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The Way of the Qin: the Ideology of a Performance and the Performativity of an Ideology

Using Butler's concept of the performative nature of a culturally predetermined script, this paper focuses on a Chinese performance tradition that has been metaphorically rehearsed continually throughout the ages, adapting to an ever-changing philosophical environment. The visual and allegorical "script" I wish to observe is the qindao or "way of the qin". I hope to describe a performing art that is itself a cultural and historical narrative, successfully negotiating contrastive musical philosophies over time, and to discuss the instrument and notation as visual objects that also approach the conditions of performance.