

RECORD OF AN INTERVIEW WITH THE *GUQIN* PERFORMER MR. GONG YI

An article by Tong Kin-Woon published in the Hong Kong newspaper *Xin Wan Bao*, 14 March 1976.

Translated by John Thompson

In December of 1975 the Shanghai Music Group came to Hong Kong to give performances. Unfortunately I had not purchased a ticket for the *guqin* performance. Later I also missed its broadcast on television. Although this caused me great regret, fortunately I was invited to participate in the cocktail reception held on the fourteenth (of December) so that I could have a meeting with the *guqin* performer Gong Yi. I immediately jotted down more than thirty of the problems of every sort concerning the *guqin* that I had had on my mind for many years, and happily went off to the party.

Because *qin* aficionados in Hong Kong know very little about the circumstances of *qin* developments inside (China) and also because on this day Mr. Gong was almost completely monopolized by myself, so that practically no one else had an opportunity to talk with him, I am hereby making public my arrangement of the materials Mr. Gong told me, in order to present it as an offering to everyone. Moreover I take this opportunity to convey my thanks to the group which sponsored this meeting (the New China News Agency) and to the elegant thoughts of Mr. Gong. However, this article has not been seen by Mr. Gong himself.

QUESTION (1): Mr. Gong, would you please talk a bit about yourself and the teachers you have had?

GONG: I am from Jiangsu. I am 34 years old. I have played the *qin* since I was fifteen. That is nineteen years so far. During these two decades I have had many teachers, for example, Mr. Xu Zhuo (Xu Lisun) of the Meian School and Shen Caonong of the Sichuan school. Both of these teachers died prior to the last New Year. I have also studied under Mr. Wu Zhenping, as well as Mr. Zhang Ziqian of the Guiangling School.

QUESTION (2): In China Mr. Guan Pinghu has recorded (the tune) *Guangling San* on (a set of) three old-style 78 r.p.m. phonograph records. The general consensus of opinion from all over seems to be unanimous that Mr. Guan played it very well. Was the *Guangling San* that you played taught to you by him?

GONG: My *qin* studies have been in Shanghai. Unfortunately by the time I'd gone up to Beijing Mr. Guan had already died. My rendition of *Guangling San* was learned from Xu Zhuo and Wu Zhenping. But although I have not mastered the entire piece, those two nevertheless play the entire piece. Actually, the number of people in China who can play *Guangling San* is not small. For example Mr. Wu Jinglue of the Yushan school can play it. His son Wu Wenguang has also learned it. (Wu) Wenguang just turned twenty-five. Among those who play *Guangling San* Guan Pinghu was the one who worked at it most diligently, so it was he who was allowed to make the recording.

NOTE:

In August 1975 Wu Wenguang was sent to Japan, where he played *Liu Shui* and *San Xia Chuan Ge*.

QUESTION (3): You have studied with all the famous *qin* masters. Certainly you must be able to play many pieces.

GONG: Although altogether I've studied forty or fifty pieces, I've been like the food-craving small black Tibetan bear searching for maize: what is gathered up in the left hand is then dropped from the right hand. I understand all the pieces which the average person plays, such as *Meihua Sannong*, *Xiao Xiang Shui Yuan*, *Liu Shui*, *Ping Sha Luo Yan*, as well as the pieces of the Meian school. For *Xiao Xiang* I studied the transcription of Mr. Zha Fuxi (who has recorded the *qin* tune *Zui Yu Chang Wan* on an Art-Tune label phonograph disc). "*Liu Shui*" I altered a bit from the old notation. I can also play a few of the newly written contemporary pieces.

Speaking of this, the number of newly written pieces is not small. For example, Mr. Wu Jinglue wrote a piece called "*Xinjiang Hao*" (Xiangjiang is Great) and someone has arranged "The East is Red as a *qin* piece. The piece I performed here called *Sanxia Chuan Ge* was written by Li Xiangting, a friend of this (Shanghai) group. He can also play the *qin*. Since my own compositions are not mature, I am embarrassed to talk about them. And yet I believe that if one wants to understand *guqin* music as fully as possible he must have the courage to compose pieces. As soon as the students I teach have studied for two years I have them compose pieces.

QUESTION (4): Please discuss the method used in writing *qin* pieces.

GONG: I am also in a phase of groping around {with this problem}, and what I say you should consider only as tentative considerations, and not as fixed conclusions. I think that first you must make clear the various (ideas) the piece is going to express, and compose the piece according to the patterns that form in your mind's eye. This is the compositional method for Chinese programmatic music. For example, if your piece is one that sings the praises of a notable person, then first you determine that the piece cannot be a short one: it must be at least a medium-length composition, or it could be a full-length composition. After this, in accordance with the impressions this person leaves on others, and details of his biography (one must) arrange the musical phrases, using mainly thematic material which is firm, vigorous and bold; compose melodies; add variations and repetition and "brew" this together in order to create one piece. As for which *qin* tuning to use, it seems as though this has no connection with the contents (of the piece). That is to say, thematic materials that can be expressed using the third string as *do* mode (*zheng diao*) can be changed so that they use the fifth string as *do* (*jin wu diao*) or other tunings.

QUESTION (5): What you have studied is very inclusive. What sorts of things did you study previously?

GONG: Formerly when I was in music school I had to put equal studying into piano, harmony, composition, instrumental accompaniment methods and other such aspects of Western music. Those of us who studied the *qin* had

private teachers. The teachers would come to our *qin* room twice a week. We used the traditional hand-technique tablature, and also used five line notation or one line (numerical) notation to help us remember the rhythms. Besides the *qin* I also play the *sanxian* (a three string banjo).

QUESTION: (6) For you *qin* students to have a *qin* room was really thoughtful! So what sort of *qins* did you use for practicing? Can private individuals in China keep Song or Tang dynasty *qins* as their own personal property?

GONG: Particularly famous *qins* have for the most part already passed into the public collections of museums, and so nowadays private citizens may as they wish personally own Song or Ming dynasty *qins*, sell them privately to friends, or they may also commission them to be sold at stores which sell old furniture on commission. Moreover, the prices are not high. It is just that one is not allowed to take one out of the country. Students may themselves buy good *qins*; those who cannot buy them may buy new *qins*, or perhaps make them with their own hands. I myself have made about ten *qins*.

NOTE:

Because *qins* of earlier periods are not easily purchased (outside China), and the tone of the new factory made *qins* not good, a lot of *qin* players hope for *qins* skillfully made by hand. As for the methods used to make *qins*, materials that were written down by *qin* players before the Ming dynasty have not survived to the present in much detail. During the Qing dynasty there was (Zhu Fengjie) who was very skilled at *qin* construction and wrote the *Yuguzhai Qinpu*, which gives a detailed account of such *qin* construction methods as selection of proper materials, treating the wood, the dimensions, the lacquer-powder, the tools needed - there is nothing which is not explained. I have searched for (this book) for many years, but have only been able to find a hand-copied version of Section Two (note: since this was written it has been learned that the Library of Congress has three copies), and haven't seen the original at all. There are many problems and questions that I have not been able to solve. Also, because the *qins* volume is small, and the method used for putting on the strings is not very convenient, these problems of how to improve its functioning are thus questions which *qin* players have given attention to for the past twenty years.

QUESTION (7): I would like to ask your opinions concerning the selection of materials, dimensions, shapes, the sound box, the bridge, the sound holes, the sound retainers (oblong protuberances opposite the two sound holes which, along with "bulwarks" inside the edge of the sound holes, should increase resonance inside the sound box), the string pegs, the lacquer-powder, and gluing it all together.

GONG: Although the old books say the *qin* top should be made of *tong* wood (*firmiana platanifolia*) and the bottom of *zi* wood (*catalpa ovata*) other materials are often used. In my experience one can make the *qin* top not only from *tong* wood, but also from *shan* wood (fir) or *song* (pine). If *song* wood is used the sound of the *qin* is liable to be a bit soft. In China we may request some old wood from the government. The older the wood the better it is. As for the *qins* which I myself have made, they are all in the experimental stage, so that what I say about styles and methods is not completely fixed. As for the size, I think a slightly large instrument is best. For the sound box to be too small is no good. The thickness of the top and bottom should depend on the size of the *qin* and the substance of the materials, and is not always the same. The sound retainers are kept. Sometimes we have experimented with longer sound retainers. Sometimes we try putting on a diagonal sound retainer, which you could also call a "slanting bean". It stretches from one corner of the

(sound box of the) *qin* all the way to the opposite, glue being used to fasten it onto the board inside the soundbox. The area below the bridge and at the top of the *qin* are both hollowed out. In this way the sounds are made a bit stronger. It is better to retain the "bulwarks". As for the glue used on the bottom board, many kinds of glue have been experimented with, such, as science glue (*kexue jiao*), cattle skin glue and pigskin glue. Using a method of inlay that involves no glue at all has also been tried. There is also one which uses a big piece of wood from which the *qin* is gouged out, and one in which a bordering piece is added between the top plank and the bottom plank. One method is not sufficient. But because the number (of *qins* made using these methods) is small, it cannot yet be calculated which kind is best. As for the lacquer-powder, sometimes the old method of mixing raw lacquer with deer horn crystals is used. However, I think that thick layers of powder obstruct the vibrations of the *qin* wood, so sometimes I add no powder at all, and use only lacquer. I have used both raw lacquer and science glue. Of course raw lacquer is good, but it is toxic. If you get it on your skin it causes red boils that contain purulent matter. We should not suffer such hardships for our own personal benefit, or to improve our ability to work with wood and lacquer in order to put lacquer on a *qin*. So now a special kind of science lacquer is being experimented with, and the results are not bad.

As for the aspect of reforming (the instrument), the upper one of the two *qins* pictured in the program book was made by myself. The head of the *qin* is about two or three inches longer than average, that is to say, this revised *qin* is bigger than *qins* of former periods, and the head of the *qin* has been gouged out empty. This *qin* of mine does not use its *qin* pegs to tune the strings by loosening and tightening them. The strings go through "string eyes" at the back of the bridge, and are fastened to a hooking device. As for the other end of the strings, they are not tied onto the "wild geese feet" (the two legs on the lower half of the *qin* base to which the strings are traditionally tied), but instead a mechanical device is employed which uses a screw to tighten or loosen the strings individually. If you look at the upper of the (two) *qins* shown in the program book (for the Hong Kong recitals), you can still see these seven screws in the side of the tail (extending from about the ninth to twelfth studs but on the side near the player. Underneath the *qin* the strings must extend diagonally from there to the tail end of the *qin*.

QUESTION (8): This reform of yours, compared with the (other new) method in which guitar pegs are fastened onto the head of the *qin* is better looking. It is just that usually we take the one or two excess feet of string at the end and wrap this onto the "wild geese feet"; then when the top end of the string breaks as we play it, we can proceed to pull out a few inches (and put the same string back on), so we do not have to change to a new string. In the first place, good strings are hard to buy. In the second place new strings have the disadvantage of not being as good as slightly old ones in smoothness and tonal purity. Although one can talk about the difficulty of tying the strings and tuning them, yet this also has its good points. With this screw-on method of yours the amount of string wrapped on the end is not long. At some time or other the string will break. It must be that there is then no more string to put on.

GONG: Our strings are discarded as soon as they break. Even if there were extra string you could not continue to use it. People who heard my performance will know that the strings on my *qin* were put on very tightly. When I play in the tuning which has the third string as *do*, the third string is raised to the "F" on a piano (about one whole tone higher than usual), so the sound is high and bright. My strings are not the traditional silkworm thread strings, but rather a new product.

From the first to the fourth string the inside is a steel thread with a layer of silk thread wrapped around the outside to make it thicker. Then outside this a layer of nylon string is wrapped. As for the fifth to the seventh strings, they are steel thread wrapped in nylon. In this way, not only do they not break easily, the sound is also brighter while keeping the flavor of the old *qins*. The nylon on the string is basically not round but rather is pressed flat. Therefore, after it is wrapped (onto the inner thread) the entire length of *qin* string will be very smooth. The old silk strings were boiled in glue. When they broke you could not discard them. Nylon strings cannot be boiled. As soon as they break you discard them. And so I say that our strings do not need to be long. When they break it is straightforward and easy to change one.

NOTE:

Nowadays Cantonese music instruments already use a new kind of string for the *zheng*. Inside is nylon, a metal string is wrapped around this, then outside again a flat-pressed nylon string is wrapped. It is very smooth. Once I put some on a *qin* and it was quite attractive. But because the middle layer did not use silk thread, it had a rather metallic flavor. When used on a *qin* the results were not of the highest quality.

QUESTION (9): When playing the *qin* it is suitable in addition to devise a *qin*\_table. That is to say, the men of old used a large scale hollow brick to make a table, also used wood, and also used stone tabletops, utilizing these to make the *qin* sound louder. If the *qin*\_sound was weak then hollow brick tables were used to make the sound louder. If the *qin* sound was empty then a stone surface or a table with a hard wood surface was used to make the sounds more solid. To sum up, one sought to have the hardness and softness of the *qin* and its table be mutually advantageous. Is there anything special about your *qin* table?

GONG: My *qin* table is in the form of a long brick. Inside there is a curled piece of wood which faces upwards, rather like a tile turned up, with the objective of broadening as well as reflecting and vibrating. But this table is made from plywood and is not an ideal one. When I give a public performance and want the sound to be expanded with purity and reliability, I use an amplifier. I take a microphone and put it in front of the *qin*. Every *qin* has different optimum "music points." As for this *qin* I am using now, it should be placed at a spot two tenths of the way from the seventh stud (towards the eighth).

QUESTION (10): The papers say the *qin* you brought this time for the performance is a Song Dynasty *qin* borrowed from the Old Palace Museum (National Palace Museum in Beijing). Could you give a summary introduction to it?

GONG: This *guqin* is the same as many other music instruments: the older they are the better their sound is. This time we have come out to perform as representatives of our country. Naturally I could not use an inferior *qin*. So I went to the Old Palace Museum and borrowed this Song dynasty *qin* called *Taigu Yiyin*. On the back of the *qin* there is a carved inscription in grass characters, and also the four (larger) characters *Tai Gu Yi Yin*. From this we know that the *qin* belonged to (the Song dynasty philosopher) Zhu Xi. The *duanwen* (cracks which gradually appear in the lacquer after many years) and the characters have all been examined and verified by Mr. Zha Fuxi.

QUESTION (11): I suspect there must be more than one thousand *qins* surviving from the Tang, Song, Ming and Qing dynasties, all stored away in China. Is that true?

GONG: I am not clear about the number of *qins* stored away in China. To make a deduction from the entire situation,

undoubtedly there are at least one thousand and several hundreds. But they are spread out in various government organizations as well as in private possession in every province. They are not collected into one museum. There are certainly some Tang dynasty *qins*. Recently at the Old Palace Museum I saw one called *Yu Ling Long*. It is very beautiful. Mr. Zha Fuxi has one called *Yi Chi Po*. Its tone is very hoary and loose. Some people even say they have possessed *qins* that pre-date the Tang dynasty. However, I have no way to examine and verify this. It would seem that the oldest *qin* known today should be considered to be the small *qin* unearthed from the Western Han Dynasty tomb number three at Mawangdui.

QUESTION (12): As for this unearthed Han Dynasty *qin*, the introduction to it in (volume 107 of the Chinese monthly periodical) *Wen Wu* was very sketchy. From looking at the photograph, the tail of the *qin* seemed to be missing one of its corners. Can you fill me in with some of the missing information?

GONG: This *qin* I have seen. It is only two feet long (standard *qin* length is just over four feet). It has no studs, nor has it powder though it has lacquer. The strings no longer exist, but there are seven string holes. Looking at it in general one can initially confirm that it is a *qin*. If it was actually of practical use, or specifically a burial object or a toy, is something that requires further research. The tail part of the *qin* is missing some wood from the inside edge. Actually the outside edge is the same. It is just that the picture in *Wen Wu* monthly was slapped on unclearly. The tail of this *qin*, moreover, is not flat but rather has one thick piece of wood more than the average *qin*. But this thick wood does not go the whole length of the *qin*. It is very strange. The bottom of the *qin* has only one "wild goose foot" in the center. The bottom part of the "wild goose foot" has one groove. The seven strings all passed through this groove and then were wrapped around the "wild goose foot". This method is not understood by anyone. And speaking of this, there could be rather a lot of strange *qins* in China. There are copper *qins* and iron *qins*, and also a stone *qin* – not porcelain (as the one in Taipei – but stone).

QUESTION (13): Several *qin* books from previous generations speak of special aspects of the shape of *qins* as follows, "Tang (*qins* are) round, Song (*qins* are) flat"; "Yuan (*qins* are) heavy, Ming (*qins* are) light" (or "Ming heavy and Yuan light"). Some books also say that "plum blossom cracks" can appear on Tang dynasty *qins*, and speak of (*qins* whose) entire body has "plum blossom cracks", and so on. What opinion does Mr. Gong have of this?

GONG: The phrase "Tang round, Song flat" is true in the majority of circumstances. The Tang dynasty *qins* which I have seen are all bigger and with rounder arching. The paintings of people of the Tang period also like to depict fat horses and fat hands. This was the vogue of the time. Song *qins* are different. According to what Mr. Zha says, Song *qins* usually have a bottom which is more narrow than the top. As for the sentence about the relative lightness and heaviness of Yuan and Ming, it is not very reliable. The Yuan dynasty lasted only a few decades. It would seem from appearances that *qin* manufacture was not completely precise. Moreover, the *qin* material can be *tong*, pine, fir or some other wood. The preferences of the craftsmen of each province in selecting materials do not necessarily resemble each other even in the same time period. Furthermore, It would seem that this matter of weight cannot be precise. As for "plum blossom cracks," I have seen *qins* which have them, but they were merely several circular cracks two or three tenths of an inch in diameter which had appeared in certain places on the *qin*, and most were in groups of two or three or single ones scattered about. Very seldom were there

five that had fortunately formed into the shape of flower petals. There can hardly be a *qin* whose entire body has "plum blossom cracks," can there be? Only if you take cracks with four or more corners so that they approach being round, and consider these as "plum blossom cracks" could this be a possibility. Or perhaps some *qin* had one or two small circles each on its bottom, top, head and tail, and so its name was beautified to "Plum Blossom Cracks on the Entire Body."

QUESTION (14): Can you play *You Lan*? I have several questions about *You Lan* that I would like to ask you to explain for me.

GONG: I cannot play the entire piece *Guangling San* yet, so how could I be able to play *You Lan*? However, *You Lan* uses Tang Dynasty finger techniques that are comparable to the finger techniques of *Guangling San*. Do not ask me about the problem of the pitches, but it would not do any harm to talk a bit about the fingering techniques.

QUESTION (15): Different experts of the Tang and Song Song dynasty all have somewhat different or contradictory explanations of the same finger techniques. How do you *choose* which one to use?

GONG: If it is known which person's way of speaking is correct, then that one is used. Otherwise, whichever finger technique from a musical point of view gives the most appropriate sounds is chosen. Did not Ms. Yuan Quanyou write an essay, "Collected Notes on the Finger Techniques of the *qin* handbook *Shen Qi Mi Pu*? That has already solved most of the problems.

QUESTION (16): Ms. Yuan's essay attaches a list of more than eighty finger techniques of which he had not yet been able to find explanations by earlier men. How should you deal with these finger techniques?

GONG: Another essay has already been printed in China in which that group of finger techniques are for the most part solved. However, that article can only be passed around among people who are specifically authorized, so you cannot see it. If it is really a matter of not being able to find explanations, then I make my own finger techniques based on experience and the structure of the music. This is "putting what one learns into practice." Actually, the finger techniques were created by people. Every music instrument depends on having new finger techniques in order to strengthen its expressive capabilities. Of course when playing an old piece for the *qin* one must use the original finger techniques. On the other hand new compositions can try using new finger techniques.

QUESTION (17): Please give me an introduction to the new finger techniques of *San Xia Chuan Ge*. (a new tune that Mr. Gong performed in Hong Kong).

GONG: Without a *qin* in hand I cannot quickly speak of the concrete details. During the Tang dynasty the right hand customarily, used compound finger techniques (NOTE: This means several motions produce sounds in succession, but are called one finger technique. This can reveal something particular about the

rhythm.) The ornamental movements of the left hand are relatively infrequent. After the Song and Ming Dynasties the right hand became more specific and elaborate about the eight methods of the four fingers (inward and outward with the thumb to ring fingers), and the left hand became more specific and elaborate about the ornamental techniques *yin* (fast vibrato), *nao* (slow vibrato), *zhuo* (sliding up into the indicated note) and *zhu* (sliding down into the indicated note). Up to the present it has remained the same. In my own finger techniques, outside of these, sometimes the left hand uses neither *yin*, *nao*, *zhuo* or *zhu*, but puts more into simply playing the basic sounds. The right hand utilizes quicker movements such as the *gun* of the *pipa* and *sanxian* (a movement in which the thumb and index finger continuously pluck) and the *kuai lun* of the *guzheng*, in which the finger is shaken back and forth. (NOTE: Mr. Gong did not clarify whether one uses the thumb or uses the forefinger.) The baby finger of the right hand is still not used, but the baby finger of the left hand may be used to help strike harmonics. However, the baby finger is still practically unused on the *qin*.  
NOTE:

I took advantage of Mr. Gong using his hands in illustration to examine his fingernails. As with the average *qin* player he had not grown the fingernails long on his left hand, while the right hand fingernails were grown out about one tenth of an inch. This was nothing special. However, the left corner of his right hand thumb was jutting out a little more than usual. Perhaps this makes it easier to pluck strings.

QUESTION (18): Taking for example the finger technique *quanfu*, Yang Zuyun of the Song Dynasty held the view that as the index and middle fingers stroke the first second strings, the thumb "binds" (restrains, that is, presses sufficiently hard on) the third string, to prevent the index and middle fingers from striking the third string, which would produce extraneous sounds. Do you follow this sort of method of "binding" the string?

GONG: Yang Zuyun said that? I had not noticed. I do not "bind" the string; I simply practice enough with the index and middle fingers so that they will not make these extraneous sounds. But I would hold the opinion that when playing the slow old melodies one could follow this style. I think the *qin* players of different regions each had their own different customs.

QUESTION (19): The publication *Jin Yu Qin Kan* 1937 recorded more than two hundred *qin* players in all of China. In 1973 I made an investigation and calculated that outside of China there were more than one hundred *qin* players, including beginners. Are there now two or three hundred *qin* players in China?

GONG: There probably could not be that many. The *guqin* after all is rather difficult to make widely popular. Fortunately, the people who study this sort of instrument value quality rather than quantity. The study and work goes on ceaselessly.

QUESTION (20): Is the work of the *Guqin* Research Institute still continued under the direction of Mr. Zha Fuxi?

GONG: The research work is still going on under his direction. Although no longer called the *Guqin* Research Institute, the research work is still the same. Mr. Zha's scholarship is very thorough, He has on

behalf of future generations spread out a smooth and wide road. Now he has changed his name to Zha Yiping, and he and he was elected as a delegate of the Fourth Meeting of the People's Congress.

QUESTION (21): What people are doing research on the *qin* in China? Do Wang Shixiang, who did research on *Guangling San* and the music history researcher Yang Yinliu play the *qin*? Before the Cultural Revolution the book *Qinqu Jicheng* published more than one thousand pages (of old *guqin* manuscripts) in its first volume. Will any other volumes be published? I heard that before the Cultural Revolution there was published in China a set of ten phonograph discs of *qin* pieces. Is that true?

GONG: In China old Mr. Yao Bingyan is studying the Ming dynasty handbook *Shen Qi Mi Pu*. Both Mr. Wang and Mr. Yang can play the *qin*. *Qinqu Jicheng* is pretty much ready for continuation. Before leaving the country I went to see Mr. Zha. He had just received a letter from the China Bookstore asking him if he wanted to publish several later volumes. The phonograph recordings of *qin* pieces have been issued in a set of eleven records. It includes a lot of pieces. But they cannot be purchased outside of China. Speaking of this, we inside of China must be more fortunate than you. Our materials are more numerous. These last ten-odd years we have discovered many examples of old tablature. Some were found outside of China and returned. The old tablature books are increasing in numbers. So the number of (known) *qin* tunes is also increasing somewhat. However, it is not easy to discover again, for example, special materials like a Tang dynasty hand copy of the *qin* piece *You Lan*.

QUESTION (22): On top of the manuscript of *You Lan* it is explained as using the Stone Tablet Tuning (*Jieshi Diao*), whereas formerly these words *Jieshi Diao* had not been seen in either old or new *qin* books. Guan Pinghu and Yao Bingyan, when they play this tune, use the tuning in which the third string is treated as *do* (*zhengdiao*) but it "borrows" the first string to use it as *do*. Meanwhile Mr. Xu Zhuo, besides just using the first string as *do* also lowers the third string half a tone (so that the first string is in fact tuned to *do*). Do you have an opinion about this?

GONG: I myself have not studied this. But from listening it would seem that Guan Pinghu's tuning is about the most correct.

QUESTION (23): Do you think that modulations occur in *qin* pieces of the old days?

GONG: The semitones of *You Lan* exceed the notes of the pentatonic and diatonic music scales. Formerly some people felt that this was modulation in the piece. I also believe that perhaps as a result of modulations, if your listening is based on the original mode then there seem to be changes into semitones. I think that *Guangling San* also has modulation, namely in the section played in slow rhythm (Section Seventeen, *Xun Wu*). But this impression depends on the understanding of the individual. The possibility of modulation in *qin* pieces still awaits research by people of profound understanding.