[accepted for publication in *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture*]

In Praise of This Prosperous and Harmonious Empire: *Sanqu*, Ming Anthologies, and the Imperial Court [1]

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Abstract:

This paper explores the textual world and functionalities of *sanqu* songs in relation to the court milieu. The imperial court may not usually be considered a natural habitat for the *sanqu* genre that is best known for its portrayal of "disengagement" and "retirement" from official life. Yet one cannot ignore the presence of a substantial number of *sanqu* songs that addressed and engaged with various court contexts and imperial occasions. I call this type of songs "courtly *sanqu* songs," in that they were written in a style suitable for presentation to the imperial court or for courtly occasions. By identifying a number of Ming dynasty *qu* anthologies that prominently feature courtly *sanqu* songs, this paper examines how these anthologies, through their organizational structure, draw the reader's attention to courtly *sanqu* songs. Ming anthologies also act as the major source for tracing the textual lineage of courtly *sanqu* and the spectrum of songs contained within this textual world. Using one song-suite ("Nation Blessed") as a case study, the paper traces its variations and different "positions" over time, across anthologies, and across

[1] This article is part of the "Linking the Textual Worlds of Chinese Court Theater, ca. 1600-1800" (TEXTCOURT) project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 819953). I would like to express my gratitude to the anonymous reviewers and the guest editor of *JCLC* for their comments.

different editions of the same anthology, thereby uncovering the status and *place* of such songs in the court milieu and beyond.

KEYWORDS: *sanqu* songs, anthology, court literature, emperor, drama

Any reader who picks up the Ming dynasty *qu* anthology *Yongxi yuefu* 雍熙樂府 (Songs of Harmonious Peace, earliest edition dated 1531) will first encounter a *sanqu* suite of twelve songs titled "Lantern Lyrics" 燈詞 (Dengci), of which the first and the final two songs are presented below:[2]

HUANGZHONG MODE 黃鍾宮: To the tune of *Zuihuiyin* 醉花陰	
A nation blessed in this gentle breeze, the great peace is complete!	國祚風和太平了，
This place produces numinous mushrooms (*lingzhi*) and propitious plants.	是處產靈芝瑞草。
[Under] the Sagely Son of Heaven and fine statesmen,	聖天子美臣僚，
The law is just and the officials are honest,	法正官清，
The common people are all happy and contented.	百姓每都安樂。
Rejoice on this happy occasion at the time of the Lantern Festival,	喜佳節值元宵，
Light up ten thousand flowery lanterns, shining high till dawn!	點萬盞花燈直到曉！

To the "Northern" tune of *Gu shuixianzi* 北古水仙子	

[2] The translation is based on the text in the *Sibu beiyao* edition of *Yongxi yuefu*, *juan* 1.1a-2b, reprinted in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu*, vol. 1740, 324-25.

I, I, I, silently ponder this matter,	我我我自暗約，
Yes, yes, yes, I've heard back then the night of the fifteenth was very fine!	是是是曾見説當年元夜好。
Because in the court of Emperor Han Wudi	因漢武帝朝中，
Dongfang Shuo was summoned to speak of the Way:[3]	召東方朔言道：
Amidst the sea there is a giant sea-turtle,	海中央有巨鰲，
That, that, that, whenever an appearance is made, brings with it bountiful harvest,	他他他現時節五穀豐饒。
Beneath the turtle shell, rays burst through the azure sky,	麟[鱗]甲内有光冲碧霄，
As if: The Deity of Heaven is pleased that the common people are contented and happy,	若天官喜悦民安樂，
Henceforth comes this tradition to celebrate the Lantern Festival.	後来因此上賞元宵。

Coda 尾聲	
Even if there are a hundred years in one's life, [one day] you will still grow old,	人生百歲須還老，

[3] There is a popular legend linking Emperor Han Wudi (r.140–87 BCE) and Dongfang Shuo (fl. 140-130 BCE) to the origin of the Lantern Festival, which involves a palace maid named Yuanxiao 元宵 reuniting with her family owing to help from Dongfang Shuo. Here, however, the reference appears to focus on Dongfang Shuo's known ability to advise and offer admonitions to the emperor.

Never cut back in pursuing pleasure and seeking for laughter,	切莫恪追歡求咲，
I only wish we could celebrate like this evening, year after year!	但願年年慶此宵。

As its title suggests, this *sanqu* was written to celebrate the Lantern Festival that falls on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. The song-suite offers ample justifications for the celebration: The first song heaps praise on the current peaceful and prosperous age in which the author lives, thanks to the rule of a sagely sovereign assisted by his able ministers. Subsequent songs go on to describe joyous scenes at the Festival: decorative lantern displays, bustling music performances, and mouthwatering food, before making a historical turn in the penultimate song to reflect on the tradition of the celebration, tracing it back to the Han Dynasty. The giant sea-turtle is linked to the famous Daoist Mount Lao 嶗山. The term *aoshan* 鰲山 (Turtle-Mountain) often appears in poems about the Lantern Festival. Initially referring to the divine mountain carried on the back of the giant sea-turtle, it is later associated with elaborate lantern displays resembling the shape of the turtle that became a common sight at the Lantern Festival celebrations beginning from the Song dynasty. The line "Beneath the turtle shell, rays burst through the azure sky" captures the dazzling display of the "Turtle-Mountain" hill of lanterns and it also links the illuminated rays to celestial approval of the celebration ("As if: the Deity of Heaven is pleased that the common people are contented and happy"). The suite then concludes with a coda wishing that the celebration can be repeated year after year.

What is the significance of this song-suite and does it mean anything for it to be placed as the opening piece of the anthology? What can we gather from its close engagement with the court milieu, loaded with repeated references to and praises of the sovereign and the empire? This style of writing extends beyond the first song-suite in *Yongxi yuefu*. A series of other song-suites in the same *juan* and throughout the rest of the anthology carry the same eulogistic and congratulatory tones, imbued with lines celebrating the Ming empire ("All regions together

congratulate the Empire of Great Brightness"萬方齊賀大明朝) and acclamations of "Long Live the Emperor" ("[May] the good fortune and long life of our Sage Sovereign equal Heaven" 聖主福壽天齊).[4] More interestingly, this style of *sanqu* songs can be found in several other Ming *qu* anthologies too.

But these are hardly the kind of songs that the same reader would have encountered if one's reading experience of *sanqu* songs begins with modern anthologies and canons of the genre. Stylistically, *sanqu* are best known for carrying a witty tone and vigorous colloquial flavor that one may trace to its origins in the streets and entertainment quarters. Furthermore, the imperial court may not usually be considered a natural habitat of the genre well known for its portrayal of "disengagement" and "retirement" from official life and from the center of the political world. In short, as one modern critic has summarized, Yuan *sanqu* is often regarded as "the songs of the frustrated" 失意者的歌 and represents a "displaced community" 失落的群體, hence making the genre unsuited for use as a panegyric.[5]

Reading *sanqu* songs in the Ming context with the use of contemporaneous anthologies, however, presents us with a different picture. One cannot ignore the presence of a substantial number of songs written for various court contexts and engaged with various imperial occasions. Not only were the songs included in these sources, but they were also often placed in highly visible positions at the beginning of each *juan* arranged according to musical modes.

I call this type of songs "courtly *sanqu* songs," in that they were written in a style suitable for presentation to the imperial court or for courtly occasions. By identifying a number of Ming dynasty *qu* anthologies that prominently feature courtly *sanqu* songs, this paper examines how these anthologies, through their organizational structure, draw the reader's attention to these

[4] *Yongxi yuefu*, *juan* 12, 59a.

[5] Wang Xingqi, *Yuan Ming sanqu shilun*, 288.

courtly songs. Ming anthologies also act as the major source for tracing the textual lineage of courtly *sanqu* and the spectrum of songs contained within this textual world.

Navigating the Textual Lineage of Courtly *Sanqu* Songs

We can find precedents of courtly *sanqu* songs in the Yuan dynasty, but not in the sort of quantity and not captured as consistently and prominently in the extant Yuan dynasty anthologies as compared to their Ming counterparts.

Yuan *sanqu* was known to have thrived in commercial theaters and urban centers, but the imperial court was certainly not out of bounds to the genre. Patricia Sieber has pointed out that by the end of the thirteenth century, Hanlin academicians were asked to compose songs for official occasions at court and "by the 1310s at the latest, songs set to *sanqu* tunes formed the climax of the musical program of imperial occasions such as imperial birthday celebrations, New Year's festivities, court audiences, and Buddhist festivals."[6] In extant Yuan anthologies, we find sporadic occurrences of *sanqu* songs of a similar nature too. For example, a song-suite placed at the beginning of *juan* 4 in *Yuefu xinbian Yangchun baixue* 樂府新編陽春白雪 (Newly Compiled Songs, Glorious Spring, Brilliant Snow, ca. 1324) ends with a coda consisting of a series of four vows in an identical structure starting with "*yuan wuhuang*" 願吾皇, "wishing for Our Emperor's" rule to continue forever.[7]

However, such examples are few and the arrangement of them does not follow a regular pattern in comparison to what can be found in Ming anthologies. Though it is unclear whether the extant corpus is an accurate representation of the size of the courtly *sanqu* corpus written

[6] Sieber, "Nobody's Genre, Everybody's Song," 32.

[7] See the song-suite attributed to Wu Renqing 吳仁卿 (Wu Hongdao 吳弘道) in Yang Chaoying, ed., *Yuefu xinbian Yangchun baixue*, 21; *Quan Yuan sanqu* (hereafter *QYSQ*), 736-37.

during the Yuan dynasty, it is safe to say that there was no attempt in Yuan anthologies to capture or represent courtly *sanqu* songs as consciously or as visibly as we will see in the Ming counterparts.

With the start of the Ming dynasty, the imperial court began to play a much more central role in the production and transmission of *qu*, both in terms of *sanqu* songs and drama. As I have discussed elsewhere, the development of songs and drama in the early Ming was largely associated with the regional courts and the two capitals. Writers such as Tang Shi 湯式 (fl. 1383), Yang Ne 楊訥 (fl.1402), and Jia Zhongming 賈仲明 (1343-1422) enjoyed the patronage of the Yongle emperor (r. 1402-1424) when the latter was still the Prince of Yan in Beijing. Furthermore, the most prolific and important *qu* writer in the first half of the fifteenth century was Zhu Youdun 朱有燉 (1379-1439), the so-named Exemplary Prince of Zhou enfeoffed in Kaifeng. The next few decades of *qu* activity continued to be dominated by court writers and performers producing songs and drama for palace entertainment and consumption in an age of anonymous *qu* writing in which few authors of songs and drama were known by name.[8] Whereas recent scholarship has given increasing attention to the significant roles and impact of the Ming court agencies in the collection, transmission, and shaping of Chinese drama texts, less is known about the case of *sanqu* songs in the similar milieu. The nature of *sanqu* as a poetic genre also lends itself to comparison with the other forms and traditions of court poetry composed at the imperial court.[9]

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[8] Tan, "Emerging from Anonymity," 126

[9] For example, see works by Stephen Owen, Fusheng Wu, Jack Chen, Xiaofei Tian, and Zinan Yan, for studies on court *shi* poetry in different periods of Chinese literary history. Wu, in *Written at Imperial Command*, outlines the generic features and conventions of panegyric poetry in the Chinese tradition and calls for more scholarly attention to this type of poetry that has been

It is under these contexts that I attempt to approach the textual lineage of court *sanqu* songs using Ming anthologies as the main source.

A Textual Note on the Anthologies and Editions

Before we pursue any further in navigating this world of *sanqu* songs across multiple anthologies, a note on how to identify and consistently refer to a song-suite will be handy for several reasons. First, because the same *sanqu* song can often be titled differently in various anthologies or different songs may share the same generic titles such as "Lantern Lyrics," it is not always helpful to refer to them using titles. In addition, some *sanqu* songs are simply untitled. Hence, I propose to name a *sanqu* using selected words from its first line, for example, "Nation Blessed" suite for the example we read at the beginning of this paper. Second, each anthology usually has more than one edition.[10] In this paper, when quoting from the three Ming anthologies using their shorter titles, namely, *Shengshi*, *Cilin*, and *Yongxi,* I refer to their standard edition (the most accessible, but not necessarily the earliest or the best) in existing scholarship, followed by the *sanqu*'s position (#X.X) in that anthology. For example, *Yongxi* #1.1 refers to the first song in the first *juan*[11] in the 1566 (*bingyin* 丙寅 / 45th year of the Jiajing reign) edition of the anthology kept in the Peking Library (now National Library in PRC), widely accessible through

"generally perceived in the Chinese tradition as impersonal, perfunctory, and sometimes deceptive" (p. 11). See also Pauline Yu, "Poems for the Emperor," for her study of the anthology *Yulan shi* 御覽詩 (Poems for the Imperial Reading) and the glimpse it provides of the self-representation of the court in the Tang.

[10] A good example of the complex textual history of multiple editions of a single anthology can be found in Chen's study, "Guojia tushuguan suo cang xinmao ben *Yongxiyuefu* kao."

[11] Fascicles are usually either named *juan* 卷 or *ji* 集 in these anthologies.

its inclusion in the *Sibu congkan xubian* series.[12] Other editions of the same anthology will be referenced using short titles with specific suffixes, for instance, *Yongxi (Wanli ed., 13 juan*) or *Cilin (palace ed.)*, to differentiate from the standard editions.

I will use the "Nation Blessed" *sanqu* suite as a case study to illustrate the major sources in this attempt to trace and map courtly songs as represented in Ming anthologies. This song-suite serves as a particularly interesting example as it is found in multiple anthologies and respective editions in various contexts. By tracing the *whereabouts* of the song-suite, taking note not only of the edition in which it appears but also where in that edition it does appear, we can get a better understanding of the status and *place* of such songs in the court milieu and beyond.

The "Nation Blessed" suites can be found across three major anthologies in the following editions:

***Yongxi* #1.1**

In the abovementioned *Yongxi* edition, we have seen that the suite was introduced as the opening piece. *Yongxi yuefu* belongs to a wave of court-related collections of song and drama printed in sixteenth-century China.

This anthology of twenty *juan* of arias from *sanqu* and drama, believed to be compiled by Guo Xun 郭勛 (1475-1542) for the imperial court, was first printed in 1531.[13] Guo Xun was the great grandson of Guo Ying, one of the heroic founders of the Ming dynasty. He inherited the title of Marquis of Wuding in the early years of the Zhengde reign (1506-1521) and later rose to

[12] Subsequently reproduced in two more recent reprints in *Xuxiu siku*, vols.1740-1741, and the handy one-volume *Lidai sanqu huizuan*. Perhaps out of economic considerations, the *Lidai sanqu huizuan* omits pages containing the content pages of each *juan*.

[13] Held in Taiwan National Library (no. 15011). For a detailed study of this edition in comparison with other printings of *Yongxi yuefu*, see Chen, "Guojia tushuguan suo cang xinmao ben *Yongxiyuefu* kao."

power in the Jiajing court.[14] A Ming dynasty anecdote records that when Guo Xun presented the anthology to the court, Emperor Jiajing (r. 1522-1566) was displeased by the word choice in the opening line of this suite ("The nation blessed and the people at rest, the great peace is complete" 國泰民安太平了[15]) and suggested changing *taiping liao* 太平了 (the great peace is complete) to *taiping hao* 太平好 (the great peace is wonderful), saying there should never be an end to the great peace as might be implied by the final character *liao* 了.[16]

The more widely circulated 1566 edition of *Yongxi yuefu* (reprinted in the *Sibu beiyao* series) was graced with a preface by a certain "Chunshan" 春山 from Ansu 安肅 (modern Hebei province), who has been identified as a eunuch named Jing Ju 荊聚.[17] In both Guo Xun and Jing Ju, we can see that the publication of the anthology, in various editions, was associated with the imperial court.

Yongxi yuefu is not the first anthology that records this song-suite. "Nation Blessed" was included in at least two earlier anthologies, *Shengshi xinsheng* and *Cilin zhaiyan*, introduced below.

***Shengshi* #2.1**

[14] Guo Xun was also one of the first known publishers of Ming vernacular fiction. See Gregory, "'The Wuding Editions'," 1-29, for a study of Guo Xun's publishing activities, and esp. 16-17 on *Yongxi yuefu*.

[15] This reads differently from the version transmitted in the anthologies: "A nation blessed in this gentle breeze, peaceful days are complete" (國祚風和太平了).

[16] Sun Kaidi, *Yeshiyuan*, 151, based on the account by Song Maocheng, *Jiuyueji*, *juan* 10, "jianding" 鑒定, *Xuxiu Sikuquanshu* ed., vol. 1374, 273.

[17] See Wang Guowei, "*Yongxi yuefu* ba", 250; Wang Chongmin, *Zhongguo shanben shu tiyao*, 700.

Shengshi xinsheng 盛世新聲 (New Tunes from a Prosperous Age, preface dated 1517) is divided into twelve fascicles (named *ji* 集 in this anthology) with song-suites organized by mode and by the tune pattern of the first song within the suite, the same format also adopted in the later *Yongxi yuefu*.[18] We will find our suite in question, "Nation Blessed," at the beginning of the *ji* containing suites written to the Huangzhong mode in *Shengshi*.[19] However, in this anthology, Huangzhong mode song-suites are placed in the second fascicle (the first being those under Zhenggong 正宮 mode), hence the suite is positioned as *Shengshi* #2.1.

The way *sanqu* songs were arranged and organized in *Shengshi* is noteworthy, because this is the earliest among the three anthologies used in this study and hence likely to have influenced the later ones. The intention to place courtly *sanqu* paeans at the front of a fascicle is clear. The "Nation Blessed" suite is followed by two other suites that share the same theme and style, opening with lines such as "The Sagely [Sovereign's] virtue is majestic, striding on this day of the fifteenth" 聖德巍巍邁三五[20] (*Shengshi* #2.2) and "Flowery lanterns like embroidered brocade,

[18] For a study on the formats of early songbooks and drama-miscellanies, see Lowry, *The Tapestry of Popular Songs in 16th- and 17th- Century China*, Chapter Two.

[19] *Shengshi*, 70. The standard edition used here is the copy held in the former Peking Library (now National Library of China) as reprinted in 1955 by Wenxue guji kanxingshe. It is often referred to as a 1517 edition based on its preface, but scholars pointed out that the existing edition contains segments recut from the later anthology *Cilin zhaiyan* and hence cannot be earlier than 1525. See Zheng Zhenduo, "*Shengshi xinsheng* yu *Cilin zhaiyan*," 140; and Wang Gang and Wang Yongkuan, "*Shengshi xinsheng* yu Zang Xian," *Wenxue yichan* 1991.4: 96.

[20] The line could refer to the sovereign's towering presence during an imperial inspection on the day of the Lantern Festival.

hang mid-sky" 錦綉花燈半空挑 (*Shengshi* #2.3).[21] All three songs suites depict courtly celebrations during the Lantern Festival, a major theme for courtly *sanqu*, and are imbued with an "imperial flavor" with repeated royal references to *huangchao* 皇朝 (imperial dynasty), *huangdu* 皇都 (imperial capital), and *shengzhu* 聖主 (sage sovereign). All three songs are not attributed to any authors, a characteristic of the anthology. Therefore, in the case of *Shengshi* we have an anthology of anonymous arias that catered to court tastes. The emphasis is more on collecting and presenting arias that fit the courtly occasions than on highlighting who composed them.

The initial publication of *Shengshi xinsheng* was believed to have been compiled by Zang Xian 臧賢 who rose from being a performer to being appointed as the Director of the Court Entertainment Bureau in early sixteenth century. *Shengshi xinsheng* was reprinted several times, including a 1596 publication by the Inner Court in the imperial palace, probably to meet high

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This suite appears in *Quan Ming sanqu (zengbuban)* (hereafter *QMSQ exp.*) on p. 5893, preceded by an additional song to the southern tune of "Nüguanzi" 女冠子 taken to be the first in the suite, which is mostly likely to be an error. According to the editorial note on p. 5895, this was added based on the version in *Shengshi xinsheng*. In *Shengshi*, "Nüguanzi" appears to have been appended to the previous suite (i.e. "Nation Blessed") by mistake, as it does not follow the same rhyme of that suite, but it is also not the first song of the subsequent suite which should begin with the "Zuihuayin" tune. See *Shengshi*, 73. The absence of song-suite titles in *Shengshi* probably adds to the confusion in determining where one suite ends and the next one begins. A look at how the song-suite appears in other anthologies such as *Cilin* and *Yongxi*, where titles are added to the beginning of the suite, will confirm this. The clearest evidence is in the *Cilin* (1597 court edition) where the anthology starts with the *Zuihuayin* aria we will discuss below.

[21] *Shengshi*, 73, 75.

demand from court entertainers who frequently turned to this anthology for songs and arias to perform.[22]

The transmission and textual history of *Shengshi xinsheng* was closely intertwined with another anthology titled *Cilin zhaiyan* 詞林摘艷 (Beauty Plucked from the Forest of Lyrics, preface dated 1525) that appeared soon after it.[23] In *Cilin zhaiyan*, one will find some interesting developments in the representation of these courtly *sanqu* songs.

Cilin #9.5 and *Cilin (Palace ed.)* #1.3: Two contrasting editions

If we look for "Nation Blessed" in *Cilin zhaiyan* using its widely circulated edition, we will find the song-suite not at the front of the anthology (as in *Shengshi*) but instead at the back of it, as *Cilin* #9.5 in the penultimate fascicle.[24] This can be partially explained by the different organizational structure and editorial choices. For instance, the anthology begins with *xiaoling* arias written to southern and northern tunes in the first fascicle, followed by suites written to various modes in the subsequent ones (from the second to the tenth *ji* 集).

More significantly, within the *ji* devoted to Huangzhong mode (placed ninth in the case of *Cilin*), courtly song-suites were not selected as the opening pieces, unlike the arrangement we have seen in the earlier *Shengshi* (for example, the first three found in *Shengshi* #2.1 to #2.3) or the later *Yongxi*. Instead, "Nation Blessed" was only positioned as the fifth song-suite in this fascicle, preceded by four suites of *sanqu* and dramatic arias on "spring thoughts" or romance

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[22] See Wang Gang and Wang Yongkuan, "*Shengshi xinsheng* yu Zang Xian", 92-97.

[23] To the extent that later printings of the two anthologies often included segments from them as supplements, one edition blatantly mixes selections from the two anthologies and packages it as a new collection titled *Shengshi cilin* 盛世詞林.

[24] The 1525 edition kept in the former Peking Library (now National Library of China) is readily available in the *Xuxiu Siku* series, vol.1740. *Cilin* #9.4 appears on pp. 273-74.

that appear to have been consciously added by the compiler of the anthology to distance it from the "imperial flavor" in *Shengshi*.[25]

One preface in *Cilin* refers to the compiler Zhang Lu 張祿 (fl. 1522-66) as "a scholar who is devoted to ancient things and fond of collecting the refined" 好古博雅之士. In the second preface penned by Zhang himself, he claimed to have carefully collated the songs and added new arias, especially for poets and scholars travelling away from home to be able to recite and sing these songs to entertain themselves.[26] This suggests a milieu rather different from that of *Shengshi* and may explain why courtly *sanqu* are presented less prominently in *Cilin*.

Nonetheless, a closer reading of *Cilin* will suggest that the courtly *sanqu* were simply *moved* from the most prominent positions at the beginning of the anthology and each fascicle, but were by no means *removed* altogether. The presence of courtly *sanqu* songs can still be felt if one reads further into this anthology that is often regarded as a collection of popular arias.

Take the group of twenty-five song-suites under Huangzhong mode in *Shengshi* as an example. If we compare them with the corresponding fascicle in *Cilin*, we will find striking overlaps between the two. Broadly speaking, twenty-three songs overlap and in more or less the same order. For instance, the five song-suites in *Cilin* #9.5 to #9.9 are the same as those in *Shengshi* #2.1 to #2.5. Likewise, *Cilin* #9.12 to #9.29 are the same as *Shengshi* #2.6 to #2.23, except that *Cilin* #9.12 and #9.13 are in reverse order to that in *Shengshi*. What separates the two anthologies in their selection of song-suites in Huangzhong mode are six new song-suites added in *Cilin*, four of them at the beginning of the fascicle.

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[25] For example, *Cilin* #9.1, titled "Chunsi" 春思, is a *sanqu* song-suite by the Yuan writer Lan Chufang 蘭楚芳, and *Cilin* #9.2 is taken from Act 4 of the drama *Qiannü lihun* by the Yuan playwright Zheng Guangzu 鄭光祖.

[26] See *Cilin*, 1-2.

In other words, the group of three courtly songs, *Shengshi* #2.1 to #2.3, are kept in the same sequence in *Cilin* (#9.5 to #9.7), but merely pushed back a few places. Something else is different: *Cilin* adds information about the titles and authors of these three song-suites where it was known to the compiler:

Cilin #9.5 "Nation Blessed" is titled "Yuanye" 元夜 (The Night of the Fifteenth), attributed to "Jia Zhongming from the imperial Ming" 皇明賈仲名,[27] referring to the early Ming writer Jia Zhongming 賈仲明 (fl. 1343-1422);[28]

Cilin #9.6 "The Sagely [Sovereign's] virtue is majestic, striding on this day of the fifteenth" 聖德巍巍邁三五 (cf. *Shengshi* #2.2) is titled "Yuanye" 元夜 (The Night of the Fifteenth), and marked as written by an anonymous writer (無名氏);[29]

Cilin #9.7 "Flowery lanterns like embroidered brocade, hang mid-sky" 錦綉花燈半空挑 is titled "Yuanxiao" 元宵 (Lantern Festival), and attributed to "Cao Mengxiu from the imperial Ming" (皇明曹孟修).[30]

By adding non-courtly song-suites in place of the courtly ones at the front of the fascicle, *Cilin* appears to consciously steer away from the court context, though still retaining the bulk of the courtly songs in less visible sections of the anthology. However, this phenomenon does not apply to all editions of *Cilin zhaiyan*.

[27] *Cilin*, 273.

[28] See relevant chapter in Idema, *The Dramatic Oeuvre of Chu Yu-tun (1379-1439)*.

[29] *Cilin*, 274.

[30] *Cilin*, 275. I will return to discuss Cao Mengxiu in the next section.

A look at a variant edition of the anthology, one published by the imperial court several decades later in 1597,[31] will show that the textual history of *sanqu* songs is often complex. Various editions of the same anthology can be significantly different and therefore deserve a closer examination. We continue using the abovementioned group of three courtly song-suites (i.e. *Shengshi* #2.1-#2.3; *Cilin* #9.5-#9.7) as a case study. In stark contrast to the group being "relegated" to the ninth fascicle (out of ten) and to further back within the fascicle (positioned fifth to seventh) in *Cilin*, it does not take much effort at all to find the same group of song-suites in the imperial reprint (preface dated 1597) of *Cilin zhaiyan*, hereafter *Cilin (palace ed.)*.[32]

Structurally, this palace edition turns the original organization of the anthology (as seen above in the 1525 edition of *Cilin*) almost upside-down, with the first fascicle on *xiaoling* songs in

[31] I use the term "palace edition" to refer to *neifu ben* 内府本. For a study on the imperial publications in the Ming court, see Scarlett Jang, "The Eunuch Agency Directorate."

[32] The copy consulted is held at the National Palace Museum in Taiwan (Number: Gushan 故善 014364-014373, 10 vols.), which has been digitized and can be accessed online upon registration via the National Palace Museum's Database of Rare Books 善本古籍資料庫 website: http://npmhost.npm.gov.tw/ttscgi/ttswebrarb?@0:0:1:rarebook@@0.22978412841979912 (Accessed 11 April 2020)

In his article in the 1930s introducing the various editions of *Cilin zhaiyani,* Zheng Zhenduo mentioned a palace edition in the National Palace Museum. He included in a footnote a brief contents page of this edition kept then in Peking but said that he, being in Shanghai, hence could not provide full collation of the text. See Zheng, "*Shengshi xinsheng* yu *Cilin zhaiyan*," 146, 150. This is possibly the copy now held in the National Palace Museum in Taiwan, which was recorded to have originated from the former collection in the Qing imperial palace (清宮舊藏).

Cilin moved to the last ("guiji" 癸集) and *Cilin*'s ninth fascicle containing song-suites under Huangzhong mode shifted to the very front of the entire collection in this later edition. This is in line with the sequence of songs by mode in *Yongxi*, which was printed after *Cilin* but before *Cilin (palace ed.)*. The first four song-suites appear in the following order:

Cilin (palace ed.) #1.1 (= *Shengshi* #2.2; *Cilin* #9.6): "The Sagely [Sovereign's] virtue is majestic, striding on this day of the fifteenth" 聖德巍巍邁三五, untitled with no attributed author;

Cilin (palace ed.) #1.2 (= *Shengshi* #2.25 and not included in *Cilin*): "The sun and moon shine brightly, lifting the soil and grains" 日月長明興社稷, untitled with no attributed author;

Cilin (palace ed.) #1.3 (= *Shengshi* #2.1; *Cilin* #9.5): "Nation Blessed", untitled with no attributed author;

Cilin (palace ed.) #1.4 (= *Shengshi* #2.3; *Cilin* #9.7): "Flowery lanterns of embroidered brocade hang mid-sky" 錦綉花燈半空挑, untitled with no attributed author.

One may speculate that the "Sagely [Sovereign's] virtue" song-suite was chosen to head the *Cilin (palace ed.)* possibly to differentiate it from earlier printings of the various anthologies such as *Shengshi*, *Cilin*, and *Yongxi*, where the "Nation Blessed" song-suite is often more prominently positioned and was the starting piece in *Yongxi*. Also, a song beginning with "The Sagely [Sovereign's] virtue is majestic, striding on this day of the fifteenth" carries an even stronger courtly flavor and showcases a more direct "imperial presence," which makes it appropriate for a palace edition.

In addition, the *Cilin (palace ed.)* is also marked by several format characteristics that are common in imperial publications: all references to and words related to the emperor or imperial

grace, such as *shengde* 聖德 (sagely [sovereign's] virtue), *huangchao* 皇朝 (imperial empire), and *huangdu* 皇都 (imperial capital) on the first page of the first song,[33] are always raised to the top margin at the start of a new column of a vertical line of text, making such imperial references especially prominent and visible. All arias are subsequently indented (i.e., positioned lower vertically) by one Chinese character in this edition. An imperial reprint of *Shengshi xinsheng* a year earlier in 1596 also shows a similar trend: the first page accentuates the words *shengzhu* 聖主 (Sage Sovereign), *shengde* 聖德 (Sagely or Sage [Sovereign's] virtue), and *wuhuang* 吾皇 (Our Emperor) in a song-suite that was "promoted," from the back of the fascicle in the earlier *Shengshi* edition to the very front of the corresponding fascicle in the palace edition.[34] One wonders whether the typographical opportunity to highlight such references to the imperial presence might have played a certain role in choosing which song-suite to star as the opening piece in these palace editions.

Under the context of and in significant contrast to this kind of intensified attention to the imperial presence and courtly flavor in the palace editions, information about authorship and

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[33] See *Cilin (palace ed.)*, *jiaji* 甲集, 1a. An image of this first page is also available at https://catalog.digitalarchives.tw/item/00/12/64/23.html. Accessed 11 April 2020.

[34] See *Shengshi xinsheng (palace ed.)*, 1596 edition held at the National Palace Museum in Taiwan (Number: Gushan 故善 004105-004116, 12 volumes). This copy has not been digitized and hence only the first page is accessible via the bibliographical record on https://catalog.digitalarchives.tw/item/00/12/61/52.html (accessed 25 April 2020), which includes an image. Nonetheless, we can see that the order of suites in this edition is different from that in the more commonly circulated and accessible *Shengshi*.

titles (previously made available in *Cilin zhaiyan* as early as the 1530s) is all removed in the palace editions published later in the 1590s, harking back to the sort of anonymous textual world presented in the earliest anthology, *Shengshi*, at the beginning of the sixteenth century. It appears that anthologies and editions more closely associated with the court milieu such as *Shengshi* and *Cilin (palace ed.)* present a textual world of arias that was anonymous and removed from its initial context (with no titles given), whereas those that were further away from the court, edited by literati or produced for the commercial market (e.g. *Cilin*) were more interested in associating the songs with known authors and providing the contexts and occasions for which they were composed. This is especially so in the later *Beigong ciji* 北宮詞紀 (A Compilation of Songs in the Northern Style), where songs suites are categorized according to themes rather than organized by respective musical modes.

As outlined above, anthologies played a central role in the preservation of courtly *sanqu* songs. The three anthologies, *Shengshi xinsheng*, *Cilin zhaiyan*, and *Yongxi yuefu*, are major sources for tracing the textual lineage of courtly *sanqu* songs. *Yongxi yuefu* has often been regarded as the culmination of the three, but it does not include all of the songs in the former two and there is a need to consult and compare all three anthologies. The first printing of these anthologies may be respectively dated to 1517, 1525, and 1531, showing that collectively they appeared in quick succession in the first few decades of the sixteenth century.[35] But it is also important to note that their popularity in the Ming court remained throughout the dynasty, as evidenced by the imperial publications in the 1590s and their continued presence in the imperial library.[36]

[35] For studies on the three anthologies and their connections to the court in the context of the development of drama in mid-Ming China, see Li Shunhua, *Liyue yu Ming qianzhongqi yanju*.

[36] Based on the imperial publication inventory list recorded circa 1638 by the eunuch Liu Ruoyu 劉若愚 (1584–1642).

Therefore, it is more useful to think of these anthologies as more broadly speaking sixteenth-century editions which, in varying degrees, were all linked to the imperial court and are essential sources for tracing a textual lineage of courtly *sanqu*. It is also important to note that not only are the three anthologies textually connected to one another, in that we see overlaps of songs among them, but each anthology itself has various editions that show selection and textual differences, and hence these individual editions are unique and significant in their own right and for various research purposes.

A full comparison of the three anthologies is beyond the scope of this paper and is to be dealt with on another occasion. Nonetheless, the above selective case study on the representation of song-suites in Huangzhong mode across different anthologies and also their respective editions has shown how two editions of the same anthology, *Cilin* versus *Cilin (palace ed.)*, can be drastically different. In tracing the textual lineage of courtly *sanqu*, it is therefore inadequate to rely only on one single source or to simply say that a *sanqu* appears in a certain anthology. There is a need to probe further: which edition of the anthology is referred to and how is the *sanqu* song presented, both in terms of content and format (including its "position") in that anthology? Doing so can be potentially rewarding in discovering a fuller textual world and spectrum of courtly *sanqu*, or even in uncovering new *sanqu* songs included only in a later imprint of an anthology that might otherwise be easily unnoticed.[37]

A Spectrum of Courtly *Sanqu* Songs

A wide range of *sanqu* songs were associated with the imperial court and represent a spectrum of textual worlds which we explore as follows, focusing on those that appear in the

[37] For example, *Cilin (palace ed.)* #1.32 does not appear in other editions of the anthology. This song-suite is also not included in *QMSQ (expanded ed.)* and hence may possibly be a new text previously unknown to *sanqu* researchers.

Ming anthologies. Not all courtly *sanqu* songs are captured in these anthologies. For example, *sanqu* compositions by Emperor Xuanzong (r. 1426-35), some of which are also in celebration of the empire and similar in style to the courtly songs we have seen above, are only found in a fascicle on "*yuefu* lyrics" 樂府詞 appended to the collection of his imperial writings and not widely circulated beyond the palace.[38]

Entertainment *Sanqu* versus Ritual *Sanqu*

The body of texts that I attempt to outline above as "courtly *sanqu* songs" in this paper belong to a wider musical world in the Ming court. For instance, one may also reference a sizable body of song texts that can be considered courtly but are more directly associated with state rituals and not included in the three anthologies. An important source of early Ming drama and *sanqu,* Zhu Quan's 朱權 (1378–1448) *Taihe zhengyin pu* 太和正音譜 (A formulary for the correct sounds of great harmony) includes not only the "secular" dramatic and *sanqu* arias, but also nine arias marked as "Zhonghe yuezhang" 中和樂章 (Harmonious Hymns). These songs are stylistically similar to what are usually classified as state sacrificial and processional songs. They continued to play a part in court ritual music in late imperial China and were cited in the eighteenth-century imperially commissioned *Jiugong dacheng nanbeici gongpu* 九宮大成南北詞宮譜 (Compendium of Official Scores of Southern and Northern Arias in Nine Modes) as examples of "Mingchao yuezhang" 明朝樂章 (Hymns from the Ming Dynasty). Ming historical records, ritual manuals, and music sources also show increasing use of popular or secular music (*suyue* 俗樂) such as those tune patterns seen in *sanqu* being introduced for use on state occasions and

[38] See *Da Ming Xuanzong Huangdi yuzhiji*, *Siku cunmu* ed., vol. 24: 264-67.

ceremonies that previously used formal sacrificial or elegant music (*yayue* 雅樂).[39] A number of songs of a similar nature were also preserved in some literary collections.[40]

For the sake of differentiation, I shall refer to them as "ritual *sanqu*" in contrast to the songs discussed in this paper which may thus be classified as courtly entertainment songs. In later anthologies such as *Beigong ciji*, these courtly entertainment songs were put in the category *yanshang* 讌賞 (banquet and entertainment)[41] which highlights such roles of the songs.

Ritual use and celebratory court-related occasions formed a significant part of the production, transmission, and consumption of *sanqu* in the imperial court. It is telling that the two types of courtly entertainment and ritual songs, however, are recorded and transmitted through different channels. Ritual *sanqu* songs were not included in the three anthologies. This might suggest that the editors did make a distinction between ritual songs (often referred to as *yuezhang*) and entertainment songs, though stylistically and thematically the difference between them is not immediately clear to a modern reader once the songs are removed from the immediate ritual or performance context. For example, *Yongxi yuefu* includes a song-suite titled

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[39] For Ming state sacrificial music and the development of drama and *sanqu* in relation to Ming court rites, see studies by Joseph S. C. Lam, esp. "Imperial Agency in Ming Music Culture;" Li Shunhua, *Liyue yu Ming qianzhongqi yanju*; Ye, "Mingdai liyue zhidu yu yuezhang ti ciqu."

[40] See Ye Ye's discovery of 119 *xiaoling* in the style of hymns written under imperial command (*yingzhi yuezhang* 應制樂章) in the literary collection of Liao Daonan 廖道南 (1494-1547, *jinshi* 1521). These were possibly composed in the 1530s when Liao was in the Hanlin Academy and might have been tasked to compose such songs. Ye terms this form of lyrics (including *sanqu* and *ci*) "*yuezhang ti ciqu*" (hymn-style lyrics and songs). See Ye, "Mingdai liyue zhidu yu yuezhang ti ciqu." The songs are now included in the expanded edition of *QMSQ*.

[41] See *Beigong ciji*, *juan* 1.

"In Celebration of the Imperial Homecoming after the Suburban Sacrifice" (慶郊祭回鑾, *Yongxi* #2.2), which is strongly linked to the state ceremony. In comparison to the courtly entertainment songs discussed in this paper that appear in the three anthologies, court ritual *sanqu* appear to be more confined to the court context and less widely circulated.

Occasions and Styles

Some courtly songs are specifically titled "Yingzhi" 應制 (Written at Imperial Command)[42] or "Zhusong" 祝頌 (Congratulatory Hymn)[43], marking the imperial context for composition. Other titles suggested courtly *sanqu* songs were composed for calendric festivals and celebratory occasions such as New Year, Mid-Autumn, Winter Solstice, and imperial birthdays. Title information serves only as a guide. As stated earlier, they are seldom fixed and tend to differ from one anthology to the other. Among the various occasions, a large number of courtly entertainment *sanqu* songs were written on or for the Lantern Festival, which is held on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. Take the first *juan* of *Yongxi* as an example:

Yongxi #1.1: "Dengci" 燈詞 (Lantern Lyrics)

Yongxi #1.3: "Dengxi" 燈夕 (The Evening of the Lantern Festival)

Yongxi #1.26: "Dengci" 燈詞 (Lantern Lyrics)

Yongxi #1.30: "Dengci" 燈詞 (Lantern Lyrics)

Yongxi #1.33: "Yuanye" 元夜 (The Night of the Fifteenth),

Yongxi #1.37: "Dengci" 燈詞 (Lantern Lyrics)

Yongxi #1.51: "Dengci" 燈詞 (Lantern Lyrics)

Yongxi #1.52: "Dengci" 燈詞 (Lantern Lyrics)

[42] See *Cilin*, 64-65 (*ji* 2) and 298-99 (*ji* 10), also in *QMSQ exp.,* 5933-34 and 6342-43.

[43] *Yongxi*, 343 (*juan* 1); *QMSQ exp.*, 5958-59.

Among the courtly *sanqu* songs found in anthologies, contemporaneous songs composed during the Ming are usually positioned at the front of each *juan*. Some old Yuan-dynasty song-suites can also be found in Ming anthologies, where one can see that the Yuan works were "updated" into Ming versions in various ways. One interesting example is a song-suite titled "Huangdu yuanri" 皇都元日 (Imperial Capital on New Year's day), written by Guan Yunshi 貫雲石 (1286–1324). One line of the song-suite making reference to the Mongolian Yuan dynasty appears as "The Great Yuan is almighty, unmatched anytime in the past or present" 大元至大古今無" in the Yuan anthology *Chaoye xinsheng Taiping yuefu* version,[44] but was later amended into different forms, as "The Great Ming's sagely rule is unmatched anytime in the past or present" 大明聖治古今無" in *Shengshi*, and as "The Great Ming is almighty, unmatched anytime in the past or present"大明至大古今無" in *Yongxi*,[45] so as to celebrate this present age and the current rulership. The song-suite by Wu Hongdao, mentioned briefly in the previous section, underwent more substantial changes in its Ming version in *Yongxi yuefu*.[46]

The courtly *sanqu* songs found in Ming anthologies all contain some form of set celebratory lines or eulogistic phrases, lauding the glory of the age and expressing well wishes for the empire or the sovereign. Overall, the tone and language of courtly *sanqu* are decorous, upbeat, and laudatory. The fifteenth-century *Taihe zhengyin pu* lists fifteen styles of *sanqu*

[44] Yang, comp., *Chaoye xinsheng Taiping yuefu*, 54.

[45] See *Shengshi*, 833, and *Yongxi, juan* 11, 83b. See also Sui Shusen's notes in *QYSQ*, 384-85, for other textual differences.

[46] See Sui Shusen's collation notes in *QYSQ*, 737.

songs, two of which may be used to describe the style of these courtly *sanqu* songs:[47] The magnificent and ravishing "*Cheng'an* style" 承安體, named after Emperor Zhangzong of Jin's second reign period (1196-1200), suits celebratory or congratulatory pieces, and the fair and impartial "Yutang style" 玉堂體 (also known as Hanlin Academy style) is used for singing praises and glorifying the empire.

Not all courtly *sanqu* songs are similar and not all engage with the imperial court equally. Whereas some apparently were composed specifically for the relevant occasions and were through-and-through court paeans in every aspect, a few may be better characterized as quasi-courtly songs which, on a whole, appear not much related to the court milieu, but contain a formulaic "courtly ending" to meet the occasion. One such example is a song-suite titled "Qiu" 秋 (Autumn) in *Yongxi yuefu*.[48] As the title suggests, this is a piece reflecting on the seasonal changes. The first song begins with the lines "The west wind grows last night / the humid summer recedes this morning" (西風昨夜生 / 溽暑今朝退), which sets a poetic and lyrical tone permeating throughout the rest of the song-suite, until the coda presents a sudden switch in subject and tone to a courtly style, ending eventually with a formulaic vow, "wishing our Emperor long live for a myriad years!" (願吾皇聖壽萬萬載). This suggests the song-suite might either be written or at one point was performed to celebrate the emperor's birthday.

Authorship and Names

In her study of Yuan *sanqu* songs, Patricia Sieber pointed out the "Problem of Authorship", exemplified in the relative scarcity of individual *sanqu* collections and the seemingly random order of multi-author Yuan-printed anthologies, as one of the potential reasons for the

[47] Zhu Quan, *Taihe zhengyin pu*, 13-14.

[48] *Yongxi*, *juan* 9, 9a-10b.

relative neglect of the genre.[49] This problem with authorship is even more severely felt in the world of courtly *sanqu* songs, which is largely an anonymous textual world, as discussed earlier, one with no information at all on titles and authors in the palace editions. Any scarce information about attributed authorship of courtly *sanqu* songs has come mainly and, on many accounts, solely from *Cilin zhaiyan*.

Some of the attributed authors are better-known names in the history of *sanqu* and drama who were affiliated to the Ming court in one way or another, such as Tang Shi, Jia Zhongming, and Chen Duo 陳鐸(1454?-1507?).[50] There are also a few other names worth pointing out that share certain common characteristics: First, they are all unfamiliar names in the history of *sanqu* and drama; Second, their extant *sanqu* songs are very few (only one or two in each case) and entirely court-related, which suggests that either they only composed *sanqu* very occasionally for the imperial court, or that authorship of such courtly songs is rarely recorded and that this is only a small sample of a larger corpus they had composed that was not identified; Third, we know almost nothing about them apart from the single lines of recorded author attribution in *Cilin zhaiyan*, which indicates that these writers lived before or during the 1520s.

The first is Cao Mengxiu 曹孟修, briefly introduced in the previous section. According to *Cilin zhaiyan*, Cao was the author of the "Lantern Festival" song-suite starting with the line "Flowery lanterns like embroidered brocade, hang mid-sky".[51] Only two extant song-suites by Cao Mengxiu have been passed down to us; the other piece was titled "Zhuzan" 祝讚

[49] Sieber, "Rethinking the History of Early *Sanqu* Songs," 90-93.

[50] See Idema, *The Dramatic Oeuvre of Chu Yu-tun (1379-1439)*, and Tan, "Emerging from Anonymity."

[51] *Cilin*, 275-76 (ninth *ji*).

(Congratulatory Paean).[52] Cao Mengxiu's song-suites represent the standard style of courtly *sanqu* and this may explain why both of his works were included and positioned rather prominently in the respective fascicles (as #1.4 and #5.3) in the palace edition of *Cilin zhaiyan*.[53] Though stylistically befitting the imperial context, Cao's song-suites are often quite generic and not much different from the multitude of anonymous courtly *sanqu* songs.

The other case cannot be more different: the name is Zang Yonghe 臧用和, whose only extant *sanqu* is a song-suite titled "Pingding Annan" 平定安南 (Conquering and Restoring Peace to Annan) in *Cilin zhaiyan*.[54] The same song-suite appears under a different title, "Zhengnan" 征南 (Campaign against the South), in *Yongxi yuefu*.[55] Similar to other courtly *sanqu* songs, this song-suite also contains lines congratulating the great peace of the empire in the presence of envoys sent from ten thousand nations to pay tribute to the Ming court. However, unlike most courtly *sanqu* songs, which are often generic and paint an overall harmonious picture of the nation without concrete details, this song-suite is set in the specific context of Ming's conquest of Vietnam under the rule of the Yongle emperor (r.1404-1424). The main body of the song-suite depicts the military campaign and describes violent war scenes in a heroic and robust writing style rarely seen in *sanqu* songs, and in a narrative mode and dramatic tone that one might associate more with arias in military scenes in drama.

Biographical information about *sanqu* authors in the textual world of the imperial court is so scarce that at times we do not even get the full name. In one instance, we find a rare record of

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[52] *Cilin*, 256-58 (eighth *ji*). The song-suite is alternatively titled "Zhu taiping" 祝太平 in *Yongxi*, 692-93 (*juan* 9.72a-74a).

[53] *Cilin (palace ed.)* #1.4 and #5.3.

[54] *Cilin*, 283-84 (ninth *ji*).

[55] *Yongxi*, 346-47 (*juan* 1).

a song-suite attributed to a member from the court entertainment bureau, but there all we know is that the author is someone surnamed Cao (教坊曹氏).[56]

Within and Beyond the Imperial Court

In a scene in Chapter 60 of *Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅 (The Plum in the Golden Vase), relatives and friends come to congratulate Ximeng Qing on the opening of his new silk goods shop and the banquet is accompanied by musical entertainment:

> 三個小優兒在席前唱了一套《南呂•紅衲襖》「混元初生太極」。須臾，酒過五巡，食割三道，下邊樂工吹打彈唱，雜耍百戲過去，席上觥籌交錯。
>
> The three boy actors came before the feast and performed a song-suite in the Nan-lü mode, beginning with the tune "Red Jacket," the first line of which was:
>
> When primordial chaos first engendered the supreme ultimate,
>
> etc., etc. It was not long before:
>
> Five rounds of wine had been consumed; and
>
> Three main courses had been served.
>
> By the time that the musicians below the hall had done performing, and the acrobatics and vaudeville acts were concluded, atop the banquet tables:
>
> Drinking vessels and game tallies lay helter-skelter.…[57]

Although the novel does not provide us with the full arias of this song-suite performed, researchers have identified it as one that appeared in full form earlier in all of the three *qu*

[56] *Cilin*, 101 (third *ji*). The song-suite is titled "Dongzhi" 冬至 (Winter Solstice).

[57] Roy, *The Plum in the Gold Vase*, Volume Three, 494-95.

anthologies discussed, *Shengshi xinsheng*, *Cilin zhaiyan*, and *Yongxi yuefu*.[58] *Cilin zhaiyani* attributes the song-suite to none other than Cao Mengxiu, a lesser-known *sanqu* author introduced in the previous section believed to have written only two song-suites: one is the ""Flowery lanterns" song-suite on the lantern festival, the other is this "Primordial Chaos" song-suite cited in the novel.[59]

The novel introduces the song-suite quoting only its first line, which suggests this might be a rather popular piece that its readers will be familiar with and can readily recognize from merely a single line of the opening aria. *Cilin zhaiyan* entitles the song-suite "Zhuzan" 祝讚 (Congratulatory Paean), whereas *Yongxi yuefu* later gives a different title "Zhu taiping" 祝太平 (In Praise of Great Peace). David Roy, in the notes to his translation of the novel, describes the song-suite as consisting "entirely of a paean of praise for the peaceful and benevolent rule of the reigning Ming emperor."[60]

If we move away from the novel and the world of popular literature it represents, and trace the song-suite in the same manner that we did with other *sanqu* songs in this paper – reading across anthologies and editions, and looking out for variants in content and format – we will find that this song-suite also appeared in another printed form for a very different target

[58] See, for example, Zhou Juntao, "*Jinpingmei* qingchang quci kao (xu)," 86; Roy, *The Plum in the Gold Vase*, Volume Three, 635 n. 10. The title of the beginning tune of the song-suite, marked as "Hongna'ao" 紅衲襖 in the novel, should be "Qingna'ao" 青衲襖 instead as seen in the Ming *qu* anthologies.

[59] See *QMSQ expanded ed*., 2892-95.

[60] Roy, *The Plum in the Gold Vase*, Volume Three, 635 n. 10.

reader in a contrasting milieu: The palace edition of *Cilin zhaiyan* places it as the third song-suite, following two other courtly songs, in the fascicle on *sanqu* selections in Nanlü mode.[61]

We know that the novel *Jinpingmei* was already circulating in manuscript form as early as in the 1590s before it was printed around 1618. The three anthologies containing the song-suite would have been widely circulated in the decades before the novel appeared. In particular, the palace edition of *Cilin zhaiyan* was printed in 1597 and copies of all three anthologies continued to be available in the imperial palace in late Ming and early Qing. In other words, during the Wanli period, around the 1590s and more broadly over different periods in late imperial China, readers could potentially encounter this "Primordial chaos" song-suite in various contexts such as commercially printed anthologies, entertainment quarters, and at actual banquets or fictional ones (as represented in the novel), or in the imperial palace both as reading text (via printed copies) or sung arias (via court performances).

In each context and occasion, the *sanqu* in question may gain a different "identity" (e.g. court song, a composition by a known elite scholar, or a popular tune from the streets) and mean something different to its reader or listener, as a result of how the *sanqu* was presented to the recipient in that particular milieu. The textual and cultural flows across the various milieus are complex and interconnected.[62] It would be less useful to try pinpointing from where exactly this

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[61] *Cilin (palace ed.)* #5.3.

[62] In her study of the late Ming world of books and their readers, Yuming He well illustrates the circulation of content across commercial, literati, and court milieus. For example, through a survey of the printing history of the popular prose anthology *Guwen zhenbao* 古文真寶, she demonstrates that the anthology long captured the attention of commercial editors, publishers, court officials and scholars, and emperors in the Ming, and argues that conventional bibliographic distinctions of various types of imprints (commercial, private, and official) "does

song-suite could have originated, and how it moved from one milieu (the court) to another (the street), or vice versa. Rather, such an example illustrates the flexibility and adaptability of *sanqu* songs to function in multiple contexts and across various milieus, and sometimes in different forms.

Following this line of thought, let us return to the earlier example of the "Nation Blessed" song-suite and consider its later transmission and transformation. In earlier sections, we have traced its appearances in the three anthologies and across different editions. If it was indeed written by Jia Zhongming as attributed in *Cilin* (and subsequently in *Beigong ciji*), then the composition of the piece might potentially be linked to the regional court of Zhu Di where Jia enjoyed royal patronage. In court-related anthologies, we saw how the song-suite was highlighted as an exemplary courtly *sanqu*, being featured prominently in such publication. It also came to be included in other more popular anthologies such as *Qunying leixuan* 群音類選 (Arranged Selections of the Gathered Sounds) and *Beigong ciji*, and hence would have been also easily accessible to the likes of performers or elite scholars.

The use and function of a song-suite can take other forms too. In Qing dynasty court drama, we once again encounter the same song-suite, this time presented as dramatic arias in the tenth act of a play. The drama, titled *Taiping leshi* 太平樂事 (Joyous Matters in the Era of Great Peace) and written by Cao Yin 曹寅 (1658–1712), contains ten short acts following very much the style of an earlier play by Chen Duo of the same title. Act 10, "Fengdeng daqing" 豐登大慶 (Grand Celebration of a Bumper Harvest), ostensibly borrows its arias from the "Nation Blessed" song-suite.[63] The play opens with a verbatim quotation from the first song of the

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not necessarily mean that any given book's circulation and influence was constrained by such boundaries." See He, *Home and the World*, 34-35.

[63] See *Taiping leshi*, included in Yao Xie's (1805-1864) *Fuzhuang jin yuefu xuan*, "Quge" (Songs in Streets and Alleys) section, held at the National Central Library in Taipei (no. 15181), 22b-23b.

"Nation Blessed" song-suite written to the tune of *Zuihuiyin*,[64] followed by the entrance of the manager of a troupe setting the scene:

> 自家東園行首是也，來日聖主御樓大酺天下，不免帶子弟們搬演燈詞一番。（下）[65]
>
> I am the manager of "East Garden". Soon our Sage Sovereign will hold a grand fest for everyone at the imperial pavilion, hence I bring along my troupe members to put on a performance of these lantern lyrics. (*exits*)

We can recall that in *Yongxi yuefu*, the "Nation Blessed" song-suite was indeed titled "Lantern Lyrics," and one may read this act of the play as a form of dramatization of a *sanqu* song. After the first song, however, the Qing dynasty play begins to depart from the Ming *sanqu* song text. The "Nation Blessed" song-suite in Ming anthologies is a combination of twelve northern and southern tunes (*nanbei hetao* 南北合套). The Qing dynasty dramatic act only contains six songs, cutting out all the southern tunes and keeping only the northern ones. Apart from the first song, the remaining arias also differ substantially from the Ming version. Given that court plays and songs do share similar style and language, it is not unthinkable that some other courtly *sanqu*

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[64] The same song as cited at the beginning of this paper. There is only one minor textual variant in the fifth line, where 百姓每都安樂 in the *sanqu* reads as 百姓每多安樂 in the Qing drama.

[65] See *Taiping leshi*, 22b. The reference to the emperor wishing to celebrate with his subjects at an imperial pavilion calls to mind a famous account of similar celebrations during the Kangxi reign, where a high platform stage was erected and a Mulian play was performed in the presence of the emperor, which were also described as a grand fest (*dapu* 大酺) by the observer. See Dong Han, *Chunxiang zhuibi*, *juan* 4, 3b.

songs might be rewritten or incorporated, in parts or whole, into court theatrical performances as in Cao Yin's *Taiping leshi*. It is also plausible that some of the courtly songs might have been inspired by their dramatic counterparts in the imperial court.

To conclude, anthologies played a significant role in the process of the transmission of these courtly *sanqu* songs in late imperial China, both within and beyond the imperial court. On the one hand, according to Gao Shiqi 高士奇 (1645-1703), a courtier in the Kangxi court, songs contained in the three Ming anthologies continued to be used in the inner palace in the Qing dynasty.[66] On the other hand, the three anthologies were also highly popular anthologies and, as storehouses of the collected arias, they in turn were influential in the wider circulation and use or adaptations of the arias beyond their initial context, occasion, or textual form.

More broadly, as we have seen in this paper, these Ming anthologies serve as the major source for us to trace the textual lineage of courtly *sanqu* and discover a fuller spectrum of songs contained within this textual world. This rich corpus of courtly *sanqu* songs awaits more scholarly attention and closer analysis, not only within the specific field of *sanqu* studies where it can expand our understanding of the functionalities and milieus of *sanqu*, but also in the wider context of courtly literature in the Chinese tradition where we can see interesting overlaps and interconnections between *sanqu* and other poetic and dramatic genres.

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[66] Gao Shiqi, *Jin'ao tuishi biji*, 145.

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