

Dual Pathways of Revolutionary Narrative: A Comparative Study of the Wartime Jiaodong Dagu Pieces “The Battle of Shangying” and “Child Hero Li Dapeng”

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Abstract

Drawing on sung texts, musical scores, and related literature, this paper examines two pathways of revolutionary narrative in the Liang-school “revolutionary dagu,” focusing on two Jiaodong dagu (drum ballad) pieces composed during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945): “The Battle of Shangying” and “Child Hero Li Dapeng.” Although both belong to the Liang-style dagu system, their compositional emphases differ. “The Battle of Shangying” centers on a local combat event: through geographic exposition, the depiction of everyday social order, and a transition to the enemy threat, it explains the concrete reasons that armed resistance became necessary in the region. “Child Hero Li Dapeng” centers on a child-hero figure: through the character's introduction, the advancement of his actions, and colloquial language, it constructs a relatable and emulable image of a young hero. Musically and performatively, the former emphasizes environmental setting and the rendering of crisis, whereas the latter foregrounds plot progression, role-switching, and the depiction of action. The differences between the two works reflect Liang Qianguang's responses to distinct propaganda tasks and audience psychologies, while their commonality lies in a compositional logic that, grounded in the Jiaodong dagu tradition, integrates new lyrics, dialect, vocal-melodic metrical patterns (*banshi*), and performance mechanisms. Through the comparison of these pieces from the same lineage, this paper reveals the specific means by which Jiaodong dagu was transformed from folk narrative singing into an art of revolutionary propaganda.

Keywords

Jiaodong dagu; revolutionary dagu; Liang Qianguang.

1. Introduction

Jiaodong dagu is a folk drum-ballad storytelling art that originated in the Qianlong reign of the Qing dynasty[1] and spread across the Jiaodong Peninsula of Shandong. In its early period it circulated in the countryside under names such as “blind men's tune” (*mangrendiao*) and “blind tune” (*xiaqiang*); its core bearers were blind performers, and its principal mode of transmission was oral transmission. Its repertoire revolved around folk legends, historical romances, and local tales, while its central functions were rural moral instruction and popular entertainment, making it an important vehicle of Jiaodong's regional folk culture. The period of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) marked a pivotal turning point in the genre's history. Amid the crisis of national survival and the practical demands of revolutionary propaganda in the Jiaodong anti-Japanese base area, this folk narrative singing—originally a means of livelihood for its performers—underwent a fundamental shift from a vehicle of rural entertainment into an instrument of anti-Japanese, national-salvation propaganda. Its artistic substance, system of transmission, narrative strategies, and social functions were all thoroughly reconfigured, and it became one of the most influential folk art forms in Jiaodong's revolutionary literature and art.

In 1943, Liang Qianguang was dispatched by the Beihai District Committee to teach at the blind-artists' training class in Penglai, where he became the central force behind this transformation. The renovated style he developed, known as "Liang-style dagu" (Liangdiao dagu), laid the musical and creative foundation for the revolutionary transformation of the genre. Existing scholarship, however, has largely addressed this wartime transformation at the level of broad historical overview, with little close, evidence-based analysis of the revolutionary pieces themselves. Accordingly, this study takes as its core objects two representative pieces that Liang composed during 1943–1944 at the Penglai training class: "The Battle of Shangying" and "Child Hero Li Dapeng." The two works share a single creator, musical system, historical context, and compositional aim; this makes them a controlled pair, exemplary material for analyzing the dual pathways of revolutionary narrative in Jiaodong dagu.

The central question of this study is how Jiaodong dagu, during the war, achieved a comprehensive reconfiguration of its social functions through adjustments in narrative strategy. Guided by the ethnomusicological principle of "music as culture[2]," the study adopts an integrated method combining historical, textual, and performance analysis. Placing the pieces back into the revolutionary-historical context in which they were created, and systematically comparing the two works' sung texts, vocal-melodic metrical patterns (banshi), and modes of performance, it identifies the concrete features of two core pathways—a documentary-style combat narrative and a character-centered heroic narrative—and explicates the underlying logic of Jiaodong dagu's revolutionary transformation, thereby deepening our understanding of how China's wartime folk narrative arts (quyi) were transformed more broadly.

2. Literature Review

Working mainly from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), this study searched under the subject term "Jiaodong dagu" and identified 43 relevant core articles, which were analyzed alongside authoritative documentary sources—the Anthology of Chinese Quyi Music: Shandong Volume and the Annals of Chinese Quyi: Shandong Volume—and the domestic literature on wartime quyi. The publication record is itself revealing. Work on Jiaodong dagu began around 2009, grew steadily after 2014, and peaked around 2020, clustering around two concerns: analysis of the music itself and the genre's historical development. One point of consensus has emerged that the war years were the decisive period in which Jiaodong dagu moved from the livelihood storytelling (shuoshu) of blind folk performers toward a more standardized art. Yet close study of that transition remains conspicuously thin.

Within the wider study of wartime quyi, most work has centered on Shaanbei storytelling (shuoshu) in the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region. This scholarship traces how folk quyi turned from a vehicle of rural entertainment into a tool of revolutionary propaganda, and it examines the mass-mobilizing function of revolutionary quyi; together these studies set the field's basic theoretical frame. Two limitations stand out. The first is geographic imbalance: attention has gone overwhelmingly to Yan'an and the other central base areas, while the revolutionary practice of folk quyi in the Jiaodong region behind enemy lines in North China has drawn almost no attention. The second is a lack of depth. Most studies stop at broad historical narrative and rarely analyze the texts or the musical design of particular revolutionary pieces in any close, evidence-based way, leaving unexamined the compositional logic by which folk quyi was fitted to revolutionary ends.

On Jiaodong dagu specifically, the scholarship divides into two strands, both of which give this study its documentary and theoretical footing. On the musical side, Yu Huiyong produced the earliest systematic account of the genre's stylistic branches and musical features; the Anthology of Chinese Quyi Music: Shandong Volume records the core repertoire, scores, and history of the

genre, and is the single most important primary source here. Later scholars among them Liu Yang, Yao Youli, and Zhang Hongmei drew on score analysis and fieldwork to sharpen our understanding of the genre's banqiang-ti structure, vocal characteristics, and regional styles, and they note in passing Liang Qianguang's wartime reworking of the singing into "Liang-style dagu." This work supplies the musical reference points for the present comparison. However, this work focuses primarily on the genre's overall musical morphology; the revolutionary pieces Liang wrote during the war appear only as background, never as the object of close musical or narrative comparison.

On the historical side, Wang Wan has traced the genre from the Qing-dynasty "blind men's tune" to the wartime "revolutionary dagu," established Liang Qianguang's central role in that shift, and clarified how the Jiaodong Federation of Literary and Art Circles, the Blind People's Anti-Japanese National Salvation Association, and the blind-artists' training classes drove the change. Her account gives this study a solid factual framework for placing the music in its historical context. Even so, the discussion stays at the level of historical outline. It does not reach into the transformation's main vehicle—the revolutionary pieces themselves—and it does not ask how one composer shaped different narrative paths for different pieces, or why.

Taken together, this literature prepares the ground for the present study but leaves three gaps. First, research on wartime quyi is geographically lopsided and has paid little systematic attention to the revolutionary drum-ballad practice of the Jiaodong base area behind enemy lines. Second, work on Jiaodong dagu has run along one track at a time—musical analysis or historical narrative—rather than returning the genre to its wartime context as a whole. Third, the study of revolutionary narrative still lacks any systematic comparison of cognate pieces, and so has yet to show the several ways such narrative actually operates in folk narrative singing. This study takes up those three gaps directly.

3. A Comparison of Textual Narration in the Two Pieces

The text of "The Battle of Shangying" (Shangying zhandou) used here is the version titled "The Battle of Shangying (New Lyrics)" in Yu Huiyong's *Shandong Dagou* (Lihua Dagou · Jiaodong Dagou). Because the surviving score is only a fragment, this section analyzes just the extant portion: its opening, its geographic exposition, and the way conflict is introduced. The score of "Child Hero Li Dapeng" (Ertong yingxiong Li Dapeng) survives largely intact, so the character's entrance, the advance of the plot, and the closing are easier to follow. By comparing the two works' narrative structure, point of view, and language, this section sets out the features of their textual narration and the differences between them.

3.1. Narrative Structure and Point of View

In overall structure, "The Battle of Shangying" is an event-centered narrative. The surviving portion is in no hurry to depict the fighting. It first enters the performance scene through the storyteller's opening patter, then moves into the local space of Jiaodong, lays out the life of the people, and only at the end brings in the "Japanese soldiers." The sequence can be described in five stages: the opening formula, a thematic cue, the geographic exposition, the everyday social order, and the turn to the enemy. Lines such as "we've told one round") and "men and women, young and old" do the work of a traditional quyi opening, establishing rapport between performer and audience. "today I speak of nothing else but the great cause of resisting Japan and saving the nation" then turns ordinary storytelling toward the wartime theme. The place names that follow shift the narrative from the performance scene into the local space of Jiaodong: Jiaodong bandao (the Jiaodong Peninsula), Penglai cheng (the town of Penglai), and Penglai ge (Penglai Pavilion, a scenic tower just outside the town).

The point of this arrangement is not to portray a particular hero but to explain why the fighting happens. The lyrics describe the Jiaodong Peninsula, the town of Penglai, and Penglai Pavilion first, then village yangge (folk dancing), lantern sheds, gongs and drums, farm fare, and the life of the people, building up a local society that is settled, lively, and familiar. Only after this order of everyday life has been laid out does "now let me tell of the Japanese soldiers in Penglai town" become the narrative's turning point. The enemy does not appear in isolation, but enters the text as a force that disrupts the local order of life. The event-centered narrative thus has a clear aim: by constructing "our place" and "our life," it shows that resistance is not a distant war but the concrete necessity of defending one's own home and livelihood.

"Child Hero Li Dapeng," by contrast, is a character-centered narrative. Although the piece is named for Li Dapeng, the lyrics do not introduce the protagonist immediately. The piece opens on the era itself, widens to the thousands of national heroes it produced, then narrows to name its subject: "today I speak not of others, but of the child hero Li Dapeng". From there it fills in his background, carries him through his actions, and closes on victory. Li Dapeng is not a figure cut off from his time but one concrete case drawn out from the body of wartime heroes.

Having named him, the lyrics fill in his age, status, and experience. He is "just fifteen," a schoolboy and head of the village ertong tuan (Children's Corps), who has carried stretchers, tended the wounded, looked after the sick, stood sentry, and scouted the enemy. The second half turns to action: he forms the xiaohou'er dui (the "Little Monkeys" squad), receives an urgent jimaixin (a "feather-letter," a wartime dispatch marked with feathers to signal urgency), reads the terrain, sets an ambush, lures the enemy into eating melons, sets off the landmines, and in the end drives the enemy back alongside his squad. His image is not built through static praise. It takes shape gradually, through one action after another.

Both works, then, are told in the third person, but their points of view settle in different places. The narrator of "The Battle of Shangying" is more a teller of events, whose main job is to make the local setting, the people's life, and the enemy's entry clear, so that the fighting rests on a concrete basis. The narrator of "Child Hero Li Dapeng" works around the character's actions, showing how Li Dapeng comes to matter within the wartime world. The narrative core of the former is why the event happens; that of the latter is how a person becomes a hero.

This difference corresponds to different revolutionary propaganda functions. Through its event-centered narrative, "The Battle of Shangying" explains the necessity of fighting: the enemy enters the space of local life, and combat becomes a necessary act of protecting home and people. Through its character-centered narrative, "Child Hero Li Dapeng" makes the hero one of the people. It shows that a hero is not remote or abstract but a fifteen-year-old country child, whose deeds unfold in everyday places: the school, the village, the melon field, the watchshed. That makes him easier for ordinary listeners to grasp and identify with, and it presses home the mobilizing point that an ordinary person, too, can become a hero.

In short, "The Battle of Shangying," through local space and the arrival of the enemy, casts the fighting as a real event that Jiaodong society has no choice but to face. It leans toward documentary event-narrative and serves to report the enemy's presence and raise morale. "Child Hero Li Dapeng," through its era-setting and its chain of actions, casts Li Dapeng as an ordinary person, an approachable and imitable child hero, forming a story-driven character-narrative that serves mass mobilization and heroic example. Together, these works constitute the dual pathways of revolutionary narrative in wartime Jiaodong dagu.

3.2. Language and Prosody

Because only the first part of "The Battle of Shangying" survives while "Child Hero Li Dapeng" is largely intact, an absolute word-frequency count across the two whole pieces would mislead. This section compares only within a limited body of text, looking at how word types are distributed rather than at raw totals. This study uses the surviving lyrics of "The Battle of

Shangying". For "Child Hero Li Dapeng" this study take the key passage where Li Dapeng turns from background to action, from "Li Dapeng saw his moment" to "and set the ambush in place", as a functional sample for observing the language of action narrative. This passage runs through a continuous chain of steps: sizing up the moment, organizing the Little Monkeys squad, reading the terrain, and laying the ambush. It shows in concentrated form how a child hero is made within the everyday spaces of village life.

This study sorted the codable items in the chosen lyrics into five categories: place and spatial terms, expository expressions, action verbs, everyday nouns and objects, and colloquial or dialectal expressions. Each item was counted once, under its primary function, to avoid double counting. A run of padding syllables or reduplicated sounds, such as ai ai ai, was treated as a single spoken unit. Common fillers like "this" and "that" were counted as colloquial or dialectal only where they clearly carried a narrating function. The percentages are based on the total codable items in each chosen text. They show tendencies in the language, not absolute proportions for the whole piece.

Table 1. Proportion of word types in representative passages from the two pieces.

Word category	"Shangying" (extant lyrics)	%	"Li Dapeng" (action section)	%
Place and spatial terms	16	35.6%	10	16.1%
Expository expressions	10	22.2%	5	8.1%
Action verbs	4	8.9%	19	30.6%
Everyday nouns and objects	8	17.8%	10	16.1%
Colloquial and dialectal expressions	7	15.6%	18	29.0%
Total	45	100%	62	100%

As Table 1 shows, in the surviving lyrics of "The Battle of Shangying," place and spatial terms together with expository expressions make up 57.8 percent, well above the share of action verbs. The weight of the language falls not on driving action forward but on fixing location and explaining the event. Place terms such as the Jiaodong Peninsula, the town of Penglai, Penglai Pavilion, Guandong (the Northeast), Dalian, Qingdao, Yingkou, and Beipin (present-day Beijing) anchor the story in Jiaodong and the wider world its people move through. Expressions such as "today I speak of nothing but the great cause of resisting Japan and saving the nation", "Penglai Pavilion, famed from south to north", "gongs and drums shaking the sky", "the people's life is full of joy", and "now let me tell of the Japanese soldiers in Penglai town") carry the work of setting the scene, shifting topic, and bringing in the enemy.

Excerpt, surviving lyrics of "The Battle of Shangying":

English translation:

We've told one round; a north wind blows, cold and still. Let me call out: listen, young and old.

Today I speak of nothing else but the great cause of resisting Japan and saving the nation.

I tell of the Jiaodong Peninsula, water on three sides; to its north stands the town of Penglai, and outside Penglai stands Penglai Pavilion, famed from south to north.

From the countryside the yangge troupes come winding through the lantern sheds, gongs and drums shaking the sky.

Many here go off to make a living, out to the Northeast, to Dalian, Qingdao, Yingkou, and Beiping; hereabouts every household lives by farming, and the people's life is full of joy.

But I'll set all this aside, and turn now to the Japanese soldiers in Penglai town[3].

The rhythm of this passage is unhurried. It unfolds through place names, everyday nouns, and explanatory phrasing. The move from the Jiaodong Peninsula to the town of Penglai to Penglai Pavilion zooms the space inward, while the run from village yangge to lantern sheds, gongs and drums, farm fare, and the people's life builds up the texture of daily life. Only once that local space and social order are in place does the "Japanese soldier" enter the narrative. The language is in no rush to show combat. It first lets the audience confirm that "this is our place," and then explains why they must fight. This serves to justify the fighting: what the enemy invades is not abstract national territory but the Jiaodong life the listeners know.

By contrast, in the action passage of "Child Hero Li Dapeng," action verbs make up 30.6 percent and colloquial or dialectal expressions 29.0 percent. Here the language leans on the character's movement and on a spoken sense of closeness. Verbs arrive one after another and form a clear chain of action: steal, set out), read the terrain, rig up, run, turn, hatch a plan, set in place, lay out, dig, bury, tie on, run a cord to, cover, and arrange. Li Dapeng is not made a hero by praise from outside. He becomes one step by step, in judging, organizing, arranging, and carrying out. Excerpt, action narrative of "Child Hero Li Dapeng":

Li Dapeng saw his moment, and quietly passed the order.

From each man he took two hand grenades, and the biggest landmine of all, with its firing cord. The Little Monkeys squad slipped out on the sly, then stood on the hilltop reading the lay of the land.

By the road, as luck would have it, lay a melon patch, and in it stood a tall watch-shed.

The melon-keeper had long since fled; the patch lay empty and still, not a soul in sight.

Li Dapeng's eyes darted, and a clever plan came to him: he would set an ambush in the melon patch.

Beside the shed he set a low table, and under it dug a deep pit.

In the pit he buried the landmine, a great big thing, and tied on the cord.

He ran the cord south, up over the edge of the well, then covered it with melon leaves so nothing showed.

With many hands they got it all in place, and set the ambush ready.[4]

The action chain in this passage is dense: seeing his moment, passing the order), taking the grenades, setting out, reading the terrain, hatching a plan, setting the ambush, digging the pit, burying the mine, running the cord, covering it with melon leaves, and arranging the ambush. The actions unfold in time order, and the pace of the narrative quickens noticeably. The denser the verbs, the less the text rests on background explanation; it turns instead into a stream of actions happening one after another. Li Dapeng's heroism takes shape within this process. He is not a hero the storyteller praises directly, but a child who can judge a situation, organize his companions, use his surroundings, and carry out a task against the enemy.

Everyday nouns and objects make up a similar share in the two pieces, but they do different work. In "The Battle of Shangying," words like yangge, lantern sheds, gongs and drums, farmers' staple food, and the people's life mainly present the local order of life before the enemy arrives. In "Child Hero Li Dapeng," words like melon patch, watch-shed, low table, deep pit, landmine, firing cord, and melon leaves take part directly in the character's actions. The melon patch, the shed, the little table, and the melon leaves belong to ordinary village life, but the lyrics reorganize them into the means of luring the enemy and laying the ambush. "Child Hero Li Dapeng," in other words, does not stage its heroics on a grand battlefield but among the village, the melon patch, and everyday objects. This makes the hero's deeds more concrete, and closer to the life that rural Jiaodong audiences knew.

Colloquial and dialectal expressions close the distance further between the hero and ordinary people. In "Child Hero Li Dapeng," terms like the Little Monkeys squad, the feather-letter, little kid, small child, "I can do it too", "will it work or not", on the sly, many hands at once, and drool all carry a clear spoken, everyday quality. The name the Little Monkeys squad in particular fits the children's age while suggesting quickness and play, softening the solemn distance of heroic narrative. The piece does not make Li Dapeng a lofty model hero. Through plain, colloquial, local language, it writes him as a child from among the village listeners themselves. In the wartime context this carries a clear mobilizing force, making the ideas that "children can resist too" and "an ordinary person can become a hero" concrete and felt. The difference in narrative function thus produces the difference in language. "The Battle of Shangying" has to explain why the event is necessary, so it leans on place names, spatial terms, and expository expressions; "Child Hero Li Dapeng" has to make its hero everyday and one of the people, so it leans on action verbs, colloquial speech, and everyday objects.

As for prosody, what I mean by "prosody" here is the spoken rhythm formed within the lyrics by sentence length, repetition, padding syllables (chenzi), reduplication, and chains of action. The rhythm of "The Battle of Shangying" is closer to a steady telling. It opens out step by step through phrases like "we've told one round", "today I speak of nothing else", "I tell of", "here in our parts", and "now let me tell of", at an unhurried pace suited to explaining local background and the turn to the enemy. "Child Hero Li Dapeng" relies more on short phrases, reduplication, and action words to create momentum, as in on the sly, many hands, hurry, hurry, grab, grab, grab, a rumbling boom, and a thrashing thud. Some of these add no new plot information, but they sharpen the live feel of oral telling, make the character's actions seem more urgent, and stick more easily in a listener's memory.

In sum, the language of "The Battle of Shangying" tends toward plain exposition, and its prosody shows a steady telling rhythm. The language of "Child Hero Li Dapeng" tends toward action and colloquial speech, and its prosody shows the momentum of short phrases, reduplication, and chains of action. Together the two pieces show that the reconfiguration of revolutionary narrative in wartime Jiaodong dagu happened first at the level of the text. Revolutionary content was not simply poured into old tunes. Through local, everyday, colloquial telling, it was turned into resistance stories that the people of Jiaodong could understand, remember, and pass on.

4. A Comparison of Performance Practice in the Two Pieces

Jiaodong dagu is a local drum-ballad storytelling art. During the war it was drawn into the system of anti-Japanese propaganda and shifted in function from rural storytelling to a tool of revolutionary propaganda[5]. In analyzing the performance practice of the two pieces, then, I focus on how vocal melody and singing serve plot, character, emotion, and mass mobilization, and so carry out a propaganda function.

4.1. Vocal-Melodic Patterns and Vocal Design

Jiaodong dagu belongs to banqiang-ti (metrical-melodic) quyi music. Its vocal structure usually includes several sections: touban (the opening section), erban (the transitional section), pingju (the narrative section), luoban (the cadential section), and kuaiban (the fast section). The touban, also called qiqiang (Opening tune) or daqiang, mostly comes at the start of a piece and works as a prelude and opening. The erban usually falls between the touban and the pingju and handles connection and transition. The pingju, also called pingban (Level beat) or pingqiang, is the main singing for telling the story, and it is strongly narrative and colloquial. The luoban rounds off or ends a section, and the kuaiban appears where the plot grows tense, conflict sharpens, or a piece climaxes[6]. These patterns are not an external musical frame. They take

active part in moving the story along, turning the emotional register, and shaping how an audience receives the piece.

The surviving part of "The Battle of Shangying" covers mainly the opening, the geographic exposition, the depiction of everyday order, and the turn to the enemy. This section analyzes only the relation between vocal pattern and narrative function in that surviving part. The piece enters through "we've told one round" and "a north wind blows, cold and still". The touban's opening function works together with the storyteller's opening patter, so that the piece first sets up the performance scene and then leads the audience into the story. The touban melody moves at a steady pace, with long melismatic extensions (*tuoqiang*), well suited to building momentum and setting the mood at the start.

In opening, the vocal line does not rush to a combat climax. It slows the entry of the narrative and creates the local atmosphere before the fighting begins. After the touban gives the scene-setting line "a north wind blows, cold and still" a relatively expansive melodic treatment, the audience feels an opening air that is both cold and tense. The touban design of "The Battle of Shangying" thus serves mainly to set the scene and prepare the mood.

The piece then moves into the *erban* and *pingju*, and the lyrics turn to geographic exposition: Jiaodong Peninsula, Penglai town, Penglai Pavilion. The *erban* carries the shift from the opening patter to the main narrative, while the *pingju*, narrative and colloquial in character, is well suited to conveying place names, scenes of daily life, and the background of events. This matches the textual structure analyzed in Section 3: at the level of text the piece writes the local space first, and at the level of vocal melody it delivers that local information to the audience through a steady, narrative pattern.

The surviving lyrics end with "but I'll set all this aside, and turn now to the Japanese soldiers in Penglai town", a clearly transitional line. It turns from the earlier groundwork of local life to the account of the enemy, bringing the "Japanese soldiers" into Jiaodong society as the force that breaks it. In pattern terms, the *luoban* usually rounds off a section and handles the change of pattern, and can join one narrative section to the next. The *luoban* here, then, is not a simple musical close. It takes part in shifting the narrative's center of gravity: village life before, enemy invasion after.

Seen this way, the vocal patterns of "The Battle of Shangying" mainly serve a logic of exposition and transition. The piece does not drive the fighting with fast, fierce singing from the outset. It first builds atmosphere through the touban, opens out the local space and social order through the *pingju*, and then completes the turn to the enemy through the *luoban*. This design suits an event-centered narrative: it first lets the audience feel that "this is our place," then lets the enemy enter that space, and so stirs a sense of crisis about defending one's home.

The vocal design of "Child Hero Li Dapeng," by contrast, serves the character's actions more openly. The piece first writes the war years and the "thousands upon thousands" of national heroes, then names its subject with "today I speak not of others, but of the child hero Li Dapeng". The *erban* here is not a plain transition. It focuses the broad backdrop of the era onto one concrete person, moving the narrative's center from the body of heroes to Li Dapeng himself. With its built-in function of connection and transition, the *erban* is just right for bringing this character forward.

Once it enters the character's experience and actions, "Child Hero Li Dapeng" unfolds mainly through a mix of steady narration and quickening rhythm. The first half tells how Li Dapeng is "just fifteen," serves as head of the Children's Corps, carries stretchers, tends the wounded, stands sentry, and scouts the enemy. This material needs to set out his identity and experience clearly, so a strongly narrative pattern suits it. The second half tells how the Little Monkeys squad sets out, reads the terrain, plants the landmines, lures the enemy into eating melons, pulls the cord to set off the blast, and counterattacks with grenades. The plot and action grow

markedly stronger here, and the vocal line and rhythm have to keep pace with the character's quickening action.

In the action section, the singing stresses compact narration, rising emotion, and the character's inner state. A run of actions such as "his eyes darted", "hatched a plan", "set the ambush", "buried the mine", and "ran the cord south" calls for a stronger sense of forward drive in the singing. When Li Dapeng holds back his anger before the enemy, plays deaf, and lures them into eating melons, the singing has to convey the child hero's tension, composure, and quick wit, so that through rhythm and vocal turns the audience can feel his situation and his state of mind.

The luring of the enemy and the combat climax show the link between vocal melody and plot most clearly. Li Dapeng first lures the enemy with melons, then, on the pretext of fetching more, walks to the edge of the well, grabs the firing cord, and sets off the mine. The passage holds both the child hero's wit and the comic effect of the enemy falling for the trick, while the singer moves gradually from narration into excitement and a sense of victory.

Comparing the two pieces, the vocal patterns of "The Battle of Shangying" lean toward setting the scene and turning the event, while those of "Child Hero Li Dapeng" lean toward naming the character, driving the plot, and coloring the emotion. The first builds local atmosphere through an expansive opening and narrative patterns, so that the necessity of fighting comes into view step by step. The second uses the erban to name its subject, steady narration to carry his background, and dramatic shifts of rhythm in the action section, so that the child hero is formed in the course of concrete action.

Jiaodong dagu is built on storytelling in the Jiaodong dialect, and dialect sound plays an important part in how the vocal line is organized. Once the lyrics are sung, the sound of the syllables, the stretching of line-endings, the padding syllables, and the melismatic extensions together make up a local listening experience. In "The Battle of Shangying," line-ending sounds like qing, cheng, and bing combine Jiaodong dialect pronunciation with line-ending melodic delivery. In "Child Hero Li Dapeng," words like "Little Monkeys" squad, the feather-letter, melon patch, and the shed are not just everyday vocabulary; once sung, they take on an intimate local sound through rhotacization (erhua), a colloquial timbre, and the stretching of padding syllables. Dialect, then, does not stay at the level of vocabulary. It takes further part in organizing the vocal line, bringing the new revolutionary lyrics closer to the listening habits familiar to Jiaodong audiences.

To show more clearly how linguistic material, sound treatment, and narrative function relate, the local sound features of the two pieces can be summarized as follows:

4.2. Accompaniment and Modes of Performance

The traditional accompaniment of Jiaodong dagu rests on the shugu (storyteller's drum), the sanxian (three-stringed lute), and the riyue ban (sun-moon clapper). Early performance was fairly flexible. There was the solo form, in which one person both played and sang (danbang); the duo form of one singer and one accompanist (dahuo); and, later, a multi-performer ensemble form (duodang). Different ways of organizing performance shape how the narrative comes across. Changes in the timbre of the sun-moon clapper and the storyteller's drum set the mood of the telling, and can even render sound effects such as gunfire, wind and rain, or horses and carts[7].

"The Battle of Shangying" is performed as an account of an event delivered to a crowd. The singer carries the event forward mainly as a teller. The opening lines "we've told one round" and "men and women, young and old" already show the piece addressing its audience at the start. Here the first job of the accompaniment is to gather the listeners, steady the rhythm, and help the singer establish the performance scene. It need not generate strong conflict at the outset. Instead it works with the singer to make the local setting and the origin of the event clear.

Table 2. Linguistic material, sound treatment, and narrative function in the two pieces.

Piece	Linguistic material	Sound treatment	Narrative / performative effect
"Shangying"	"we've told one round" and "a north wind blows, cold and still"	The storyteller's opening leads into the touban's evocative start; line-endings delivered expansively	Slows the entry of the narrative and builds the local atmosphere before the fighting
"Shangying"	Jiaodong Peninsula, Penglai town, Penglai Pavilion	Place names enter the singing through Jiaodong dialect pronunciation	Turns the combat event into a local narrative of "defending home"
"Li Dapeng"	today I speak not of others, but of the child hero Li Dapeng	The urban names the subject and focuses the narrative	Brings the child hero out from the body of national heroes
"Li Dapeng"	Little Monkeys squad, the feather-letter; melon patch; the shed,	Colloquial, rustic words combined with a tighter rhythm	Heightens the immediacy and memorability of the character's action
Both pieces	Padding syllables, line-ending extension, colloquial expression	Fill out the rhythm and extend the melodic phrase, creating aural continuity	Turn the new revolutionary lyrics into an oral text that can be heard, remembered, and passed on

As Table 2 shows, dialect and vocal melody are not decorative in the two pieces but a key medium through which revolutionary narrative enters local listening experience. "The Battle of Shangying" uses place names and an expansive melodic line to build the emotional ground for defending one's home; "Child Hero Li Dapeng" uses a colloquial sound treatment to bring the child hero closer to the everyday experience of rural listeners. Vocal pattern and dialect sound work together, so that the two pieces do not merely "tell" revolutionary stories but turn them into ballad performances that local people can understand and pass on.

The performance of "The Battle of Shangying" turns on converting "local life" into a "wartime event." The lyrics describe the Jiaodong Peninsula, the town of Penglai, and Penglai Pavilion first, then yangge dancing, lantern sheds, gongs and drums, farm fare, and the people's life, and only at the end turn to "the Japanese soldiers in Penglai town." Within this structure, the accompaniment mainly supports the narration and signals the turning point. The first half needs a fairly steady rhythm, so that the audience hears the local background clearly. At the move to "the Japanese soldiers," the drum and clapper, together with a change of tone, signal the coming of the crisis. This kind of accompaniment lets the audience feel not an abstract war but that "our own local life is under threat." The storyteller thus uses drum, clapper, and sanxian to organize local space, the people's life, and the turn to the enemy into one audible wartime story. The effect of the performance is to rouse the audience's sense of crisis, so that "defending home" becomes an immediate emotional response.

The performance of "Child Hero Li Dapeng" is clearly different. It comes closer to a story-driven performance with shifts of role. The piece holds not only the narrator's telling but also distinct voices for the squad leader, Li Dapeng, the enemy officer, and the Little Monkeys squad. The leader teases Li Dapeng as a "little rascal", and Li Dapeng answers "I can do it too" and "let me show you whether I can or not"; the enemy officer orders a search, and Li Dapeng plays deaf

and lures him into eating melons; at the close, the Little Monkeys squad shouts "Japanese devils, hear this clearly". Such passages require the singer to switch back and forth between narrating and impersonating characters, so that the mode of performance serves directly to shape the child hero.

The accompaniment of "Child Hero Li Dapeng" suits compact, forward-driving action better. The second half runs continuously from stealing the grenades, scouting the terrain, and burying the mine to luring the enemy with melons, setting off the blast, and the squad's counterattack. Here the sanxian drives the character's action through continuous playing, keeping the narrative flowing forward. The drum and clapper mark the rhythm, forming a catch or pause at turning points and bursts of action, so that the sense of action in the lyrics is made audible. In the firing-cord and explosion section, the lyrics run through action and onomatopoeic phrases one after another: "hand pulls the firing cord", "one hard tug", hutongtong, a booming sound, and "a gust of black smoke rises up". Set against a tighter sanxian line and forceful drum-and-clapper beats, these bring out the turn from "luring the enemy in" to "pulling the cord and the blast" all the more vividly. The accompaniment here, then, does not simply follow the vocal line. It takes part in shaping tension and release, so that the audience feels in the sound both the wait for the mine to go off and the surge of victory after the blast.

Neither "The Battle of Shangying" nor "Child Hero Li Dapeng" breaks away from the storytelling tradition of Jiaodong dagu. But where traditional Jiaodong dagu mostly served rural entertainment and the livelihood of blind performers, the wartime Liang-style dagu, through new lyrics and new ways of organizing and circulating performance, turned ballad performance into a tool of revolutionary propaganda and mass mobilization. The textual narrative provides what to tell; the vocal performance settles how to move the audience. It is in the joining of the two that Jiaodong dagu completed its shift in function from local folk storytelling to an art of wartime propaganda.

5. Differences and Common Ground in the Deeper Logic and Historical Value of the Two Pieces

5.1. The Core Reasons for the Differences Between the Two Pieces

"The Battle of Shangying" and "Child Hero Li Dapeng" are both wartime Jiaodong dagu lyrics written by Liang Qianguang, and both served anti-Japanese propaganda. Yet they take different directions in textual structure, choice of language, vocal treatment, and mode of performance. The reason is that they carry different propaganda functions and stir the audience's feelings in different ways.

"The Battle of Shangying" answers the question "why must we fight." Its narrative centers on setting out the concrete grounds for the fighting, so that listeners understand the war not as a distant political slogan but as a necessary act of defending local life. "Child Hero Li Dapeng" sets out to promote a child-hero figure. The first is event-centered, the second character-centered, and from this they take different starting points and different ways of moving forward.

The two pieces also differ in the emphasis of their propaganda function. The central aim of "The Battle of Shangying" is to explain the enemy's presence, give the reasons for fighting, and rally the local population. Through place names like Jiaodong Peninsula, Penglai town, and Penglai Pavilion, it sets the fighting within a local space the audience knows; through scenes of yangge dancing, lantern sheds, farm fare, and the people's life, it first builds a settled world of everyday living. So when "the Japanese soldiers" enter the narrative, the enemy is no longer an abstract invader but a real threat that breaks Jiaodong local life. What the piece accomplishes is an account of why the fighting is necessary. The propaganda function of "Child Hero Li Dapeng" leans more toward heroic example and mass mobilization. It does not make its hero a remote model but writes Li Dapeng as a fifteen-year-old country child, which narrows the distance

between the hero and ordinary people. What the piece conveys is not "only heroes can resist" but "ordinary children, too, can take part in the resistance," giving its character-centered narrative a mobilizing force.

Third, the two pieces engage the audience's feelings differently. "The Battle of Shangying" works mainly on a sense of crisis. It sets out local life first, then lets the enemy enter that space, so that listeners feel "our home is under threat." It draws on a sense of local community and stresses the need to defend home and resist invasion. "Child Hero Li Dapeng" works mainly on a sense of participation and on confidence in victory. What the audience sees is not a hero placed high above them but a youth much like an ordinary child, who carries out his fight against the enemy through wit and nerve. This makes the thought "I, too, can take part in the resistance" concrete.

In terms of compositional strategy, "The Battle of Shangying" uses a documentary mode of narration, and "Child Hero Li Dapeng" a character-centered one. Documentary narration stresses cause and consequence, and has to make the local setting, the social order, and the turn to the enemy clear. Character narration stresses the course of action, and has to bring the character to life through a chain of deeds and concrete scenes. For this reason the language of "The Battle of Shangying" leans more on explanation and exposition, while that of "Child Hero Li Dapeng" leans more on action, colloquial speech, and everyday scenes. In singing and performance, the former tends toward steady narration and scene-setting, the latter toward driving rhythm and role-playing. Together the two form the dual pathways of the Liang-school "revolutionary dagu" in the wartime context. They also show that the revolutionizing of Jiaodong dagu was not simply a change of lyric subject matter, but a deliberate reorganization of the traditional ballad form to suit different propaganda audiences and different ways of receiving it.

5.2. The Shared Compositional Logic: The Core Features of the Liang-School "Revolutionary Dagü"

Different in subject as they are, both pieces show the Liang-school "revolutionary dagu" as an overall reorganization of text and performance together. "The Battle of Shangying," through its structure of opening, exposition, and turn, makes a local combat event intelligible to listeners. "Child Hero Li Dapeng," through its chain of action and tight performance rhythm, shapes a child hero in the course of live ballad performance. What is new in the Liang-school "revolutionary dagu," then, lies not only in updated subject matter but in the way it makes lyrics, vocal pattern, accompaniment, and performance all serve revolutionary narrative.

The two pieces also bring out the accessibility and transmissibility of the Liang-school "revolutionary dagu." Wartime propaganda addressed a rural population, so a piece had to be easy to follow, easy to remember, and worth passing on. Neither piece relies on abstract political argument. Each turns wartime content into a story familiar to Jiaodong audiences, bringing revolutionary content into the language and listening habits the local people already had, and so strengthening its propaganda effect.

Together, "The Battle of Shangying" and "Child Hero Li Dapeng" display the compositional mechanism of the Liang-school "revolutionary dagu": grounded in the Jiaodong dagu tradition, supported by Liang-style vocal melody, carried chiefly by new lyrics, addressed to a local audience, and aimed ultimately at wartime mobilization. Its historical value lies not only in preserving the local artistic form of Jiaodong dagu, but in showing that folk quyi could be activated under particular historical conditions to become an important medium linking revolutionary discourse with the lived experience of local people. This suggests that the vitality of folk art often shows itself in its capacity to connect with present circumstances and to generate new expressive functions under new conditions, which is what keeps it alive.

6. Conclusion

During the Second Sino-Japanese War, the transformation of Jiaodong dagu from folk narrative singing into a tool of revolutionary propaganda was not simply a replacement of subject matter. It involved a broader reworking of narrative logic, vocal design, and modes of performance. “The Battle of Shangying” and “Child Hero Li Dapeng” both belong to the Liang-style dagu created by Liang Qianguang during his work at the blind-artists’ training class in Penglai, yet they follow two different narrative pathways. The former centers on an event. By setting out local space and everyday social order, it turns combat into a necessary act of defending home. The latter centers on a character. Through the advancement of action and colloquial language, it brings a fifteen-year-old child hero before the audience in concrete and relatable form.

In vocal-melodic patterns and accompaniment, the two pieces also differ in emphasis. “The Battle of Shangying” gives greater weight to environmental setting and the preparation of crisis, while “Child Hero Li Dapeng” stresses rhythmic forward motion and shifts of role. The difference between these two pathways reflects Liang Qianguang’s grasp of different propaganda tasks and audience psychologies. In the face of enemy threat, the performance needed to arouse a sense of crisis and the will to defend one’s home. In the work of mass mobilization, it needed to make the heroic figure specific, audible, and close to ordinary listeners.

The common ground between the two pieces is equally important. Neither abandons the tradition of Jiaodong dagu. Instead, both reorganize new lyrics, the Jiaodong dialect, vocal-melodic patterns, and performance mechanisms within the existing form of local narrative singing. Through this process, revolutionary content entered the listening habits and lived experience of local audiences. This shows that the revolutionary transformation of folk quyi did not depend simply on “changing the words.” Its key lay in finding a point of connection between revolutionary discourse and local life. In this sense, the wartime transformation of Jiaodong dagu offers a concrete example of how a folk art form could reconfigure its function under specific historical conditions.

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