

Bard College Buddhist Music Conference 2021

## Two Millennia of Buddhist Music – Ceremonies, Functions and Aesthetics

净土梵音二千年 -- 仪轨、功德、美学

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(All English translations by Mingmei Yip)

### Summary

After its introduction to China from India during the Eastern Han dynasty (23-220), both Buddhism and Buddhist music had undergone a long process of sinicization to merge with Chinese culture. Before the *Song of the Three Treasures*, composed by the twentieth century Buddhist monk Master Hong Yi (1880-1942), there were two main categories of Buddhist music: Traditional Buddhist chant and Buddhist folk music. Now modern Buddhist music in both vocal and purely instrumental form is a third category. The latter uses Western music techniques for composing. Main functions of Buddhist traditional and folk music are to praise the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and also to attract people to the noble path of Buddhism. Additionally, while used for same purposes as traditional Buddhist chant, much modern Buddhist music is composed as “art for art’s sake” to be performed on concert stage.

This paper will discuss the functions and music of five traditional forms of ceremonial Buddhist music: birthday celebrations; morning and evening lessons; feeding the hungry ghosts; water and land ceremony; Yulan Pan assembly. The aesthetics of traditional and modern Buddhist music will be discussed.

### Introduction

The Buddha’s most basic teaching was the Four Noble Truths 四圣谛：苦、集、灭、道. First, that life always involves suffering; and second that suffering is caused by desire. Third is the optimistic message that suffering can be overcome and the fourth lists the Eightfold Noble Path;<sup>1</sup> following this can release us from unhappiness.

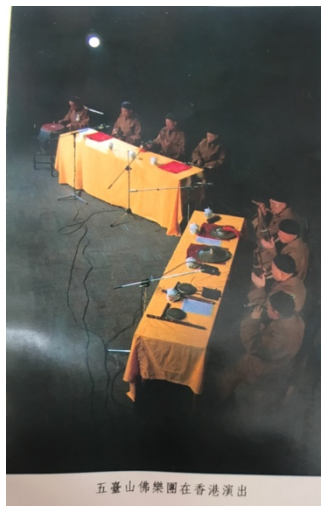
Buddhism considers desire to be the cause of suffering and has very definite ideas about it. For example it analyzes how we perceive things and

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<sup>1</sup> Eight noble paths: right view, right thought, right speech, right behavior, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration 八正道：正见、正思维、正语、正业、正命、正精进、正念、正定。

concludes that sensation has six roots: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind 眼耳鼻舌身意. These desires result from sensations and, according to Buddhism, always bring us pain. In order to free ourselves from earthly pains and troubles, we need to let go of cravings. Buddhism believes that meditation is the best way to loosen our attachments such as always wanting to feel pleasant sensations and avoid unpleasant ones. Moreover, we first need to purify our spirit to be able to transcend our desires.

This is where Buddhist art comes in, as a means to channel people's desire toward a state of purity. For example, Buddhist paintings are ways to beautify the visions of the eyes. Fragrances of flowers and incenses <sup>2</sup>are means to beautify the smell of the nose. In temples, flowers and incenses are used to purify air and as offerings to the Buddha. The scent of rice and vegetarian food are means to beautify the sense of the tongue. And of course, Buddhist music, or *Sabda-vidya* 声明 *sheng ming*, is a means to beautify the hearing of the ears.



The world's first Buddhist music concert, held in Hong Kong 1989. Organized by Mingmei Yip and Tian Qing.

**Conflict between Buddhism and Arts – from Theravada Buddhism's opposition to music to the use of music as offerings 供养 and *upaya* skillful means<sup>3</sup> 方便法门 in Mahayana Buddhism**

### Music as Offerings

<sup>2</sup> Incense burning is to create a sacred space and spiritual world distant from the dusty world. Chinese believe the fragrant incense could eliminate impure air and its rising smoke communicate with heavenly spirits, enabling one to achieve the state of "union with Heaven" 天人合一. That is why incense burning is included in most ceremonies including qin playing.

<sup>3</sup> The Bodhisattva spirit of *upaya* is to conduct virtuous deeds to help all sentient beings to release from sufferings and attain enlightenment.

The role of music in Buddhism is complicated. The early Buddhist traditions -- Theravada/Hinayana/Abhidharma 原始佛教-- are primarily anti music<sup>4</sup>, dance and other arts. Because art and music are earthly desires which can sway people's emotions, it was thus detrimental to cultivation and obstructive of liberation from suffering.<sup>5</sup> Therefore practicing music and dance is opposite to original Buddhism's goal of cultivation for liberation and attaining nirvana. And that is why monks and nun are forbidden to attend or participate in music, dance, and drama performances.<sup>6</sup> Because if monks and nuns could sing and play music, then there would be no difference between them and lay people.<sup>7</sup>

The use of music in Buddhist ceremonies became more common with the rise of the Mahayana when, after the Buddha's *parinivana* 圆寂, his disciples and followers used flowers, jewels and music as offerings to Buddha's body and to accompany the cremation<sup>8</sup>. This was described in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, which appeared around the Southern and Northern dynasties (420-56

89) :

Śakro devānām indrah [A Buddhist protector god] carried the subtle and wonderful seven-treasured canopy, infinite fragranced flowers,

<sup>4</sup> In *Primitive Buddhism's Approach to Music*, Hong Kong late Buddhist scholar Huo Taohui (1940-2018) quoted venerable master Zhao Hui's 照慧 suggestions of five reasons that primitive Buddhism was against music: 1. 坏威仪 Damaging to monks and nuns' dignified image ;2. 曠时废事 Wastes time; 3. 近恶堕恶 Causes downfall; 4. 妨修禪定 Interfere with cultivation; 5. 障碍解脱 Obstructs liberation. 霍韬晦 “原始佛教对音乐的态” *Dharma Words Monthly Journal* 【法言月刊】， vol 5, 1989, p. 59

<sup>5</sup> Tang dynasty *Dharma Garden and Pearl Forest*, vol. 36: “Kinara [music heaven, song god] used the *dharmata*, ultimate reality of music and singing to praise the Buddha, then Sumeru [the sacred five-peaked mountain, center of the world in Buddhist cosmology] and trees shook in response. The venerable Kasyapa felt disturbed in his seat, while the five hundred immortals were intoxicated and lost their sacred footing.” This passage recounts that even cultivated immortals, when listening to loud, fast, and licentious worldly music, were overcome with drunkenness and madness. Thus, it was believed that worldly music could destroy life-long meditation and cultivation, and even the Buddhist goal of attaining liberation and enlightenment. 【法苑珠林】卷36 引【菩萨处胎经】：“有一紧那罗名头娄罗，琴歌诸法实相以赞世尊，时须弥山及诸林树皆洞悉振动。迦叶在座不能自安，五百仙人生狂醉失其神足。”

<sup>6</sup> In fact, early Buddhism was not completely opposed to music. It only opposes to vulgar, worldly music, instead advocated spiritual, proper music.

<sup>7</sup> Monks and nuns were not even allowed to use music and dance as offerings. In *Five Part Disciplines* (420-479), it was recorded that when monks wanted to use song and dance as offerings to the stupa [where the Buddha's relics were stored], they faced criticism from lay people. “White clothed people [laity wore white] can sing and dance, if monks inside the *sangha* do the same, then what is the difference between them?” 【五分律】（南朝宋 420-479）：“白衣歌舞，沙门释子亦复如是，与我何异？” Another work entitled *Four Part Disciplines* (384-417) criticized monks and nuns singing and dancing as losing dignity like children's playing. “According to these scared rules, singing is like crying, dancing is like going crazy, laughing and playing are like children's games.” 【四分律】（后秦 384-417）：“于圣法律中，歌戏犹如哭，舞如狂者，戏笑如小儿” Early Buddhism believed singing and dancing would make monks and nuns look undignified.

banners, music, while crying sadly with the other heavenly beings, making offerings to the sacred coffin hanging in the air... including endless fragrant flowers, banners, pearl and jade necklaces, and subtle music as offerings into the air... then crying while making offerings to Tathāgata's seven- treasured coffin, they sang together... 【大般涅槃经 机感荼毗品第三】（南北朝北凉时期中天竺人昙无讖所译）尔时帝释即持微妙大七宝盖无数香花幢幡音乐，与诸天众悲泣流泪，垂在空中供养圣棺材。..无数香花幢幡璎珞，音乐微妙彩杂空中供养。..哀泣流涕供养，如来七宝灵棺，同声唱言。



Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra 大般涅槃经

The *Flower Adornment Sutra* ( *Avatamsaka Sutra* (400-500 CE), chapter on *Skillful Means*, describes how music was played to praise the Buddha as offering:

People make music, beating drums and blowing horns,  
Playing flutes, qin, harp, pipa, cymbals.  
All this wonderful music for making offerings.

<sup>8</sup> In *Primitive Buddhism's Approach to Music*, Huo Taohui said: “... religious activities, especially those to commemorate the Buddha, could not be carried out without music and art to express their devotion through offerings... In *India Buddhist History*, a Japanese scholar stated that this derived from the tradition of the burial ritual of the Buddha's relics and placement in the Buddhist stupa...” 霍韬晦 “原始佛教对音乐的态”：“后来为了举行宗教活动，特别是为了纪念佛陀，不可无音乐、艺术的形式来表达供养之情。。。日本学者在他的【印度佛教史】中，便认为这是礼葬佛陀遗骨，建塔供养的遗风影响所致。【法言月刊】，vol 5，1989，p. 59.

Also expressing their joyful hearts to sing *fanbai* extolling Buddha's virtue.

Even listening to one small sound is enough to attain enlightenment.

【华严经·方便品】：

若使人作乐，击鼓吹角呗，  
箫笛琴箏篪，琵琶鐃铜钹，  
如是众妙音，尽持以供养，  
或以欢喜心，歌呗诵功德，  
乃至一小音，皆以成佛道。

A passage from the *Avada<sup>na</sup>-s/ataka*, or *Hundred Karma Sutra*, (approximately 3<sup>rd</sup> century) ) also describes how people made music as offering to Buddha:

In the past when Buddha was in the world, the people in Sravasti performed music and dance in a dignified way. After leaving the city seeking enjoyment they encountered the Buddha begging for food by the city gate. Pleased to meet the Buddha, they paid respect by prostrating, then immediately played music as offerings. After that, they made vows and left. The Buddha smiled and said to Ananda<sup>9</sup>: These people used music to make offering to Buddha, so during their future life's one hundred calamities, they would not fall onto the evil path, instead they will be the most happy people in the heavens. 【百缘经】（吴·支谦（约三世纪）翻译，收录于大正藏第四册）“昔佛在世时，舍卫城中有诸人民，各自庄严而作伎乐，出城游戏，入城门值佛乞食，诸人见佛欢喜，礼拜。即作伎乐供养佛，发愿而去。佛微笑，语阿难言：诸人等由伎乐供养佛，未来世一百劫中，不堕恶道，天上人中受最快乐。”

### Music as *upaya*

Besides played as offering to the Buddha, music in Buddhism has also become a skillful means 方便法门 to spread Buddha's teaching and praise the merits of Buddha and various Bodhisavattas. For Buddhism, there are many *famen*, or dharma gates -- different ways to lead people onto the path of the Buddha. Sound, which includes human speech, sounds in nature, and music, is among them. Sound, or music, considered *zhenyan* 真言 *mantra*, or true words, is one of the keys to enlightenment and liberation. Preaching with sound is

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<sup>9</sup> Ananda was one of the Buddha's ten disciples. "Ananda" means happiness, or without taint. Ananda was famous for his unfailing memory; able to memorize the Buddha's preachings, he was also named Multiple Listening 多闻.

considered direct and very effective. This is called *yinsheng foshi* sound in Buddhist events 音声佛事 or *yinsheng duoluoni* 音声陀罗尼 vocalized *dharani* <sup>10</sup>, or *yinsheng falun* 音声法轮 wheel of Dharma sound. Buddhism believes that through *dharani*, which contains all the infinite, subtle sounds, one can be enlightened to the wonderful knowledge of the *dharma*.

*Flower Adornment Sutra* ( *Avatamsaka Sutra*, vol. 13, chapter on *The Twelve Merit Transferences* ) (approximately translated in 418) :

Use the untied, unattached mind to accomplish all the gates to the wheel of sound *dharani*. Use sound to preach the boundless *dharma*. 【大方广佛华严经·卷 31·十回向谛二十五之九】

(418) : “以无着无缚解脱心，成就解了一切音声陀罗尼门，同一切音，说无量法。”

*Avatamsaka Sutra – Chapter on Samantabhadra Bodhisattva’s Cultivation* (400-500 CE):

Use oceans of sound to express infinite, subtle and wonderful words, reaching out to the endless future, to praise the Buddha’s boundless oceans of merit. 【华严经·普贤行愿品】：  
“各以一切音声海，普出无尽妙言辞；尽于未来一切劫，赞佛甚深功德海。”

*King Kinnara Questioning Sutra* (translated by Kumarajiva 343-413):

King Kinnara [music heaven, song god] tuned the zither to harmonize with the many ensembles ... Together the Buddha’s sound, the Dharma sound, the monks’ sound, the Bodhi Samadhi’s sound.... All these create the sound of the Samadhi merit and of Bodhi Samadhi. Shariputra [a disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha] creates the samadhi sound from the zither and ensembles, so as to educate and enlighten all sentient beings. 【大树紧那罗王所问经】 (鸠摩罗什 343-413 译, 收大正藏第十五册): “是大树紧那罗王，善自调琴和众伎乐。。。于是音中出于佛声、法声、僧声、不忘菩提心声。。。作一切功德三昧声，观菩提三昧声。善男子，是琴歌音诸伎乐中，出于如是三昧声，令诸众生受化而去。”

All the above quotes show that Buddhist music is played for the purpose of spreading the Buddha’s message and aiding people to attain enlightenment. Buddhism hopes that through proper music, people would admire the Dharma,

<sup>10</sup> *Dharani* is an incantation consisting of a series of syllables based on long sutras to aid memory. These possess the power to enable the reciter to remember Buddha’s teachings and gain merit.



praise the Buddha, cultivate compassionate hearts, turn their six roots of desire into six wisdoms, and ultimately transform all troubles and sufferings into insights. Thus the Buddhist saying “through music to enlighten to the Dao, through beautiful sound to preach the Dharma.” 声闻悟道, 美音演法。

Pure Land<sup>11</sup> Buddhism could be considered a musical land, so this Buddhist paradises are often depicted with large ensembles with musicians and flying Bodhisattvas playing instruments.



<sup>11</sup> *Great Buddhist Dictionary* · *Pure Land Buddhism*: “This is the land where the enlightened lived. It is not polluted by the five dirts, that is why it was named Pure Land.” 【佛学大辞典·净土宗】：“圣者所住的国土也，无五浊之垢染，故云净土。”

Established in the Tang dynasty (618-907), Pure Land Buddhism is famous for its music. *Buddha Expounding the Infinite Life Sutra* (Translated by the Wei dynasty 220-265 Monk Kai): “In this land, the cool breeze often emits five tones, and these subtle *gong* and *shang* modes will naturally correspond with each other. ..the subtly blowing wind emits the wonderful dharma sound, spreading to all Buddhist lands of the ten directions....there is also ten thousandfold music whose tunes are none other than the dharma sound. It is pure, smooth, melancholic and brilliant; subtle, wonderful, harmonious and elegant, ranks number one in the music of the worlds of all directions.” 【佛说无量寿经】（三国魏康僧铠译）：“又其国土，七宝诸树.....清风时发出五音声，微妙宫商，自然相和。.....微风徐动出妙法音，普流十方一切佛国，.....亦有自然万种伎乐，又其乐声无非法音，清畅哀亮，微妙和雅，十方世界音声之中最为第一。”

【中华藏 9：596】

Depiction of music and dance in Pure Land, Dunhuang grotto 敦煌  
“释迦牟尼净土图”中的乐舞



Music ensembles in Pure Land 西方净土变伎乐图



净土药师经变乐舞图

Similarly, *Paradise of Sakyamuni* depicting music and dance.





Depiction of music and dance in *Paradise of Shakyamuni*, early 9th century, Tang dynasty, with illustrations of episodes from the *Baoen Sutra*, or *Ullambana Sutra of Mahāvairocana Buddha* 大方便佛报恩经, from Cave 17, Mogao, near Dunhuang, Gansu province, China.

Buddhism also cherishes the concept of *yiyin shuofa* 一音说法<sup>12</sup>, one sound preaching the dharma, this is also referred to as *yuan yin* 圆音, round sound.

<sup>12</sup> "One sound in Buddhism refers to the fact that all things corporeal are void in nature. Only when the self is empty could it embrace all things, like the ocean receiving all rivers. Only when one single sound is empty could it embrace all the ocean of sound. That is why in Buddhism, realizing that sound is emptiness, is the dhrama gate for cultivation. ...When realizing the essence of sound's emptiness, one can cultivate to reach purity of the mind, tongue, and sound, thus entering sound Samadhi and sound's wisdom gate. .. From Buddhism's point of view, sound is originally pure and tranquil, symbolizing the fundamental belief that all things are empty in nature, thus their base is unshakable. Sound could express all dharma laws, in fact, one sound is all sound. Practitioners cultivate through sound to focus their mind and thoughts, reaching the state of purity and tranquility of the heart, mind and sound. From here, one could preach the world's complexities, its fundamental quietude, and empty nature. Therefore, sound is a means of cultivation which could penetrate truth and achieve the enlightened mind. This is the real meaning of sound in Buddhism." Yang Qiuyue: *Concept of Sound Represented in Big Sun Sutra*, Central Music Conservatory Journal, vol. 1, 2017, p.46. "佛教的“一音”是当体即空。只有自性本空才能海纳百川，一音本空才可以具众音声海。所以说，音声对于佛门来说，是修持法门，明悟一音本空，在实践中运用具体方法进行修持从而达到花开见性悟无生。。。体悟一个音声当体

The sounds of the Buddha and all the bodhisattvas possess the four qualities of all embracing, equality, pleasantness, and ease.

*Sutra of the Big Sun* (translated around 724, Tang dynasty) states:

The word of one sound entering the wisdom Dharma gate to fill the world. 【大日经·卷7】(唐开元十二年善无畏译)“能以一音遍满世界。。。尔时自入音声慧法门也。”

Buddhism believes that people's six roots, (sense faculties) of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind will generate the six *gunas* of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thought. And good music should be developed according to the root of sound, as stated in *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*: (945)

The best genuine teaching lies in the purity of sound. The best way to enter *Samadhi* is through listening to sound<sup>13</sup> in order to leave suffering and enter liberation.<sup>14</sup> 【大佛顶首楞严经】(唐·天竺·沙门般刺密帝译): “此方真教体, 清净在音闻; 欲取三摩地, 实以闻中入, 离苦得解脱。”

However, although later Buddhism advocates peaceful, elegant and spiritual music, it is still cautious in preventing the power of music from distracting people in their cultivation.

*Four Part Disciplines*:

During quiet thinking and remembering music could disturb meditation. 【四分律】“若在寂静之处思维, 缘忆音声, 以乱禅定。”

Therefore, Buddhism only advocates music which is pure, simple, elegant, and rectified, so it could fully spread the Dharma and transform people. Worldly music with fast tempo, ostentatious skill, and stimulating melodies is discouraged, because it is considered vulgar and will distract people from cultivation and the meaning of the sutras.

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即空的含义。通过这种方法使意念清净、便可以舌根清净, 从而可以音声清净, 进入音声三昧, 音声慧法门。。。在佛教看来, 音声本自清净, 象征着诸法空寂, 本不动摇的根本宗旨。音声能够表一切法, 一音即一切音, 修行实践者通过音声摄持心念, 达到心、意、音清净, 从而通过音声演说大千世界繁花似锦而又空寂静然的本质。听者亦感同身受。因此, 音声是一种能通达真理、明心见性的修持法门。可以说, 这是音声对佛教的真正意义之所在。”“杨秋悦“【大日经疏】体现的佛教音声观”中央音乐学院学报, 1期, 2017, 页46。

<sup>13</sup> In Buddhism, sound 音声 refers to all kinds of sound including music.

<sup>14</sup> For this reason, chanting the Buddha's name 念佛 is the main method for cultivation in Pure Land Buddhism.

The *Vinimu Sutra* (Taisho-pitaka, vol. 24) tells why the Buddha discouraged music of the non-Buddhists 外道 as contrary to the purity and elegance of Buddhist music:

If one uses non-Buddhist music to spread the Dharma, there would be five flaws: the mind will be scattered and unfocused; the audience will not be pleased, nor will heaven; its language will not be rectified and will be hard to understand. Finally, it will not possess the skillful means to be understood. 【毗尼母经】(收【大正藏】24册)卷六记载了佛陀诃斥外道的歌音:“用外道歌音说法,复有五种过患:一不名自持,二不称听众,三诸天不悦,四语不正难解,五语不巧故义亦难解,是名五种过患。”

## Categories of Buddhist Music

Buddhist music is only one kind of religious music in China.<sup>15</sup> There are different kinds of Buddhist music which serve different purposes. In temples, music accompanies ceremonies for offering to cosmic beings such as Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and lower beings such as animals and ghosts.

Music is performed during a variety of circumstances:

- I. Buddhist Ritual Music 法事音乐. is performed during various Buddhist ceremonies; it is also called temple music 庙堂音乐; music in an institute for enlightenment 道场音乐; sound in Buddhist events 佛事音乐.

Below are five main categories of Buddhist ritual music

- a. Celebrations and birthdays 佛教仪典/祝圣佛事:

Birthdays of various deities such as the Buddha, Bodhisattva, Bodhidharma. Besides Buddha's birthday, this also includes the day Buddha became a monk 出家日, the day he got enlightened 成道日, and the day he entered nirvana 涅槃日. Other birthdays include the birthday of Guanyin Pusa, Wensu Pusa, Puxian Pusa etc. Buddha's birthday is also called "Bathing the Buddha Festival" 浴佛节. This is to commemorate Buddha's birth by rinsing the baby Buddha's statue with fragrant water<sup>16</sup>. The baby Buddha's right finger always point

<sup>15</sup> Religious music in China includes: Buddhist music, Daoist music, *Yingjiao* 应教 music, Christian music, Islam music, minority ethnic music. Almost all religious music is part of a ritual.

<sup>16</sup> The legend goes that after baby Buddha was born, his right finger pointed up and his left pointed down, while proclaiming that under heaven and on earth, he was the most honored one. This proclamation

to heaven and his left finger to earth. This was baby Buddha's posture right after he was born while proclaiming, "Under heaven and on earth, I am the most honored one." He also walked seven steps with each step blooming into a lotus.



Bathing the baby Buddha

Purpose and function:

Celebration of the Buddha's and deities' birthdays and other significant days.

Music:

- *Incense Tribute* 香赞<sup>17</sup> Lyrics: "The Bodhisattvas descended from the clouds, while the King Suddhodana was born in the palace. A golden baby was born from the right side of Lady Mahāmāyā while heavenly music played from the sky. Looking around, the baby Buddha took seven steps, then he pointed toward heaven and earth. Nine dragons sprayed water to bathe his compassionate countenance. All the ten thousand Dharmas are ratified". "菩萨下云中，降生净饭王宫。摩耶右胁娩金童，天乐奏长空。目顾四方周七步，指天指地尊雄。九龙吐水沐慈容，万法得正中。"

- *Praise to Buddhist Treasure* 佛宝赞

- *Praise to the Buddha* 赞佛偈<sup>18</sup>: "Above and below, there is no being like the Buddha, no being could compare to him in the ten directions."

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shocked the dragon kings, so they immediately sprayed pure water onto baby Buddha to purify him. 【长阿含经】*Dirghagama-sutra* (413): '佛告比丘：诸佛常法，毗婆尸菩萨，当其生时从右胁出，专念不乱。从右胁出堕地行七步无人扶持，遍观四方，举手而言：天上天下唯我为尊。'

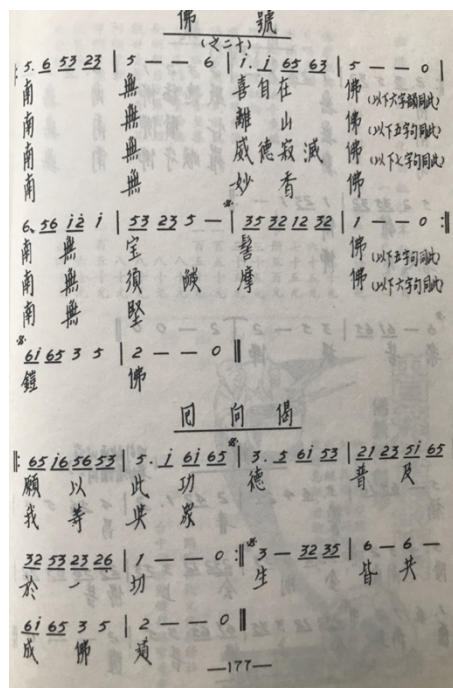
<sup>17</sup> Among the forms of Buddhist music, *zan* 赞 is melodious, but its phrases irregular; its content include blessing, worship, and praise to the Buddha.

<sup>18</sup> *Ji* 偈 are tunes with phrases of four, seven, or nine words that relate Buddhist stories or philosophy.

Nothing in this world can be compared to the Buddha". “天上天下无如佛，十方世界亦无比，世界所有我尽见，一切无有如佛者。”

• *Bathing the Buddha* 浴佛偈：“Today I bathe all the Buddhas; pure wisdom and merits solemnly converge. So that the five sentient beings will leave their defilements, I witness the Buddha’s pure and clean Dharma body”. “我今灌沐诸如来，净智功德庄严聚，五浊众生令离垢，愿证如来净法身。”

• *Hail to Nanmo Master Sakyamuni Buddha* “南无本师释迦牟尼佛”名号<sup>19</sup>



Dai, Mingxian: *Fanbai Notation*, International Buddhist Cultural Press, Taipei, 1980. 戴明贤【梵呗赞谱】国际佛教文化出版社，台北，1980。

#### b. Morning and Evening Lessons 早晚课/朝暮课诵

Mahayana monks and nuns, instead of being forbidden to participate in musical activities, chant their morning and evening lessons. This is the most common everyday practice. In this ritual, monks and nuns living in a temple chant in the morning from 3 to 5 and at the same hours in the evening. It is believed that in the early morning hours the air is fresh and the mind is calm, so this is the best time to chant to reach the mind’s clearest and focused state 一心不乱之境。Since monks and nuns will chant from dark to light, they feel that their chanting will conjure up the sun to rise. Evening lesson is held in the late

<sup>19</sup> *Fohao* 佛号 is the reciting of the Buddha and other Bodhisattvas’ names, such as 南无阿弥陀佛，南无地藏王菩萨。Because of the endless repetition of hailing to the same name, tunes of *fohao* often use the same melodies repeatedly.



afternoon because in the past, there was no electricity, and so the monks and nuns needed to finish their daily activities before sunset. Also many monks and nuns follow the rule of not eating after noon 过午不食.



Morning and evening lesson

Purpose and function:

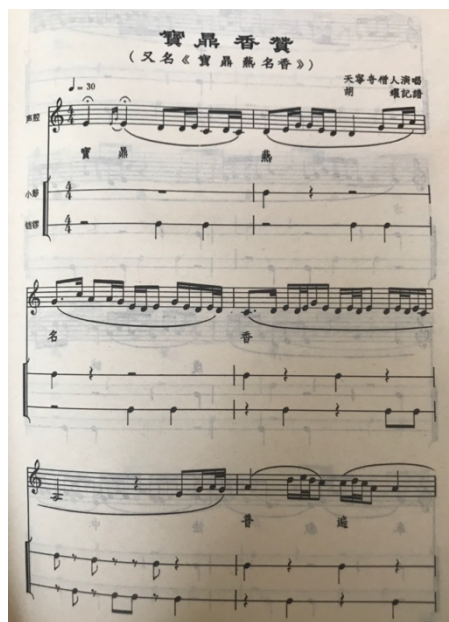
- Praise and pay respect to the three treasures of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. 佛、法、僧三宝
- Spreading the Dharma
- Self cultivation and discipline
- Praying for good fortune, longevity, world peace
- *Parinamana*, merit transference -- transference of all benefits of the virtuous chanting to the Pure Land. 总摄所诵功德回向净土
- Universal redemption 普渡众生
- Liberating sufferings of all beings
- Accumulating inconceivable merits

Music:

Music (examples) <sup>20</sup>:

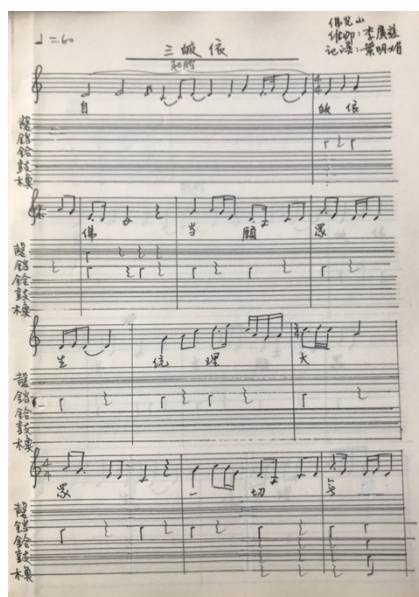
- *Praise to Incense Burner* 宝鼎香赞, praising fragrance, flowers, lamps, fruits as offerings to the Buddha.

<sup>20</sup> Music differs between temples



Tian Qing: *The Selected Chinese Buddhist Music*, Shanghai Music Conservatory Press, 1993. 田青【中国佛教音乐选萃】，上海音乐出版社，1993

- *Chant of Blessing* 祝愿偈
- *Praise to the Buddha* 赞佛偈
- *Three Refuges* 三皈依
- *Hail to Guanyin's Name* 观音佛号
- *Praise to Amida Buddha* 弥陀赞
- *Praise to the Medicine Buddha* 药师赞



*Three Refuges*, sung by Li Guangci 李广慈, notation by Mingmei Yip

Chantings are followed by various incantations

### c. Ceremony for Repentance at Place for Enlightenment 道场忏法

These are ceremonies for living Buddhists to repent their sins and restore their blessings, and also for deceased ancestors who are suffering in the three evil realms of animals, hungry ghosts and hell-beings.

- i. *Yujia Yankou* 瑜伽<sup>21</sup>施食焰口/放焰口<sup>22</sup> Feeding the Hungry Ghosts 超度饿鬼. This is held during July which is the ghost month according to the Chinese calendar. Hungry ghosts, represented by *yankou* 焰口 (flaming mouth), are dead people who could not control their desires while alive. They have huge mouths and bellies but tiny necks so that they can never swallow enough to satisfy their hunger. When alive, they were extremely greedy people so after they died they become ghosts and suffer in hell. Their mouths spit fire and thus they are not able to eat anything. During this ritual, the hungry ghosts are redeemed and their sins expiated so that they can eat and drink again. The living perform this ritual to help release the dead from hell but it also develops their compassion since they do it to help the most miserable beings. This can last as long as six hours, is considered a musical event which includes

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<sup>21</sup> "In Tantric Buddhism there are three secret *yujia*, because a person of true words always returns to the three secret actions of body, language and mind." *Buddha Light Big Dictionary*, Buddha Light Press, 1988, 6<sup>th</sup> vol. p.5529. "所谓瑜伽，在密教一般称为三密瑜伽；此因真言行者之瑜伽终归于身、语、意三密之行。"【佛光大辞典】，佛光出版社，1988，六册，页 5529.

"...Hands in mudra postures, mouth chanting mantras, the mind focusing on meditation. The body in harmony with the mouth, the mouth in harmony with the mind, the mind in union with the body. When the three karmas correspond with each other, this is called *yu jia*." *Collection of Yujia Yankou Feeding the Poor*, Chang Zhou Heavenly Peace Temple, Yu Long Presss, Taiwan, 1964, p.2 "。。。手结密印、口诵真言，意专观想，身与口协、口与意符、意与身会，三业相应，故曰瑜伽。"【瑜伽焰口施食要集】，常州天宁寺板，台湾裕隆印务局，1964，页 2.

<sup>22</sup> "Yankou, Flaming Mouth, is the name of the ghost king. According to the story of the origin of Yankou: "The venerable Ananda was meditating in the forest in the evening when he encountered the Ghost King pitting fire with smoke coming out from the top of his head. He was extremely ugly with limbs rattling like broken wheels, hungry fire consuming his body, and his throat as thin as a needle. When Ananda asked his name, he responded 'Burning Face'" *Collection of Yujia Yankou Feeding the Poor*, Chang Zhou Heavenly Peace Temple, Yu Long Presss, Taiwan, 1964, p.40. "焰口是鬼王的名称，因口吐火焰，故名“焰口”，亦因其面冒火光，又名“面然”。焰口的由来：“阿难尊者，林间习定，夜见鬼王，口吐火焰，顶发烟生，身形丑陋，肢节如破车之声。饥火交然，咽喉如针锋之细，见斯怪异，问是何名，答曰面然。”【瑜伽焰口施食要集】，常州天宁寺板，台湾裕隆印务局，1964，页 40.

chanting, reciting, incantation, instrumental music and mudra.

23



Sketches of Buddhist mudra, late 9<sup>th</sup> century, Dunhuang cave 17



Manual for Feeding the Hungry Ghost 【瑜伽焰口施食要集】

<sup>23</sup> “Yujia refers to correspondences, the mouth chanting incantations, the hands practicing mudras, the heart/mind meditating.” *Collection of Yujia Yankou Feeding the Poor*, Chang Zhou Heavenly Peace Temple, Yu Long Press, Taiwan, 1964, p. 47. “瑜伽以相应为义，谓口诵咒，手结印，心作观。”【瑜伽焰口施食要集】，常州天宁寺板，台湾裕隆印务局，1964，页 47. “The practice of mudra enables feeling the Buddha and Bodhisattva’s power within. Therefore the clasping and unclasping of hands into mudras should be done with respect and sincerity under the guidance of a teacher.” *Buddha Light Big Dictionary*, Buddha Light Press, 1988, 2nd vol. p. 1412. “由于修行者结手印即能感受佛、菩萨之力量而与之成为一体，故结印、解印，必要拜师亲授，敬谨慎重。”【佛光大辞典】，佛光出版社，1988，二册，页 1412.



瑜伽焰口手印<sup>24</sup>

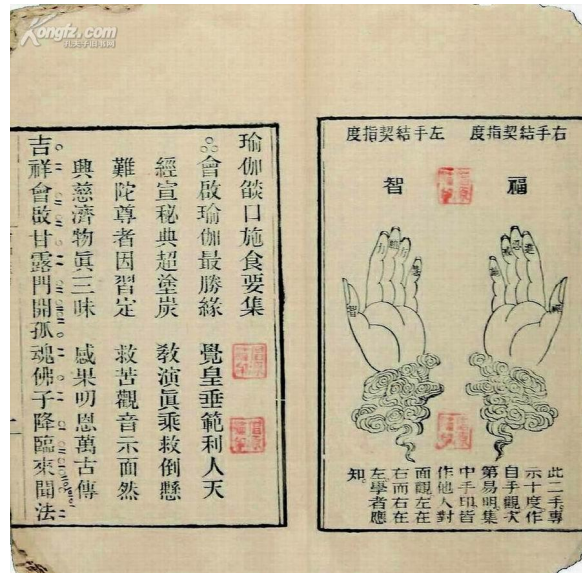
This *Yujia* ceremony consists of three parts:

- Setting up the altar 结坛城, singing *Clouds Gathering Bodhisattva Mahasa* 云来集菩萨摩呵萨 and *Fragrant Clouds Parasol Bodhisattva Mahasa* 香云盖菩萨摩呵萨
- Breaking open hell, giving out food, beckoning lonely ghosts 破地狱、施食、召请诸孤魂。
- Sending off ghosts

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<sup>24</sup> The *Yujia* Dharma ceremony differs from most other Dharma ceremonies in its use of mudras. Mudras could only be practiced by the monk hosting the ceremony. There are thirteen mudras, each having its own function: 1. Riding of troubles, distancing from evil and releasing great brilliance. 2. Dignifying all Buddha lands. 3. Inviting Wisdom Guanyin to emit infinite light. 4. Nurturing with an honest heart. 5. Visualizing Guanyin during meditation. 6. Penetrating hell with light and repenting from the heart. 7. Luring beings from the realms of hell, bringing hungry ghosts, and animals to the place of enlightenment. 8. Touching the lotus' sacred water to obtain purity and freedom from hindrance. 9. Chanting the seven Tathāgata so Buddhist disciples could be released from the three evil realms of animals, hungry ghosts, hell-bings and the eight calamities. 10. Luring the ghosts and spirits of the six paths to take refuge in the three treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. 11. Vowing to deliver all sentient beings from suffering. 12. Transforming one meal to infinite meals and feed the hungry. 13. Showing that the Dharma ceremony is completed to perfection. *Buddha Light Big Dictionary*, Buddha Light Press, 1988, 2nd vol. p. 1412.





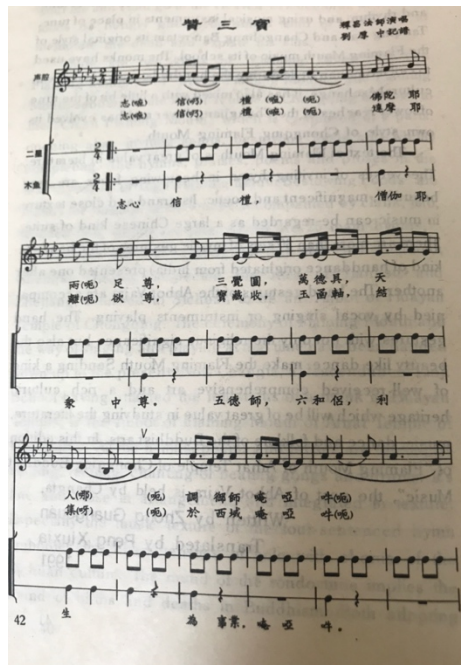
Manual for Feed the Hungry Ghost ceremony

Purpose and function:

- Repentance of sins
- Release souls, hungry ghosts from suffering
- Development of compassion
- Accumulating merit for fortune and longevity

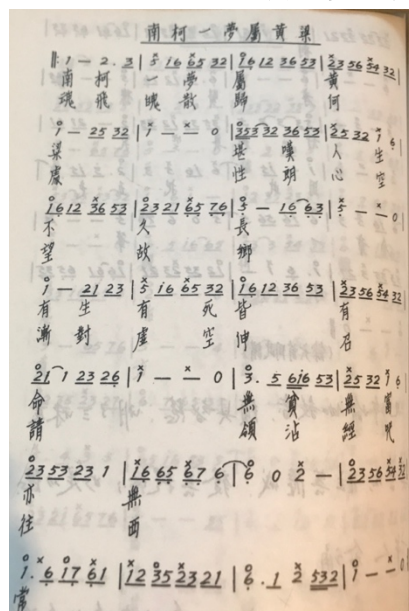
Music:

- *Praise of Disciplined Meditation and Fragrant Incense* 戒定真香贊
- *Praise of [Guanyin's] Willow Branch and Pure Water* 楊枝淨水贊
- *Praise of the Three Treasures* 三寶贊



*Praise of the Three Treasures*

- *Four Great Blessings* 四大祝延
- *Eight Great Praises* 八大贊
- *Buddha Treasure* 佛宝
- *Ten Offerings* 十供养
- *Nan Ke's Dream* 南柯一梦属黄粱



*Nan Ke's Dream*

At the end of the ceremony, participants will sing secular folk tunes to lament the unpredictability of life, encourage people to redeem themselves and return to the right path. *Nan Ke's Dream* is one of these folk tunes.

Recitation of various incantations and sutras :

- *Incantation of Great Compassion* 大悲咒,
- *Six Word Brilliant Mantra* 六字大明咒
- *Twelve Links in the Chain of Causation* 十二因缘咒

ii. Water and Land Ceremony <sup>25</sup>水陆法会

Similar to the feeding of the hungry ghosts, the purpose of this ritual is to show compassion by blessing all sentient beings from suffering – on water, on land, and in the sky <sup>26</sup>. These beings comprise humans, cows, pigs, cats, dogs, rats, even cockroaches, flies, mosquitoes. Rich people, also referred to as “Big Protector of the Dharma” 大护法, donate large sums of money to pay for this ceremony, hoping that their ancestors – now perhaps reincarnated as animals – will be released from suffering.

The ceremony is performed on both inner and outer altars <sup>27</sup>. The former is decorated with flowers, fruit offerings, lamps,

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<sup>25</sup> The complete title of this ceremony is “The ritual of the Dharma realm where enlightened beings and common people of water and land are ferried with all sentient beings to the far shore” 法界圣凡水陆普渡大斋胜会, other titles include: “water and land place of enlightenment” 水陆道场, “water and land great assembly” 水陆大会, “water and land meal offering” 水陆斋仪, “compassion and rescue ceremony” 悲济会. The legend is that emperor Liang Wu 梁武帝 of the Southern dynasty created this ceremony in order to commemorate his concubine. He wrote the “water and land ceremonial text” based on having studied the Tripitaka for three years. In 505, using his ceremonial text, he established the water and land ceremony in the Golden Mountain Temple 金山寺. 宋宗鑑【释门正统】卷4: “所谓水陆者, 因梁武帝梦一神僧告曰: ‘六道四生, 受苦无量, 等斛食之意, 用制仪文, 遂于润州金山寺修设。帝躬临地席, 命僧祐禅师宣文’”。 Since the Song dynasty (960-1279), the Water and Land Ceremony has been very popular, often being performed after wars to release deceased souls from suffering in hell.

<sup>26</sup> The ceremony is called “water and land” because the food offered to higher beings will be dispersed into the water, and the food offered to ghosts will be scattered on the land.

<sup>27</sup> The activities of inner altar of the Water and Land ceremony last seven days and include: 1. Purification 洒净; 2. Sending invitations to heaven and hell 遣使发符; 3. Invite Buddhas and spirits to the high altar 请上堂; 4. Make offerings to the high altar 供上堂; 5. Pardon 告赦 by releasing beings from the Six Realms of Existence by reciting the 地藏经 (地藏菩萨本愿经) *Sutra of the Past Vow of Earth Store Bodhisattva*; 6. Invite to the low altar 请下堂; 7. Make offerings to the low altar 供下堂; 8. Feed the poor and hungry 施食; 9. Initiate into Buddhahood 受戒; 10. Complete offerings to six kinds of common people and four saints 圆满供 11. Completion with

candles, musical instruments and water and land paintings. The paintings are portraits of enlightened beings to be invited to the ceremony. A Water and Land ceremony can last from seven to forty-nine days and is a big source of revenue for the temple.



Inner altar of Water and Land Ceremony 水陆法会内坛布置

fragrance -- after beings are released from suffering they begin to smell the dharma fragrance 圆满香.

Activities of outer altar include: Flaming mouth; offerings to heaven; setting free animal life; taking refuge; sending back the saints etc. 焰口、供天、放生、皈依、送圣等佛事。There are all together six altars for the recitation of different sutras.

The audience for this ceremony includes three levels: 1 **Upper level**. All Buddhas and Bodhisattavas from the past, present, future; the sacred and virtuous 圣贤; enlightened beings of the sixteen venerable and eighteen *arhat* 声闻缘觉, 十六尊者, 十八罗汉; Bright Kings with ferocious expressions 明王; Gods, ghost and dragons of all heavens 八部; chan and *vinaya* masters 禅、律宗祖师; immortals of five awarenessess 五通神仙. 2 **Middle level**. Buddhism's protector god 梵王帝释; all cosmic gods 空宿曜一切尊神. 3. **Lower level**. Dragons and gods of the five mountains, rivers, seas, land 五嶽河海大地龙神; Ancestors; *Asura* 阿修罗; Officials in hell and their relatives 冥官眷属; Beings in hell 地狱众生; Souls and spirits 幽魂滞魄; Abandoned ghost and spirits 无主无依诸鬼神众。参看宋·宋赜【水陆缘起】





Make offerings to the high altar 水陆法会内坛供上堂仪



Water and land paintings placed over the inner altar 水陆画





## Land and water ceremony 密严寺



End of ceremony: Sending back the enlightened beings, South Mountain Temple 南山寺

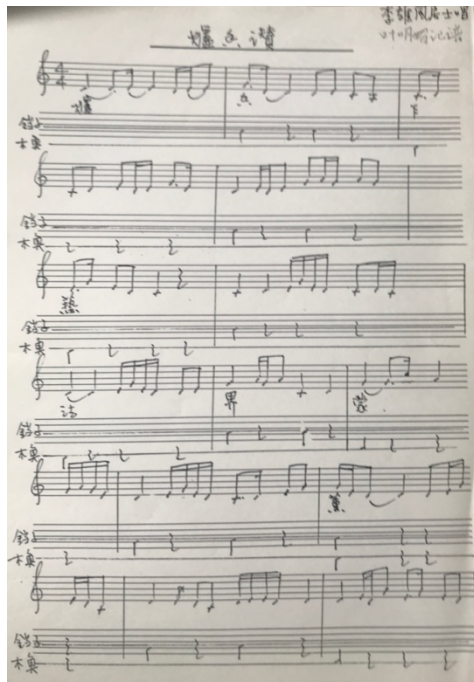
### Purpose and function:

- Blessings to all beings on land, sea, and sky
- Honor the deceased 追荐亡灵
- Ferry all sentient beings to the far shore 普渡众生
- Transfer of the merit to the donors and singers of Buddhist chants and their relatives as so to attain blessings and longevity.
- Accumulate unfathomable, profound, extraordinary merit and virtue 不可思议殊胜功德 to eliminate calamities. Ferry all to the far shore. Make offerings and feed the hungry. 消灾、普渡、上供、下施。

### Music<sup>28</sup>:

- *Praise to the Fragrant Incense Burner* 炉香赞
- *Praise to the Wonderful Offering from the Heavenly Kitchen* 天厨妙供赞
- *Praise to the Three Treasures* 三宝赞
- *Chant of Transferring Merit* 回向偈
- *Chant of the Six Roots' Purity and the three Consequences of Wrongdoing* 清静六根三业偈

<sup>28</sup> The music listed here is only a few examples from the many songs chanted during the ceremony.



*Praise to the Incense Burner*, sung by Li Xiongfeng, notation by Mingmei Yip

#### Recitation of mantras and sutras:

- *Showering Fragranced Water for Purification Mantra* 洒净真言
- *Amita Sutra* 弥陀经
- *Sutra of the Past Vow of Earth Store Bodhisattva* 地藏经
- *Buddha Expounding Infinite Life Sutra* 佛说无量寿经
- *Diamond Sutra* 金刚经
- *Mahayana Wonderful Dharma Lotus Sutra* 大乘妙法莲花经
- *Buddha Expounding the Amitabha Sutra* 佛说阿弥陀经

#### iii. Yulan Pan Assembly 盂兰盆会<sup>29</sup>

29

*Yulanpan* is the transliteration of *ullambana*, which means hanging upside down. *Sound and Meaning of the Tripitaka*, vol. 34 (Monk Hui Lin, Southern Song dynasty 1127-1279): "...Hanging upside down. According to law of the Western Regions, during the day of release (when monks repent their sins and feel relieved and serene). Monks believed that their ancestors had sinned and that was why their family was cut off from having offspring to make them offerings after their deaths. As a consequence, their ancestors are tortured by being hanged upside down in the ghost realm..." 释慧林【一切经音义】:盂兰盆,此言讹也。正言乌蓝婆,此译云:倒悬。案西国法,至于众僧自恣之日,云先亡有罪,家复绝嗣,亦无人飧祭,则于鬼趣之中受倒悬之苦。旧云盂兰盆是储食之器,此言误也。"

Another explanation of *Yulan Pan* is found in Tang dynasty monk Jing Hui's *Narration and Praise of the Yulan Pan Sutra*: "Place good food and delicious meat in the basin to offer to Buddha and monks, in order to save (ancestors) from the suffering of hanging upside down,

Originated by Emperor Liang Wu 梁武帝萧衍 (464-549), this ceremony is held on July fifteen (lunar calendar) to release ancestors' soul from hunger and suffering. The legend goes that after the venerable Mu Lian 目莲 had obtained the "awareness of six categories of mysterious, unfathomable, unobstructed wisdom" 六通, he was able to see his mother suffering in hell as a hungry ghost. He tried to feed his mother with a bowl of food. But when his mother tried to eat with her right hand, her left hand would block her right hand from reaching for the food. And before she could eat, the food would turn into ashes. Distraught and devastated, Mu Lian went to see the Buddha and ask for advice. Buddha said his mother's sin was too deep to be redeemed by one person, only by all the monks and gods from the ten directions. So Buddha advised Mu Lian to offer a big basin of delicious food on July fifteen (the day when monks complete their cultivation) to virtuous monks of the ten directions so that the latter could release his mother's and other ancestors' souls. This ceremony consists of reciting sutras, offering food, and performing the play *Mu Lian Rescuing his Mother* 目莲救母.

Function and purpose:

- Blessings to parents for good fortune and longevity
- Releasing ancestors' souls from suffering and attain happiness
- Making offerings to the Buddha, Dharma, Shanga
- Confession and erasure of sins
- Release parents, parents of the past seven generations, and the six relatives from the suffering of fire, blood and knives in hell. *Ullambana-sutra* (Western Jin dynasty 265-316) :: "Make offerings for monks, living parents and the six relatives so they can be released from the path of sufferings, attain liberation, and from the sufferings of cold and hunger." 【佛说盂兰盆经】(西晋竺法护译): 其有供养此等自恣僧者, 现世父母六亲(父母兄弟妻子)眷属、得出三涂之苦。应时解脱, 衣食自然。

- Repay parental grace and kindness

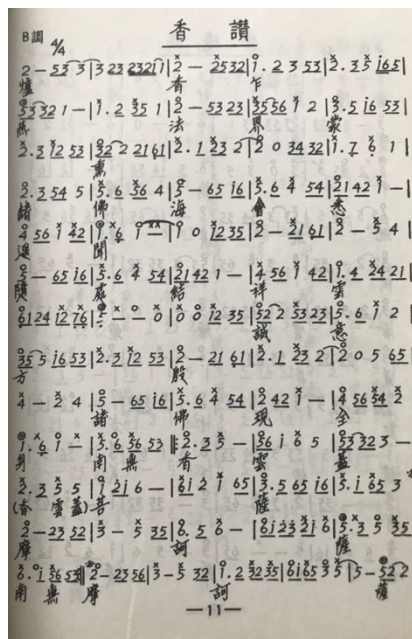
Music:

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therefore it was named *pan*." The commentary of this sutra states : "*Yulan* in the language of the Western Region means upside down; *pan* in Chinese means basin. Following this custom, it should be called 'vessel for rescuing from hanging upside down'." 唐代慧净【盂兰盆经赞述】: "名餐香俎在于盘内, 奉佛施僧以救倒悬之苦, 故名盘也。。。盂兰是西域之语, 此云倒悬, 盘乃东夏之音, 仍为救器。若随方俗, 应曰救倒悬器。"

*Ullambana* also means filial piety, making offerings, gratitude.

• Chanting of *Praise to Incense*. Lyrics: “Incense from the burner warms and perfumes the Dharma realm. All the distant Buddhas hear the sounds of this great gathering. Everywhere auspicious clouds gather. With our sincere intentions we have the karma to see the full bodies of the Buddhas.” 【香赞】 炉香乍热。法界蒙熏。诸佛海会悉遥闻。随处结祥云。诚意方殷。诸佛现全身。



- Recitation of:
- *Yulan Pan Sutra* 念盂兰盘经
- *Great Compassion Sutra* 大悲咒
- *The Ten Lesser Sutras* 十小咒
- *Heart Sutra* 心经

### Aesthetics of *Fanbai*:

Chanting Buddhist sutras in temples are referred to as *Fan Bai* 梵呗<sup>30</sup>. *Fan Bai* is considered *sheng jiao* 声教 “teaching through sound”. Thus its goal is to release people from the suffering by the ear’s root to reach a state of purity and

<sup>30</sup> King Chen Si Cao Zhi 陈思王曹植 was considered to be the person who created, or, more accurately, recorded *fan bai*. *Dharma Garden and Pearl Forest* • song of praise 34: “When Cao Zhi traveled to Fisherman Mountian, he suddenly heard music from the sky. The music was pure, elegant, melancholic and gentle, and its sound moved his heart. After listening to this music for a long time, he copied its tunes and rhythm, then created *fan bai*.” 【法苑珠林 • 呗赞第 34】: “曹植尝游渔山, 忽闻空中梵天之响, 清雅哀婉。其声动心, 独听良久。。。乃慕其音节, 写为梵呗。”

coolness. Therefore the singing of *fan bai* should be leisurely, subdued, focused, profound.

*Fan Bai*, as a means to spread the Buddha's teaching, is simple, slow (♩ = 25-30) melodious and elegant, according to the *Janavasabha Sutta*:

The Brahma boy told people in Trayastrimsa that the sound which possesses five different purities is called *fan yin*. What five purities? The first is that the sound should be rectified, second it should be harmonious and elegant, third it should be crystal clear, fourth it should be deep and remote, fifth it should project far and wide.”【长阿含五闍尼沙经】：“时梵童子告忉利天，曰：其有声音五种清净乃名梵音。何等为五？一者其音正直，二者其音和雅，三者其音清澈，四者其音深远，五者周遍远闻。”



*Flower-born child musicians* <sup>31</sup> 花（化）生童子伎 Buddhist children singing and dancing, Dunhuang 9<sup>th</sup> century

<sup>31</sup> Gao Dexiang says: “Transformed birth is a Buddhist term. Buddhism teaches that people have four lives, and transformed birth is one of these. In frescos, it has become “lotus flower born,” symbolizing being born from mud but not tainted by it ....These are called flower born child musicians. Possessing the flavor of Buddhism, this symbolizes the purity and beauty of the paradise of happiness.” *Children Musicians in Dunhuang Frescoes*, Chinese Music, 1991, 2<sup>nd</sup> vol, p.36. “‘生化’一词为佛教术语。佛教中为之人有‘四生’，‘化生’为‘四生’之一。‘化生’表现在壁画中就是‘花生’而已，并不是佛教中所说的‘化生无依托’，而事实上是有依托。这依托就是佛教壁画中象征着出污泥而不染的莲华，‘化’即‘花’。‘化生童子伎’亦可谓‘花生童子伎’，即以为这些童子伎出脱于莲华之中。这



Tang dynasty Shi Daoshi's *Dharma Garden and Pearl Forest*:

Buddhist music should be virtuous and wonderfully spontaneous, pure but not weak, strong but not ferocious, flowing but not overflowing, dense but not stagnant. Its fascination is like a kite in the wind; its flavor is like heaven's breath. When heard from afar, it evokes the elegance and might of the vast ocean. When heard from nearby, its sound is subtle, harmonious and solemn. 唐·释道世【法苑珠林】：“原乎经音为懿妙出自然。。当使清而不弱，雄而不猛，流而不越，凝而不滞，趣发祇鹭之风，韵结霄汉之气。远听汪洋以峻雅，近属则从容以和肃，此其大致也。”

*Original Mind Expounds All Dharma Quick Wisdom* translated by Tang dynasty monk Yi Jing :

Among all the “hearing-sounds-of-the-world” disciples, the monk Shan He ranked first. His singing of *fan bai* was harmonious and elegant, filling listeners' hearts with joy...his voice was pure and bright, its resonance reaching heaven. 【根本说一切有部昆奈耶杂书卷四】“于我法中所有声闻弟子，音声美妙，善和苾芻为第一。由其演唱，音韵和雅，能令闻者发欢喜心。。其音清亮，上徹梵天。”

Singing of *fan bai* starts slowly, then builds up to a climax. This is to keep the chanters' mind on focus, so as to reach the state of “undisturbed mind, full absorption, without illusionary thoughts” 一心不乱, 专心摄受, 不打妄想.

Non-feminine voice *bunu sheng* 不女声

Because Buddhist chant is to spread the Dharma and praise the Buddha, the meaning of the text is of primary importance, while the music is secondary. Nuns are required to sing in a neutral, non-feminine voice void of any strong emotion and desire. A high-pitched voice is considered flirtatious and thus can distract both the singer and listeners. In chanting *fan bai*, the volume should be low and the mouth should not be wide open.

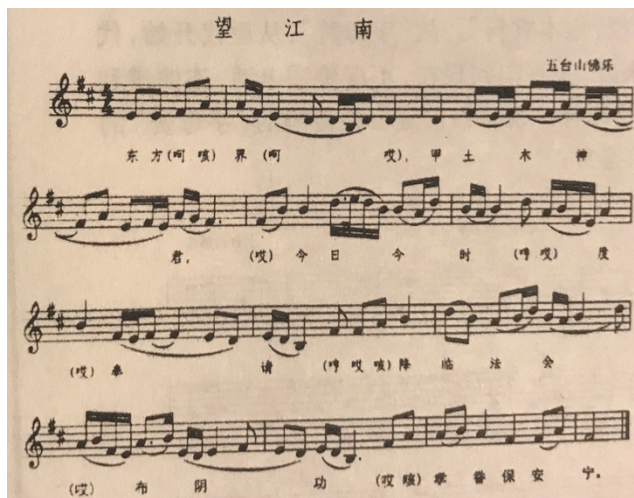
## 2. Buddhist Folk Music 民间佛曲

Unlike Buddhist ceremonial music, Buddhist folk music is considered secular and generally not performed with rituals. Instead, it adopts popular forms to “encourage benevolence and avoid evil deeds” 劝善化恶. In contrast,

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些形式具有浓厚的佛教色彩，她寓意着佛教中的纯净、美好，反映了一个理想中的极乐世界。” 高德祥 “敦煌壁画中的童子伎”，【中国音乐】，1991，第二期，页 36

ceremonial temple music is directed to metaphysical beings such as Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, hungry ghosts and other spirits rather than to living beings in this world, as folk music is. Buddhist folk music uses well-liked folk tunes with simple, straightforward lyrics to lead listeners to the Buddha-Dharma.



A Buddhist folk song *Looking at the South of the River* as preserved in Beijing's Wu Tai Temple 五台山佛乐望江南,为五台山的高僧把唐代民间曲牌“佛化”的典型。

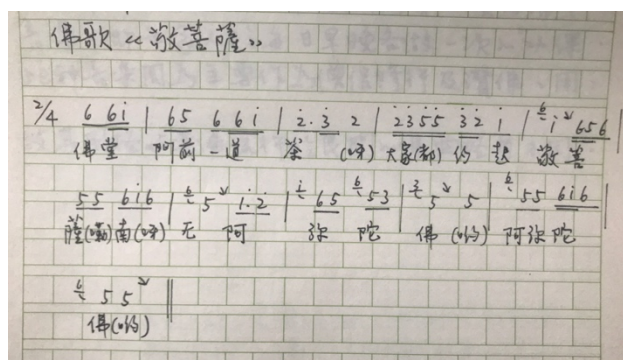
*Ten Sticks of Incense* 十炷香 Beijing Buddhist music scholar Tian Qing 田青 described this piece:

Because of the long term influence of Buddhism, there are many regional pieces embodying Buddhist philosophy; these are especially popular among village women. These songs are also referred to as Buddhist songs, Sutra tunes, encourage benevolence, natural benevolence. “由于佛教的长期影响，中国民间广泛流传着各种以佛教思想为内容，以地方音乐为特色的地方性佛曲，主要流传在农村的信佛妇女中间。这些佛曲，有的地方叫“佛歌”，有的地方叫“经调”，有的地方叫“劝善”、“善本”等。”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> 田青（编）【中国宗教音乐】宗教文化出版社，北京，1997，页30.



*Ten Sticks of Incense*



*Paying Respect to Bodhisattva*

### 3. Modern Buddhist Music – from Ritual Temple Music to Concert Hall Music 现代佛乐 - 从仪式音乐到弘法音乐会

#### Master Hong Yi, 弘一大师 Li Sutong 李叔同 (1880-1942)

In order to cope with the hasty pace of modern society and to bring Buddhism to the younger generation, monks and lay Buddhists have utilized Western musical techniques to compose new Buddhist music. The eminent high monk Master Hong Yi, 弘一大师 (Li Sutong 李叔同) is considered the pioneer in modern Buddhist music. Born into a wealthy family, Li was well versed in poetry, painting, calligraphy, seal carving, painting, theater, and music. He enjoyed life as a dandy until at age thirty-nine when he became a Buddhist monk, taking the Buddhist title Master Hong Yi 弘一大师. In the nineteen thirties, he had studied Western music in Japan to bring back to China. He composed six songs and also wrote many Buddhist lyrics to be sung to Western melodies.

Only one of Master Hong Yi's song compositions was Buddhist, the very popular *Song of the Three Treasures* 三宝歌. Lyrics for this were composed by the

eminent Buddhist monk, Master Taixu 太虛法師 (1890-1947). The song praises the three treasures Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. This, the first modern Buddhist music in China, sounded very different from the traditional Buddhist chanting in temples. Because of its pleasant melody, *Song of the Three Treasures* became popular almost immediately, being sung with piano accompaniment in Buddhist gatherings to the present day.

$\frac{4}{4}$  C調      三 寶 歌      太虛大師作詞  
弘一大師作曲

5 · 6	5	3		3 · 2	1	2		3	5	2 · 4		3	—	·	0	
人天長夜	二諦總持	依淨律儀		宇宙三	難增妙	聞上和		誰恢恢	啓以法	光界遠		明身型				
5 · 6	5	3		3 · 2	1	2		3	5	2 · 2		1	—	·	0	
三界火宅	淨德既圓	修證果		眾苦煎	染患斯	弘法利世		誰濟蕩	以涅槃	安樂佛		寧城明				
1̣ · 1̣	6	6		5 · 1̣	3	—		2	5	5 · 5		5	—	·	0	
大悲大智	眾緣性空	三乘聖賢		大雄唯識	力現濟			南無佛	無達摩	陀摩伽		耶耶耶				
5 · 6	5	3		3 · 2	1	2		3	5	2 · 2		1	—	·	0	
照朗萬有	理無不影	統理大眾		祇席羣	蔽無不	生解礙		功德莫	乎其能	正大法		名明城				
2 · 2	2	—		1 · 3	5	—		1̣	5	5 · 4		3	—	·	0	
今乃知	今乃知	今乃知		唯此是	唯此是	唯此是		真正歸	真正歸	真正歸		處處處				
2 · 2	2	—		1 · 3	5	—		5	1̣	2̣ · 2̣		1̣	—	·	0	
盡形壽	盡形壽	盡形壽		獻身命	獻身命	獻身命		信受勤	信受勤	信受勤		行行行				

*Song of the Three Treasures*

A number of new Buddhist music works were composed based on the example of Master Hong Yi. These works can be classified into three categories:

- Buddhist songs.

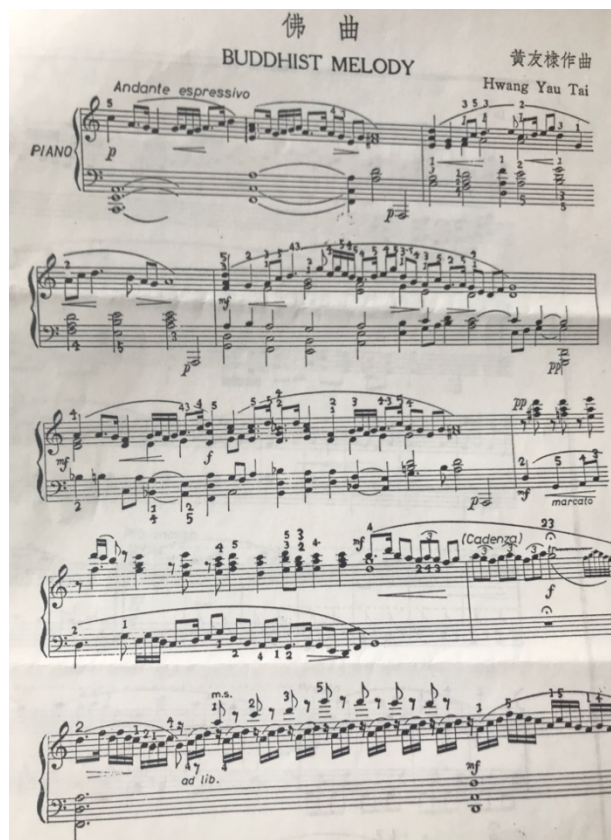
Similar to *Song of the Tree Treasures*, they are functional and meant to be sung at Buddhist organizations as religious music. They are mostly composed by lay Buddhist musicians usually with lyrics written by Buddhist monks and nuns.

- Buddhist inspired compositions.

These are vocal and instrumental pieces with a Buddhist title. Most such pieces are the work of professional composers who were trained in Western music. Some, but not all, have been lay Buddhists. These works are mostly composed for aesthetic and commercial purposes and performed on the concert stage.



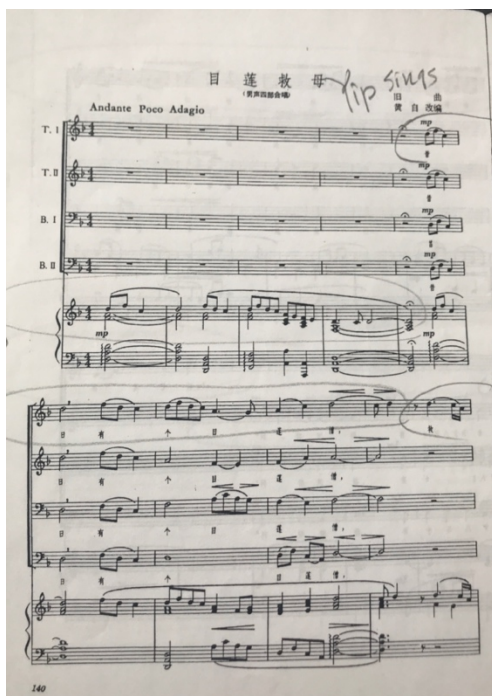
An example is *Buddhist Melody* 佛曲 composed for solo piano by the late Hong Kong composer Huang Youdi 黄友棣 which was written in the sixties. Within the piece is a melody imitating traditional chanting.



*Buddhist Melody*, piano solo, Huang Youdi

- A third kind of new Buddhist music consists of melodies of traditional Buddhist chants rearranged for various instruments, such as piano or electric organ, traditional Chinese instruments, as well as chorus or orchestra.

For modern Buddhist music, most texts are no longer adopted from Buddhist scriptures but written as modern song lyrics. Western instruments, not only piano or organ, but also guitar, synthesizer, electric organs are used as accompaniments. Polyphonic music replaces the traditional monophonic chant.



*Mulian Rescuing his Mother* by Huang Zi (1904-1938) 黄自佛曲 “目莲救母”  
performed at BMCC, New York 2010, with performance of Buddhist mudra and qin by Mingmei Yip.

Many famous and popular Buddhist organizations have greatly contributed to the popularization of modern Buddhist music. All new Buddhist music, be it vocal or instrumental, is basically Western music in technique and form<sup>33</sup>, rather than traditional Chinese music such as operas or narrative music. Without the lyrics it would be difficult to tell that they are Buddhist music.

### General Functions and Benefits of Buddhist Music:

*Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* (404~405) :

<sup>33</sup> Hong Kong contemporary Chinese music scholar Liu Ching-chih 刘靖之 provides a clear and precise description of what is New Music in China? : “I use the term ‘new music’ to denote an additional and entirely new category of Chinese music – westernized Chinese music composed by Chinese composers in European style during the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the following defining points in mind: The kind of music written by Chinese composers trained in European style conservatories of music either in China or abroad – music with no connection with traditional Chinese music and more akin to the tonality, harmony, and musical forms of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe -- is practically NEW in every sense from musical languages, textures, forms to technique, as compared with Chinese music. Such music has never been an indigenous evolution but is rather a transplant. It has no roots in China.” *The Development of New Music in China: Reflections on Past Research*, Liu Ching-chih, ed. *Asian Music with Special Reference to China and India* – Music Symposia of 34<sup>th</sup> ICANAS, Hong Kong University Press, pp 8-9)

There are five benefits of chanting: the body will not tire; the mind will not forget; the heart will not be depleted, the voice will not be strained. Instead, the words will be easily understood and the listener will feel happy. 【十诵律】（后秦弗若多罗和鸠摩罗什等译，收【大正藏】23册）“呗有五利益：身体不疲，不忘所忆，心不疲劳，声音不坏，语言易解，诸天闻呗声心则欢喜。”<sup>34</sup>

*Southern Sea Sending Esoteric Dharma* by Tang dynasty monk Yi Jing (635-713) :To realize the profundity of Buddha's virtue; purify the tongue; understand the sequence of the sutras; obtain clarity of the heart; be fearless within a crowd; attain longevity and be rid of sickness. 【南海寄归内法传】(671 唐义净撰)：“一能知佛德深远，二体制文之次第，三令舌根清静，四得胸藏开通，五则处众不惶，六乃长命无病。”<sup>35</sup>

Based on various ancient documents, here is a summary of the six main functions of Buddhist music:

- As offerings to Buddha, Bodhisattvas, and other spiritual beings.
- Celebration of birthdays of Buddhas/Bodhisattvas/enlightened beings birthdays
  - Spread the Dharma
  - Self-cultivation
  - Transformation to virtue
  - Reaching lay people

Other functions/benefits include:

- Creating a solemn atmosphere
- Calming the mind
- Purifying the tongue
- Detaching from desires
- Attaining longevity
- Preventing fear, exhaustion, and improving memory
- Expanding the mind
- Improving concentration
- Making merit by praising the Buddha and Bodhisattva
- Release sentient beings from suffering
- Redemption from karma
- Channeling the dead
- Regulating the sequence of the ritual

<sup>34</sup> 【大正藏】23 册，页 269

<sup>35</sup> 新文丰，1987，页 166.

- Praying for world peace.
- Ceremonies for Funerals and, recently, weddings

### Appendix 附录 1:

Example of Chan ritual program schedule (partial) by Venerable Hong Xun, Abbess of Zhi Lian Nunnery, Hong Kong. 金山寺禅堂活动表, 宏熏法师, 香港志莲净苑。

時間	坐禪	其他活動
4:00am		早殿
6:00		早粥
7:00	早板香	
	四板香	
9:00		午飯
10:00	午板香	
	四板香	
	六板香	
2:00pm		安心粥
3:00		晚殿
4:00		放養息
6:00	養息香	
8:45	四板香	
10:20		開大靜

佛門法器圖

板

方+編槌

### 信號字彙

在禪堂所有敲的鑼板和水魚之訊號是由當值僧打。所有引磬信號由當值的悅眾敲打。維那用子指細聲地輕拍看桌三下或以手指示或松指指示通知他何時打信號。

- 起三板——由夜巡(照頭)發出,在晚上通知止靜息休開燈。  
|||
- 起三板——在早上通知廚房職侍起林信號。  
|||
- 起四板——通知全寺僧眾起林信號。  
||||
- 煞三板——起四板已完成之信號。(交禪堂報鐘)  
|||
- 打報鐘——此信號是發出自禪堂之鐘。用以回報堂外之信號。(即打七點+(九點二下))  
|||·|||
- 打接鐘——任何從禪堂發出之信號,其首二下,夾在其他法器發出之最後三下信號之間者,名曰打接鐘。
- 開梆——在禪堂外魚形大木上之信號。它通知寺中僧眾,飯堂將可供應。此信號乃敲頭敲打。打的不波此下。  
先一慢小試訊。信號乃敲頭敲打。打的不波此下。  
|||...||| 早 |||...||| 晚 |||...||| 由慢到快。

### Appendix 2:

Sample quotes from Buddhist sutras which mention music and its purposes.

*Amitabha Sutra* (ca. 486, translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva):

In the Buddhist lands of ultimate happiness, heavenly music is played in morning and evening on golden earth, with *mandara* flowers raining down from heaven all day and night... Sariputra [Śākyamuni's disciple] said, 'That country has wonderful and colorful birds... these birds sing harmonious music all day and night. Its music expresses the five roots, five powers, seven wisdoms, eight sacred paths, ultimate essence of things... In the Buddhist land of ultimate happiness, light breezes sway the treasure trees and treasure nets, emitting wonderful and

subtle sounds, like that of hundred and thousands of music played simultaneously. Those who listen will naturally tend to recite in their heart the Buddha's name, the Dharma and the Shanga. 【阿弥陀经】(鸠摩罗什译 486): 彼佛国土, 常作天乐。黄金为地。昼夜六时, 雨天曼陀罗华。.. 又舍利弗, 是诸众鸟, 昼夜六时, 出和雅音。其音演畅五根、五力、七菩提分、八圣道分...彼佛国土, 微风吹动诸宝行树, 及宝罗网, 出微妙音, 譬如百千种乐, 同时俱作。闻是音者, 自然皆生念佛、念法、念僧之心。

The *Flower Ornament Sutra* 华严经 and *Lotus Sutra* 莲花经 contain phrases such as “accompany Buddhist ceremonies with music” “以音声为佛事”<sup>36</sup>, and “make offerings with music.” “声音供养”

*Lotus Sutra*: (translated by Kumarajiva 343-413):

Today we hear the Buddha's teaching by sound, so happy to attain something we did not possess in the past. 【法华经·信解品】(后秦鸠摩罗什译): “我等今日, 闻佛音教。欢喜踊跃, 得未曾有。”

*Infinite Life Sutra* (app. 220-265):

(The Bodhisattvas) played an ensemble of heavenly music, which reverberated in the void, extolling the great merits of the Buddha with their subtle music..... The fragranced breeze blows on the seven-treasured trees, emitting five-toned music. Infinite brilliant flowers scatter everywhere lifted by the breeze. Offerings will never end. In all the heavens grow hundreds and thousands of fragranced flowers, and thousands of music ensemble as offerings to the Buddha, Bodhisattvas and Buddha's disciples (s/ra^vaka). Coming and going, all beings are happy. 【无量寿经】(曹魏康僧铠译): “于虚空中共奏天乐, 以微妙音声歌赞佛德.....即时香风吹七宝树, 出五音声。无量妙华, 随风四散。自然供养, 如此不绝。一切诸天, 皆齐百千华香, 万种伎乐, 供养彼佛。前后往来, 熙怡快乐。”

*Bodhisavatta of Original Life* (ca. 1068-1077):

Use Brahma's sound to spread the wonderful and subtle dharma 【菩萨本生鬘论卷五】(宋 1068~1077 释绍德、慧询译). “以梵音声说微妙法”。

Dunhuang manuscript *Buddha Talks on Amita Sutra*:

<sup>36</sup> Buddhist chanting originated from “euphonious reading of sutras” 经文美读。So monks and nuns do not regard their chanting as music, in terms of art for art's sake, but as skillful means.



Listening to the wonderful dharma on the twenty-eighth heaven; those on the heavenly path scatter heavenly flowers. The dragon roars and the phoenix dances among colorful clouds; strumming the *qin* and *se* to harmonize the elegant tunes. 汉·敦煌本【佛说阿弥陀经讲经文】：“二十八天闻妙法，天男天女散天花。龙吟凤舞彩云中，琴瑟鼓吹和雅韵。”

This poem describes the Buddhist Pure Land with its wonderful, subtle music and beautiful, peaceful scenes to attract lay people to turn to Buddhism.

### Appendix 3:

Books in Chinese on new Buddhist songs published from the 1930ies to the 1980ies. (English titles are approximate.)

- *Collection of 'Pure and Cool Songs'* Xia Mian-jun ed., Kai Ming Book Store Press, 1936. *Qingliang Geji* 清凉歌集, 夏沔尊, 开明书局, 1936.
- *Collection of Sacred Buddhist Songs*, Foguang Shan Publisher, Taipei, 1977. 佛教圣歌集, 佛光出版社, 台北, 1977.
- *Posthumous Collection of Music of Master Hong Yi*, Chan Huai-zhang ed., Tian Hua Press, Taipei, 1978. 弘一大师音乐遗集, 陈慧剑编, 天华出版社, 台北, 1978.
- *Collection of Buddhist Songs*, Wu Chu-che, Hua Yan Lian She Press, Taipei, 1983. 佛教歌曲集, 吴居徹, 华严莲社, 台北, 1983.
- *Selected Collection of Sacred Buddhist Songs*, Lee Chun-ho, Ren Yin Chorus, Taipei, 1986. 佛教圣歌选集。
- *New Cool Purity Refreshing Sound*, lyrics by Master Xiao Yun, music by Huang Youdi, Lee Chung-ho, Hiaso Hu-ying, Yuan Quan Publisher, Taipei, 1986. 清凉新声, 晓云法师 (词) 黄友隶 (曲), 源泉出版社, 台北, 1986.
- *Collection of Songs of Hua Fan*, lyrics by Master Xaio Yun, music by Huang Youdi, Lee Chung-ho, Hua Fan Institute, Taipei, 1990. 华梵歌曲集, 晓云法师 (词) 黄友隶 (曲), 台北, 1990.
- *Collection of Sacred Buddhist Songs*, By Xu Jiangxiong ed., in commemoration of the fiftieth birthday of the abbot Pu Fang of Zhongchi Temple, Taipei, no date. 佛教圣歌集。

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田青（编）【中国宗教音乐】宗教文化出版社，北京，1997. Tian Qing (ed.) *Chinese Religious Music*, Religion and Cultural Press, Beijing, 1997.

田青（编）【中国佛教音乐选萃】Tian Qing (ed.) *Selected Chinese Buddhist Music*, Shanghai Music Publishing House, 1993.

叶明媚：中国佛教梵呗早晚课的研究

财团法人佛光山文教基金会：佛教东传2000年，佛教音乐学术研讨会论文集，台北，2000.

李纯仁：【中国佛教音乐之研究】，私立中国文化学院，艺术研究所研究生硕士论文，台北，1971.

【佛教圣歌集】佛光出版社，台北，1985.

张育英：中国佛道艺术，宗教文化出版社，北京，2000

张运华：中国传统佛教仪轨，中华书局，香港，1997. Zhang, Yunhua: *Traditional Chinese Buddhist Rituals*, Zhong Hua Bookstore, Hong Kong, 1997.

赖信川：一路念佛到中土 -- 梵呗史谈，法鼓文化，台北，2001. Lai, Xinchuan, *Reciting Buddha's Name all the Way to China -- Discussions on the History of Fan Bai*, Dharma Drum Press, Taipei, 2001.

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1. *A Study of new Buddhist Music Composed in Taiwan and in the People's Republic of China*. Citation to be added

2. *Qin Music and Zen Buddhism in the Light of Aesthetics*. Citation to be added

3. *Study of Aesthetics of Guqin Music and Buddhist Chant*, Dharma Words Monthly Journal, Dharmasthiti Institute Press, Hong Kong, 1989, pp. 62-67. “古琴音乐与佛教音乐美学思想研究”，法言月刊，法言出版社，香港，1989，页62-67.

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1. Buddhist Mudra Performance, Songs of Commemorations and Celebrations East and West, BMCC, New York, 2010
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3. "Chinese Buddhist Music – Introduction and Performance of Fan Bai by Nuns" Chinese Culture Promotion Center, Hong Kong, 1987. 中国佛教音乐 – 梵呗介绍与示范，由僧尼作早晚课梵呗示范，香港中华文化促进中心。
4. "Aspects of Buddhist Art", Buddhist Youth Communication Center, New York. 禅趣禅话 – 佛教艺术面面观，佛教青年通讯中心，
5. Lecture on "Buddhist Calligraphy", Fo Guan Shan Center, New York.