

胡笳十八拍 Hujia Shibapai

18 Songs of a Nomad Flute

VII, p. 31

Yellow Bell Mode 黃鐘調 1 3 5 6 1 2 3

1, here notated C, should be sung as A or B flat
Compare transcription by 王迪 Wang Di
from 琴適 *Qin Shi* (1611), as printed in
中國古代歌曲 *Songs from Ancient China*
(Beijing, 1990), which makes 1 = f#

From 綠綺新聲 *Luqi Xinsheng* (1597), this is the
earliest surviving melody set to the lyrics attributed
to 蔡琰 Cai Yan, daughter of 蔡邕 Cai Yong.

The lyrics are a first person verse narration of her
abduction by Central Asian nomads ca. 193 CE,
marriage to a Xiongnu prince, and return to China
after being ransomed by Cao Cao in 206

1

slow and free

我 生 之 初 尚 無 爲 ; 我 生 之 後 漢 祚 衰。
Wo sheng zhi chu shang wu wei; wo sheng zhi hou Han zuo shuai.
At my life's beginning / still in equilibrium; in my life's later / the Han / blessings withered.
(the world was) (years) (dynasty's)

10.0

more rhythmic

天 木 仁 兮 降 亂 離 ; 地 不 仁 兮 使 我 逢 此 時。
Tian bu ren xi jiang luan li; di bu ren xi shi wo feng ci shi.
Heaven without mercy sent down confusion / separation; and earth without mercy caused me to come into / at this time.
(the world)

10.0

干 戈 日 尋 兮 道 路 危 ; 民 卒 流 忘 兮 共 哀 悲。
Gan ge ri xun xi dao lu wei; min zu liu wang xi gong ai bei.
Weapons were daily sought, roads were dangerous; people and soldiers fell into neglect, together wailing and grieving.

10.0 13.1 12.3

25

煙 塵 蔽 野 兮 胡 勇 盛; 志 章 乖 兮 義 節 虧。
 Yan chen bi ye xi hu yong sheng; zhi zhang guai xi yi jie kui.
 Haze and dust hid a wilderness / in which nomad soldiers thrived; our / will power was perverted, our / integrity hence failed.

12.3 7.9

33

對 殊 俗 兮 非 我 宜; 遭 惡 辱 兮 當 告 誰?
 Dui shu su xi fei wo yi; zao e ru xi dang gao shei?
 As for the terribly vulgar / customs, (nomad) (they were) / not what I / considered proper; / met evil abuse I could tell who?"

10.0

41

rit *slow*

笳 一 會 兮 琴 一 拍; 心 憤 怨 兮 無 人 知。
 Jia yi hui xi qin yi pai; xin fen yuan xi wu ren zhi.
 Nomad flute for a while with the qin in the first verse; (but my) heart's anger and resentment no one knows.

2

49 *a tempo* *mm. 1-4*

戎 羯 逼 我 兮 為 室 家; 將 我 行 兮 向 天 涯。
 Rong jie bi wo xi wei shi jia; jiang wo xing xi xiang tian ya.
 The nomads compelled me to marry (their chief) and caused me to travel to the end of the world.

10.0

57 mm.25-26

雲 山 萬 重 兮 歸 路 遐； 疾 風 千 里 兮 風 揚 沙。
 Yun shan wan chong xi gui lu xia; ji feng qian li xi feng yang sha.
 Clouds and mountains (seem to form) / endless layers / (and the) return road is distant; / ill winds (there are) for 1,000 miles / (and the) winds scatter the sand.

12.3

65

人 多 暴 猛 兮 如 虺 蛇； 控 弦 被 甲 兮 爲 驕 奢。
 Ren duo bao meng xi ru hui she; kong xian pi jia xi wei jiao she.
 People / mostly (here are) cruel / fierce, and like vipers; they pull / strings / put on their bow- and armor for pride / and show.

7.9 7.6

74 mm.41-48 rit. slow

兩 拍 張 弦 兮 弦 欲 絕； 志 摧 心 折 兮 自 悲 嗟。
 Liang pai zhang xian xi xian yu jue; zhi cui xin zhe xi zi bei jie.
 In the second verse I stretch / strings / strings want to break; will repressed, heart broken, to myself in grief I sigh.

3 a tempo mm. 49-56

越 漢 國 兮 入 胡 城； 亡 家 失 身 兮 不 如 無 生。
 Yue Han guo xi ru hu cheng; wang jia shi shen xi bu ru wu sheng.
 Passing beyond Han country I enter a nomad village; losing home / losing and the self is worse than being dead.

10.0

8

251 continue freely

爲天有眼兮何不見我獨漂流？爲神有靈兮何事處我天南海北頭？
 Wei tian you yan xi he bu jian wo du piao liu? Wei shen you ling xi he shi chu wo tian nan hai bei tou?
 /heaven has eyes why /not see my /solitary wandering? /divine has /spirit why /cause my wandering?

Since heaven has eyes does it does it Since the an active does it

5.6 5.6 5.6 6.2 6.4 5.9 6.4 6.2

259

我不負天兮天何配我殊匹？我不負神兮神何殫我越荒州？
 Wo bu fu tian xi tian he pei wo shu pi? Wo bu fushen xi shen he jian wo yue huang zhou?
 I /not /heaven: why did it pair me with such a I /not /the divine: why did it did turn against imprisonment barren lands?

I /not /heaven: why did it pair me with such a I /not /the divine: why did it did turn against imprisonment barren lands?

6.2 5.6 5.9 6.4 5.9 5.6 4.4 4.8 4.4 4.4 4.4 4.6

267

mm.41-48 a tempo

rit.

slow

製茲八拍兮擬俳憂；何知曲成兮心轉愁？
 Zhi zi ba pai xi ni pai you; he zhi qu cheng xi xin zhuan chou?
 I made this eighth verse intending diversion; how / know /song was finished my heart /turn melancholy?

I made this eighth verse intending diversion; how / know /song was finished my heart /turn melancholy?

4.0 4.8 4.4 3.2

9

275

天無涯兮地無邊；我心愁兮亦復然。
 Tian wu ya xi di wu bian; wo xin chou xi yi fu ran.
 Heaven has no edge, earth has no border; my heart sad: and (this) is repetitive limitless.

Heaven has no edge, earth has no border; my heart sad: and (this) is repetitive limitless.

5.6 5.6 5.6

341 *a tempo*

淚 成 血。 十 拍 悲 聲 兮 淚 成 血。
 lei cheng xue. shi pai bei sheng xi lei cheng xue.
 / tears become blood. (repeat verse).

6.4 6.4 6.4 6.4 6.4 6.4 6.4 6.4 6.4 6.4

11
348

我 非 貪 生 而 惡 死； 不 能 捐 身 兮 心 有 以。
 wo fei tan sheng er e wu si; bu neng juan shen xi xin you yi.
 I neither covet life nor hate death; I cannot reject / body (while my) heart has a reason / to live

5.9 5.6 6.2

356

生 仍 冀 得 兮 歸 桑 梓； 死 當 埋 骨 兮 長 已 矣。
 sheng reng ji de xi gui sang zi; si dang mai gu xi chang yi yi.
 While I still have hopes of going home (to my) mulberry / catalpa / and trees once / dead then they will bury / bones my forever it is all over.

7.6 5.9 6.4 6.2

364

日 居 月 諸 兮 在 戎 壘； 胡 人 寵 我 兮 有 二 子。
 ri ju yue zhu xi zai rong lei; hu ren chong wo xi you er zi.
 For days and months I lived within the nomad walls; a nomad esteemed me and we had two songs.

7.6 7.6

405

忽遇漢使兮稱近詔；遣千金兮贖妾身。
 Hu yu Han shi xi cheng jin zhao; qian qian jin xi shu qie shen.
 Suddenly / receive we a Han envoy calling on us with an / message; imperial they have 1,000 pieces of gold to ransom this humble woman.

2.4 9.0 9.4

413

喜得生還兮逢聖君；嗟別稚子兮會無因。
 Xi de sheng huan xi feng sheng jun; jie bie zhi zi xi hui wu yin.
 I am / happy to have my life restored and to be going the emperor; sad to leave my sons, / return not possible.

7.9 7.6

421 mm.41-48 rit. slow

十有二拍兮哀樂均；去住兩情兮誰具陳？
 Shi you er bai xi ai le jun; qu zhu liang qin xi shei ju chen?
 In the 12th verse misery and joy are equal; to go or stop, both emotions: who can put them all in order?

13 429

不謂殘生兮卻得旋歸；撫抱胡兒兮泣下沾衣。
 Bu wei can sheng xi que de xuan gui; fu bao hu er xi qi xia zhan yi.
 I did / not value much my useless life, now as I am about to my return home, I fondle and embrace my nomad sons, tears falling to soak my clothing.

4.6

529

再還漢國兮歡心足；心有懷兮愁轉深。
 Zai huan Han guo xi huan xin zu; xin you huai xi chou zhuan shen.
 Again returning to Han country pleases my heart enough; my heart has cherishing, my grief turns deeper.

外三拍 六拍 外三拍 六拍 外三拍 六拍 外三拍 六拍 外三拍 六拍

537

日月無私兮會不照臨；母子分離兮意難任。
 Ri yue wu si xi ceng bu zhao lin; mu zi fen li xi yi nan ren.
 The sun / moon / and have no bias / as they already don't shine near here; mother / son and are separated, my / thoughts are hard to bear.

外三拍 六拍 外三拍 六拍 外三拍 六拍 外三拍 六拍 外三拍 六拍

12.3 10.8 12.3

545

同天隔越兮如商參；
 Tong tian ge yue xi ru shang cen;
 Under the same sky / separated thus but like Shang Lucifer and Orion;
 (two constellations which never meet)

外三拍 六拍 外三拍 六拍 外三拍 六拍 外三拍 六拍

12.3

551

mm. 137-141 rit.

生 死 不 相 知 兮 何 處 尋？
 sheng si bu xiang zhi xi he chu xun?
 In life and death not knowing each other, in what place / search?
 can we

中九拍 外三拍 中九拍 外三拍 中九拍 外三拍 中九拍 外三拍 中九拍 外三拍

590

泣血仰頭兮 訴蒼蒼； 胡爲生我兮 獨罹此殃。
 Qi xue yang tou xi su cang cang; hu wei sheng wo xi du li ci yang.
 Weeping blood I raise my head and curse heaven; nomads gave life to me but only to suffer this misfortune.

化六 勻勻勻 七比 达, 屈四 勻勻勻 勻勻四 九

17

598

十七拍兮 心鼻酸； 關山阻 隔兮 行路難。
 Shi qi pai xi xin bi suan; guan shan zu ge xi xing lu nan.
 In the 17th verse my heart and nose are bitter; the mountain passes are a barrier, making travel difficult.

入漫 become slow

九 立 勻勻勻 十 勻勻勻, 十一 勻勻勻 十二 勻勻勻, 十三 勻勻勻 十四 勻勻勻 十五 勻勻勻 十六 勻勻勻 十七 勻勻勻

606

去時懷土兮 心無緒； 來時別兒兮 思漫漫。
 Qu shi huai tu xi xin wu xu; lai shi bie er xi si man man.
 When I had to go away I missed my homeland, my heart was out of joint; returning, as I leave my sons, I feel uncontrollable/grief.

外 勻勻勻 外 勻勻勻 外 勻勻勻 外 勻勻勻, 外 勻勻勻 外 勻勻勻 外 勻勻勻 外 勻勻勻

614

塞上黃蒿兮 枝枯葉乾； 沙場白骨兮 刀痕箭瘢；
 Sai shang huang hao xi zhi ku ye gan; sha chang bai bu xi dao hen jian ban;
 The frontier's yellow sagebrush, the dead branches / dry leaves; the sandy desert, with white bones, knife scars / arrow scars;

外 勻勻勻 外 勻勻勻 外 勻勻勻 外 勻勻勻, 外 勻勻勻 外 勻勻勻 外 勻勻勻 外 勻勻勻

12.3 10.8

622

風 霜 凜 凜 兮 春 夏 寒； 人 馬 饑 餒 兮 筋 力 單。
 feng shuang lin lin xi chun xia han; ren ma ji hui xi jin li dan.
 wind / frost are chilling, spring / summer are cold; people / horses / hungry / tired, and are and their muscular strength insufficient.

外 上 世 外 世 外 下 勻 世, 分 二 分

630 m.137-141

豈 知 重 得 兮 入 長 安？ 歎 息 欲 絕 兮 淚 闌 干。
 qǐ zhī chóng de xi rù cháng ān? tàn xī yù jué xi lèi lán gān.
 How / know / again get to enter Chang'An? Sighing, I am about to break; tears roll down my face.

外 上 世 外 世 外 下 勻 世, 外 上 世 外 下 勻 世 外 上 世 外 下 勻 世 外 上 世 外 下 勻 世

18 642

胡 笳 本 是 出 胡 中； 緣 琴 翻 出 音 律 同。
 hu jiā běn shì chū hū zhōng; yuán qín fān chū yīn lǜ tóng.
 The nomad pipe basically is coming from / amongst the nomads; compared to the qin it draws out melodic patterns that are similar.

正慢 very slow

外 上 世 外 下 勻 世, 外 上 世 外 下 勻 世 外 上 世 外 下 勻 世 外 上 世 外 下 勻 世

650

十 八 拍 兮 曲 雖 終； 響 有 餘 兮 思 無 窮。
 shí bā pāi xi qǔ suī zhōng; xiǎng yǒu yú xi sī wú qióng.
 With the verse the melody, although it ends, resonates still further, and my thoughts have no end.

大 半 命 三 尸 也 立 下 半 也 勻 世, 外 上 世 外 下 勻 世 外 上 世 外 下 勻 世 外 上 世 外 下 勻 世

6.2 6.4 6.4

