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► **To cite this version:**

Véronique Alexandre Journeau. The Subtle Connection between Text and Music in a Daoist *ci* written by Lu You to the tune of Zhegutian. *Issues of Far Eastern Literatures. Dedicated to the Memory of Lu You*, Jun 2010, Saint Pétersbourg, Russia. pp.1-20. halshs-01989321

HAL Id: halshs-01989321

<https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01989321>

Submitted on 22 Jan 2019

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The Subtle Connection between Text and Music in a Daoist 詞 *ci*
written by 陸游 Lu You to the tune of 鷓鴣天 *Zhegutian*

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ABSTRACT

In the 詞 *ci*, a famous genre in vogue under The Southern Song dynasty, 陸游 Lu You (1125-1210) composed at least twenty poems to be sung “to the tune of” and about twelve tunes were selected. Most of them are listed in anthologies and the music of several among them may be found in tablatures for *guqin*. This paper will focus on the Daoist content of one of these poems sung to the tune of “鷓鴣天 *Zhègu tian*” in its particular relationship with music. Investigating the consistency of this rather obscure poem will enable the reader to grasp its deeper structure and will be of help in translating it; while its Daoist context is clearly indicated by the use of the expression “yellow court” in the 4th line. In the process of interpretation, we discover that the last line remains equivocal until the analysis of the relationship with the music reveals a key factor and, as a result, that there is a shift in the vis-à-vis between a line and the music related to it, as if they both alternate, being intermixed like *yin* and *yang* in *lǚlǚ*. This point has a significant bearing on the discussion on the relationship between poetry and music – the case of declamation using the tones of prosody excepted – depending of whether the music was composed on an existing poem (then developed and changed in the instrumental field, mainly under Tang dynasty) or whether the music had inspired several poets (mainly under The Song dynasty). Lu You’s poem, in its perfect and subtle harmonization with the music composition, contributes to the excellence of sung poetry and its analysis gives rise to new developments in the field.

陸游 Lu You composed several 詞 *ci*, poems to be sung “to the tune of”, connected to more than twelve tunes – with, sometimes, several poems to the same tune – which shows his liking for such a genre. Among them are the poems listed below (in brackets) by titles of the tunes¹:

卜算子 *bǔ suàn zǐ* (驛外斷橋邊 *yì wài duàn qiáo bian*);

定風波 *dìng fēng bō* (進賢道上見梅贈王伯壽 *jìn xián dào shàng jiàn méi zèng wáng bó shòu*);

漢宮春 *hàn gōng chūn* (羽箭雕弓 *yǔ jiàn diào gōng*);

好事近 *hǎo shì jìn* (秋曉上蓮峰 *qiū xiǎo shàng lián fēng*);

南鄉子 *nán xiāng zǐ* (歸夢寄吳檣 *guī mèng jì wú qiáng*);

秋波媚 *qiū bō mèi* (秋到邊城角聲哀 *qiū dào biān chéng jué shēng āi*);

鷓鴣仙 *zhè gū xiān* (華燈縱博 *huà dēng zòng bó*, 一竿風月 *yī gān fēng yuè*, 茅檐入靜 *máo yán rù jìng*);

雙頭蓮 *shuāng tóu lián* (華鬢星星 *huà bìn xīng xīng*);

訴衷情 *sù zhōng qíng* (當年萬裏覓封侯 *dāng nián wàn lǐ mì fēng hóu*);

謝池春 *xiè chí chūn* (壯歲從戎 *zhuàng suì cóng róng*).

¹ In the case of 詞 *ci*, the main reference is includes the title of the tune in the formula « to the tune of ... » and, generally speaking, specifies it with the first line of the poem, in particular when the poet has written several poems on the same tune. In some cases, the poet gives a specific title to a dedicated poem.

夜遊宮 yè yóu gōng (雪曉清笳亂起 xuě xiǎo qīng jiǎ luàn qǐ); 釵頭鳳 chāi tóu fēng (紅酥手 hóng sū shǒu);

漁家傲 yú jiā ào (東望山陰何處是 dōng wàng shān yīn hé chǔ shì);

鷓鴣天 zhè gu tiān (家住蒼煙落照間 jiā zhù cāng yān luò zhào jiān);

In the process of translating these poems, it appears that any interpretation remains doubtful for some lines in the absence of any further indications. In the case of sung poetry, the best manner of approaching them seems to me to investigate the music related to the poem through its title “to the tune of”, and to make the assumption that the relation between the poem and the tune is likely to help to clarify the meaning of such rather ambiguous lines. A musical notation of “鷓鴣天 zhè gu tiān” is registered in a compilation of *guqin* (古琴) tablatures entitled 抒懷操 *Shuhuái cāo* (1682)². It may be connected to the poems composed under Song dynasty although such compilations of tablatures come later (under The Ming dynasty) because the editing of ancient texts is a current practice in China for the preservation of the best legacy of the former dynasties – in particular after a period of war or invasion. Moreover, in what seems to be the only written source of this period for the music of this tune, the musical and textual structures are identical. This may be proved by using a bilingual musical notation (indications of gestures written in the Chinese tablatura and transcribed in a Western five line staff) and by inserting the Chinese text in characters below. In this paper, we intend first to explain how the structure of the poem emerges during the process of understanding the translation upstream, then to show how the knowledge of the music related to the poem is a key factor of decision and to conclude with the value of gaining further knowledge on the music of sung poetry “to the tune of”³.

LU YOU’S POEM TO THE TUNE OF « ZHEGU TIAN »: ITS DAOIST STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

家住蒼煙落照間 (*jiā zhù cāng yān luò zhào jiān*)

絲毫塵事不相關 (*sī háo chén shì bù xiāng guān*)

斟殘玉瀝行穿竹 (*zhēn cán yù xiè xíng chuān zhú*)

卷罷黃庭臥看山 (*juǎn bà huáng tíng wò kàn shān*)

貪嘯傲，任衰殘 (*tān xiào ào rèn cuī cán*)

不妨隨處一開顏 (*bù fāng suí chù yì kāi yán*)

元知造物心腸別 (*yuán zhī zào wù xīn cháng bié*)

老卻英雄似等閒 (*lǎo què yīng xióng sì děng jiàn*)

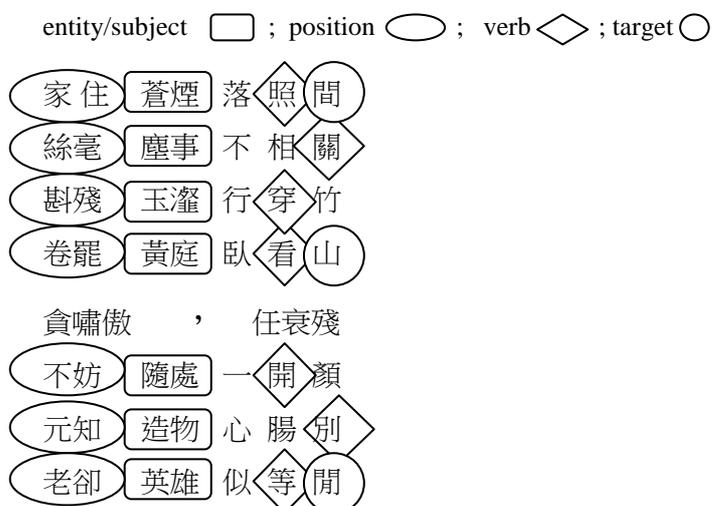
² Available in 琴曲集成 *Qinqū jichéng*, 中華書局出版發行 *Zhōnghuá Shūjú Chūbān Fāxíng*, Beijing (Vol. 1 - 8) and Shanghai (Vols 9 - 17, except 15), 1981-1991, Vol.12, p. 357.

³ Until now, it’s not in use for the appreciation of a poet’s quality probably because the notation in tablature is a language destined to connoisseurs.

The structure of the poem is {7/7/7/7 // 6/7/7/7}, a quite classic one: with the exception of the first line of the second stanza which is a six character one, it appears, so to speak, as an eight line poem (huitain) in seven characters with rhymes in *an* at 1st, 2nd, et 4th lines of each stanza: a style much in vogue under The Tang dynasty. However, the real meaning of the poem is not clear. The opening line of the poem is ambiguous, the same can be said for the last line which might have clarified the context or an element. The step by step preparation of the translation through a close study of its meaning (character by character) confronts us with a juxtaposition of characters, each of them rather simple but comprising multiple connotations. For example, the first line is constituted as follows:

家	home; family; a person engaged in a certain art or profession; furniture; tool; ... ;
住	residence; to live; to dwell; to reside; to stop; ... ;
蒼	dark blue; fly; deep green; ... ;
煙	smoke; mist; ... ;
落	leave behind; alight; to fall; to drop (behind); ... ;
照	according to; in accordance with; to shine; to illuminate; to reflect; photograph; ... ;
間	between; among; space; interstice; separate; ... ;

Several combinations are possible and some ambiguity remains until the expression “Yellow Court” in the 4th line gives a key to its interpretation: because “Yellow Court” is the title of a Daoist canon (a decisive element which enables us to select the real meanings among multiple possibilities). The structure of the poem has to be considered as a design made of echoes between positions and meanings, based on the dynamic principle of *yin-yang* opposition-complimentarity and the relation between Unity and the Multiplicity, in particular the unity of oneself with itself and the unity of oneself with the rest of the world. To summarize the analysis of such a structure, let us visualize the poem with a few graphic codes as follows:



Mist is an image of Dao, it fills emptiness, amasses and disperses itself, elusive, colourless and tasteless, without substance but penetrating, unnumbered and immeasurable, simultaneously one and multiple. Present in the 1st and 3rd lines, it guides the glance (toward the unity) then the gesture (toward the multiple) before the turning of the glance from oneself toward the rest of the world (Multiple and Unity)⁴. “Even if “Keep the Unity” is synonymous with concentration”⁵, the context of the poem is clearer. Moreover, the six character line (the 5th one) which follows the one revealing a Daoist approach (the 4th one) uses a hexameter, the favourite rhythm of Daoism. Similarly, the choice of the tune is, to a certain extent, evocative of a cry of this bird based on six notes (or five with the last one sustained). From a cosmological point of view, this emphasizes a position of centre, of a 5th season, of reversal, and so on, and suggests that both stanzas establish a link between the individual for the first one and the universal for the other in a same plan of concentration-progression. Hence the poem is proved to focus on Unity and Multiplicity, centre and confines, time and space. The joint discernment of structure and meaning for each term clarifies the poem. The personal residence is, in concrete and symbolic terms, the adept’s hearth; and 間 *jian*, last character of the first line, is an instertice which becomes the centre by echoing back, not only to this opening of the poem (hearth) but also to 間 *jian* which means interval (both as an instant and as a time difference) and is the last character of the last line which proves to be a key for the understanding of the meaning of the whole poem and of the relationship with music. Therefore, a possible translation of this poem may be adapted from the French translation with the same kind of transposition of rhymes and doubling of the pace:

Au foyer adepte brumes en tombées vertes mirant le centre	At adept’s hearth drops of greenish mists reflect the centre
Au bout du pinceau le monde sensible est éparpillé	At the brush end the tangible word is dissipated
En essor-chute brumes nées du jade pénétrant les bambous	Rising and falling jade-born mists penetrate bamboos
Au bout du rouleau la Cour jaune fait fixer la montagne	At the scroll end the Yellow Court makes him gaze the mountain

⁴ Isabelle Robinet (*Méditation taoïste, op. cit.*, p. 189): « De façon générale, on peut considérer que la plupart des exercices de méditation visuelle consistent à faire apparaître des divinités pour les résorber ensuite et se résorber soi-même en une Unité, et recréer ainsi le double mouvement, à partir du Un, de division puis de réunion, le solve et coagula qui sont l’Origine et la Fin de monde ».

⁵ *Ibid.*

Souhait souffle jaillissant,
puissance déclinante

Wishes and breath flying
energies declining

Sans obstacles
en lieux variés
l'Un éclot multiple

Without obstacles
in various places
Unity opens multiple

De l'origine
des créatures
le cœur voit les confins

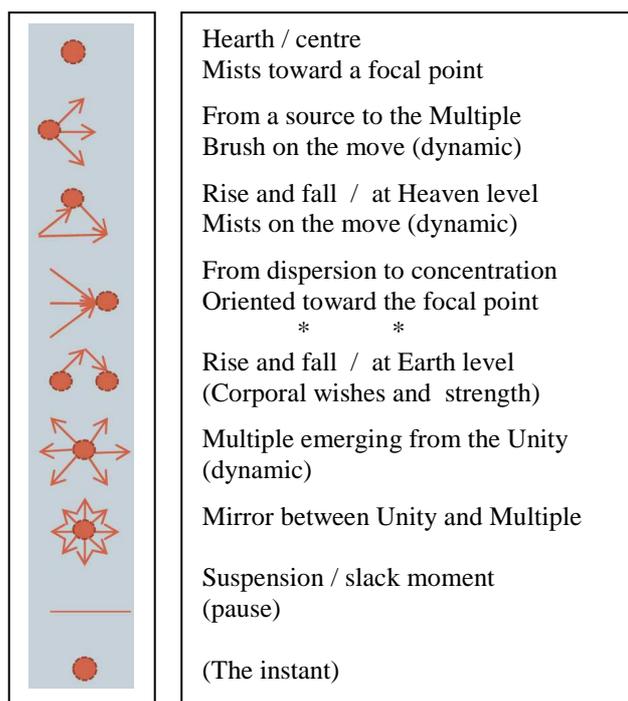
From the origin
of creatures
the heart sees confines⁶

Suspendre longtemps,
le suc
en attente de l'instant

Withhold, for a long while,
the sap
waiting for the moment

“What is prior to Heaven and Earth is the « instant » before the time the adept of inward alchemy tries to catch in the passage toward the world, the one at which is activated the “celestial spring” [« ressort céleste »], spring of the world which gave rise to its first move. [...] This first instant is by itself alone the whole alchemic work, but is nowhere, without shape, elusive.”⁷

A cosmological consistency is perceptible in the couple constituted by structure and meaning and the logical progress within the poem may be visualized in time and space through a presentation with directional lines (arrows) and positions (points), as follows:



⁶ A Daoist interpretation leads to translate “viscera” by “confines”: the interior of a body and the outside world echo each other (See Isabelle Robinet, *op. cit.*, p. 96: « Dans toute la tradition chinoise, les viscères ont une grande importance, car ils sont pris dans le réseau de significations que trace la théorie des cinq Eléments. [...] ils constituent les lignes de force de l'ensemble du corps organisé autour d'eux en tant que totalité structurée ; [...] ils sont les points symboliques qui relient le microcosme au macrocosme, l'Homme à la Nature. [...] Chaque particule du microcosme humain recèle quelque chose du cosmos extérieur. »).

⁷ In my translation from French into English. Isabelle Robinet (*Comprendre le Tao*, Paris, Albin Michel, Coll. Spiritualités vivantes, p. 125-126): « Ce qui est « antérieur au Ciel et à la Terre », c'est l'« instant » d'avant le temps que cherche à capter l'adepte d'alchimie intérieure dans son passage vers le monde, celui où se déclenche le « ressort céleste », ressort du monde, qui lui a donné son premier mouvement. [...] Ce premier instant est à lui seul l'œuvre alchimique tout entière, mais n'est en aucun lieu et n'a aucune forme, est insaisissable ».

The last point (shifted along) discovered thanks to the analysis of music related to, symbolizes the return to the undifferentiated world and the origin, both at individual/microcosmic and at universal/macroc cosmic levels, to the instant-after which will become an instant-before the time as set out by Isabelle Robinet: “In the history of the world, a chaos occurs at each change of the cosmic era change, after the disappearance of Heaven and Earth and before the resurgence of another Heaven and another Earth”⁸. That is the “raison d’être” of the first line of Lu You which is timeless in the poem, before the beginning and after the end (proved, see below, by the music). The discernment of what may be the coherence within the poem was necessary in the course of translation but would not have been sufficient to prove the pertinence of the choices made if they were not corroborated, and even inspired by the analysis of a music that may be the one which had initially inspired the poet. 詞 *ci* is “produced by music; its sonority resembles a smile, its essence and its substance are all images of its virtue” (词完全是音乐的产儿; 它的声音笑貌, 精神肉体, 都是 ‘克肖其德’)⁹.

« 鷓鴣天 *ZHEGU TIAN* » TUNE: MUSIC AND ITS CONNECTIONS WITH LU YOU’S POEM

The music of sung poems “to the tune of” were not been passed on through compilations of sung poetry, and one must seek and transcribe it in order to make them available to the public through new publications. The fact is that, even if such music was probably played on the favourite instrument of literati poets – the *qin* zither (古琴) time and again celebrated in Chinese poetry –, on the one hand, some tunes may have been lost in the passing on from masters to disciples¹⁰, and, on the other hand, the musical notation used is an abbreviated notation codified in tablatures a few connoisseurs only are able to decipher.

A tablature of “鷓鴣天 *Zhè gu tian* (Heaven of partridge)¹¹” may be found in the manual 抒懷操 *Shuhuái cao* (1682). Its structure and that of the poem are identical. The tune is said to be in *guxian* mode which requires a tightening of the 2nd, 5th and 7th strings (based on the standard tuning {C, D, F, G, A, C, D}), that is to say setting them a semitone higher, then the tuning is {C, E flat, F, G, B flat, C, E flat}. The tune has the characteristics expected in the classic genre: indication about the mode [E flat, F, G, B flat, C] during the prelude with a

⁸ In my translation from French into English. Isabelle Robinet (*Comprendre le Tao, ibid.*, p. 125): « Dans l’histoire du monde, un chaos intervient à chaque changement d’ère cosmique, après que le Ciel et la Terre ont disparu et avant qu’un autre Ciel et une autre Terre ne réapparaissent ».

⁹ 词于音乐叙 *Ci yu yinyue xu*, 云南人民出版社 *Yunnan renmin chubanshe*, 昆明 Kunming, 1982, p. 3.

¹⁰ Fallen in disuse or adapted to local styles through time and space as proved by the existence of several variations for some of them.

¹¹ “*Francolinus pintadeanus*” live in the South-East of China. Its alarm cry consists of five or six strong, hoarse and clanged sounds.

beginning on Sib, a cadence using two strings on E flat and a conclusive coda in harmonics giving way to four out of five notes of the mode. Generally speaking, in *guqin* music, a coda opens up a possible modulation, in the current case towards [B flat, C, D, F, G] with E flat making way for D by loosening the 2nd and 7th strings, or towards [A flat, B flat, C, E flat, F] with G making way for A flat by tightening the 4th string. A kind of coherence, inherent in the genre, arises out of the connection between elements (notes) constituting parts (sequences) organized in a whole the logic and progression of which are perceptible: notes of the 均 *jun* (on the example of {Do, Ré, Sol}) are predominant, (Mib, Fa, Sib) in the current case.

Chant du francolin perlé 鷓鴣天 Zhè gu tian
 抒懷操 Shu huái cāo (1682, QQJC-XII)

(next poet/poem in play)

structure 家住蒼煙落照間
 甚 筍 簫 寒 有 燈 籠
 菊 勻 唇 寫 卷 盡
 松 色
 蒼 鷺 鴛 鴦 寫 卷 盡
 蒼 鷺 鴛 鴦
 簫 簫 簫 簫
 松 色
 色 紫 杏 遠 色 勻 早

meaning 絲毫塵事不相關
 樹殘玉溜行穿竹
 卷罷黃庭臥看山
 貪嘯傲，任衰殘
 不妨隨處一開顏
 元知造物心腸別
 老卻英雄似等閒

A look at the score on the above left side can be puzzling. First of all, by setting the poetic and musical texts side by side, it seems as if the structures don't match, but some fingerings written with only one character correspond to several notes like the ones in the 3rd, 5th and 7th lines¹² – a fact that is known only by a few connoisseurs. Hence, the structures prove to fit each other. However, the relation between text and music might only match up the structures without creating specific connections between poetry and contents because of some lack of musical “figuralism”, much appreciated in China and frequently used in music: how would the 3rd musical sequence (one note repeated seven times) express the dynamics in the 3rd line (“Rising and falling, born of jade mists, penetrate bamboos”) and would the 4th musical sequence (an ascending movement with jumps) express the idea of concentration in the 4th line (“At the scroll end, the Yellow Court makes him gaze the mountain”)? Nevertheless, some figuralism inherent to the musical genre may be found directly: the note C, which is much repeated, is the sixth of the mode used and the sixth of the pentatonic mode is called “yu” written with a character “羽” which means also “wing” and evokes the fluttering wings of a bird in the sky, that is to say the title of the tune chosen for the poem. Actually, as usual in Daoism, the connection isn't shown directly but is intricate.

A look at the upper right side reveals the key of composition which is a case in which music (proposal) and text (answer) alternate like the dialogue between Boya and Zhong Ziqi, one suggesting by his play on *guqin* the answer of the other. The attempt to translate the last line of the poem for which the possibilities of translation were multiple clarifies the intention of Lu You. Each character of the last line has several meanings, but one possible meaning refers to a future resolution, after this last line (what is visible with the presence of a last point, shifted along in the succession of small schemas giving an interpretation of the internal structure of the poem), so that the last line of the poem becomes a waiting line. Therefore it appears that it corresponds to the slack moment, the pause, expressed in the 7th musical sequence (note repeated seven times). Returning step by step to the beginning of the poem with such a shift, it becomes obvious: gazing at the mountain corresponds to the same figure (note repeated seven times) in the 3rd musical sequence, the rising-falling movement of mists corresponds to the joint movement of ascending then descending (2nd musical sequence), the mirror between Unity and the Multiple, the inward and the outward (the viscera/the confines),

¹² In this tablature, one fingering-character (*huansuo*) corresponds to seven notes (the third sequence) that is a whole line and each of two fingering-characters in the fifth sequence (*santan* and *xiaosuo*) correspond to three notes. See complete list of fingerings in three languages (Chinese, English, French) in the chapter 2 of my doctoral thesis: *La Cithare chinoise qin (guqin): texte-image-musique* (Sorbonne Paris IV university, 2003).

from the origin corresponds to the succession of dichords (C-F); Unity opens multiple corresponds to the two notes repeated three times according to Laozi (Tao gave birth to the One; the One gave birth successively to two things, three things, up to ten thousand)¹³. The shift might have been a difficulty to get the structure and the meaning harmonized in the correspondance between text and music because of the 5th sequence (a six character one inside a poem in seven character), but the music may be read and played with an ending of the 4th sequence (F-F in dichord) being the beginning of the 5th sequence (F repeated), so a double sequence in 6/7 instead of 7/6. Nevertheless, as far as we can compare, 攄懷操 *Shuhuái cao* is a specific manual: for example, we may find several manuals with the tablature “水龍吟 *Shuǐlóng yín*”, all based on the same structure except 攄懷操 *Shuhuái cao*¹⁴.

To conclude, I would like to make two remarks: Firstly, we are used to appreciating a poem through the sounds of its words – whatever its language – and, similarly, we are used to listening to *guqin* music usually played without singing, but in the case of 詞 *ci* poetry, it would be wonderful to have both music and text of sung poems of Song dynasty in order to appreciate whether the connection between poetic and musical arts gives the poem, the music and the poet an enlarged value, an additional flavor, as it is the case in 陸游 Lu You’s poem to the tune of 鷓鴣天 *Zhègūtian*. What about other poems to the same tune of 鷓鴣天 *Zhègūtian*, for example the ones written by 蘇軾 Su Shi, 李清照 Li Qingzhao, 辛棄疾 Xin Qiji, 吳文英 Wu Wenying, 張炎 Zhang Yan? What about other 詞 *ci* written by 陸游 Lu You? (At least for some with available tablatures like 卜算子 *bǔ suàn zǐ*, 漢宮春 *hàn gōng chūn*, 定風波 *dìng fēng bō*). This is a work in progress, part of my present field of research¹⁵. Secondly, we need to remind people interested in such analysis of the content of old tablatures, by transcribing it in a more universal notation than the one for connoisseurs, even better a bilingual one, and publishing it. It requires some improvements in the software devoted to the computerization of musical notations because of the specificities of *guqin* music, well-indicated by the notation in tablatures. This is also a work in progress I am involved in, both on Western side for music of the Middle-Ages as well as contemporary music and on the Chinese side (at Xiamen University¹⁶).

¹³ English translation by Arthur Waley (*The Way and Its Power: A Study of the Tao Te Ching and its Place in Chinese Thought*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1934), seen on <http://afpc.asso.fr/wengu/wg/wengu.php?l=Dao+dejing&no=42> on February 24th, 2010.

¹⁴ « Cohérence(s) dans le genre du poème chanté en Chine », *Arts, Langue et cohérence* (Véronique Alexandre Journeau ed., Paris, Editions L’Harmattan, Coll. L’univers esthétique, 2010).

¹⁵ To be published: *La Musique des poèmes à chanter des Tang aux Song (VIIIe-XIIIe siècles)*.

¹⁶ 丁晓君, 叶婷婷, 周昌乐, 《古琴减字谱的编码与编辑方法》, 乐中国音乐学, 2008-2, p. 93-96.