

MASTER'S THESIS

The emperor's music: the creation of a poetic tradition from the Han dynasty music bureau

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**The Emperor's Music:
The Creation of a Poetic Tradition from the Han Dynasty Music
Bureau**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Philosophy

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Abstract

The following dissertation offers an analysis of the development, expansion, and abolition of the Han dynasty Music Bureau through a consideration of the poetry it collected, recorded, and patronized. Inquiry is made regarding the relationship between this early Music Bureau poetry and that of the traditional *yuefu* genre of folk-songs and literati compositions. It is the hope of the present study that a renewed focus on the *yuefu* poetry of the Han dynasty will lead to further reconsiderations and, in turn, greater understandings of *yuefu*'s special place in the Chinese poetic tradition.

The first chapter of the following dissertation is an introduction, which expounds upon the main arguments of the thesis and acquaints the reader with information regarding the Music Bureau. The introduction also provides an over view of some of the most important scholarship consulted. The second chapter illustrates the early Han ritual system through a reading of several "Anshi fangzhong ge" ritual hymns, and places them in a greater historical and philosophical context. The third chapter examines the expansion of the Music Bureau under the reign of Emperor Wu of Han; while the fourth chapter discusses the interplay between folk-songs and literati imitations in the earliest anthologies of *yuefu* poetry. Finally, the fifth chapter is the conclusion, and suggests that the form and thematic contents of *yuefu* poems be considered in launching a greater discussion on the beginnings of *yuefu* poetry as a discernible literary tradition.

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