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NANXI: THE EARLIEST FORM OF
XIQU (TRADITIONAL CHINESE THEATRE)

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
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By

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ABSTRACT

Nanxi (literally, "southern theater") was the earliest form of xiqu (literally, "theater of song"), the indigenous or traditional Chinese theater. This form first originated on the southeast coast of China around the third decade of the twelfth century; later, it was circulated primarily in south and east China. During the course of its spread, nanxi gradually lost the attributes of folk theater, and eventually evolved into chuanqi (literally, "transmission of the marvelous") before the middle of the sixteenth century.

By the early thirteenth century at the latest, nanxi had already synthesized stories with song and dance in performances that were conventionalized, and therefore possessed the generic characteristics of xiqu. As the direct forerunner of chuanqi, nanxi had a crucial impact on chuanqi, through which it further influenced other later xiqu forms. However, because of various historical reasons, nanxi was disdained for a long time and was not written about in any formal records. Moreover, most nanxi play scripts were lost through the centuries; others were altered arbitrarily by literati during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). These revised or rewritten play scripts deviated from the original editions

and were mistakenly regarded as chuanqi texts for a long time. After the middle of the sixteenth century and before the twentieth century, few were aware that there had been a xiqu form called nanxi.

Nanxi was rediscovered in this century. Since 1920, a number of original nanxi scripts have been discovered both in China and elsewhere. As an independent discipline, the study of nanxi began in the 1930's. Due to their diligent effort, Chinese scholars have made great achievements in textual and literary studies concerning nanxi.

This dissertation is the first comprehensive English-language study concerning nanxi, and the first study of nanxi in any language from the perspective of total theatrical performance. This dissertation also analyzes a number of controversial issues in previous studies regarding nanxi. The sources for this dissertation principally comprise historical data found in literati's writings from the thirteenth through the seventeenth centuries and information from the original nanxi play scripts. At relevant points, statistical figures are employed as well.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I refer to the following works again and again. To save space and avoid tedious repetitions, I only cite their full titles in footnote when they first appear, and then use the following abbreviations:

ZDBQXQ

Zhongguo da baike quanshu: Xiqu guyi (Encyclopedia of China: Xiqu, storytelling and ballad-singing)

ZDBQYW

Zhongguo da baike quanshu: Yinyue wudao (Encyclopaedia of China: Music and dance)

ZDBQZL

Zhongguo da baike quanshu: Zhongguo lishi (Encyclopedia of China: China's history)

ZGXLJ

Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng (A collection of treatises on classical Chinese xiqu)

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is the first systematic introduction to nanxi¹ (literally, "southern theater"), the earliest form of xiqu (literally, "theater of song"), in English language scholarship. This dissertation comprehensively examines this theatrical art, from its origin to its extinction, from its plays to its performances, and from its creators to its audiences, and is the first study of nanxi in any language from the perspective of theatrical performance.

Xiqu is the indigenous Chinese theater. It employs a role category system, and synthesizes stories with song and dance in performances that are both stylized and conventionalized. Currently, in indigenous Chinese scholarship, the term xiqu is a generic concept, including a variety of forms (juzhong) appearing in different areas and historical periods, each distinguishable by dialect and/or musical style. Most of these individual xiqu forms survive to this day; however, some of them disappeared from the stage

¹ For the ideographs of Chinese theatrical, musical and literary terms in this dissertation, see "Appendix B: List of Chinese Written Characters."

decades, even centuries, ago. Its earliest form--nanxi--vanished more than four hundred years ago, but evidence of it was fortunately rediscovered in this century. Due to the rediscovery of nanxi, xiqu scholarship is being updated.

In the English language, the term xiqu is usually translated as "Chinese opera" or "traditional Chinese theater". However, these translations easily lead to confusion in the study of Chinese theater. First of all, going purely by the word "opera," it is easy to confuse xiqu with geju² (literally, "sung drama"), another Chinese theatrical genre that is often translated as "opera," as well. Secondly, the word "traditional" is also inappropriate. In contemporary China's xiqu, there are both traditional plays³ (chuantong xi) and modern plays⁴ (xiandai xi). If the translation "traditional Chinese theater" is employed, either a repetitious phrase--"traditional plays of traditional Chinese theater"--or a contradictory expression--

² Geju emerged in this century, blending Chinese and Western forms. At first, geju merely reflected contemporary life; later on, it also expressed traditional subject matter like myth, legend, and historical stories.

³ With a few exceptions, most of xiqu plays existing before the establishment of the People's Republic of China are regarded as traditional plays. These plays portray myth, legend, and historical stories.

⁴ Modern plays have contemporary plots, characters, and costumes, and have been created since the 1950's.

"modern plays of traditional Chinese theater"--is unavoidable in the study of Chinese theater.

For clarity, I consider that the best way to speak of the native Chinese theater is to employ the Chinese terms--xiqu as the generic and nanxi, chuanqi, kunqu, etc. for specific forms--just as we refer to Japanese theatrical forms like noh or kabuki by their Japanese names. For the sake of consistency, I will use the vernacular Chinese language for all specific terms concerning Chinese theater in this dissertation.

A Xiqu Form with the Oldest Surviving Play Scripts

For a long time, scholars considered that the earliest appearance of the term xiqu was in Records after Plowing (Chuo geng lu) (1366). However, according to a recent discovery, Liu Xun (1240-1319), in his A Draft from Shuiyun Village (Shui yun cun gao), already employed the term "Yongjia xiqu" as the name for a kind of contemporary theatrical form which would later be called nanxi.⁵ Yongjia is an old name for Wenzhou, a city in Zhejiang province

⁵ See Li Changji, Zhongguo gudai sanqu shi (A history of classical Chinese sanqu) (Shanghai: Huadong Shida Chubanshe, 1991) 69. Also see Luo Di, Xiqu yu Zhejiang (Xiqu and Zhejiang) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe, 1991) 15-16.

located in southeast China, which is considered the original home of nanxi. In China, xiqu forms are commonly named according to their place of origin. Liu Xun's record reveals that the term xiqu appeared at least by the transition from the thirteenth to the fourteenth centuries.

Doubtless, the appearance of the term xiqu did not occur at the same time as the emergence of xiqu activities. Just like many ancient things, for which names were only given later, the practice of xiqu surely occurred earlier than its name. By and large, current scholarly opinion favors the idea that xiqu's roots can be traced back thousands of years, but that xiqu--the developed song and dance drama--did not appear until the "full-fledged" forms like nanxi and Yuan zaju⁶ (literally, "mixed drama") emerged.

In A Study of Song and Yuan Dynasty Xiqu (Song Yuan xiqu kao) (1912), Wang Guowei (1877-1927), the founder of modern xiqu scholarship, first sought the antecedents of the song and dance in the activities of shamans (wu) in primitive times. Then, he successively discussed performances of

⁶ Historically, a number of Chinese theatrical arts were once called zaju. To distinguish these forms, usually a historical period or a geographical position was added before the term zaju. Yuan zaju is a particular xiqu form, which appeared between the Jin (1115-1234) and Yuan dynasties (1206-1368), and flourished in the Yuan dynasty in north China. It usually consisted of four acts, with one character having the singing role in each act.

jesters (you) in the Zhou dynasty (1066-256 B.C.), and baixi⁷ (literally, "hundred games") in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), and indicated that:

Ancient jesters only performed song, dance and banter. Since the Han dynasty, [in baixi] stories sometimes were presented; but performances that synthesized a plot with song and dance in fact started in the Northern Qi dynasty (550-577). Considering their plots simple, [I would] prefer to call them dance rather than theater. However, the origin of later theater actually started from this period.⁸

After a further analysis of theatrical performances in the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties, Wang concluded that,

Not until the Song and Jin (1115-1234) dynasties did the theater, which purely presents stories, appear; hence the consideration that the real theater emerged in the Song dynasty might be reliable. ... However, no script of this theater has survived. Therefore, whether or not the xiqu of daiyanti⁹ (literally, "the first person speaking

⁷ Baixi includes various feats, such as tightrope walking, trapeze acrobatics, pole climbing, sword swallowing, fire spitting, somersaulting, tumbling, ball juggling, animal disguises, and wrestling. Among baixi performances, Mr. Huang of the Eastern Ocean (Donghai huanggong), a wrestling game (jiaodi xi), was considered by Wang Guowei to be the earliest theatrical performance presenting a story. See Wang Guowei, Song Yuan xiqu kao (A study of Song and Yuan dynasty xiqu), Wang Guowei xiqu lunwen ji (A collection of Wang Guowei's treatises on xiqu) (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1984) 7.

⁸ Wang Guowei 8. All translations from the Chinese language in the dissertation are mine, except where otherwise noted.

⁹ Daiyanti and xushiti (literally, "narrative form") are paired concepts in modern scholarship of Chinese xiqu. Daiyanti, which indicates that the lines in a play are

form") existed at that time is unknown. Because of this, the discussion of real xiqu must be started from Yuan zaju.¹⁰

Apparently, Wang Guowei considered that it might have taken hundreds of years for separate elements like singing, dancing and storytelling to blend into a complex kind of theater--xiqu. Moreover, he regarded surviving play scripts as one of the prominent standards for judging whether a theatrical art was a real xiqu form. Thus, he argued that Yuan zaju was the first real xiqu form because it consisted of synthesized stories with song and dance in performances, and it had the oldest surviving play scripts.

It is understandable that Wang Guowei set so high a value on the survival of play scripts. Unlike visual arts in which pieces such as paintings and sculptures endure over time, strictly speaking, theater is a kind of instantaneous art. In other words, live theatrical art is ephemeral. Surviving play scripts are almost the only evidence to verify whether or not the lines in an extinct theatrical form were delivered by performers playing separate parts, thereby proving whether or not the form had yet become a "real" xiqu form.

delivered by performers playing separate parts, is considered one of the characteristics of real theater. In contrast, xushiti, which means that the speeches in a story are recited by storytellers, is regarded as one of the attributes of artistic forms like ballad-singing and storytelling.

¹⁰ Wang Guowei 55.

It is also easy to comprehend why Wang Guowei did not regard nanxi as the earliest real xiqu form, even though, by analyzing historical materials, he guessed that nanxi might have emerged earlier than Yuan zaju.¹¹ When Wang Guowei wrote his monograph, the early nanxi scripts had not been found. Thus, in Wang Guowei's time, the surviving play scripts of Yuan zaju were the oldest.

Wang Guowei's scholarship profoundly influenced most later Chinese scholars. Following Wang's approach, scholars such as Zhou Yibai (1900-1977) and Zhang Geng (1911-) have studied primitive song and dance, performances of jesters, the baixi, dance theater, and clowning theater in order to explore the origin of xiqu and its evolution.¹² Like Wang Guowei, they also believed that xiqu did not reach maturity until the emergence of its full-fledged form.

However, on some concrete questions, like which kind of Chinese theatrical performances may be regarded as the earliest full-fledged xiqu form, these scholars have different viewpoints from Wang Guowei. From newly discovered original nanxi play scripts,¹³ scholars have found real proof

¹¹ Wang Guowei 93.

¹² See Zhou Yibai, Zhongguo xiju fazhan shi (A history of Chinese theater) (Taiwan: Minmian Chubanshe, 1975) 9-167; Zhang Geng, et al., Zhongguo xiqu tongshi (A general history of Chinese xiqu), 3 vols. (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1980-1981) 1: 3-78.

about nanxi's existence so that they have been able to revise Wang Guowei's theory, clearing up a puzzle their pioneer could not in his time. Currently, most Chinese scholars believe that nanxi emerged earlier than Yuan zaju,¹⁴ and that nanxi was the earliest xiqu form with surviving play scripts.¹⁵ In other words, they consider that the earliest full-fledged xiqu form is nanxi rather than Yuan zaju.¹⁶

Of course, some scholars disagree with the aforementioned theories, and have pushed back the date of xiqu's birth to earlier dynasties. For example, challenging Wang's viewpoint, Ren Bantang (1897-1991) argued that full-fledged xiqu already existed in the Tang dynasty.¹⁷ However, he could not offer any surviving play scripts from the Tang dynasty. Although he collected an impressive amount of material about Tang gewuxi (literally, "song and dance

13 See the "A Brief Review of Previous Nanxi Studies" section of this chapter and the "Surviving Texts of Nanxi Plays" section of chapter 3 for details.

14 See Zhou Yibai 168.

15 See Zhang Geng, Xiqu yishu lun (On xiqu arts) (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1980) 37.

16 See Ye Dejun, Xiqu xiaoshuo congkao (A series of studies on xiqu and novels), 2 vol. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1979) 1: 1. See also, Zhao Jingshen, Oulun chutan (A preliminary exploration of theories of xiqu) (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe, 1980) 1.

17 See Ren Bantang, Tang xinong (Theater in the Tang dynasty), 2 vols. (Beijing: Zuoja Chubanshe, 1958).

theater"), among these theatrical performances, only a few are discussed as containing stories, and those stories are very simple.

On the other hand, some scholars, under the influence of traditional viewpoints, still consider that xiqu did not reach maturity until the Yuan dynasty, and even incorrectly claim that Yuan zaju is the forerunner of all Chinese theatrical forms. For instance, Cyril Birch clearly declares, "Yuan drama is at once the first full florescence, the Golden Age and the grand classical forebear of all Chinese theatre."¹⁸ This viewpoint actually has ignored a historical fact: nanxi emerged earlier than Yuan zaju, and influenced other later xiqu forms in a more direct manner and in more aspects than did Yuan zaju. Undoubtedly, Yuan zaju has a vital position in the histories of both Chinese literature and Chinese theater, but this is not to say that it was the direct forerunner of all subsequent xiqu.

To conclude, nanxi is the earliest Chinese theatrical form connected with the term xiqu in surviving historical records. It also has the oldest surviving play scripts. Therefore, we can call nanxi the earliest xiqu form, unless

¹⁸ Cyril Birch, foreword, The Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yuan Tsa-chu, by Chung-wen Shih (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976) V.

original scripts of a theatrical form earlier than nanxi or new historical records are discovered.

Multiple Names Referring to Nanxi

Historically, nanxi once had a variety of names. Since a number of historical materials will be quoted and paraphrased in this dissertation, to avoid confusion and misunderstanding, it is necessary to discuss the various names of this particular xiqu form.

As mentioned in the last section, this theatrical form was called "Yongjia xiqu" in the memoir of Liu Xun, a scholar who wrote in the transition from the Song to Yuan (1206-1368) dynasties.¹⁹ Also, nanxi was called "xiwen" (literally, "theater text") in literati treatises of the Yuan and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties.²⁰ Occasionally, it was referred to as nanqu xiwen ("southern music xiwen") and nan xiwen ("southern

¹⁹ See note 5.

²⁰ See Zhou Deqing, Zhongyuan yinyun (The phonology of the central plains), Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng (A collection of treatises on classical Chinese xiqu), comp. and ed. Zhongguo Xiqu Yanjiuyuan (The China Institute of Xiqu Research), 10 vols. (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1959) 1: 219. Also see "Qinglou ji zhi (A note on the Brothel collection)," ZGXLJ 2: 7; and Xu Wei, Nan ci xu lu (An account of nanxi), ZGXLJ 3: 239.

xiwen") as well.²¹ Possibly, people added the word "nan" or "nanqu" before xiwen in order to distinguish the southern theater from the northern theater.²² Later on, these terms were abbreviated as "nanxi" (nan xi[wen] or nan[qu] xi[wen]).²³ Logically, the abbreviation--nanxi--appeared later than its full name--nanqu xiwen or nan xiwen. The earliest historical record of the term nanxi found to date is in the Brothel Collection (qinglou ji) written at the end of the Yuan dynasty.²⁴

Besides the above names, in terms of literati records of the Ming dynasty, the xiqu form was once called "Wenzhou zaju"²⁵ and "Yongjia zaju"²⁶. Obviously, these two names derived from Wenzhou, also known as Yongjia, the original home of nanxi.

²¹ Zhong Sicheng, Lu gui bu (Register of ghosts), ZGXLJ 2: 134.

²² After the Mongol conquest of south China, Yuan zaju, the northern theater, was spread into south China. Later on, nanxi also circulated in north China. This will be discussed in chapter 2.

²³ Qian Nanyang, Xiwen gailun (A general study of xiwen) (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1981) 3.

²⁴ Xia Tingzhi, Qinglou ji (Brothel collection), ZGXLJ 2: 32.

²⁵ Zhu Yunming, Wei tan (Miscellaneous records), qtd. in Hu Ji, Song Jin zaju kao (A study of zaju during the Song and Jin dynasties) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959) 60.

²⁶ Xu Wei, ZGXLJ 3: 239.

Nanxi was even called chuanqi (literally, "transmission of the marvelous") in some original play scripts like Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career²⁷ (Huanmen zidi cuo lishen), Little Butcher Sun (Xiao Suntu), and The White Rabbit (Baitu ji).²⁸ In the history of Chinese culture, chuanqi has been a very general concept, successively representing short stories in the classic language during the Tang and Song dynasties, zhugongdiao (literally, "various modes", a ballad-singing form) during the Song and Jin dynasties, and xiqu forms like nanxi, Yuan zaju, and a successor of nanxi during the Ming and Qing (1616-1911) dynasties.

When people called these different genres by the same name, they were, essentially, just paying attention to the similarity of content--the fantastic or miraculous (qi)--and disregarding differences in their forms. There were historical reasons for the phenomenon. Originally, in Chinese culture, narrative literature was mixed together with

²⁷ The translation of this play title is from William Dolby's Eight Chinese Plays (New York: Columbia UP, 1978).

²⁸ See Qian Nanyang, comp. and ed., Yongle dadian: Xiwen san zhong jiaozhu (Collated and annotated edition of three xiwen plays from the Great collectanea of Yongle) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1979) 231, and 257. Also see Xin bian Liu Zhiyuan huanxiang baitu ji (Newly written Liu Zhiyuan returning to his home town: the white rabbit), Ming Chenghua shuochang cihua congkan (Collection of balladry from the Ming [dynasty] Chenghua [period]), 12 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1979) 12: 2.

historiography. Later on, as an opposition to historiography, narrative arts showed their characteristics through the introduction of legendary or fictitious matter, which deviated from actual historical accounts. Impressed by the generic identity of these new arts rather than distinctions between different branches, people called them by the same name--"transmission (chuan) of the marvelous (qi)". For people in those times, there was nothing inappropriate in the general usage of the term chuanqi. However, for modern scholars, it has become necessary to restrict the meaning of the term; otherwise, the concept does not make sense in academic studies. In modern scholarship, the concept chuanqi has been limited to two forms: the Tang and Song short stories (Tang Song chuanqi), and the Ming-Qing xigu form (Ming Qing chuanqi) mentioned above. In the following study, the term chuanqi is used only to designate Ming-Qing chuanqi²⁹, the successor of nanxi during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Historically, the treatises and memoirs of literati did not employ the same standards as those employed in modern academic works. Literati usually followed folk customs in describing theatrical forms, without employing a set

²⁹ For details, see note 131, Chapter 2.

definition. Thus, nanxi had a variety of names in different areas or historical periods, each with a slightly different connotation. However, in this dissertation, for clarity and consistency, I only apply the term nanxi to the xiqu form being studied, except in the case of direct citations.

A Brief Review of Previous Nanxi Studies

Nanxi had a crucial impact on other later xiqu forms in many respects, including dramatic subject matter, script structure, music, and role categories. However, because of its colorful language, rough prosody, and folk-art-based writing style, especially in its early period, nanxi was disdained by the literati. Only a little bit of information about nanxi was written down. Moreover, most nanxi play scripts before the Ming dynasty were destroyed in wars, or lost through the centuries; as mentioned in Chapter three below, some of them were also altered arbitrarily by Ming literati, and therefore deviated from their original versions. After the middle of the sixteenth century and before the twentieth century, almost nobody knew where nanxi originated from or what the early nanxi had been.

In contrast, due to its poetic value, Yuan zaju was cherished. Some historical accounts of Yuan zaju were preserved, and more than one hundred scripts of Yuan zaju

have survived. All of these advantages brought Yuan zaju to a glorious situation--on a par with significant genres of Chinese literature like the Tang shi³⁰ and Song ci.³¹

The illustriousness of Yuan zaju concealed the obscure nanxi, and as a result of the great disparity in the fates of these two xiqu forms, inaccurate viewpoints developed after the middle of Ming dynasty. For example, Shen Defu (c. 1618)³², a scholar and critic, asserted that Yuan zaju was transformed into xiwen.³³ However, xiwen actually came into existence earlier than Yuan zaju, as pointed out above. Lü Tiancheng (1580-1618), a dramatist and critic, stated that "[Yuan] zaju was created in the Jin and Yuan dynasties, and then evolved into chuanqi in the beginning of the Ming dynasty."³⁴ However, the historical fact is that, as discussed in Chapter Two below, chuanqi directly developed from nanxi, although it also incorporated some artistic elements of Yuan zaju.

³⁰ Shi, a poetic form, flourished during the Tang dynasty (618-907).

³¹ Ci, the congener of shi, prospered during the Song dynasty (960-1279).

³² He passed his provincial examination (xiangshi) in 1618. See ZGXLJ 4: 195.

³³ Shen Defu, Gu qu za yan (Miscellaneous records on xiqu), ZGXLJ 4: 215.

³⁴ Lü Tiancheng, Ou pin (Remarks on xiqu), ZGXLJ 6: 209.

In the twentieth century, due to the recovery of nanxi texts, nanxi--the long-forgotten xiqu form--has gradually received the attention it deserves. In 1920, Volume 13,991 of the Great Collectanea of Yongle (Yongle dadian), including three original nanxi play scripts, was discovered in London and brought back to China. Those scripts are: First Place Scholar Zhang Xie (Zhang Xie zhuangyuan), Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career, and Little Butcher Sun. After the recovery of these three scripts, three other valuable nanxi texts were also discovered. In the 1950's, Brocade Pouch of Romances (Fengyue jinnang)--a collection of the excerpts from xiqu plays³⁵ and sanqu³⁶ preserved in the Royal Library of San Lorenzo of Spain--was brought to scholars' attention. In 1967, Newly Written Liu Zhiyuan Returning to His Home Town: The Story of the White Rabbit (Xin bian Liu Zhiyuan huanxiang baitu ji), printed in the Chinghua period (1465-1488) of the Ming dynasty,³⁷ was unearthed from a Ming grave in the suburbs of Shanghai. In 1975, Illustrated Newly Written Liu Xibi: The Gold Hairpin (Xinbian quanxiang nanbei chake zhongxiao zhengzi Liu Xibi jinchai ji), hand-written in the Xuande

³⁵ Most of them are nanxi plays.

³⁶ Sanqu was a popular poetic and musical form during the Yuan dynasty.

³⁷ The title of this text will be abbreviated to The Chinghua Edition of The White Rabbit in the following study.

period (1426-1436) of the Ming dynasty,³⁸ was excavated from a Ming tomb in Chaoan county in Guangdong province.³⁹

The recovery of these nanxi texts has encouraged and promoted studies concerning nanxi. Not long after the recovery of the three scripts preserved in Great Collectanea of Yongle, several Chinese scholars started to collect dispersed fragments of nanxi texts from various historical documents. From 1934 to 1936, Xiwen Subject Matter in the Song and Yuan Dynasties (Song Yuan xiwen benshi) by Zhao Jingshen (1902-1985), Collected Portions of Song and Yuan Dynasty Nanxi (Song Yuan nanxi bai yi lu) by Qian Nanyang (1899-1987), and Collected Portions of Nanxi (Nanxi shi yi) by Lu Kanru (1903-1978) and Feng Yuanjun (1900-1974) were published. In 1956, primarily based on the above works, Qian Nanyang published his Collected Portions of Song and Yuan Dynasty Xiwen (Song Yuan xiwen jiyi)--the most comprehensive collection of dispersed fragments of nanxi. He also published his Collated and Annotated Edition of Three Xiwen Plays in the Great Collectanea of Yongle (Yongle dadian: Xiwen san zhong jiaozhu) in 1979, and the Collated and Annotated Yuan edition of The Lute (Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu) in 1980. The above archival and textual studies have

³⁸ The title of this text will be abbreviated to The Xuande Edition of The Gold Hairpin in the following study.

³⁹ For details of the texts mentioned in this paragraph, see "Surviving Texts of Nanxi Plays," Chapter 3.

supplied necessary and reliable materials for the further study of nanxi.

In 1981, Qian Nanyang published A General Study of Xiwen (Xiwen gailun) that primarily studied the plays of nanxi, but also touched upon the other aspects of nanxi, such as its historical development and performance. In 1986, Liu Nianzi (1927-) published his New Study on Nanxi (Nanxi xin zheng), investigating remains of nanxi that survive in old xiqu forms in south China. Jin Ningfen (1933-) summarized the history of nanxi studies in her Changes in the Study of Nanxi (Nanxi yanjiu bianqian) in 1992. Besides these monographs, a large number of academic papers on nanxi have been published. As an illustration, Jin Ningfen has compiled and edited A Selected Collection of Papers on Nanxi (Nanxi lunwen xuan) that is over 1,000,000 Chinese characters in length.⁴⁰ However, broadly speaking, the greatest achievement in nanxi studies so far has been in textual and literary aspects. Very few scholars specifically discuss the performance of nanxi.

Nanxi has not been sufficiently studied yet in English language scholarly writings. To date, English texts on xiqu have only introduced nanxi in a few pages. In addition, there are only a few informally published theses and

⁴⁰ Due to the shortage of funding, this book has not been published.

dissertations regarding this subject, such as Early Nan-hsi Plays of the Southern Sung Period by Tadeusz Zbikowski, and Hsu Wei as Drama Critic: An Annotated Translation of the Nan-tz'u Hsu-lu⁴¹ by K.C. Leung.

The Purpose and Approach of This Study

The aim of this dissertation is to bridge Chinese language scholarship and English language scholarship in order to write a systematic English-language introduction to nanxi, which will include discussions of its origins, historical development, plays, music, role category system, staging, creators, and audiences. There are a number of controversial issues in Chinese language studies concerning nanxi. I will examine these issues with analytic rigor and state my own perspectives through careful arguments.

Moreover, this dissertation will strengthen the study of nanxi in performance. As mentioned in the preceding section, previous studies concerning nanxi, while touching upon performance, focus almost entirely on annotations, commentary and literary aspects. This dissertation treats nanxi as a theatrical form rather than as dramatic texts. Indeed, in

⁴¹ Nan ci xu lu (An account of nanxi) is a treatise written by Xu Wei (1521-1593), which retroactively recounted the root, music, and plays of nanxi.

the chapters that do not focus directly on performance aspects, I still discuss topics such as "play structure" and "language" from the perspective of the theatrical performance.

To construct this historical study on a solid foundation, I will investigate the historical data found in literati's treatises, memoirs and miscellanies from the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, and analyze the nanxi scripts as well. I will study fourteen nanxi scripts, among which six were not altered by the Ming literati, and Brocade Pouch of Romance, which contains scenes from 34 nanxi plays.

In the discussion of performances of nanxi, the primary materials are stage directions from original scripts which contain more reliable information than that found in the literati's writing. Besides the written texts, I also study porcelain figurines from the Song dynasty, which provide invaluable tangible evidence of theatrical performance.

A common approach to discussing a particular xiqu form is to start with a brief description of xiqu's evolution prior to the emergence of the particular form. Following this method, this dissertation should depict connections with and transmutations of theatrical forms predating nanxi. However, the extreme scarcity of factual information regarding xiqu's origins has resulted in contentious

theories. Theoretical problems concerning the process of xiqu's evolution before the birth of nanxi are still being argued.

Aside from the main stream of theories concerning xiqu's origin mentioned in the first section of this chapter, there are other theories as well. For example, Zheng Zhenduo (1898-1958) asserted that xiwen, the earliest xiqu form, was imported from India by sea-merchants in the twelfth century.⁴² Furthermore, he assumes that, following xiwen, zaju--the song and dance performance narrated in the third person--grew into the theater of daiyanti.⁴³ In terms of Zheng's theory, the roots of these two early xiqu forms were both in India.

Sun Kaidi (1898-1986) attributed the origin of xiqu to puppetry. He argued that nanxi and Yuan zaju, as well as later xiqu forms, were evolved from rou kuilei (literally, "flesh puppets"), a kind of puppet-show acted by human beings, and da yingxi (literally, "big shadow plays").⁴⁴

⁴² Zheng Zhenduo's first evidence is that a fragment of a Sanskrit written text of Sakuntala was found in Mount Tiantai which is near Wenzhou--the home of xiwen. Then, by comparing xiwen with Sanskrit drama, Zheng indicated many similarities between these two kinds of theater including both form and content. See Zheng Zhenduo, Chatuben zhongguo wenxue shi (The illustrated history of Chinese literature), 4 vols. (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1957) 3: 563-573.

⁴³ Zheng Zhenduo 633.

⁴⁴ Sun Kaidi, Kuileixi kaoyuan (A study of puppetry), (Shanghai: Shangza Chubanshe, 1952).

Since so many traces of xiqu's evolution before nanxi have vanished in the course of history, modern scholars have to employ their own inferences to make up those lost links in the chain of history. Their theories are mixtures of historical evidence and subjective interpretations.⁴⁵ To clear the haze surrounding these theories once and for all would require a revelation of new proof. That, however, I am unable to produce.

Hence, I will omit a description of xiqu's evolution before nanxi, which would necessarily be inflated with too much subjective inference and conjecture, and will go directly to a discussion of nanxi itself. I will only bring up the influences on nanxi from earlier theatrical forms for which we have relatively certain evidence, and only at relevant points in the discussion.

⁴⁵ For example, in The Book of History (Shujing), said to have been edited by Confucius, there is the following passage: "I beat stones; I clap stones; the various animals follow [my order] dancing." Zhang Geng interprets this mythical account to mean that a group of primitives attiring themselves as animals is dancing (see Zhang Geng, et al, 1: 3).

CHAPTER 2

A SUMMARY OF NANXI'S HISTORY

Despite China's long tradition of historiography, most information regarding xiqu practices has never been written down. The traditional society held highly varying values and attitudes towards different genres of literature and arts. Poetry and prose were respected while plays and novels were disdained. This is why official histories devoted almost no space to xiqu. As a xiqu form originally popular in folk rather than literati or court tradition, nanxi was even more ignored by writers of formal records.

Fortunately, the treatises, memoirs, and miscellanies of a few literati fond of xiqu contain information concerning nanxi. The recovered nanxi scripts themselves also give relevant evidence about this xiqu form. In addition, a limited number of archaeological relics reveal valuable clues about xiqu performance in the Song dynasty. On the basis of information from the above sources, it is possible to outline the historical development of nanxi. Nevertheless, the scarcity of data unavoidably leads to a paucity of detail in the historical description of nanxi.

Additionally, information about nanxi found in the accounts of the literati, which were written elliptically, is sporadic, indirect, and in some cases mutually contradictory. Hence, there is always the question of how to identify the authenticity of these materials and how to apply them. Because of these circumstances, in this chapter I also examine interpretations of these records made by earlier scholars, and in some places construct my arguments through analyzing or comparing different scholarly viewpoints.

The Origins of Nanxi

Two items of record in the Ming dynasty indicate that nanxi arose in the twelfth century. Zhu Yunming (1460-1526) described the emergence of nanxi as follows:

Nanxi appeared after the Xuanhe period (1119-1125), at the time of the evacuation to the south (1129). It was called Wenzhou zaju. I have seen old records. At that time Zhao Hongfu posted a prohibition which lists some titles, such as Chaste Woman Zhao and the Second Son of the Cai Family (Zhao zhennü Cai erlang) and so on, but they are not numerous.⁴⁶

However, Xu Wei (1521-1593) gave two contradictory versions of the time of origin of nanxi in his treatise:

⁴⁶ Zhu Yunming, Wei tan (Miscellaneous records) qtd. in Hu Ji, Song Jin zaju kao (A study of zaju during the Song and Jin dynasties) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959) 60.

Nanxi began in the reign of Emperor Guangzong (reigned 1190-1194) of the Song dynasty. Two plays, Chaste Woman Zhao (Zhao zhennü) and Wang Kui (a man's name),⁴⁷ written by Yongjia folk actually initiated it. ... Somebody said, "[Nanxi] was already in the embryonic stage during the Xuanhe period, and became popular after [the time of] the evacuation to the south. It was called Yongjia zaju, and huling shengsou⁴⁸ as well." Its arias consisted of the ci⁴⁹ of the Song people supplemented with folk songs. They were not harmonized into mode sets, hence the literati rarely paid attention to them.⁵⁰

Comparing these two accounts, there is a gap of around seventy years between Zhu Yunming and Xi Wei's views. Both Zhu Yunming's viewpoint and that quoted by Xu Wei considered that nanxi appeared around the third decade of the twelfth century, but Xu Wei's own statement, i.e., the first version in his treatise, places the emergence time of nanxi in the last decade of the twelfth century.

⁴⁷ These two plays have both been lost, although eighteen arias of Wang Kui are still extant. But we cannot judge whether these arias are the originals, or have been revised.

⁴⁸ According to Qian Nanyang's study, huling shengsou, a folk phrase during the Song and Jin dynasties, means sweet tunes (see Qian Nanyang 5). However, Zheng Xicun argues that this phrase refers to making jokes (see Zheng Xicun, "'Huling shengsou' xin shi [A new elucidation of 'huling shengsou']," Nanxi lunji [A collection of papers on nanxi], ed. Fujian Xiqu Yanjiusuo [The Fujian Institute of Xiqu Research] [Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1988] 448).

⁴⁹ See note 31, Chapter 1. Additionally, during the Song dynasty, ci was not only a poetic form, but also a song form.

⁵⁰ Xu Wei, ZGXLJ 3: 239.

Qian Nanyang conceived that Xu Wei's view was incorrect. From Zhu Yunming's account, he deduced that since Zhao Hongfu banned nanxi, in Zhao's day nanxi must have already been flourishing, or at least well known; had nanxi just germinated in the villages, high officials would have known nothing of it. Qian Nanyang's judgment is reasonable. According to Xi Wei's own words quoted above, when nanxi first appeared, the literati, not to say high officials--the top of the literati's class--ignored the existence of the folk creation.

Through investigating The History of the Song Dynasty (Song shi), an official history of the Song dynasty, Qian Nanyang ascertained that Zhao Hongfu was a member of the royal family of the Song dynasty, and conjectured that the years during which Zhao served as an official might be the period of the reign of Emperor Guangzong.⁵¹ Later on, Jin Ningfen confirmed Qian Nanyang's conjecture. She discovered that Zhao Hongfu passed his imperial examination in the first year of the reign of Emperor Guangzong (1190).⁵² Thus, the fact that Zhao Hongfu publicly banned a group of nanxi plays proves that, in the period of the reign of Emperor Guangzong, nanxi was already conspicuous outside of rural areas rather

⁵¹ Qian Nanyang 22-23.

⁵² Jin Ningfen, Nanxi vanjiu bianqian (Changes in the study of nanxi) (Tianjin: Tianjin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1992) 12.

than just in its beginning stages as represented by Xu Wei. This is to say that nanxi appeared at the latest in the third decade of the twelfth century.

Although Zhu Yunming and Xu Wei claimed different times for the emergence of nanxi, they had the same opinion concerning the birthplace of nanxi: the original home of nanxi was Wenzhou or Yongjia, a city on the southeast coast of China.⁵³ Additionally, Ye Ziqi, who lived during the transition between the Yuan and Ming dynasties, also stated a similar point of view: "The performer's xiwen began with Wang Kui, which was written by Yongjia folk."⁵⁴

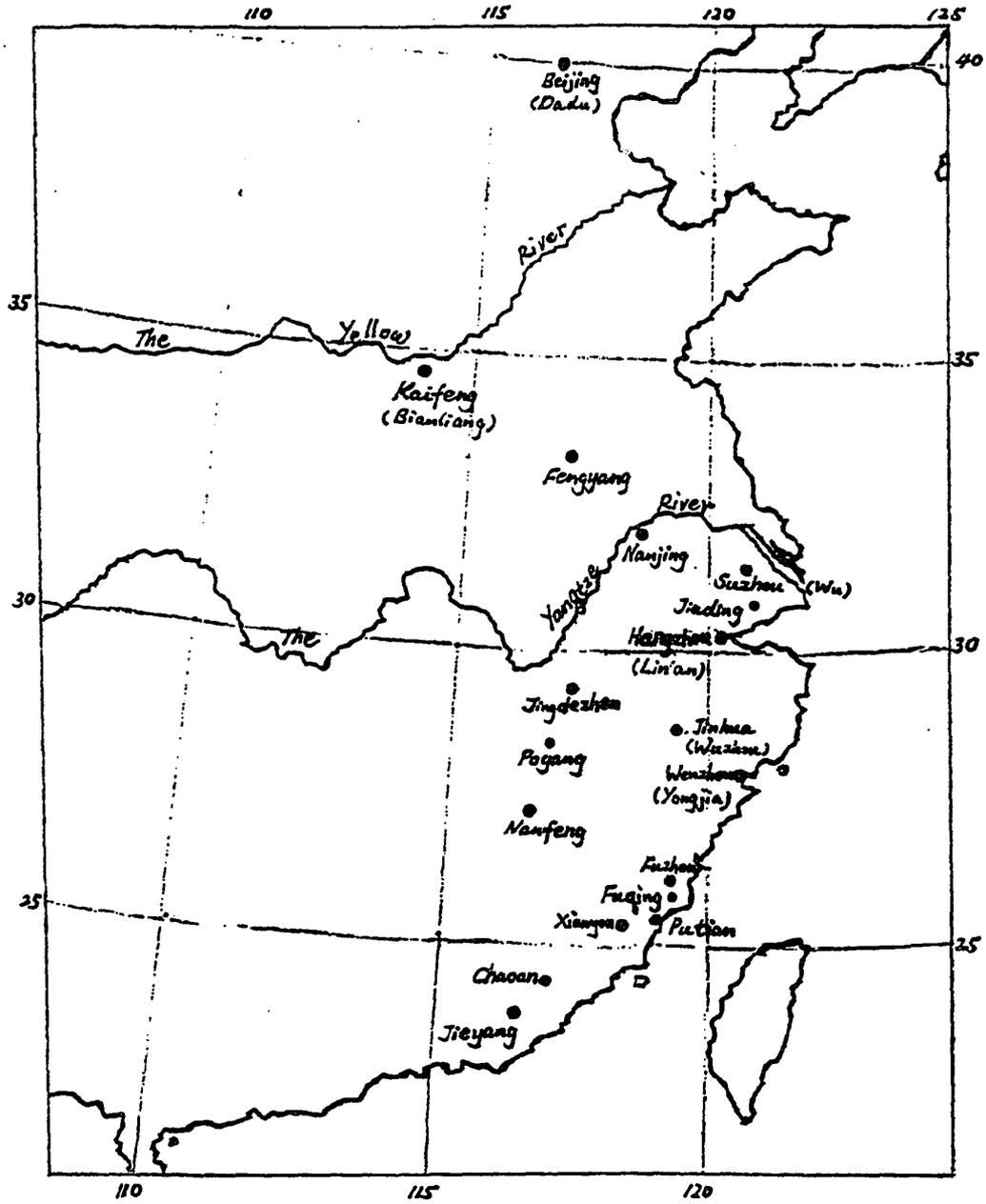
For a long time, scholars accepted the standpoint that Wenzhou was the sole cradle of nanxi. However, in the 1980's Liu Nianzi and a group of scholars from Fujian province challenged the traditional theory, asserting that nanxi originated not only in Wenzhou but also contemporaneously in several places in Fujian province. Senior scholar Zhao Jingshen supported this opinion.⁵⁵ Liu Nianzi listed the following evidence to support their new argument.

53 See map.

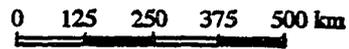
54 Ye Ziqi, Cao mu zi (Grass and wood) qtd. in Wang Guowei 99.

55 See Zhao Jingshen, xu (preface), Nanxi xin zheng (A new study of nanxi), by Liu Nianzi (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1986) 6-7.

MAP: THE NORTH, EAST, AND CENTRAL SOUTH OF CHINA



Scale 1: 12 500 000



First, historical records show that, from the last decade of the twelfth century to the third decade of the thirteenth century, theatrical activities were very numerous in Fujian.⁵⁶

Second, according to The Phonology of the Central Plains (Zhongyuan yinyun) (1324), xuwen utilized both Fujian and Zhejiang dialects.⁵⁷

Third, two old xiqu forms in Fujian have consanguinity with nanxi. An Account of Nanxi (nan ci xu lu), the earliest significant treatise on nanxi, was written by Xu Wei in Fujian in 1559. Most plays listed in this book, according to Liu Nianzi's field research in Fujian, have survived in puxian xi (literally, "theater of Pu[tian⁵⁸ and] Xian[you]"⁵⁹) and liyuan xi (literally, "pear garden theater"), two old xiqu forms in Fujian; furthermore, several of the plays are rarely seen in the other regional xiqu forms, and one of them existed only in liyuan xi.⁶⁰ In addition, the bili, one of the Chinese reed instruments used in nanxi, can be only seen in puxian xi,⁶¹ but not in all other xiqu forms.⁶²

⁵⁶ See Liu Nianzi, Nanxi xin zheng (A new study on nanxi) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1986) 21-22 and 23-24.

⁵⁷ See Liu Nianzi 22-23.

⁵⁸ See map.

⁵⁹ See map.

⁶⁰ See Liu Nianzi 24-29.

Liu Nianzi's book provides good sources for nanxi studies, but his conclusion is not convincing. Liu's first point does not show any necessary connection between Fujian's theatrical activities and nanxi--these performing activities might not be related to nanxi. And even if they were connected with nanxi, these performances of 1190-1230 occurred much later than the emergence of nanxi. Only by assuming that nanxi did not emerge until the last decade of the twelfth century (Xu Wei's erroneous view) could these materials be used as evidence substantiating nanxi's origin in Fujian.

Based on Liu's second and third points, instead of coming to Liu's conclusion, one can conclude that nanxi was already popular in Fujian around the early fourteenth century and that it had a profound influence on puxian xi and liyuan xi. Nevertheless, no matter how brilliant nanxi once was in Fujian, this cannot certify that Fujian was also nanxi's birth place. In fact, some xiqu forms have flourished more in neighboring areas than in their original homes. For instance, huangmei xi (literally, "theater of Huangmei") originated in Huangmei county, Hubei province, but later

⁶¹ In fact, the bili has also been used in Chinese folk music although its name has been changed (See Zhou Ruikang, "Guan [Tubes]" Zhongguo da baike quanshu: Yinyue wudao [Encyclopedia of China: Music and dance], ed. Lü Ji, et al. [Beijing: Zhongguo Da Baike Quanshu Chubanshe, 1989] 237).

⁶² See Liu Nianzi 29 and 299-301.

became one of major regional xiqu forms in Anhui--a province adjacent to Hubei.⁶³

From the scant historical accounts, one may draw the conclusion that nanxi originated in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, around the third decade of the twelfth century at the latest.

The Spread of Nanxi

After emerging in Wenzhou, nanxi was gradually spread north, west, and south, quickly reaching Hangzhou, the capital of the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279). In a literati memoir of the Yuan dynasty, there is the following passage:

Between the years wuchen (1268) and jisi (1269), Wang Huan (a man's name) xiwen was in vogue in the capital; this play was written by Huang Kedao, a student in the Imperial Academy.⁶⁴

It appears that, at the end of the Southern Song dynasty, nanxi was already popular in the capital.

⁶³ See Wen Nian, "Huangmei xi (Huangmei theater)," ZDBQXQ 132-133.

⁶⁴ Liu Yiqing, Qiantang yishi (Incidents in Qiantang) qtd. in Hu Ji 59.

Hangzhou is located along the southeast China coastline, approximately 170 miles northwest of Wenzhou.⁶⁵ During the Song dynasty, this area was relatively rich, populous, and peaceful, unlike war-ridden north China. Because of the Jurchens' invasion and their capture of the Song Emperor in 1127, the Song Imperial Government was reconstituted and then evacuated to south China, finally settling down in Hangzhou in 1130.⁶⁶ This new Song court was called the Southern Song dynasty, while the era prior to it was named the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127). Due to the evacuation from north China, the population in Hangzhou was over a million. The flourishing trade in the metropolis supplied adequate conditions for the development of a variety of entertainments. Under these conditions, nanxi easily traveled to Hangzhou through convenient land and water transportation, further attracting numerous audiences.

Although there are no specialized treatises regarding nanxi activities in Hangzhou during the Yuan dynasty, a few clues can be found in treatises about Yuan zaju. After the Mongol conquered south China in 1279, the performing center

⁶⁵ See map.

⁶⁶ See Wu Tai, "Song Gaozong Zhao Gou (The emperor Gaozong of the Song dynasty--Zhao Gou)," Zhongguo da baike quanshu: Zhongguo lishi (Encyclopedia of China: China's history), ed. Hou Wailu, et al. 3 vols. (Beijing and Shanghai: Zhongguo Da Baike Quanshu Chubanshe, 1992) 2: 1013-1014.

of Yuan zaju moved from the north capital, Dadu,⁶⁷ to Hangzhou. Cherishing Yuan zaju, literati wrote books focusing on it, which also incidentally mentioned nanxi performance.

Having lived in Hangzhou for many years, Zhong Sicheng (ca. 1279-ca. 1360) had many friends in theatrical circles, including both natives of Hangzhou and those who had settled there.⁶⁸ He wrote the Register of Ghosts (Lu gui bu) to record the playwrights of Yuan zaju. In his book, two natives of Hangzhou who were related to nanxi were also mentioned. One was Xiao Dexiang, who participated in nanxi playwriting.⁶⁹ The other was Shen He, who was the first to use nan bei he tao (literally, "southern and northern [arias] both arranged in the same set").⁷⁰ This new method of constructing sets would be widely employed in the music of nanxi later on.

The Brothel Collection (Qinglou ji), an exceptional document, recorded brief descriptions and in some case biographies of a hundred and seventeen actresses, and

⁶⁷ Dadu was located in what is now modern Beijing.

⁶⁸ See Zhongguo Xiqu Yanjiuyuan (The China Institute of Xiqu Research), "Lu gui bu tiyao (A precis of the Register of Ghosts)," ZGXLJ 2: 87.

⁶⁹ Zhong Sicheng, ZGXLJ 2: 134.

⁷⁰ Zhong Sicheng, ZGXLJ 2: 120. See next section of this chapter for details.

mentioned thirty-five actors: most were Yuan zaju performers, but three were nanxi actresses. Among these three, the native place of only one was indicated. She was from Wuzhou,⁷¹ a city between Wenzhou and Hangzhou.⁷²

The traces of nanxi activities in Hangzhou during the Yuan dynasty can be seen in the original nanxi scripts as well. For example, Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career was written by the "talented man [or men]" (cairen) in Hangzhou during the Yuan dynasty.⁷³ And its congener, Little Butcher Sun, was composed by the "writing society" (shuhui) of Hangzhou.⁷⁴ The talented men were intellectuals of low social status who joined writing societies to create scripts for plays, storytelling, and ballads for a variety of performers.⁷⁵ The advent of writing societies implies that the need for play scripts increased--a number of nanxi troupes might have existed in Hangzhou at that time.

⁷¹ Wuzhou was located in what is now modern Jinhua. See map.

⁷² See Xia Tingzhi, ZGXLJ 2:32. See also Sun Chongtao and Xu Hongtu, comp. and ed., Qinglou ji jianzhu (Notes and commentaries on The brothel collection), by Xia Tingzhi (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1990) 181-183.

⁷³ Qian Nanyang, comp. 219.

⁷⁴ Qian Nanyang, comp. 257. However, Qian Nanyang himself considers that the author of this play was Xiao Dexiang; see Qian Nanyang, comp. 1-2.

⁷⁵ See Chapter 5 for details.

A further example can be found in Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career, a love story between a grandee's son and an actress. In the fifth chu or scene, the hero and the actress review popular plays together. Wang Jinbang, the actress, lists a total of twenty-nine plays,⁷⁶ eighteen of which are nanxi.⁷⁷ These eighteen nanxi plays seem to have been widely known in Hangzhou at that time; hence they could be listed by the talented man [or men] of Hangzhou in Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career. Certainly, these eighteen productions constituted only a portion of the nanxi popular in Hangzhou. For example, The Moon Pavilion (Baiyue ting), written by a Hangzhou native,⁷⁸ was a well-known nanxi play at that time, but was not in the list.

⁷⁶ Qian Nanyang, comp. 231-231.

⁷⁷ Scholars have different views on the identification of these twenty-nine plays. Qian Nanyang regarded all of them as nanxi (see Qian Nanyang, comp. 234). Tan Zhengbi had the same opinion in his special study regarding the list of these twenty-nine plays (see Tan Zhengbi, Huaben yu guju [Storytelling texts and classical theater] [Shanghai: Shanghai Gudian Wenxue Chubanshe, 1956] 205-220). However, according to Liao Ben's convincing argument, only eighteen among these twenty-nine plays were nanxi (see Liao Ben, "Nanxi Huanmen zidi cuo lishen yuanchu bei zaju tuikao [A study: the nanxi play--Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career was transplanted from the northern zaju]," Wenxue yichan [Literary heritage] 2 [1987]: 97-104). See also Wilt Idema, and Stephen H. West, Chinese Theater 1100-1450 (Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH Wiesbaden, 1982) 209-210.

⁷⁸ See Yu Weimin, "Baiyue ting de zuozhe he banben kaolue (A study on the author and editions of The Moon Pavilion)," Wenxian (Documents) 1 (1986): 13-15.

Nanxi was circulated through the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River at least by the time of the transition from the Yuan to the Ming dynasty. Xu Wei wrote the following passage in his treatise:

At the time The Lute (Pipa ji) was presented, and the High Emperor⁷⁹ smilingly said, "The Five Canons⁸⁰ and the Four Books⁸¹ are [just like] cotton and silk textiles, beans and millet, [which] every household has; [but] Gao Ming's The Lute is like delicacies from the mountains and seas, without [which] rich and honorable family cannot do." ... Later on, he ordered actors to perform [the play] at the palace every day.⁸²

Xu Fuzuo (1560-ca. 1630), a dramatist, poet, and scholar, also mentioned that this first emperor of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang, was amazed by The Lute when he was still a commoner.⁸³ The hometown of Zhu Yuanzhang was Fengyang,⁸⁴ Anhui province, and the area of his activities before

⁷⁹ Namely, Zhu Yuanzhang, the first emperor of the Ming dynasty, regent 1368-1398.

⁸⁰ The Five Canons are Shijing (The book of songs), Shujing (The book of history), Yijing (The book of changes), Liji (The book of rites), and Chunqiu (The spring and autumn annals).

⁸¹ The Four Books are Daxue (The great learning), Zhongyong (The doctrine of the mean), Lunyu (The analects of Confucius), and Mengzi (Mencius).

⁸² Xu Wei, ZGXLJ 3: 240.

⁸³ Xu Fuzuo, Oulun (On xiqu) ZGXLJ 4: 233.

⁸⁴ See map.

ascending the throne was the Yangtze River valley.⁸⁵ Establishing the Ming dynasty, he decided on Nanjing⁸⁶ as the capital. Therefore, Zhu Yuanzhang must have come to know The Lute--a masterpiece of nanxi--in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River. In other words, in the late fourteenth century, nanxi had already reached this area, including Nanjing.

In the middle of the fifteenth century, nanxi further extended to Beijing⁸⁷--the later capital of the Ming dynasty:⁸⁸

Actors from Wu⁸⁹ performed nanxi in the capital. Men Da, a member of the secret police, reported to the emperor that these males played female roles, [and thus] corrupted public morals. Emperor Yingzong (reigned 1436-1450, and 1457-1465) had

⁸⁵ See Wan Ming, "Ming taizu Zhu Yuanzhang (The first emperor of the Ming dynasty--Zhu Yuanzhang)," ZDBQZL 2: 699-700.

⁸⁶ See map.

⁸⁷ Qian Nanyang asserted that nanxi had already been performed in Beijing during the Yuan dynasty. His evidence is that an item of material, which is from "A General List (Zongmu)" in The Metrical Patterns of the Southern Arias (Nanqu pu) by Zhang Dafu in the early Qing dynasty, indicates that a script of xiwen was once printed in Beijing during the Yuan dynasty (see Qian Nanyang 29). However, his opinion is not convincing. The fact that a nanxi script was printed in Beijing does not necessarily prove that this xiqu form was also performed there.

⁸⁸ The Ming capital was moved from Nanjing to Beijing in 1421. See Li Guanglian, "Yongle qiandu (The Yongle emperor moving the capital)," ZDBQZL 3: 1413.

⁸⁹ Namely the modern Suzhou area. See map.

them arrested, and interrogated them in person. These actors all explained how they encouraged people to moral rectitude. The emperor ordered them released, and ordered them to perform then and there. An actor, stepping forward, said: "The country is right[,] Heaven is satisfied; officials are honest[,] subjects are reassured." etc. The emperor was very pleased, and said: "These are proverbs. Why were they condemned?" Then, these actors were admitted into the court troupe. ... When the emperor died, they sneaked back to Wu.⁹⁰

Besides supplying facts about nanxi in Beijing, this story also reveals information about nanxi in the Suzhou area. Considering that Wu was these actors' native place and their retreat, there must have been fairly large audiences for nanxi in the area at that time.

The discovery of The Chenghua Edition of The White Rabbit supplies similar information. This text was printed in Beijing in the Chenghua period (1465-1488), but was put into a grave in Jiading county⁹¹ outside modern Shanghai as a funerary object.⁹² It appears that, in Beijing at that period of the Ming dynasty, a certain number of people were interested in nanxi; had there been no market, the script would not have been printed. Additionally, the fact that the script was brought back to the Wu area and placed into a tomb

⁹⁰ Lu Cai, ed., Du gong tan zuan (The collection of talks of gentlemen in the capital) qtd. in Ye Dejun 1: 3.

⁹¹ See map.

⁹² See Peng Fei, "Lüe lun chenghua ben Baitu ji (On The Chenghua Edition of The White Rabbit)," Wenxue yichan (Literary Heritage) 3 (1983): 70.

as a funerary object reveals that the owner of the tomb must have loved nanxi performance when she was alive. In the light of Chinese folkways, the objects buried with the dead were usually things the person had cherished during his or her lifetime. This also suggests that people from the Wu area in general might have been fond of nanxi.

During the Southern Song dynasty, nanxi activities also stretched into Jiangxi Province, which lies to the west of Zhejiang province. As mentioned in "A Xiqu Form with the Oldest Surviving Play Scripts" section of chapter one, Liu Xun, a scholar in the transition from the Song to the Yuan dynasty, remarked on nanxi in his notes: "In the period Xianchun (1265-1274), Yongjia xiqu arose ...".⁹³ This record was mingled with a description of entertainments in Liu Xun's hometown, Nanfeng,⁹⁴ a city in the east of Jiangxi province, near the boundary between Fujian and Jiangxi provinces. Evidently, at the end of the Southern Song dynasty nanxi from Zhejiang province had already spread to Jiangxi.

Two archaeological excavations in Jiangxi Province yielded facts about theatrical performances in this area, possibly relating to nanxi. In 1973, six porcelain figurines

⁹³ See note 5, Chapter 1.

⁹⁴ See map.

of actors were excavated in Jingdezhen,⁹⁵ a famous porcelain-producing area, from a tomb constructed in 1252.⁹⁶ In 1975, twenty-one porcelain figurines, also of actors, were excavated from a tomb constructed in 1264 in Poyang,⁹⁷ which is near Jingdezhen.⁹⁸ The images of these porcelain figurines demonstrate that they were figurines of theater, rather than dance, performers. Plates One and Two clearly illustrate that the costumes of these figurines, similar to those in contemporary real life, were inconvenient for dancing movements; correspondingly, the size of their gestures is smaller than those in dance performances.

However, it is difficult to ascertain whether these figurines were statuettes of performers of nanxi. First, there are no literary records concerning these figurines. Second, it is impossible through the mutual relationships of these figurines to conjecture what plays they originally

95 See map.

96 See Liu Nianzi, Xiqu wenwu congkao (A series of studies on xiqu relics) (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1986) 28-29.

97 See map.

98 See Tang Shan, "Jiangxi Poyang faxian Songdai xiju yong (The Song dynasty pottery actor[s] excavated in Jiangxi Poyang [The translation of the title is from the original article.])," Wenwu (Cultural Relics) 4 (1979) 6; see also Liu Nianzi, Xiqu wenwu congkao, 27-28. Tang Shan and Liu Nianzi argue definitively that these figurines represent theatrical performers, and not individuals in everyday life.

PLATE 1: PORCELAIN FIGURINES UNEARTHED
IN JINGDEZHEN, JIANGXI PROVINCE



Source: Liu Nianzi, Xiqu wenwu congkao (A series of studies on xiqu relics) (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1986), Plate 4.

PLATE 2: PORCELAIN FIGURINES UNEARTHED
IN POYANG, JIANGXI PROVINCE



Source: Liu Nianzi, Xiqu wenwu congkao (A series of studies on xiqu relics) (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1986), Plate 5.

belonged to. In the courses of excavations, some of these figurines were damaged, and their original composition was destroyed as well.

Around the middle of the thirteenth century, there were three kinds of theatrical arts in China: Song zaju,⁹⁹ nanxi, and Yuan zaju. These figurines might be connected with either nanxi or Song zaju, but not with Yuan zaju. The reason is that these statuettes were buried in graves built before the end of the Southern Song dynasty. At that time the south and north were at of war; Yuan zaju, the xiqu form in the enemy area, could not have been brought to south China.

When nanxi went north to Hangzhou, it simultaneously extended south to Fujian. In First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, written in the Southern Song dynasty, the names of two gupai¹⁰⁰ (literally, "song types") are associated with two places in Fujian. Fuzhou ge¹⁰¹ literally means the song of Fuzhou,¹⁰² which is the capital of Fujian Province.

⁹⁹ Song zaju refers to theatrical performances in the Song dynasty, which included such theater forms as dance and the comic sketch. Constituents of Song zaju were incorporated by both nanxi and Yuan zaju.

¹⁰⁰ For details, see the "Music" section of Chapter 4.

¹⁰¹ Qian Nanyang, comp. 44.

¹⁰² See map.

Similarly, the literal meaning of fuqing ge¹⁰³ is the song of Fuqing,¹⁰⁴ a coastal city to the south of Fuzhou. Considering that Chinese folk ditties frequently obtain their names from their places of origin, it is quite possible that these two arias were folk songs originating in Fuzhou and Fuqing, which were then incorporated into nanxi. In other words, nanxi activities had reached the Fujian area before the incorporation happened.

Further evidence of the circulation of nanxi in Fujian is that nanxi utilized Fujian dialect. As mentioned in the last section of this chapter, Liu Nianzi analyzed the records in The Phonology of the Central Plains (Zhongyuan yinyun) (1324) and found that the language of xiwen was in compliance with a kind of special phonology compiled by Shen Yue, which consists of both Fujian and Zhejiang dialects.

Also, through his field research in Fujian, Liu Nianzi found a number of relics of nanxi in the subject matter, cupai, and musical instruments of puxian xi and liyuan xi. His discoveries indicate that nanxi once prospered in the Fujian area.

The flourishing of nanxi in the Fujian area had its historical causes. Because of the evacuation from north China, the population in Fujian rapidly increased from

103 Qian Nanyang, comp. 119.

104 See map.

2,043,032 to 2,808,851 between the third and fourth decades of the twelfth century.¹⁰⁵ A substantial number of these refugees were from the upper classes, and therefore accustomed to variety and sophistication in entertainment. This type of population growth was one of the necessary conditions for the development of various entertainments in Fujian.

In the fourth decade of the fifteenth century at the latest, nanxi reached to Guangdong province, to the south of Fujian. In a tomb in Chaoan county¹⁰⁶ in Guangdong Province, The Xuande Edition of The Gold Hairpin, a handwritten copy of a performance script, was unearthed in 1975; the date of transcribing the script is given as the seventh year of the Xuande period (1433).¹⁰⁷ Similarly, a handwritten copy of Cai Bojie, i.e., The Lute, copied in the Jiajing period (1522-1567), was excavated in Jieyang county,¹⁰⁸ Guangdong province, in 1958.¹⁰⁹

105 See Liu Nianzi 35.

106 See map.

107 See Yang Yue, et al., eds., Ming ben Chaozhou xiwen wu zhong (Ming dynasty edition of five Chaozhou xiwen plays) (Guangdong: Guangdong Renming Chubanshe, 1985) 826.

108 See map.

109 See Yang Yue, et al. 826-827.

To summarize, nanxi spread north to Beijing, west to Jiangxi, and south to Fujian and Guangdong. Considering that the above conclusion comes out of limited literary documentation and archaeological excavations, the actual area covered by nanxi might be larger, and the real dates of its reaching Beijing and other cities might be earlier than those described in this section.

The Transmutations of Nanxi

With the passage of time, nanxi spread from its birthplace to distant areas, but in these places this xiqu form was no longer the original "Wenzhou zaju" or "Yongjia zaju." Xiqu forms in their developing period often absorb different dialectal usages and regional musical styles of the areas they reach. Besides, the participation of literati in the creation of xiqu inevitably affected both the ideological content and the artistic form of these theatrical arts. To put it simply, nanxi gradually changed during its spread. The expansion process of nanxi was in fact a process of transmutation of the form itself.

Nobody knows what the concrete artistic form of nanxi was like in its embryonic state. The plots of such early nanxi plays as Chaste Woman Zhao and Wang Kui can at least be

learned from their descendants in later xiqu genres. However, there is almost no way of investigating their concrete artistic forms. What is known about them is merely that their music was a mixture of ci tunes and folk songs, according to Xu Wei's record as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.¹¹⁰

In the same treatise, Xu Wei further described the music of nanxi as follows:

The Yongjia zaju arose, employing ditties from villages and towns. [It] originally had no mode sets, and rarely did [it] have fixed rhythms. [It] only collected what peasants in the field and girls in town could offhandedly sing¹¹¹

It appears that, as a "small-scale" folk theater (minjian xiaoxi), the music of Yongjia zaju was simple and direct.

However, the music of nanxi became quite complicated in the transition between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Sun Chongtao (1939-) analyzed the music sources contained in First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, which was created during the middle of the Southern Song dynasty (around 1200).¹¹² He found that, in addition to ci tunes and folk ditties, First Place Scholar Zhang Xie also incorporated melodies from various artistic forms, such as zhugongdiao, qupo (literally,

110 Xu Wei, ZGXLJ 3: 239.

111 Xu Wei, ZGXLJ 3: 240.

112 See Sun Chongtao, "Zhang Xie zhuangyuan yu 'Yongjia zaju' (First place scholar Zhang Xie and Yongjia zaju)," Wenyi yanjiu (Literature and art studies) 6 (1992): 107.

"melody break," a kind of dance tune), fogu (literally, "Buddhist music"), huaci (literally, "flower lyrics") and puppetry.¹¹³ One of the important factors in the promotion of nanxi developed in this era was the prosperity of performances in cities on the southeast coast of China. When the Jurchen troops captured north China, large numbers of refugees evacuated to south China. Among those refugees there were various entertainers such as story-tellers, comedians, and puppeteers. With a rapid increase in population and commercial activities, a variety of entertainments flourished in Hangzhou, Wenzhou and other cities.¹¹⁴ Therefore, on one hand, nanxi had a golden opportunity to absorb artistic elements from these performances; on the other hand, competing with these entertainments, nanxi had to continuously enrich itself. Otherwise, it could lose audiences in commercial competition.

During the Yuan dynasty, one of the important developments in the music of nanxi was the creation and application of nan bei he tao, a new method of constructing sets. Originally, the arias of nanxi were from southern music while those of Yuan zaju were from northern music.¹¹⁵

113 See Sun Chongtao 111.

114 See Wilt Idema, and Stephen H. West 56-83.

115 Put simply, the differences between southern and northern arias consist basically in two aspects. First of all, southern music used the pentatonic scale, but northern

After the Mongols conquered south China, nanxi and Yuan zaju influenced one other. Therefore, nanxi began to incorporate northern tunes of Yuan zaju. According to Zhong Sicheng, it was Shen He who began to use nan bei he tao; but he merely employed this new technique to write sanqu¹¹⁶ rather than dramatic poetry.¹¹⁷

Through examining Grande's Son Takes the Wrong Career and Little Butcher Sun, both written in the Yuan dynasty,¹¹⁸ one can see that these two plays occasionally contain northern tunes. For example, in the twelfth chu of Grande's Son Takes the Wrong Career, a short set of southern music including five arias was inserted in a long set of northern music.¹¹⁹ Moreover, in the fifth chu of the play, and in the fourteenth chu of Little Butcher Sun, southern and northern arias were alternately arranged into a set.¹²⁰ This kind of

music employed the heptatonic scale. Secondly, southern arias were melismatic, and had a slow rhythm, while northern arias were syllabic, and had a fast tempo. Therefore, in general, the southern style was soft and melodious, the northern strong and forceful.

116 See note 36, Chapter 1.

117 Zhong Sicheng, ZGXLJ 2: 120.

118 See the first section of next chapter--"Extant Texts of Nanxi Plays"--for specifics.

119 Qian Nanyang, comp. 245. See pp. 105-106 for information on arias and their northern or southern origin.

120 Qian Nanyang 36.

organization was increasingly employed in nanxi and chuanqi during the Ming dynasty.

Not only its music, but the whole form of nanxi was transmuted. In First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, created in the Southern Song dynasty, one can easily identify elements borrowed from other performance forms; they stand out because they were not yet naturally synthesized with the theatrical art. However, in later nanxi plays, this kind of phenomenon disappeared. In other words, the component parts of later nanxi became more unified, and the style of this xiqu form was more internally consistent than in its earlier period.

For example, in the prologue of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, a mo or fumo¹²¹ first recites two pieces of ci, remarking on human existence, and introducing information about this production; then he performs a passage of zhugongdiao (including five arias interspersed with monologues), narrating a little synopsis of the play in the third person. When the mo performs zhugongdiao, he is essentially a storyteller--an outsider rather than a character in this play--and his performance is actually ballad-singing and storytelling rather than acting per se. This kind of device was no longer used in nanxi plays created during the Yuan dynasty. The prologues of Grandee's Son

¹²¹ A secondary male role. See chapter 4 for specifics.

Takes the Wrong Career, Little Butcher Sun, and The Lute only contain one or two pieces of ci. Following this convention, later nanxi plays usually employed two pieces of ci in prologues: one states the purpose for creating the play, and the other describes the gist of the story.

Similarly, another example of a performer acting as a storyteller can be seen at the beginning of the second chu of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie. After his entrance, the sheng¹²² first talks to musicians off backstage, and then introduces information about his troupe to the audience. He does not begin to play the title role--Zhang Xie--until he finishes this public-relations pitch. However, in plays after First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, as soon as the male lead enters in the second chu, he speaks or sings in first person. In other words, from the very beginning, he is already a character rather than a storyteller.

Likewise, vestiges of Song zaju also remain in First Place Scholar Zhang Xie.¹²³ For instance, when the mo or fumo and the jing¹²⁴ were both on the stage, they usually teased

122 The male lead. See chapter 4 for specifics.

123 Some scholars have argued that nanxi developed directly from Song zaju (see Zhou Yibai 170-171). However, others consider nanxi to have evolved from performances of folk song and dance, absorbing influences from Song zaju during its evolution (see Zhang Geng et al. 108-113). Although these two kinds of perspectives have some differences, both of them recognize the influences of Song zaju on nanxi.

each other, making jokes. This kind of comic performance was descended from Song zaju, in which the fumo and fujing were a pair of comic roles and their special duty was making jokes.¹²⁵ The style of this kind of clowning was central in the comic sketches of Song zaju, and continued to be employed in early nanxi plays, where at it was given precedence over plot development.

In First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, some of the clowning of the mo and jing indeed interrupt the flow of the plot. For example, having achieved first place in the imperial examination and thereby becoming the "first place scholar" (zhuangyuan), Zhang Xie not only refuses to recognize his wife--a poor girl who helped him before--but even tries to kill her with a sword. Fortunately, she does not die, but rather asks her neighbors to save her life. In this critical moment, the mo and jing make the following joke:

Dan:¹²⁶ Grandmama, help me!

Jing: Where are you now?

¹²⁴ The jing was a comic role in nanxi. However, in chuanqi and other later xiqu forms, it comprises characters who are frank and open-minded but rough, or who are crafty and dangerous.

¹²⁵ See Hu Ji 109-120. See also Liao Ben, Song Yuan xiqu wenwu yu minsu (Xiqu relics and folklore in the Song and Yuan dynasties) (Beijing: Wenhua Yishi Chubanshe, 1989) 276-282.

¹²⁶ The female lead who plays Zhang Xie's wife here. See Chapter 4 for specific information of this role category.

Dan: I have fallen down into a deep pit.

Jing: (Watching)
Pitiful! Pitiful! How can I, an old lady, help you? Grandpapa, come on! Ah!

Mo: (Entering)
... Grandmama, what are you doing?

Jing: Grandpapa, Zhang Xie's wife has fallen down into a deep pit.

Mo: What kind of pit?

Jing: A night soil pit.

Mo: She must stink! Let's help her get out it.

Mo and jing: (Singing)
Lady, you were picking tea,
Why have [you] fallen?
Could somebody be trying to secretly kill you?
You are bleeding all over.¹²⁷

It is apparent that while this chu might first put the audience in the mood to sympathize with the poor girl in her misfortune and to hate Zhang Xie for his ungrateful and ruthless action, the joking of the mo and jing quoted above actually disrupt the keynote of sympathy for the victim.

This kind of featured clowning disappeared in Grande's Son Takes the Wrong Career and Little Butcher Sun. Compared with those in First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, in these two plays created in the Yuan dynasty, the comic roles have much shrunken realms of activity. Specifically, in First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, some chu such as the eleventh and the

¹²⁷ Qian Nanyang, comp. 178.

twenty-eighth were written solely for the comic roles; there are no such chu in Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career and Little Butcher Sun. Instead, the comic acting of jing and chou is sometimes interspersed with performances of the male or female lead, and the frequency of clowning is decreased. Moreover, mo in these two plays are no longer comic roles. In sum, the whole style of these two plays is more internally consistent than that of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, and more like that of the late nanxi plays and the plays written in the transition from nanxi to chuanqi.

From the end of the Yuan dynasty, more and more literati participated in the creation of nanxi. This tendency promoted the evolution of nanxi from a folk theater to an aristocratic art.

Most authors of nanxi plays before the end of the Yuan dynasty were anonymous. For example, the three plays discussed above were generally attributed either to writing societies or to "talented men" rather than specific playwrights. This kind of anonymity of authorship further indicates that nanxi during this period still had some of the characteristics of folk theater. Specifically-authored nanxi plays did not appear until the emergence of the literati's re-created nanxi plays. The first non-anonymous nanxi play

is Gao Ming's The Lute written at the end of the Yuan dynasty.

Gao's re-creation was based on Chaste Woman Zhao--one of the earliest nanxi plays,¹²⁸ but the literary value of this play reached a higher level than that of early nanxi plays. The dramatic conflict of the play was designed very successfully. For instance, Gao Ming interwove two plot lines together, comparing the miserable experiences of Zhao Wuniang--Cai Bojie's first wife--and the comfortable life of Cai Bojie and his second wife--a daughter of the prime minister. By comparison and contrast, the chu regarding Zhao Wuniang are rather moving and touching. In addition, the language of The Lute is not only elegant, but also natural and personalized. Thanks to Gao Ming's effort, the dramatic poetry of nanxi was for the first time comparable to that of Yuan zaju.

The other extant nanxi plays adapted or revised by literati in the transition between the Yuan and Ming dynasties are The Thorn Hairpin (Jingchai ji), The White Rabbit, The Moon Pavilion, and Killing a Dog (Shagou ji). Partly preserving the merit of early nanxi plays, in general these plays were good in terms of performability. Additionally, they had more formulated structure, more

¹²⁸ See "Surviving Texts of Nanxi Plays," Chapter 3 for details.

literary language, and more systematized prosody than early nanxi plays although their literary value remained uneven.

In the early Ming dynasty, a number of literati began to create new nanxi plays themselves rather than adapting or revising old ones. These plays created purely by literati embodied the aesthetic tastes of the educated elite. Generally speaking, literati playwrights liked to treat drama as a kind of poetic genre through which they could exhibit their poetic talents. Moreover, some literati playwrights even paraded their knowledge of Chinese classics in their plays.

The Perfume Pouch (Xiangnang ji) was a typical example of this kind of ornate or euphuistic style. As Xu Wei pointed out:

The Perfume Pouch is a play written by the old scholar Shao Wenming from Yixing, who researched The Book of Songs (Shijing), and specially studied the poetry of Du [Fu¹²⁹]. Thereupon, he filled his arias with verses from these two books; the dialogue and monologue were also written in classical language. Worst of all, he also liked to employ obscure classical allusions in his couplets.¹³⁰

Obviously, Shao Wenming's style hurt the theatricality of his play. In Chinese classical poems, readers could ponder implicit verses to conceive intangible images; however, in

¹²⁹ Du Fu (712-770), was one of the greatest poets of China.

¹³⁰ Xu Wei, ZGXLJ 3: 243.

performance of nanxi audiences only had one opportunity to catch the lyrics and lines. Therefore, in drama those copious quotes from classical poems would be obscure and perplexing for audiences, obstructing their appreciation of the productions

Broadly speaking, unlike nanxi plays created before the Ming dynasty, the literati's plays written in this period were literary rather than theatrical, and some of them were even unperformable. For instance, a large number of scenes from plays such as The Thorn Hairpin, The White Rabbit, The Moon Pavilion, and Killing a Dog have been continuously presented in later xiqu forms, while very few scenes from plays like The Perfume Pouch were preserved. This fact indicates that the literati's plays written in this period did not last long as performance pieces.

Understandably, in the past those talented men of writing societies familiarized themselves with performers, troupes, and the stage, and therefore they wrote scripts with performance conditions and requirements in mind. But now, the literati playwrights always paid great attention to rhetoric, diction, and prosody, but ignored the performability of their plays.

To sum up, the participation of literati in the creation of nanxi had paradoxical effects on the transmutation of this xiqu form. Around the middle of the Ming dynasty, nanxi

finished its evolution, and became chuanqi. The new generation of nanxi--chuanqi¹³¹--spread throughout the whole of China while Yuan zaju was waning; eventually, it entirely replaced Yuan zaju on the stage.

The Divide between Nanxi and Chuanqi

As discussed before, nanxi was the direct forerunner of chuanqi. However, it is extremely difficult to ascertain the divide between the history of nanxi and that of chuanqi.

131 In Chinese language scholarship, the term chuanqi may be used to designate the new generation nanxi, which possessed a number of sub-genres such as yiyangqiang (see note 139) and kunqu or kunshangqiang (see note 137); (see "Chuanqi [Transmission of the marvelous]," Zhongguo xiqu quyici dian [Dictionary of China's xiqu, storytelling and ballad-singing], eds. Shanghai Yishu Yanjiu Suo [Shanghai Institute of Art Research] and Zhongguo Xijujia Xiehui Shanghai Fenhui [The Shanghai Branch of the Association of Chinese Theater Artists]. [Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, 1981] 39). However, following the traditional viewpoint, some scholars only use the term chuanqi to designate the scripts of the new generation nanxi (see Yu Lin, "Chuanqi [Transmission of the marvelous]," ZDBQXQ 46), and define yiyangqiang and its counterparts as musical styles (see Yu Cong "Yiyangqiang [Tunes in Yiyang]," ZDBQXQ 542-543). This is to say that these scholars only regard chuanqi as a form of dramatic literature, which could be performed in a number of different musical styles. I personally agree with the first viewpoint, and believe that chuanqi is a complete xiqu form (juzhong), which included both the dramatic literature and performing arts. However, to argue that point here is beyond the scope of a dissertation concerned with nanxi.

Concerning this academic problem, there are different scholarly viewpoints.

A common approach to solve the above problem is to set a divide in the transition between the Yuan and Ming dynasties. Usually, scholars put names of particular dynasties in front of nanxi and chuanqi, respectively calling them Song-Yuan nanxi (or xiwen), and Ming-Qing chuanqi. For instance, in his The General Records of Chinese Classical Xiqu (Zhongguo gudian xiqu zong lu), Fu Xihua (1907-1970) devoted volume two to Song-Yuan xiwen, and volumes five and seven to Ming-Qing chuanqi.¹³² A recent authoritative book on xiqu--Encyclopedia of China: Xiqu, Storytelling and Ballad-singing (Zhongguo da baike quanshu: Xiqu guyi) still employed the same method, listing two items: "The Song and Yuan Dynasties' Nanxi" ("Song-Yuan nanxi") and "The Ming and Qing Dynasties' Chuanqi and Zaju" ("Ming-Qing chuanqi he zaju").¹³³

Essentially, the above approach divides the histories of nanxi and chuanqi according to the dynastic change. However, in reality, the histories of nanxi and chuanqi did not synchronously develop with the dynastic history. Therefore,

132 See Fu Xihua, Mingdai chuanqi quan mu (A complete list of the Ming dynasty chuanqi) (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1959) 1.

133 See Zhongguo da baike quanshu: Xiqu guyi (Encyclopedia of China: Xiqu, storytelling and ballad-singing), ed. Zhang Geng, et al. (Beijing and Shanghai: Zhongguo Da Baike Quanshu Chubanshe, 1983) 255 and 366.

this kind of simplistic method unavoidably brings out a contradiction in dealing with the plays created in the transition between the Yuan and Ming dynasties, such as The Lute, The Thorn Hairpin, The White Rabbit, The Moon Pavilion, and Killing a Dog.

For example, Zhou Yibai considered that the above five plays were the pieces of nanxi at the end of the Yuan dynasty.¹³⁴ Ironically, contradicting himself, he entitled the chapter which specifically discussed these five nanxi plays "Ming Dynasty's Chuanqi."¹³⁵

Zhang Jing regarded these five nanxi plays as early plays of chuanqi.¹³⁶ She considered that, unlike nanxi, chuanqi was a literati creation, and literati had already participated in the creation of these five plays. Nevertheless, as mentioned in the preceding section, although these five plays were re-created by literati, they still preserved some characteristics of the nanxi plays that had been created prior to the end of the Yuan dynasty. In fact,

¹³⁴ See Zhou Yibai, Zhongguo xiqu fazhan shi gangyao (A brief history of the development of Chinese xiqu) (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1979) 203.

¹³⁵ See Zhou Yibai, Zhongguo xiqu fazhan shi gangyao 213.

¹³⁶ See Zhang Jing, Ming qing chuanqi daolun (An introduction to Ming-Qing chuanqi) (Taiwan: Dongfang Shudian, 1961) 11.

I believe that these five plays cannot be excluded from nanxi.

Differing from the scholars mentioned above, Qian Nanyang considered that the divide between nanxi and chuanqi was the appearance of kunqu¹³⁷ (literally, "songs in Kun[shan]").¹³⁸ His division avoided the contradiction in dealing with those five plays, but brought out a new problem. Unquestionably, nanxi and kunqu had apparent differences in their plays, music, and role categories; they were two different xiqu forms. However, kunqu was only one branch rather than the whole of chuanqi. Besides kunqu, chuanqi also had other branches such as yiyangqiang¹³⁹ (literally,

137 Kunqu or kunshangqiang (literally, "tunes of Kunshan") is a xiqu form which appeared in the middle of the sixteenth century and dominated Chinese stages from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries.

138 Qian Nanyang 56-57.

139 Traditionally, yiyangqiang was considered merely a musical style while kunshangqiang or kunqu was considered a complete xiqu form. Actually, this viewpoint was more or less influenced by the literati's tendency to value dramatic literature and to disparage performance. Unquestionably, kunshangqiang showed a great achievement in its playwriting because of the participation of a large number of literati. In contrast, yiyangqiang sometimes borrowed plays from kunshangqiang. However, in order to meet the requirements of performance of yiyangqiang, borrowed plays were usually revised or partially re-created. Additionally, yiyangqiang also had its own repertoire and performing style. Hence, it seems better to regard yiyangqiang as a complete xiqu form just as we do kunshangqiang.

"tunes of Yiyang"). In terms of Qian's division, other categories of chuanqi would be ignored.

The theoretical variety or perplexity in the above academic problem embodies the complexity of the relevant historical facts.¹⁴⁰ As described in the last section, the evolution of nanxi was a gradual process; the last part of this course--from the end of the Yuan dynasty to around the middle of the Ming dynasty--was the transition from nanxi to chuanqi, in which, due to the participation of literati in the ongoing creation of nanxi, nanxi became more sophisticated or more in line with aristocratic taste. Although folk artists continuously influenced chuanqi, as we saw in yiyangqiang, the literati in general had a greater impact on this xiqu form. During this transition, nanxi underwent a series of noticeable changes in its music, plays,

¹⁴⁰ The other reason for the theoretical confusion is that these scholars were respectively influenced by different definitions or terminology from the literati's writings. Unfortunately, in terms of modern scholarship, the literati's definitions or terminology are often not precise. For instance, the literati used the terms "nanxi" and "chuanqi" confusingly. As mentioned in the "Multiple Names Referring to Nanxi" section of chapter one, nanxi was once called chuanqi during the Yuan dynasty. On the other hand, until the late Ming dynasty, after nanxi already became chuanqi, this xiqu form was sometimes still called nanxi. For example, Wang Jide (?-1623), a leading scholar on xiqu studies, still used the term "nanxi" when referring to the chuanqi of his time in his important treatise--Rules of Xiqu (Qu lü), which was written in 1610 and continuously revised in the following decade (see Wang Jide, Qu lü [Rules of xiqu] 4: 143). Avoiding the use of the literati's definitions or terminology, I have employed only evidence provided by original play scripts to support my argument here.

written form, and performance. None of these changes individually transformed nanxi to chuanqi. However, over the years, these cumulative alterations changed the aesthetic characteristics of nanxi.

During this transition, the xiqu form--the disappearing nanxi or the newborn chuanqi--was naturally in a mixed state, just as we saw in those five nanxi plays adapted or revised by literati: the features of folk theater had not faded, but the characteristics of the literati's creation were already blooming. This is the reason why previous scholars felt it difficult to taxonomize the five plays in the transition between the Yuan and Ming dynasties, and did not find an appropriate divide between the histories of nanxi and chuanqi in this period.

Since no one can set a sharp divide between the disappearance of nanxi and the appearance of chuanqi, it seems it would be better to deal with the transition as a whole--an overlap period including both the disappearance of nanxi and the appearance of chuanqi--rather than artificially separating it into two periods through drawing a hard or fast line.

Due to their historical continuity, nanxi and chuanqi were similar in some ways, but these two forms were also different in some aspects. Through comparing nanxi plays from before the early Ming with chuanqi plays from after the

mid Ming,¹⁴¹ we can see the distinctions between them in the following four respects:

First, in terms of play scripts, nanxi plays are not divided into chu, while chuanqi plays have indicated chu, each of which has a subtitle. Interestingly, some plays in the transitional period, such as The Xuande Edition of The Gold Hairpin, already have marked chu, but no subtitles.¹⁴² Additionally, a nanxi play has a title poem (timu), a poem in four-line form which introduces the synopsis of the play and was once employed as an advertisement of the production.¹⁴³ This poem is placed before the prologue of the play, while in chuanqi it is put at the end of the first chu and becomes the mo's exit poem (xiachangshi).

Second, regarding the role system, in nanxi, taking First Place Scholar Zhang Xie as an example, there were seven role categories: sheng (male lead), dan (female lead), jing (comic role), chou (clown), mo (secondary male role), wai (secondary female role)¹⁴⁴ and hou or tie (secondary young

¹⁴¹ Here, I deliberately avoid using plays in the transitional period, which usually mixed some characteristics of nanxi with those of chuanqi.

¹⁴² See Yang Yue, et al., eds, Ming ben Chaozhou xiwen wu zhong (Ming dynasty edition of five Chaozhou xiwen plays) (Guangdong: Guangdong Renming Chubanshe, 1985) 3-163.

¹⁴³ See Qian Nanyang, comp. 4.

¹⁴⁴ Wai was usually male, but in this play it was primarily a secondary female role. See "The Role Category System," Chapter 4 for details.

female role).¹⁴⁵ However, in chuanqi, besides the seven role categories mentioned above, five new ones were created: xiaosheng (young male), laodan (old female), xiaodan (young female), zhongjing (the minor jing) and za (various walk-on parts).¹⁴⁶

Third, concerning music, nanxi predominantly used southern arias although it started to employ nan bei he tao (literally, "southern and northern [arias] both arranged in the same set") during the Yuan dynasty. Unlike nanxi, chuanqi widely applied nan bei he tao, and at times only used northern arias in a few chu. Additionally, in nanxi, arias were arranged in a flexible way; for example, a chu often consisted of several short aria sets.¹⁴⁷ However, in chuanqi, the organization of arias was strict; for instance, a chu often had a single long aria set.

Finally, as for subject matter, most nanxi plays were related to love, marriage or domestic stories. To put it specifically, all nanxi plays mentioned in this dissertation so far are concerned with these themes only. However, in chuanqi, there were a number of plays about political or

¹⁴⁵ See Qian Nanyang, comp. 1-217.

¹⁴⁶ See Xu Zichang, Shuihu ji (The Water Margin), comp. and ed. by Mao Jin, Liushi zhong qu (Sixty plays), 12 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1958) 9. See also Wang Jide (?-1623), Qu lu (Rules of xiqu), ZGXLJ 4: 143.

¹⁴⁷ For specifics, see "Music," Chapter 4.

military struggles, such as Crowing Phoenixes (Ming feng ji) and The Water Margin (Shuihu ji).

In conclusion, due to the scarcity of information, it is impossible to precisely describe the historical development of nanxi. Nevertheless, from nanxi plays in different historical periods like First Place Scholar Zhang Xie during the Southern Song, Little Butcher Sun during the Yuan, and The Lute in the transitional era from nanxi to chuanqi, we are able to ascertain differing features of these plays. Further, through comparing the features of nanxi plays in different historical periods, we are able to see the historical path of nanxi from a folk creation to chuanqi--a "literati" art.

CHAPTER 3
PLAYS OF NANXI

As aforementioned, at the beginning of this century few were aware that, several centuries ago, there had been a xiqu form that had been called nanxi. However, currently, after nearly a century of study, scholars have acquired much information about this extinct xiqu form, and most especially about its plays.

From the table of contents of the Great Collectanea of Yongle,¹⁴⁸ Xu Wei's An Account of Nanxi, and from other historical documents, scholars have collected more than three hundred titles of nanxi plays. Qian Nanyang claimed 238 nanxi plays were written in the Song and Yuan dynasties,¹⁴⁹ and 63 in the Ming dynasty.¹⁵⁰ However, some scholars believe that Qian mistakenly included some titles of Yuan zaju and even one sangu¹⁵¹ in his bibliography of nanxi plays. According to these alternative accounts, only 213 nanxi plays

¹⁴⁸ For details, see next section of this chapter.

¹⁴⁹ See Qian Nanyang 73-82.

¹⁵⁰ See Qian Nanyang 111-120.

¹⁵¹ See Note 36, Chapter 1.

can be identified in the Song and Yuan dynasties.¹⁵² Yet another scholar, Liu Nianzi lists 244 titles of nanxi plays written in the Song and Yuan dynasties, and 125 in the Ming dynasty.¹⁵³

It is not difficult to understand why different scholars obtain different statistics concerning nanxi plays. Among the materials these scholars collected are plays which have survived only as titles. It is difficult, judging only by a title, to determine whether a play is nanxi. Nanxi, Yuan zaju, and other xiqu forms often shared the same plots. For the same play titles, therefore, different scholars could reasonably make different interpretations and judgments.

Despite scholars' inability to ascertain if some plays were nanxi, the above bibliographies are the only sources that supply information on the number of nanxi plays. From these bibliographies, we are also able to discover the subject matter of nanxi plays. Although most of the nanxi plays in these bibliographies have been lost, the surviving titles of these lost plays indicate that these plays employed the same plots as some works of other genres, such as Yuan zaju and short stories. By looking at some of the surviving

¹⁵² See Huang Jusheng, Peng Fei and Zhu Jianming, "Guanyu Song Yuan nanxi jumu de zhengli he jiyi (On the collation and collection of Song-Yuan nanxi plays)," Qu yuan (Xiqu world), 2 vols. (Nanjing: Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe, 1986) 2: 53-58.

¹⁵³ See Liu Nianzi 59-87.

pieces from other genres, therefore, we are able to investigate the plots of some of the lost nanxi plays.

From the Ming collections of excerpts from xiqu plays and from the Ming-Qing collections of prosody or musical scores¹⁵⁴, scholars have also collected a number of dispersed fragments which had originally belonged to more than one hundred nanxi plays. Of this type of scholarship, Qian Nanyang's Collected Portions of Song and Yuan Dynasty Xiwen (Song Yuan xiwen jiyi), published in 1956, is the most comprehensive. Since most nanxi play scripts have been lost, such dispersed fragments collected by scholars are very precious. From these materials, we are able to obtain many hints about the lost nanxi plays.

The most important materials are, of course, the surviving texts of nanxi plays. These texts will be discussed in the following section.

¹⁵⁴ In the Ming-Qing collections of prosody or musical scores, editors include a large number of arias from various nanxi plays in order to supply readers examples of standard prosody of nanxi lyrics. Unfortunately, most of the nanxi plays these editors quoted were lost after these editors' compilations.

Surviving Texts of Nanxi Plays

Most surviving texts of nanxi plays were printed or hand-written after the middle of the Ming dynasty. These plays were revised by Ming literati, so the nanxi plays in these late Ming editions have lost their original written features, and look the same as the scripts of chuanqi. Like the chuanqi, these late Ming editions are divided into chu, each of which has a subtitle. Before the recovery of nanxi, these texts were mistakenly considered to be chuanqi. As mentioned before, until the early part of this century, very few people were aware that the form nanxi had even existed.

After the recovery of nanxi, scholars identified a number of nanxi scripts that had been revised by the Ming literati and mis-regarded as chuanqi for a long time. These scripts include Gold Seal (Jinyin ji), The Orphan of the Zhao Family (Zhaoshi guer), Tending Sheep (Muyang ji), Search for His Father (Xunqin ji), and Jumping Dragon Gate (Yueli ji).

Scholars have different opinions, however, about the number and date of such nanxi plays. In Qian Nanyang's list, eighteen plays are identified as being from the Song and Yuan dynasties,¹⁵⁵ sixteen are presumed to be from those same

¹⁵⁵ Qian Nanyang 83-95.

dynasties,¹⁵⁶ and twelve are assigned to the Ming dynasty.¹⁵⁷ However, in Liu Nianzi's catalogue, only fifteen plays are considered to be from the Song and Yuan dynasties¹⁵⁸ while 32 are said to be from the Ming dynasty¹⁵⁹. In addition, when comparing Qian's and Liu's bibliographies, one finds that Qian Nanyang listed eight plays that Liu Nianzi did not while Liu cataloged ten Ming plays that Qian did not.

The proper identification and dating of texts, especially those from the Ming era, is obviously very difficult. Sometimes, it is very difficult to judge whether a play is a nanxi script revised by literati or a chuangqi text created entirely by literati. As mentioned above, due to Ming literati revisions, most nanxi texts in the late Ming edition lost their original written features and therefore look similar to those of chuangqi. On the other hand, some chuangqi plays borrowed stories from nanxi so that the texts of this type of chuangqi can be mistaken for revised editions of nanxi. Textual research is not the aim of this dissertation, however, so I will not further explore the issues involved in identifying these controversial texts.¹⁶⁰

156 Qian Nanyang 95-96

157 Qian Nanyang 111-120.

158 Liu Nianzi 59-78.

159 Liu Nianzi 78-87.

Among all the surviving nanxi texts, six scripts that were not altered by the Ming literati provide the most reliable materials for the study of nanxi. These six scripts are the following:

First Place Scholar Zhang Xie

Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career

Little Butcher Sun

The Chenghua Edition of *The White Rabbit*

The Yuan Edition of *The Lute*

The Xuande Edition of *The Gold Hairpin*.

The texts of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career, and Little Butcher Sun were preserved in Volume 13,991 of Great Collectanea of Yongle.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ For discussion of these controversial texts, see Jin Ningfen 84-106.

¹⁶¹ Great Collectanea of Yongle is a classified anthology (leishu) that was compiled under the order of Emperor Chengzu (reigned 1403-1425)--the third emperor of the Ming dynasty--and therefore was named according to the title of his reign, Yongle. This great anthology had 22,937 sections, including 60 sections of guide to the use of the anthology and the table of contents, and was bound in 11,095 stitched volumes.

When the compilation of the great anthology was completed in 1408, there was only a single hand-written copy of this book because it was too large to be printed. Later on, Emperor Shizong (reigned 1522-1566) was afraid that the single copy would easily be damaged, and therefore he ordered another copy of the anthology. The first copy of the great book was destroyed around the fall of the Ming dynasty. Some volumes of the second copy were lost before the end of the Qing dynasty. In 1900, most volumes of the copy were burnt by the Eight-Power Allied Forces--the troops sent to China by America, Austria, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Russia. Most of the rest was brought out of China by the

The surviving table of contents of the anthology suggests that the original twenty-seven volumes of this book, from 13,965 to 13,991, contained thirty-three nanxi scripts. Unfortunately, all have been lost except for the three Volume 13,991, which was accidentally recovered by Ye Gongzhuo in 1920 in an antique shop in London. He brought this volume back to China.¹⁶²

Through careful analysis of the three nanxi scripts, scholars have discovered certain internal evidence to establish that First Place Scholar Zhang Xie was written in the Southern Song dynasty,¹⁶³ and that Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career and Little Butcher Sun were both written in the Yuan dynasty.¹⁶⁴

One of regulations covering the compilation of Great Collectanea of Yongle was that all books in the anthology

Eight-Power Allied Forces as well (see Wang Qiju, "Yongle dadian [Great collectanea of Yongle]," ZDBQZL 3: 1412).

162 See Qian Nanyang, comp. 1.

163 See Sun Chongtao 107.

164 For the dating of Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career, see Zhu Hengfu, "Xiwen Huanmen zidi cuo lishen chansheng yu Yuandai (The xiwen play--Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career written in the Yuan dynasty)," Wenxue yichan (Literary Heritage) 4 (1986): 47-51; and Liao Ben, "Nanxi Huanmen zidi cuo lishen yuanchu bei zaju tuikao (A study: the nanxi play--Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career was transplanted from the northern zaju)," Wenxue yichan (Literary heritage) 2 (1987): 98. For the dating of Little Butcher Sun, see Qian Nanyang, comp. 1-2.

were to be included without any correction or revision.¹⁶⁵ Because of this, it is reasonable to believe that the above texts basically preserve the characteristics of nanxi before the Ming dynasty, although the anthology was compiled in the early Ming. In fact, it is from these three texts that scholars have determined the characteristics of nanxi that differ from those of chuanqi. Unlike chuanqi plays, for example, these three nanxi texts all have a title poem--a poem in four-line form--and they are not divided into chu. In addition, the lengths of these three plays are quite different: First Place Scholar Zhang Xie is three times longer than Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career, and two and half times longer than Little Butcher Sun. The lengths of chuanqi, by contrast, are regular, usually from thirty to fifty chu.

Like the three scripts preserved in Great Collectanea of Yongle, The Chenghua Edition of The White Rabbit also narrowly escaped extinction. In 1967, this script with eleven volumes of balladry was unearthed by peasants from a Ming tomb in the rural area of Jiading county in Shanghai. It was kept by a peasant in his home. In 1972, when the Shanghai Ancient Bookstore was purchasing old books in that county, this peasant brought the texts to the city to sell. At first, an inexperienced clerk was not aware of the value

¹⁶⁵ See Wang Qiju, ZDBQZL 3: 1413.

of the texts, and was only willing to purchase the first two volumes. He said that the rest of them (including the nanxi script) were seriously damaged by body seepage in the tomb¹⁶⁶ so that they should be burnt. However, when a senior member of the bookstore staff saw the two volumes, he recognized their value, and immediately sent the clerk rushing into the countryside looking for the peasant in order to buy the rest of the texts.¹⁶⁷ After many extremely careful treatments, experts at last made the texts readable.¹⁶⁸

This recovered text of The White Rabbit, printed in the Chenghua period (1465-1488), is the oldest edition among several surviving scripts of this play. Hints in this text suggest that The White Rabbit may have been created prior to the Chenghua period of the Ming dynasty. For example, in the prologue of The Chenghua Edition of The White Rabbit, the mo mentions that the play was written by the "talented man [or

166 See Plate 3.

167 See Han Zhen'gang, "Ganyu Ming Chenghua ben shuochang cihua ([Introduction to] Balladry from the Ming [Dynasty] Chenghua [Period]," Lanshu fuyuan cheng zhenbao: Ming Chenghua ben shuochang cihua xianzhuang tecang ben chuban (Damaged books restored: The publication of a special thread-bound edition of balladry from the Ming [dynasty] Chenghua [period]) (Hongkong: Sanlian Shudian, 1979) 1. See also Anne E. McLarent, "The Discovery of Chinese Chantefable Narratives from the Fifteenth Century: A Reassessment of Their Likely Audience," Ming Studies 1 (1990): 7.

168 See Plate 4.

PLATE 3: ONE OF THE DAMAGED TEXTS OF THE CHENGHUA EDITION
UNEARTHED IN JIADING IN 1967



Source: Lanshu fuyuan cheng zhenbao: Ming Chenghua ben shuochang cihua xianzhuang tecang ben chuban (Damaged books restored: The publication of a special thread-bound edition of balladry from the Ming [Dynasty] Chenghua [period]) (Hongkong: Sanlian Shudian, 1979), Plate 1.

men] of the writing society in Yongjia."¹⁶⁹ Considering that all writing societies were disbanded in the Ming dynasty,¹⁷⁰ this writing society in Yongjia, which created The White Rabbit, probably existed prior to the Ming dynasty. In addition, one line in this script mentions that 1,500 wen was worth three to five cups of wine.¹⁷¹ In the sixth year of the Chenghua period, because of inflation the same amount of money was only worth one loaf of steamed bread.¹⁷² This fact also indicates that this play was created earlier than the Chenghua period.

The Chenghua Edition of The White Rabbit does not look like a text revised by Ming literati. First, like the three scripts in Great Collectanea of Yongle, this text is not divided into chu in its written form. Second, the text contains a large number of erroneous Chinese characters and ungrammatical lines. Had literati revised this script, they probably would have corrected the errors of written

¹⁶⁹ See Chenghua ben baitu ji (The Chenghua edition of The white rabbit) 2.

¹⁷⁰ See "Writing Societies (shuhui)," Chapter 5 for details.

¹⁷¹ See Chenghua ben baitu ji (The Chenghua edition of The white rabbit) 3.

¹⁷² See Wang Qingzheng, "Ji wenxue xiqu he banhua shi shang de yici zhongyao faxian (An important historical discovery for literature, xiqu, and woodblock prints)," Wenwu (Cultural Relics) 11 (1973) 63.

characters and grammar. They might even have made the language of the play more literary, as they did in the other editions of this play. Fortunately, The Chinghua Edition of *The White Rabbit* was put into a tomb before the middle of Ming dynasty so that it could avoid the revision of the later literati and preserve its original features.

The next surviving text that should be mentioned is The Yuan Edition of *The Lute*. Being enthusiastically and widely received during the Ming and Qing dynasties, Gao Ming's The Lute was printed numerous times in various editions. So far, around forty editions of The Lute, printed or handwritten during the Ming and Qing dynasties, have survived.¹⁷³ Most of these texts were altered by the Ming literati; the names of critics or revisers are usually indicated, and the written form looks similar to that of chuanqi. Differing from these revised editions, however, The Yuan Edition of *The Lute* has the same written form as that of the three nanxi plays contained in Great Collectanea of Yongle. There is a four-line title poem at the very beginning of the text. The script is not divided into chu. It is thus reasonable to conjecture that this text was not extensively revised by Ming literati.

Still, the date of this text is in question. Following traditional versions, Qian Nanyang named this text The Yuan

¹⁷³ See Jin Ningfen 158-162.

Edition of *The Lute* when he collated and annotated it.

However, through textual research, other scholars argue that this text is an edition of the Ming rather than Yuan dynasty. Nevertheless, all agree that this edition is the oldest edition among the various surviving texts of *The Lute*.¹⁷⁴

Another valuable text is *The Xuande Edition of The Gold Hairpin*, which was unearthed from a Ming tomb in Chaoan county in Guangdong province in 1975. Through historical investigation and textual analysis, Liu Nianzi has verified that this play is a Ming adaptation from Liu Wenlong--a lost nanxi play of the Yuan dynasty.¹⁷⁵ This adapted play has some features of the nanxi plays in the transitional period. For instance, in written form, the text has marked chu, but, unlike chuanqi texts, they do not have individual titles.

The internal evidence of this text reveals that the handwritten copy is a performance script. This text contains a large number of stage directions. At the end of the text, there is a sentence which indicates that this text belongs to

¹⁷⁴ See Liu Nianzi 360; Sun Chongtao, "Jin ben Bojie shu zhi: Xibanya cangben Fengyue guanqia jinnang kaoshi zhisan (Bojie [the given name of the hero of The Lute]: The third part of the textual research concerning the Brocade pouch of romances as preserved in Spain)," Zhonghua xiqu (Chinese xiqu) 10 (1991): 131. See also Huang Wenshi, "Pipa ji banben xiaokao (A study of the editions of The lute)," Wenxue yichan (Literary Heritage) 1 (1987): 90.

¹⁷⁵ Liu Nianzi 371-388.

a troupe.¹⁷⁶ Two scores for percussion instruments are enclosed after the script.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, as suggested by the large number of errors in the written characters, this text was not revised by the literati.

In addition to the six extant plays introduced above, the Brocade Pouch of Romances preserved in the Royal Library of San Lorenzo of Spain is also a precious text for nanxi studies.¹⁷⁸ This collection contains scenes from 34 nanxi plays, including fourteen plays which were formerly considered to be lost. The Brocade Pouch of Romances was probably first printed around 1420, and was supplemented later.¹⁷⁹ The edition preserved in the Royal Library of San Lorenzo of Spain was reprinted in 1553. In the 1950's, Lo Chin-Tang and James J. Y. Liu respectively published studies concerning the Brocade Pouch of Romances.¹⁸⁰ Recently, Sun

¹⁷⁶ See Yang Yue, et al., eds, 148.

¹⁷⁷ See Yang Yue, et al., eds, 159-160.

¹⁷⁸ I viewed the entire set of macro-photographs of Brocade Pouch of Romances in the Feng Ping Shan Library of Hong Kong University.

¹⁷⁹ See Sun Chongtao, "Liuxi haiwai de zhengui xiqu wenxian: Xibanya cangben Fengyue quanjia jinnang kaoshi zhiyi (A precious xiqu document overseas: The first part of the textual research concerning the Brocade pouch of romances as preserved in Spain)," Zhonghua xiqu (Chinese xiqu) 8 (1991): 154.

¹⁸⁰ See Lo Chin-Tang, Chin-Tang lun qu (Chin-Tang's treatises on qu) (Taipei: Lianjing Chuban Shiye Gongsi, 1977) 239-269, 270-309, 321-337, 338-348, 663; see also James

Chongtao and other scholars have paid more attention to this book and have conducted studies of it in depth.

To summarize, among the surviving nanxi texts found to date, the three scripts preserved in the Great Collectanea of Yongle are the earliest handwritten ones; The Chenghua Edition of The White Rabbit is the earliest printed one; The Xuande Edition of The Gold Hairpin is an authentic stage script. These five texts were either preserved in royal court, or buried in tombs for a long time so that they could avoid revision by the Ming literati.

In what follows, when discussing the artistic form of nanxi, I will rely exclusively on these original nanxi texts. Only in discussions of the subject matters of nanxi will I employ the play scripts revised by literati, since even in revision they contain the original stories of the authentic nanxi plays.

Subject Matter

As introduced at the beginning of this chapter, the range of the subject matter of nanxi plays can be gleaned

J. Y. Liu, "The Feng-yüeh Chin-nang: A Ming Collection of Yuan and Ming Plays and Lyrics Preserved in the Royal Library of San Lorenzo, Escorial, Spain." Journal of Oriental Studies 1-2 (1957-8): 79-107.

from examining the surviving titles of nanxi plays. Studies of these titles show that the majority of nanxi plays are related to love, marriage or other domestic situations. For instance, the table of contents of the Great Collectanea of Yongle contains 33 titles of nanxi plays. The subject matter of three is indeterminate; 24 of the remaining 30 are related to love, marriage or other domestic situations. Another example of the prevalence of these themes can be found in An Account of Nanxi which lists 65 nanxi plays from the Song and Yuan dynasties. The subject matter of ten is unclear; 44 of the remaining 55 are related to love, marriage or other domestic situations.

In the following discussion, the categorization of nanxi plays will be handled flexibly. Strictly speaking, it is sometimes difficult to put a nanxi play into a particular category, such as "love plays," "marriage plays," or "domestic plays," because the subject matter of these plays is not confined to one category. For example, plays describing love, such as Grantee's Son Takes the Wrong Career and The Moon Pavilion, devote many pages to the heroes and heroines' life after their marriages. Similarly, plays concerning marriage, such as The Lute and The Thorn Hairpin, often involve conflict between the married couples and other members of their families, which are domestic matters beyond marriage.

Broadly speaking, the love plays of nanxi usually follow a stereotypic plot pattern: a young talented scholar and beautiful girl fall in love at first sight; later on, they make a decision to marry without consulting their parents. After many setbacks, the hero becomes zhuangyuan (places first in the imperial examinations) so that he can be reunited with the heroine for a happy end. This kind of plot may look stale today, but such love deviated from the traditional Chinese ideology of that era and showed a brave or rebellious act. In traditional China, the formal marriage of young people had to be decided by their parents and made by matchmakers. When some nanxi plays describe the passion between the heroes and heroines in a positive and optimistic attitude, in fact, these plays might be seen as encouraging a free love that was seldom seen in reality at that time.

Among the love plays of nanxi, Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career is exceptional. This play depicts the pure and true love of a grandee's son for an actress, a love which counters the era's social bias. Wanyan Shouma, a high official's son, falls in love with Wang Jinbang, an actress. When the high official finds out, he angrily drives Wang's family troupe out of the area he administers, and places his son in confinement. Escaping from home, Wanyan Shouma marries Wang Jinbang, and becomes an actor. At the end, the regretful father meets his son by chance. He then forgives

his son and recognizes the marriage of his son to the actress.

In this play, the playwright's attitude towards performers and the imperial examinations (keju kaoshi) violated those of main stream traditional Chinese ideology. For centuries, performers were considered outcasts by the whole society of China, but Wanyan Shouma gives up a comfortable living and forfeits a bright future for an actress. Although the playwright titled the play Grande's Son Takes the Wrong Career, he actually sympathized with Wanyan Shouma's behavior. Secondly, attaining office by passing the imperial examinations was always the most important purpose for scholars in traditional China. As mentioned above, in most nanxi love plays, the hero's becoming zhuangyuan is a decisive prerequisite for the happy end. However, Grande's Son Takes the Wrong Career differs from these plays. In it, the love between the hero and heroine and the affection of the father for his son rather than the passing of the imperial examinations leads to the happy ending.

The violations of the dominant ideology found in Grande's Son Takes the Wrong Career might involve the following historical reasons. The hero of the play is a Jurchen rather than a Han person and the Jurchen were less influenced by Confucianism than the Han people. Furthermore,

the play was created in the Yuan dynasty, when Confucianism was officially opposed, and the scholars' social status was lowered almost to the same level as that of performers.¹⁸¹ The seeming ideological violations in Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career thus may actually reflect the changing values of that particular period.

In another type of nanxi plays, those which may be called "unhappy marriage plays" or "ungrateful men plays," the passing of the imperial examinations is also a decisive element or condition that affects the future of the hero and heroine. However, in this kind of play, the hero's becoming zhuangyuan does not lead to the reunion of the hero and heroine; instead, it causes the hero to abandon the heroine. For example, Wang Kui, one of the earliest nanxi plays, relates such a story. Wang Kui meets Guiying, a courtesan, after he has failed in his examination. She encourages him to concentrate on study and devotes all her time and money to him. The next year, before taking his examination, Wang Kui goes with Guiying to a temple and pledges that he will never

¹⁸¹ During the Yuan dynasty, the social classes were classified into ten levels. According to Zheng Suonan's Collection (Zheng Suonan ji), the order of this classification from the seventh to the lowest level is hunters (lie), commoners (min), scholars (ru) and beggars (gai). In terms of Dieshan's Collection (Dieshan ji), this order is artisans (jiang), performers (chang), scholars (ru) and beggars (gai). These two records indicate that the scholars' social status was lowered to a level just surpassing that of beggars (see Zhang Geng, et al, 1: 99)

desert her. If he does, he says, he will be killed by a god. After becoming zhuangyuan, he breaks his promise. Guiying decides to take revenge on him by committing suicide. Her ghost comes to Wang Kui's office to extort his life, and so Wang Kui dies as well. Chaste Woman Zhao, the counterpart of Wang Kui, also tells a story about a disloyal husband. Cai Erlang abandons his wife--the chaste woman Zhao--and his elderly parents. When Zhao comes to the capital to look for him, he rides a horse that tramples her to death. At the end, he is struck dead by lightning.

There were historical and social reasons for the appearance of the "unhappy marriage play" or "ungrateful men play" in the early nanxi. After the imperial examinations started in the Sui dynasty (581-618), it gradually changed the rigidity of the caste system in society. More and more intellectuals of scanty means, especially those in the Song dynasty, obtained opportunities to get into royal governments. After becoming officials, some of them deserted wives--who had sacrificed everything for their success--in order to marry new spouses who were either younger and prettier or from prominent families. Since people sympathized with betrayed women and condemned ungrateful men, the misfortune of betrayed women had a strong appeal to audiences. Many of these types of stories appeared in popular and folk arts, such as in balladry and xiqu.

"Unhappy marriage plays" or "ungrateful men plays" in early nanxi often punish ungrateful men through supernatural powers, reflecting a certain sense of social justice. In a patriarchal society, those disloyal men can only be punished in stories or on stages. In reality, there was no legal remedy against them at all.

When "unhappy marriage plays" or "ungrateful men plays" try to resolve the conflict between the faithless hero and the betrayed heroine, they awkwardly reunite the couple at the end. First Place Scholar Zhang Xie may serve as an example. The synopsis of the play is as follows. On his way to the capital to take the imperial examination, Zhang Xie is robbed and injured by a bandit. Pinnü (literally, "a poor girl") takes care of him, and marries him. Having passed his examination and become zhuangyuan, Zhang Xie deserts his wife. Simultaneously, he refuses to marry the prime minister's daughter--Shenghua. His action makes Shenghua feel terribly ashamed and causes her to fall ill and die. Later, the prime minister adopts Pinnü, and has Zhang Xie reunited with her.

There is an apparent contradiction in this play: Zhang Xie first betrays his wife (and even tries to kill her), but then he unexpectedly remarries her at the end. The change in Zhang Xie's attitude is not to be explained by the rise of her social status. She has become the prime minister's adopted daughter, but Zhang Xie previously refused to espouse

the real daughter of the prime minister, so why would he now be willing to marry a merely adopted daughter?

From the mo's introduction in the prologue of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, we know that this play is a revision of The Story of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie (Zhuangyuan Zhang Xie zhuan).¹⁸² Thus, it is possible to conjecture that, in The Story of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, the hero, like Wang Kui and Cai Erlang, does not recognize his original wife at the end. The playwright of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie changed this part of the story. He had the prime minister's daughter die, clumsily made Zhang Xie's original wife be adopted by the prime minister, and thus grafted on a happy ending.

Like the author of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, Gao Ming also altered some points of Chaste Woman Zhao, especially its denouement. In Chaste Woman Zhao, Cai is an unfilial son and faithless husband who is punished with death by the heavens at the end. However, in The Lute Cai is a positive character who marries both women, and all three of them receive imperial honors in a happy ending. The alterations in The Lute are more believable than those of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie. In The Lute, Cai prefers to stay home taking care of his elderly parents rather than be an official. But his father forces him to take his

¹⁸² See Qian Nanyang, comp. 2.

examination in order to bring glory to the family. According to filial piety (xiao), one of the important codes in domestic relationships for Confucianism, the son has to obey his father's command. After becoming zhuangyuan, Cai does not betray his wife as he refuses to marry the prime minister's daughter. It is the emperor who orders him to accept the marriage. Cai has to obey the emperor's order because of the royal power and because of the laws of Confucianism as well. Loyalty to the emperor (zhong) is always the most important virtue for a Confucian scholar.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, some marriage plays involve conflict between the married couple and their family members. By the same token, conflicts in some domestic plays often start from the leading characters' marriages. For example, in Little Butcher Sun, Scholar Sun marries Li Qiongmei--a prostitute. Before long, Li has an adulterous affair with Official Zhu. Murdering Li's maid, Li and Zhu cut the head off the maid, and then dress up her body like that of Li. After Li goes into hiding, Zhu charges Scholar Sun with murdering his wife. Little Butcher Sun-- Scholar Sun's younger brother--takes the place of Scholar Sun in order to receive his punishment. He is killed by Official Zhu, but revived by a god. Later on, the Sun brothers unexpectedly meet Li Qiongmei and they prosecute her and

Official Zhu. Finally, Judge Bao redresses the mishandled case.

Zheng Zhenduo and other Chinese scholars regarded Little Butcher Sun as a "court case play"¹⁸³ (gongan ju).¹⁸⁴ However, it seems better to regard Little Butcher Sun as a domestic play. Although this play involves a mishandled case that Judge Bao redresses, it primarily describes a series of domestic conflicts. Due to his love for his brother, Little Butcher Sun opposes his brother's marriage to a prostitute; after marrying scholar Sun, Li Qiongmei resents her husband's addiction to drink for which he frequently leaves her alone at home; Little Butcher Sun tries to find evidence of his sister-in-law's adulterous affair, and then the whole family quarrels; finally, Little Butcher Sun even dies for his brother. Apparently, this play portrayed a domestic picture, praising love and respect for one's elder brother (ti), one of the important Confucian domestic virtues.

The White Rabbit similarly starts with its leading characters' marriage. Before Liu Zhiyuan, the first emperor of the Hou Han dynasty (947-950), gains his fortune, he is destitute. Uncle Li takes him in as his son-in-law. After

¹⁸³ The "court case play" is one of the important categories of plays in Yuan zaju; such plays usually feature an upright and wise judge who reverses an unjust verdict. There are also several "court case plays" in nanxi, but most of them have been lost.

¹⁸⁴ See Jin Ningfen 143-144.

the death of Li, Li's son and daughter-in-law mistreat Liu, and Liu is forced to leave home and join the army. Liu's wife--Sanniang--stays at home, and suffers many forms of abuse. She even gives birth to a son while grinding in a mill. To protect her son from her brother and sister-in-law, she has the baby sent to her husband, who has since married the daughter of General Yue. One day, after sixteen years, her son--a young general--goes hunting. He accidentally meets his mother while running after a white rabbit. He reports the news of his mother to his father. Finally, Liu leads his troops back to join Sanniang.

Although The White Rabbit is related to an emperor's experience, it is a domestic rather than a historical or political play. The plot of this play derives from folk legends rather than historical records. Furthermore, the play principally describes the conflict between two nuclear families in a household.

As pointed out at the beginning of this section, the subject matter of the majority of nanxi plays is related to love, marriage and other domestic situations. This phenomenon more or less embodies the peculiarity of the folk theater. On one hand, this reveals the close relationship between the content of nanxi and the lives of its audience members. On the other hand, it also indicates the limitations of nanxi in terms of the scope of its subject

matter. Nanxi plays focus on a limited number of aspects rather than extending to the multifaceted whole of social life.

A minority of nanxi plays do relate to other type of stories. For example, a few plays describe political or military struggles. The East Window (Dongchuang ji) tells the story of Qin Hui, the treacherous prime minister of and a traitor to the Southern Song dynasty, who frames and finally kills Yue Fei, the great general resisting the Jurchens' invasion. This play castigated traitorousness, while praising loyalty. The Orphan of the Zhao Family uses an historical story to express a contemporary theme. In it Zhao, a royal minister, is framed by Tu, a treacherous minister. All Zhao's family is killed except a posthumous child saved by Cheng Ying. Later, to save the life of the orphan, Cheng and his friend make many significant sacrifices. Finally, Cheng brings up the orphan and tells him the truth of his heritage. At the end, the orphan avenges his family. The key to understanding the play is the orphan's family name--Zhao, which is also the royal family name of the Song dynasty. During the Yuan dynasty ruled by the Mongols, there was a particular meaning in highly praising righteous characters who continued the Zhao family line. This in fact celebrated the memory of the former Song dynasty--the royal government of the Han Chinese. When nanxi plays describe political or military struggles, the frequent

appearance of the theme of loyalty reflects the spiritual state of the Han Chinese, who were then resisting the rule of the Mongols.

To sum up, then, the majority of plays in the nanxi repertoire are love plays, unhappy marriage plays, and other domestic plays, though a few nanxi plays offer other subject matter. We have seen that nanxi plays usually make a moral judgment on characters. In nanxi plays, good characters are rewarded with good, and evil-doers with evil; sometimes, the tasks of praising good and castigating evil are fulfilled by supernatural powers. The vast majority of nanxi plays have a happy ending. All of the above characteristics of nanxi plays were inherited by later xiqu forms, and some of them still exist in the traditional plays of a number of living xiqu forms.

Play Structure

The basic unit of a nanxi play is the chu or scene, in which one or more characters present a sequence of the plot (guanmu) of the play. A short play like Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career consists of less than twenty chu, while a long one like The Gold Hairpin includes more than sixty. A

chu begins from the entrance of the first character, and usually ends with the exit of all the characters. Just before the exit at the end of almost every chu, one or more characters recite a two-line--or more often a four-line--exit poem. After one chu is finished, the next chu starts, and ends in the same pattern. Between every two chu, there is a brief pause.

As previously pointed out, the chu are not marked in the original texts of nanxi plays. Nonetheless, these texts are all divided into many sections due to these brief intermissions, during which all characters exit; at the end of each of these sections, there is a stage direction that indicates the characters' exit. Thus, chu can be identified even in these play scripts. Primarily in terms of such entries and exits,¹⁸⁵ Qian Nanyang divided First Place Scholar Zhang Xie into 53 chu, Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career

¹⁸⁵ Sometimes, Qian Nanyang divided chu according to phases of the plot development rather than entries and exits. For example, in First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, a piece of the plot relates a bandit robbing travelers, and consists of the following two parts. In the first the bandit enters, makes a self-introduction to the audience, and then exits. In the second two travelers enter, tease each other in comic gags, and are then robbed by the reentering bandit. Disregarding the break--an empty stage--between the bandit's exit and travelers' entry, Qian Nanyang dealt with these two parts as one chu--the eighth chu--in order to avoid separating this sequence of plot (see Qian Nanyang, comp. 41-45). A similar example can be also seen in Qian's same work (see Qian Nanyang, comp. 151-153).

into 14 chu, Little Butcher Sun into 21 chu, and The Yuan Edition of The Lute into 42 chu.

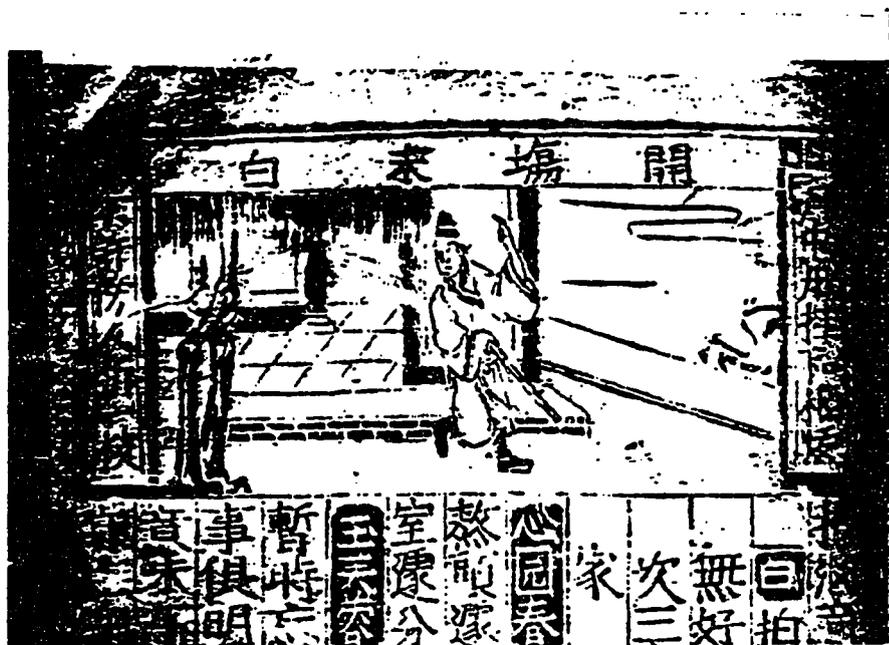
Conventionally, the first chu of a nanxi play is a prologue, in which a mo or fumo introduces the theme and gist of the play in the third person.¹⁸⁶ In all surviving texts of nanxi plays except First Place Scholar Zhang Xie and The Chenchua Edition of The White Rabbit, the prologue consists of two, or sometimes one or three pieces of ci poetry,¹⁸⁷ which are recited rather than sung by a mo or fumo.¹⁸⁸ As described in "The Transmutations of Nanxi" in Chapter Two above, the prologue of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie contains two ci pieces followed by a passage of zhugongdiao. The zhugongdiao combines singing, speaking and acting. Similarly, in The Chenchua Edition of The White Rabbit, there is also a long and complex prologue containing arias and long recited passages. In addition, both of these prologues introduce information about the creators of their respective plays. Considering that First Place Scholar Zhang Xie is the oldest extant script of nanxi, and that this kind of long and

¹⁸⁶ Two illustrations in the Brocade Pouch of Romance depict the performances of mo in prologues (see Plate 4 and 5).

¹⁸⁷ See note 31, Chapter 1, and note 49, Chapter 2.

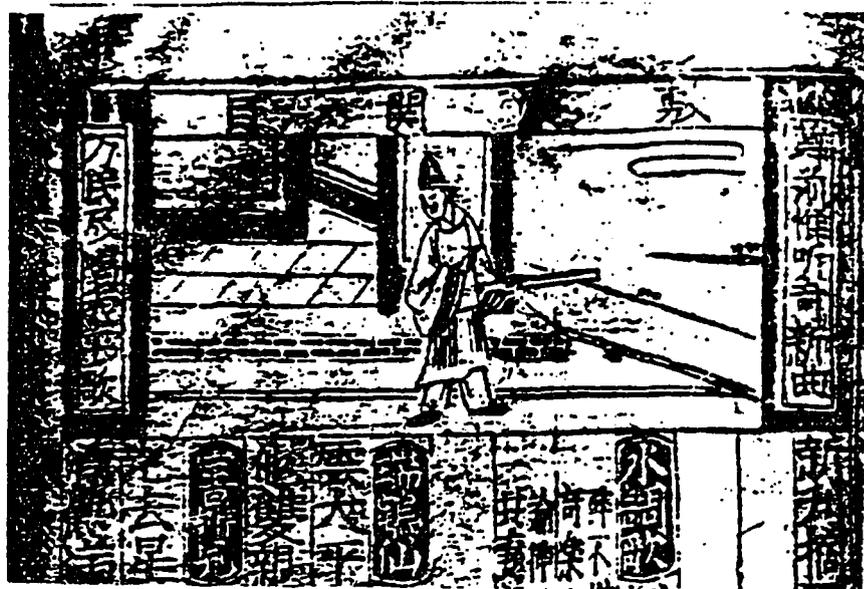
¹⁸⁸ The prologue of Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career only contains one, while that of The Xuande Edition of The Gold Hairpin consists of three.

PLATE 5: IN PROLOGUE THE MO SPEAKING (KAICHANG MO BAI)



Source: Xu Wenzhao, ed., Feng yue jingnang (Brocade pouch of romances), (1553) (Taiwan: Taiwan Xuesheng Shuju, 1987) 485.

PLATE 6: ENACTING THE PLOT (FUYAN GUANMU)



Source: Xu Wenzhao, ed., Feng yue jingnang (Brocade pouch of romances), (1553) (Taiwan: Taiwan Xuesheng Shuju, 1987) 93.

complex prologue does not appear in any later nanxi plays except The Chenghua Edition of *The White Rabbit*, it is reasonable to conjecture that this kind of prologue existed in the early nanxi, but was simplified in later times.

After the prologue, in a standard nanxi play, a male lead enters in the second chu. In the exposition of plot, a nanxi play generally focuses on the experience of the hero, the heroine or another important character, like Little Butcher Sun in Little Butcher Sun,¹⁸⁹ although episodic events beyond the main line of the plot occasionally appear. In some plays, such as Little Butcher Sun, plots develop as a single thread; in others, such as The Lute, stories unfold as two contrasting threads. Usually, the dramatic events of a nanxi play are presented in chronological order.

The dramatic action of a nanxi play often covers months or even years. For example, in The White Rabbit the story begins with the heroine and hero's marriage and ends when their son is sixteen years old. Similarly, The Gold Hairpin relates over twenty years of the hero and heroine's experiences. Of course, the time represented by the dramatic action in a nanxi play is much longer than the actual time taken for its presentation.

¹⁸⁹ In this play, although Little Butcher Sun is the title character, Scholar Sun is played by the sheng--the role category of the male lead in nanxi.

Narration by characters is often used in nanxi plays to allow for the passage of time in the dramatic action. For example, in the eighteenth chu¹⁹⁰ of The Chenghua Edition of The White Rabbit, Liu Zhiyuan's son is a baby who has been sent to his father through a long journey. The next chu relates the experience of Sanniang--the baby's mother--and does not mention the baby at all. However, in the very next, twentieth chu, the baby has grown up to become a young general; through a monologue, the character tells the audience about his life during the intervening sixteen years. In nanxi, many such sequences are narrated rather than being directly enacted on stage. By compressing plot time in this fashion, a nanxi play is able to chronicle a long story from its beginning through to its end. In this fashion, the epical or chronological structure of nanxi is quite similar to that of other Chinese narrative art forms.

Nanxi and these other narrative art forms were historical companions. As mentioned before, during the Song and Yuan dynasties most authors of nanxi plays were "the talented men of the writing society," who not only created play scripts but also wrote texts for storytelling and ballad singing. For these talented men of the writing society, there was little difference between a narrative art form and

¹⁹⁰ The chu are not originally marked in The Chenghua Edition of The White Rabbit. According to entries and exits, I have divided the text into 24 chu.

a theater form; once the speech of a narrator is shifted to the language and action of various characters, the narrative becomes the theatrical. First Place Scholar Zhang Xie offers evidence to support this view. In the prologue of this play, the mo performs a passage of zhugongdiao that narrates a part of synopsis of the play, and then he says:

In this way, [merely] narrating and singing zhugongdiao, how can [we] enact this huawen (literally, 'storytelling text')? Instrumentalists, beat your drums together and play a prelude. Leading role, prepare for your entrance.¹⁹¹

In this passage, the mo directly and clearly tells the audience that the passage of zhugongdiao he has performed is huawen, but that his troupe is going to enact the plot of this huawen in theater form. This implies that huawen--"a storytelling text"--can be easily converted into xiwen--"a theater text."¹⁹² Since nanxi has such a close relationship to narrative art forms, it is easy to understand why a nanxi play usually employs epical methodology to present its dramatic action.

Because of its epical or chronological structure, a nanxi play gains a certain freedom from the limitation of its performance time, and it is able to comprehensively relate

¹⁹¹ Qian Nanyang, comp. 4.

¹⁹² Xiwen is one of the names given to nanxi in its early period. See "Multiple Names Referring to Nanxi" in the Introduction for details.

stories in which there is little restriction to the time of the dramatic action. By the same token, a nanxi play also obtains a freedom from the restriction of its performance space, and thus it is able to present a broad picture on a small stage.

In a nanxi play, there are frequent changes of place. Little Butcher Sun may be employed as an example. The locales of Little Butcher Sun are as follows:

- Chu 1, A stage for the mo's performance
- Chu 2, The west suburbs of Kaifeng city
- Chu 3, Li Qiongmei's public house
- Chu 4, Sun's home
- Chu 5, Scholar Sun's study (?)
- Chu 6, The government office of Kaifeng city
- Chu 7, On the road
- Chu 8, Sun's home
- Chu 9, Official Zhu's office or home (?), and
Sun's home
- Chu 10, Sun's home
- Chu 11, The government office of Kaifeng city
- Chu 12, On the road
- Chu 13, Official Zhu's home (?)
- Chu 14, On the road,
The Jude temple, and
Sun's home
- Chu 15, Jail

Chu 16, Sun's home, and

The government office of Kaifeng city

Chu 17, Official Zhu's home (?)

Chu 18, Hell (?)

Chu 19, From heaven to earth, and

Wilderness

Chu 20, Official Zhu's home (?)

Chu 21, The government office of Kaifeng city

All of the above locales are indicated by the characters' language and actions rather than by stage directions. This means that the environments of a nanxi play are directly connected with its characters. In other words, spatial references in a nanxi play are presented by characters; the location of a chu does not appear until the entrance of the characters in that chu; and when the characters of the chu all exit, the location of the chu disappears as well. Without characters, as, for example, during an intermission, a stage is only an empty or abstract space not representing any specific locales.

Since the spatial references in a nanxi play are presented by characters, a location can shift with an intermission, or even without an intermission--as seen above in chu nine, fourteen, sixteen and nineteen of Little Butcher Sun. In these chu, with the actions of character(s), locations freely shift. Another example is found in Zhu

Yingtai (a girl's name), in the chu in which Liang Shanbo sees Zhu Yingtai off. Having studied together with Liang for three years, Zhu, a girl disguised as a young man, has fallen in love with Liang, but he is not aware that Zhu is female. During their farewell walk, through a number of figures of speech, Zhu keeps suggesting to Liang that she is a girl and that she loves him. Since this chu relates a farewell walk, its locales successively change from the side of a wall, to the mouth of a well, to a woods, a riverside and so on. These changes are established solely by the characters' words and actions.¹⁹³ Such indication of locale is the same method used in storytelling.

Due to the flexibility of the spatial treatment, a nanxi play is able to present events happening in a space that is thousands of times larger than a small stage. Heaven, earth or hell, all can be exhibited on the nanxi stage. As one Chinese saying from the xiqu circles puts it: "Where a storyteller's mouth can reach [is] where an actor's legs can arrive."¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ See Xu Wenzhao, ed., Zhu Yingtai, Feng yue jingnang (Brocade pouch of romances), (1553) (Taiwan: Taiwan Xuesheng Shuju, 1987) 379-382.

¹⁹⁴ I have personally heard this saying many times in xiqu circles.

In sum, then, through constructing its dramatic action in the epical or chronological structure, a nanxi play frees itself from the temporal limitations of the performance and the spatial restraints of the stage. This tradition starting in nanxi developed continuously in xiqu forms after nanxi and has become an integral part of xiqu aesthetics.¹⁹⁵

Language

The language of a nanxi play consists of three major components: aria lyrics (quwen), speech passages (shuobai) and acting (kejie) directions. The discussion in this section will focus on the characters' language in nanxi, including both aria lyrics and speech passages. Most of the information regarding acting directions will be introduced and analyzed in the "Acting" section of Chapter Four.

Aria lyrics in a nanxi play are poems written to pre-existing prosodic and melodic patterns called gupai. Each of these patterns has a fixed number of lines, but these lines vary in length. Extra words (chenzi) may be added to these lines without changing the basic prosodic pattern. Each pattern has its own name and that name is put at the head of

¹⁹⁵ See Sun Mei, "Guankui Zhongguo xiqu de xingcheng (On the emergence of xiqu)," Qu yuan (Xiqu world), 2 vols. (Nanjing: Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe, 1986) 2: 133-134.

the aria lyrics written to that pattern. Although the melodies are no longer known, each name identifies its origin--northern or southern--and prosodic pattern. In other words, nanxi's aria lyrics are verses written in prosodic patterns for pre-existing tunes.

As pointed out in "The Transmutations of Nanxi" in the preceding chapter, the arias of nanxi, including both the tunes and the prosodic patterns, were originally from ci tunes, folk songs, zhugongdiao and melodies of other artistic forms. In the early period of nanxi, aria lyrics were written in colloquial style and flexible prosody. However, in its late period, aria lyrics of the plays created by literati were written in elegant language and strict prosody.

As the aria lyrics of nanxi were closely related to ci and so inherited the lyrical tradition of Chinese poetry, they possessed a strong lyrical quality used to explore various nuances of a character's feeling. In a nanxi play, arias were usually employed to reveal a character's inner world and to express his or her emotion although they were also applied at times to develop plots. Speech passages of a nanxi play, by contrast, were primarily used to develop plots.

The speech passages of a nanxi play contain both monologues and dialogues, and both are interwoven with aria lyrics. Unlike aria lyrics which are musical poems, speech

passages are principally prose though a few verses are sometimes mixed with the prose. Most of these verses in speeches are poems with regular meter. For example, an exit poem usually has four-lines, each of which contains seven words or syllables.¹⁹⁶ A number of stereotypical poems with regular meter are conventionally recited in similar situations in different plays. For example, in Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career, The Chenghua Edition of *The White Rabbit* and The Xuande Edition of *The Gold Hairpin*, a servant recites the same couplet at his entrance:

Lucky people are served by people,
(You fu zhi ren ren fu shi.)

unlucky people serve people.
(wu fu zhi ren fu shi ren.)¹⁹⁷

Occasionally, a few verses in speech are lyrics with irregular meter, such as the ci recited by mo in prologues.

The speech parts of nanxi plays were written in a wide range of styles, from the colloquial to the semi-classical, and, even, to the extremely literary. The language styles of nanxi plays vary in different periods and among different authors. Still, to some degree, there are similarities in the language used in most nanxi plays. The language of

¹⁹⁶ In the classical language used in Chinese poetry, most words have only one syllable.

¹⁹⁷ See Qian Nanyang, comp. 233; see also Ming Chenghua ben baitu ji (The Ming dynasty Chenghua edition of *The white rabbit*) 15, and Yang Yue, et al., eds, 8.

leading roles like sheng and dan is serious and poetic, for instance, while that of comic roles like jing and chou is light and amusing, sometimes even vulgar. Puns, wisecracks and allegorical sayings are often employed in speeches for comic roles in order to enliven the atmosphere. Dialectal expressions can also be found in some speech passages, especially in those of comic roles. For example, First Place Scholar Zhang Xie contains many dialectal phrases from the Wenzhou area.¹⁹⁸ It is difficult in English translations to recreate the subtleties in language styles present in the original Chinese.

In summary, then, we can conclude that in nanxi plays the aria lyrics were more lyrical than the speech passages, while the latter were more colloquial than the former. In general, the speech passages were in the vernacular. This helped audiences understand the plot development of the plays.

¹⁹⁸ See Sun Chongtao, "Zhang Xie zhuangyuan yu 'Yongjia zaju' (First Place scholar Zhang Xie and Yongjia zaju)," 106-107.

CHAPTER 4
PERFORMANCES OF NANXI

Though we have much general knowledge about the plays of nanxi, we have very little information about how the plays were performed. There is a scarcity of written records, and there are, of course, no audio-visual records of this twelfth-to-sixteenth century xiqu form. The physical performances of generations of actors have vanished in the long process of history.

The principal sources we are able to explore are the original play scripts of nanxi, which contain a large number of stage directions. Through carefully analyzing these stage directions, we are able to obtain information concerning the performances of nanxi which, in some sense, is even more reliable than the accounts found in the literati's writing in those eras.

The stage directions available to us include three main categories: the names of gupai, the names of role categories (hangdang), and the acting (kejie) directions. The names of gupai reveal clues about nanxi's music; the names of role categories display the role category system of nanxi; and the acting directions contain information about nanxi's physical

performances. Most stage directions were probably composed by playwrights. However, in some performance scripts, a number of stage directions might have been added by actors according to their experiences with what was effective in performance.

Because of the scarcity of information, this chapter will also employ comparison between other earlier and later xiqu forms to help clarify the distinguishing feature of nanxi performance.

Music

Music study commonly analyzes musical scores. Unfortunately, this approach cannot be employed here because no musical scores of nanxi exist. In some nanxi play scripts and aria collections, the meters or rhythms of arias are marked. However, no melodies of the nanxi arias were written down. The melodies of nanxi were memorized by performers and were passed on from a master's mouth to his disciples' ears.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ Zheng Xicun, "Nanxi qupai 'dinglü' 'dingqiang' goucheng de 'guifanhua' (The standardization of nanxi's arias resulted from their fixed prosody and melodies)," Nanxi tantao ji (Collected explorations of nanxi), ed. Zhejiang Sheng Wenzhou Yishu Yanjiusuo (The Arts Institute of Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province) 6-7 (1992) 25.

Although Chinese musical notation appeared at the latest during the Tang dynasty,²⁰⁰ it was employed in xiqu very late. The oldest surviving musical scores of xiqu are those of kunqu in the Qing dynasty.²⁰¹ As one of the descendants of nanxi, kunqu inherited a large number of musical components from nanxi; however, it also considerably revised its heritage. We cannot expect to perceive the music of nanxi from the kunqu scores that were written down two hundred years after nanxi's extinction. Thus, in this section, I will only use information from literary materials to discuss the musical structure, the singing, and the instrumental accompaniment of nanxi.

There are a large number of arias in each nanxi play; these arias are an important medium used to create characters and to develop plots. Nanxi--the earliest xiqu form--embodies one of the generic attributes of xiqu: as its name suggests, xiqu or "theater of song" is a musical theater, in which vocal music plays a central role.

²⁰⁰ This kind of musical notation was improved during the Song dynasty, and finalized during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Ming-Qing musical notation represents notes with a number of Chinese written characters. Since gong and che are two of these written characters, this kind of musical notation is called gongche pu (literally, "gongche notation or score"). (See Zhu Zhou, "Gongche pu [Gongche notation]," ZDBQYW 218.)

²⁰¹ See Wu Junda, "Xiqu changqiang yuepu (The musical scores of xiqu arias)," ZDBQXQ 441.

As mentioned in "The Transmutations of Nanxi" section of Chapter Two of this study, the melodies of nanxi arias were originally borrowed from Song ci, folk songs, zhugongdiao, and other ballad-singing. These pre-existing melodies are called gupai, musical patterns "in which rhythm and basic melodic progression are essentially set."²⁰² Each gupai has its specific name which was the original title of that vocal piece. In its first usage, the title was relevant to its lyric. In later usage, however, the title became irrelevant to its new lyrics. Thus, the real function of a gupai's name is to serve as a sign representing the fixed melodies and prosodic patterns that have been used.

When writing a nanxi play, a playwright selected pre-existing gupai and then followed these gupai's prosodic patterns to fix the number of lines, the number of words,²⁰³ and the tone of each word in writing his lyrics. Since actors were very familiar with pre-existing gupai, they could smoothly sing newly-written lyrics to the old tunes.²⁰⁴ This

202 Elizabeth Wichmann, Listening to Theatre: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1991) 249.

203 Sometimes, extra words (chenzi) were added. See also "Language," Chapter 3.

204 Sometimes, especially in the later period of nanxi, musicians and performers needed to adjust pre-existing tunes or even to considerably change melodies in order to have them precisely fit lyrics. In certain ways, this work may be understood as musical composition.

means that, in nanxi, a large number of melodies were repeatedly used. Repeated patterns are characteristic of folk arts--in nanxi, they are further evidence that nanxi possessed the characteristics of a folk theater form.

According to musical logic, individual qupai are organized into an aria set (taoshu). As Xu Wei pointed out,

Arias are sequentially arranged, ... [and] cannot be disordered. For example, huangyinger²⁰⁵ is followed by cuyulin; huameixu is followed by diliuzi, and so on. Certainly, there are specific orders.²⁰⁶

To understand the organization of qupai, one must pay attention to modes or keys (gongdiao). Various qupai belong to different modes. Qupai in the same mode are arranged in a sequence; sequences in different modes can be successively joined together if their modes are harmonized.²⁰⁷

A set of modes is employed in nanxi. Although some prosody manuals list thirteen modes (which are the simplification of the 28 modes from the music of the Tang

205 Here, the names of qupai are not translated into English. As pointed out before, the literal meanings of qupai's names are irrelevant to their lyrics, and the function of qupai's names is to serve as signs representing the fixed melodies and prosodic patterns. A literal translation of these technical names would not make any sense.

206 Xu Wei, ZGXLJ 3: 243.

207 He Wei, "Gongdiao (modes)," ZDBQXQ 90.

dynasty), only nine of them were ordinarily used .²⁰⁸ These nine modes are the following:²⁰⁹

zheng gong
zhonglü gong
nanlü gong
xianlü gong
huangzhong gong
dashi diao
shuang diao
shang diao
yue diao.

Unfortunately, the distinguishing characteristics of these modes cannot be ascertained today.²¹⁰

As mentioned above, sequences of qupai, each sequence in a different mode can be successively linked as long as the modes are sufficiently related. In nanxi, then, one chu or scene can contain several modes. For example, the tenth chu of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie consists of three modes in succession: huangzhong gong, xianlü gong, and shuang diao.

208 Qian Nanyang 179.

209 It is impossible to literally translate the names of these nine modes into English, just as we cannot literally translate their counterparts in western music theory, modes such as Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, into Chinese. These Chinese technical terms were derived from the music theory of ancient China.

210 He Wei, "Gongdiao (modes)," ZDBQXQ 90.

The second chu of Grande's Son Takes the Wrong Career also includes three modes: zhonglü gong, xianlü gong, and yue diao.²¹¹

The organization of qupai also includes the use of metrical types (banshi). In an aria set, the initial aria is usually a yinzi (literally, "introduction"), the next is a guogu (literally, "passing aria") consisting of more than one aria, and the final aria is a weisheng (literally, "ending sound").²¹² Sometimes, an aria set can omit either a yinzi or a weisheng or both, and only use a guogu--the main body.²¹³ Yinzi and weisheng are free metrical types. Contrasted to them, the guogu section employs metered metrical types. In this main body, the rhythm of successive arias gradually increases from slow to fast. To sum up, usually, an aria set starts with a free metrical type, then progresses from slow meter to fast meter, to end finally with another free metrical type.²¹⁴ This rhythmic principle is common in Chinese performing arts. Its application can be traced back

²¹¹ Unlike in Yuan zaju plays, gongdiao are not indicated in nanxi scripts. Here, the description of the application of nanxi's gongdiao is based on Qian Nanyang's study. (See Qian Nanyang 207-208).

²¹² Qian Nanyang 187-202.

²¹³ Qian Nanyang 207.

²¹⁴ See Wu Junda, "Qupai liantao ti (Qupai joined-set form)," ZDBQXQ 302.

to the eighth century's daqu ("literally, "big song"),²¹⁵ and can still be seen in contemporary Beijing opera (jingju or jingxi).²¹⁶

The type of musical structure used in nanxi and described above is called lianqu ti (literally, "joined-song form") by modern scholars. Before the end of the Ming dynasty, lianqu ti was the only type of musical structure used in xiqu music.²¹⁷ This kind of musical structure was not only used in nanxi, but also employed in the rival of nanxi--Yuan zaju. Nevertheless, the lianqu ti of nanxi was more flexible than that of Yuan zaju. As described above, in nanxi, several modes could be applied in a single chu.

215 Daqu emerged during the Han dynasty (206 BC- 220 AD) and flourished as one of the important court music and dance forms during the Tang dynasty. A Tang daqu consists of three parts. The first part, called the san xu (literally, "dispersed introduction"), is instrumental music of free meter without any singing or dancing. The second part is ge (literally, "song"), a group of songs in meter with instrumental music and sometimes accompanied by dance. Po (literally, "break"), the third part of a "big song," is a set of dances in fast tempo, accompanied by instrumental music, but without singing. In po, the rhythms of the dance gradually increase. (See He Wei, "Daqu [Big song]," ZDBQXQ 52-53; see also Wu Zhao, "Daqu [Big song]," ZDBQYW 103.)

216 In Beijing opera, a complex large aria often starts in a free metrical type, then progresses in increasingly faster metered metrical types, and then "breaks" at the end into a free metrical type. For details, see Elizabeth Wichmann 138-140.

217 In the late Ming, a new kind of structural form of xiqu--bangiang ti (literally, "beat-tune form")--appeared. For English definition and discussion on bangiang ti and lianqu ti, see Elizabeth Wichmann 292.

However, in Yuan zaju, only one mode could be employed in a zhe (act). Additionally, in Yuan zaju, some modes were used conventionally. For instance, the first zhe usually employed xianlü gong, and the final zhe applied shuang diao.²¹⁸ In nanxi, there are no such restrictive conventions.

In the flexibility of its singing, nanxi contrasts as well to the rigidity of Yuan zaju. Any of the seven role categories in nanxi--the sheng, the dan, the mo, the wai, the tie, the jing, and the chou--could sing.²¹⁹ By contrast, in Yuan zaju, singing roles were restricted to the principal male and female, and the arias of any given act could only be sung by one of them, either the male lead or the female lead. The flexibility of nanxi's singing was inherited by chuanqi, which then further influenced a number of later xiqu forms. In these later xiqu forms, all role categories can sing, the same as seen in nanxi.

Most arias²²⁰ in nanxi are solo singing (duchang). Sometimes, a character sings several arias successively;

218 See Wu Junda, "Qupai liantao ti (Qupai joined-set form)," ZDBQXQ 302.

219 For details of the seven role categories, see the next section of this chapter.

220 In English, aria means a solo in a musical play. In this study, I borrow the term to represent a Chinese term--changduan (literally, "singing passage"). However, in nanxi, changduan were sometimes sung by more than one person. Thus,

sometimes, two or more characters alternately sing different arias. For example, in the thirteenth chu of Little Butcher Sun, Li Qiongmei first sings one aria, then she and Official Zhu alternately sing four arias.²²¹ Two or more characters can also alternately sing different sentences or phrases of an aria. For instance, in the sixteen chu of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, the seventh aria is successively sung by the chou, the mo and the jing.²²²

Frequently, the Chinese word he (literally, "combine" or "whole") or hechang (literally, "combined singing") is put before an aria or line. For example, in the arias of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, he appears more than one hundred times. From the literal meaning of this word, we can surmise that the following part is combined singing rather than a solo. A few combined singings specify the singing roles of the parts that follow. The fourth aria in the eleventh chu of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie may serve as an example. In this aria, the two terms mo and jing are indicated before hechang (mo jing hechang).²²³ We can conclude that this aria is supposed to be a duet sung by the mo and the jing.

here, the term aria represents a singing passage that can be sung by one person or more than one person.

221 Qian Nanyang, comp. 305-306.

222 Qian Nanyang, comp 85.

223 Qian Nanyang, comp. 63.

In most cases, however, the role categories are not indicated before he or hechang. Thus it is impossible for us, judging only by the term he or hechang, to determine whether a combined singing is a duet (erchongchang), a trio (sanchongchang), an on-stage ensemble (taishang hechang), or an off-stage helping chorus (taihou bangqiang). For example, when two characters are on stage, a he may have four kinds of possibilities: a duet, a helping chorus, a character's singing joined by a helping chorus, or these two characters' singing with a helping chorus. To ascertain what the he actually represents, we have to examine the context of the lyrics first.

Due to the ambiguousness of he, it is easy to mistakenly identify a he that is a character's singing joined by off-stage helping chorus as on-stage ensembles. For instance, in the seventeenth chu of The Lute, there are two characters on stage: a matchmaker and Cai Bojie. The matchmaker instructs Cai Bojie to attend his wedding with the prime minister's daughter. Then, Cai Bojie sings:²²⁴

The bridle of fame, the locks of profit
Have already bound me down;
Now comes a phoenix to entrap me in chains.
When can I ever reach my home?
But they are not to blame.
The truth is,
It's only I

²²⁴ Except in the two places noted, the following translation is from Jean Mulligan's The Lute (New York: Columbia UP, 1980) 145.

Who was wrong to come
To view the flowers in the capital.
How unhappy must my parents be!
My tears in silence flow.²²⁵

(He or a combined singing):²²⁶

This marriage fate
I'm helpless to escape.²²⁷

Jean Mulligan translated the above he as "They sing the chorus together[.]" "They"--the subject in this translation--is easily misunderstood to be these two characters, Cai Bojie and the matchmaker. However, according to the context of this chu, the combined singing in fact cannot be a duet between Cai Bojie and the matchmaker. It would not make any sense in this non-comic scene if the matchmaker would sing such words: "This marriage fate I'm helpless to escape." The above combined singing can only be Cai's singing joined by a

225 In the Chinese language script, the pronoun of this sentence is not indicated. (This is a common language phenomenon in Chinese.) Jean Mulligan translated this sentence as "Their tears in silence flow." However, according to the context of this aria, it seems that this sentence means "My tears in silence flow." Cai Bojie worries about his parents, but, being afraid of the despotic power of his emperor and prime minister, he can only choke by himself with silent distress. Additionally, in terms of the descriptions of this play, when Cai's parents long for their son, they often mutually quarrel, and they cry rather than weep silently.

226 In the Chinese language script, the stage direction is only one word--"he." Mulligan translated it as "They sing the chorus together."

227 For the Chinese language script, see Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu (Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of The lute) (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1980) 110.

helping chorus. By adding the helping chorus, the playwright emphasizes Cai's depression.

A similar example can be seen at the beginning of the twentieth chu of the same play. Zhao Wuniang, Cai Bojie's wife, laments alone. He is indicated for her first aria.²²⁸ Jean Mulligan translated this he as "She sings the chorus[.]"²²⁹ This translation probably confuses readers. If Mulligan intends "chorus" to refer to verse-and-chorus structure, this concept is incorrectly applied to nanxi. If she is referring to ensemble singing, how can a single role sing a chorus? Obviously, this he must be a combined singing by the heroine and off-stage performers since only she is on stage at this moment.

By applying off-stage helping choruses, the creators of nanxi heightened the atmosphere of scenes and thereby increased the artistic appeal of their plays. Otherwise, the overall musical impact of nanxi might have been too weak, since nanxi troupes were usually small,²³⁰ and did not have many instrumentalists. This simple but useful medium was later inherited by yiyangqiang, one of the descendants of

228 Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu (Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of *The lute*) 120.

229 Jean Mulligan, The Lute (New York: Columbia UP, 1980) 156.

230 See the section "Performers and Troupes" in Chapter 5 for specifics.

nanxi, and still exists in some contemporary xiqu forms, such as chuanju (literally, "Sichuan's theater") and xiangju (literally, "Hunan's theater").

To summarize, the solo, the duet, the on-stage ensemble, and the off-stage helping chorus were employed in the singing of nanxi. The singing of two or more characters was possibly joined by an off-stage helping chorus as well, without any indication in scripts; this type of he may be easily mistaken for the duets or the on-stage ensembles today. Therefore, when describing the singing of nanxi, we need to use caution when employing terms like "duet" and "on-stage ensemble." Moreover, we need remember that all combined singing in nanxi was in unison rather than harmony. Generally speaking, harmony does not appear in Chinese music until the early part of the twentieth century.²³¹

Regarding the instrumental accompaniment of nanxi, very little information can be found. At the beginning of the second chu of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, two items of stage directions indicate that the sheng's acting was accompanied by musical instruments:

Sheng: (Enters, and speaks)
All right.

Off-stage members: (Adlibbed response)

231 Sang Tong, "Hesheng (Harmony)," ZDBQYW 263.

Sheng: Thank you for watching my entrance.

Off-stage members:
Sorry to trouble you [to perform].

Sheng: Instrumentalists, play zhuying yaohong²³²
as an introduction.

(Off-stage members play musical instruments)

Sheng: (Dances to the beat of the music)²³³

Unfortunately, these stage directions do not specify what kinds of musical instruments were employed in this performance.

In the prologue of the same play, the mo's monologue reveals a few clues about the musical instruments used in nanxi. In his first ci, the mo mentions:

We are not offspring of performers' families, but
are skilled in the plucking of string [instruments]
and the blowing of bamboo [flutes].²³⁴

From these two phrases--the plucking of string instruments and the blowing of bamboo flutes--one is able to conjecture that string instruments and bamboo flutes were used in nanxi, but we cannot ascertain what specific instruments they are. Bamboo flutes, for example, can be either the horizontal bamboo flute (dizi) or the vertical bamboo flutes (xiao), though it is my impression that the horizontal one has been more widely used in China.

232 A gupai

233 Qian Nanyang, comp. 13.

234 Qian Nanyang, comp. 1.

In the later part of his monologue, the mo says:

The gongs have sounded. Your honors, please be quiet and watch our performance.²³⁵

Instrumentalists, beat your drums together and play a prelude.²³⁶

The above passage clearly shows that the drum (gu) and the gong (luo) were used in the performance of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, two scores for percussion instruments are actually attached to the script of The Xuande Edition of The Gold Hairpin.²³⁷ It seems reasonable to believe that percussion instruments were widely used in nanxi.

One item in the written records of the Ming era refers to the string instruments used in nanxi. As mentioned in Chapter Two of this study, Zhu Yuanzhang, the first emperor of the Ming dynasty, was amazed by The Lute, and he ordered actors to perform this play at the palace every day.

Later, he was dissatisfied that [the Lute] could not be accompanied by string instruments; he ordered Shi Zhong, an official of the court institution of music and dance, to think of a way. Liu Gao, a head of one of the subdivisions of the court institution, thus composed melodies [for this play] and presented it [to the emperor] ... [The rewritten music] could be played on the Chinese zither (zheng) and the lute (pipa).²³⁸

235 Qian Nanyang, comp. 2.

236 Qian Nanyang, comp. 4.

237 See Yang Yue, et al., eds, 159-160.

238 Xu Wei, ZGXLJ 3: 240

This passage suggests that string instruments were not widely used in nanxi in the early Ming period. According to this record, the production of The Lute was first performed without the accompaniment of string instruments; later, two kinds of string instruments were incorporated--the Chinese zither and the lute. However, this does not necessarily mean that after this production the Chinese zither and the lute were frequently used in nanxi. Usually, non-palace troupes did not have the luxurious conditions that a court company enjoyed.

From the scant materials, we may draw the conclusion that the musical accompaniment of nanxi definitely included percussion instruments like gongs and drums and that they might have incorporated bamboo flutes and string instruments as well. It seems that not many musical instruments were used in nanxi. This probably helps us to understand why the off-stage helping chorus played a very important role in this xiqu form.

The Role Category System

As we have seen in the two quotations from First Place Scholar Zhang Xie,²³⁹ the names of role categories (hangdang),

rather than characters, are indicated before the aria lyrics or speech passages of characters. In this earliest surviving nanxi script, seven terms--sheng, dan, mo, jing, chou, wai and hou (or tie)²⁴⁰--are used to represent the different characters.²⁴¹ These seven terms can be also found in other nanxi plays, such as The Chenghua Edition of The White Rabbit and The Yuan Edition of The Lute. Additionally, in some plays, a few conventional names--neither the names of role categories nor the personal names of characters--are used for some stock characters. For example, in Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career, Zhao Qianmei--Wang Jinbang's mother--is termed the qian (literally, "old woman"); in Little Butcher Sun, Li Qiongmei's maid is called the mei, an abbreviation of mei[xiang], the common term for maids in classical xiqu.

It makes little sense to interpret the designations of most role categories according to their literal meanings.

239 See "The Transmutations of Nanxi," Chapter 2, and "Music," Chapter 4.

240 In First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, this role category is often named hou, but sometimes tie. In other nanxi plays, the category is named tie. Qian Nanyang considered that this role category should be designated tie, and in transcription this Chinese ideograph--tie--was mistakenly written as another Chinese ideograph--hou. He explained why and how these two Chinese written characters were confused (see Qian Nanyang, comp. 74).

241 Characters' names are presented to the audience through characters' language. Usually, the names of important characters are exhibited in their self-introductions (zibao jiamen), while those of minor ones are disclosed in characters' communications with each other.

Some literati tried to explain the terms for nanxi's role categories through etymology, but such interpretations are not convincing and often seem strained.²⁴² One such view, for instance, interpreted the terms used to designate each of nanxi's role categories through an application of fanxun (literally, "inverse explanation"), an approach used in traditional Chinese linguistics. An actor is valued for singing arias skillfully so that, in an opposed way, he is designated "sheng," which has one literal meaning of "unskillful" (other possible meanings are "living," "raw," "person," and so on). A woman is good at serving at night but she is named "dan," which literally means "day" (or "dawn"). Mo always enter first in a nanxi play, and as a result they are inversely called "mo," which can literally mean "last" (or "end," "detail," or "powder"). The comic role jing is boisterous, but he is termed "jing," which literally can mean, among other things, "calm."²⁴³ I do not find it convincing to interpret the names used for nanxi's role categories through the fanxun approach, nor through the other alternative interpretations that literati have offered in explanation.

²⁴² See Xu Wei, ZGXLJ 3: 245-246; see also Wang Jide, ZGXLJ 4: 142.

²⁴³ Wang Jide, ZGXLJ 4: 142.

However, the roots of the names and attributes of some role categories in nanxi can be found in the tradition of Chinese theatrical practices. For example, in Song zaju, there were five role categories: yinxi, fujing, fumo, zhuanggu and moni.²⁴⁴ Among them, the paired comic roles of fujing and fumo were developed from the canjun (adjutant) and canggu (grey hawk) in Tang canjun xi²⁴⁵ (literally, "adjutant theater"), and transmuted into the jing and mo of nanxi.²⁴⁶ In fact, the two terms--jing and mo--might be abbreviations for [fuljing] and [fulmo].²⁴⁷

244 The responsibilities of these five role categories were as follows:

yinxi--the leading performer who also sometimes plays female roles;
fujing--one who pretends to be a fool;
fumo--one who makes gags;
zhuanggu--one who plays a mandarin; and
moni--one who plans the whole performance

(see Liao Ben, Song Yuan xiqu wenwu yu minsu [Xiqu relics and folklore in the Song and Yuan dynasties] 270-287).

245 Canjun xi is a kind of skit which flourished in the Tang dynasty. For further information in English on this form, see William Dolby's A History of Chinese Drama, (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1976) 7-9.

246 See "The Transmutations of Nanxi," Chapter 2.

247 Some scholars consider that the mo is an abbreviation of mo[ni] (see Liao Ben, Song Yuan xiqu wenwu yu minsu [Xiqu relics and folklore in the Song and Yuan dynasties] 285).

Two examples found in First Place Scholar Zhang Xie indicate that mo and fumo are the same role category. In the fifth chu of this play, Zhang Xie's mother is played by the jing; she refers to a servant who is played by the mo as fumo:

Jing: (Speaks)
Hey, fumo, come here.

Mo: (Enters)
Don't argue with her. It will be easy.
I haven't finished my things, but she
"heys" [calls] me out.²⁴⁸

Similarly, in the second chu of this play, Zhang Xie's father also calls the same servant fumo.²⁴⁹

Not all of the role categories of nanxi derived from earlier theatrical forms, however. For example, sheng and chou quite possibly appear for the first time in nanxi.

In nanxi the sheng usually plays a hero, and the dan plays a heroine; the mo, the jing, the chou, the wai and the hou (or the tie) represent various other characters. Taking First Place Scholar Zhang Xie as an example, these seven role categories respectively represent the following characters:

Sheng: Zhang Xie--a young scholar;

Dan: Pinnü--a poor girl who marries Zhang Xie later
on;

²⁴⁸ Qian Nanyang, comp. 32.

²⁴⁹ See Qian Nanyang, comp. 15.

Mo: one of Zhang Xie's friends in the second chu,
Zhang Xie's servant in the fourth chu,
one of the merchants in the eighth chu,
the judge of hell (panguan) in the tenth chu,
Grandpapa Li in the eleventh chu,
and other minor roles;

Jing: one of Zhang Xie's friends in the second chu,
Zhang Xie's mother in the fifth chu,
one of the merchants in the eighth chu,
a god in the tenth chu,
Grandmama Li in the eleventh chu,
and other minor roles;

Chou: a fortune-teller in the fourth chu,
Zhang Xie's younger sister in the fifth chu,
a bandit in the eighth chu,
Li Xiaoer in the eleventh chu,
the prime minister in the twenty-first chu,
and other minor roles;

Wai: Zhang Xie's father in the fifth chu,
and the prime minister's wife from the
seventeenth chu to the end of this play; and

hou (or tie): the prime minister's daughter,
and a maid after the daughter dies.

The above summary suggests that in First Place Scholar Zhang Xie the two principal role categories were classified

according to characters' genders, ages, and personalities. The sheng plays a young scholar and the dan plays the female counterpart of the sheng; both of them are serious or non-comic roles. The above summary also implies that the functions or responsibilities of the five supporting role categories are not as specific as those of the two leads. Each of these supporting role categories plays quite different characters in the same play. For example, the chou plays both Li Xiaer--a peasant--and the prime minister. Obviously, a peasant and a prime minister have different personal experiences and social status, which definitely effect their personalities.

Second, in this play the wai plays characters of different genders: Zhang Xie's father and the prime minister's wife. This is very unusual. In all later nanxi plays (those created after First Place Scholar Zhang Xie), the wai only plays male characters.

However, in nanxi, another role category more frequently represents characters of both genders. In First Place Scholar Zhang Xie and The Lute, the jing plays old women, and in The Chenghua Edition of The White Rabbit, the jing plays Sanniang's sister-in-law. This is more understandable. In nanxi, the jing is essentially a comic role. When a male comic player enacts a female character, it is relatively easy to obtain comic effect.

In the later chuanqi form, the jing gradually lost its comical color. Eventually, this role category became a serious or non-comedic role, representing characters who are frank and open-minded but rough, or those who are crafty and dangerous. Simultaneously, a new role category--laodan--was created for representing old women.

The development of role categories from nanxi to later xiqu forms can also be seen in the emergence and transmutation of the young male role category xiaosheng (literally, "young sheng"). In nanxi plays of the Song and the Yuan dynasties, most title roles played by the sheng are young scholars who would be played by the xiaosheng later on. In early times, the function or responsibility of the sheng included that of the xiaosheng in the later period.

In the later nanxi, as a subdivision, the xiaosheng derived from the sheng. The term xiaosheng can be found in nanxi scripts published in the Ming dynasty.²⁵⁰ However, when this new role category first appeared, it was inconsistently designated in different plays. For example, in The Chenghua Edition of The White Rabbit, Liu Zhiyuan's son is named xiaowai (literally, "young wai").²⁵¹ In Jiang Shi (The hero's

²⁵⁰ See for instance Xu Wenzhao, ed., Wu Lunquan (Wu Lunquan and his brothers), Fengyue jingnang (Brocade pouch of romances) 369; see also Xu Wenzhao, ed., Lanhua ji (The orchid), Fengyue jingnang (Brocade pouch of romances) 409.

²⁵¹ Ming Chenghua ben baitu ji (The Ming dynasty Chenghua edition of The white rabbit) 39.

name)²⁵² and Du Fu Going Sight-seeing in Spring (Du Fu you chun), some young males are categorized by the shortened term xiao.²⁵³ In later xiqu forms, the two terms xiaowai and xiao have disappeared, and only the term xiaosheng is employed. Moreover, this young male role category has been further subdivided. For instance, in kunqu, xiaosheng includes guan (hat) sheng, jing (cloth cap) sheng, xiepi (shoe leather) sheng and zhiwei (pheasant tail) sheng.²⁵⁴

Compared with that of nanxi, the role category system (hangdang tizhi) of later xiqu forms is more specific and strict. In these later forms, the jing and the chou became as important as the sheng and the dan. Nonetheless, the role category system of nanxi is the bud from which role categories in these later xiqu forms bloomed. The names of the four primary role categories--sheng, dan, jing and chou--are all from nanxi. The principle of classifying role categories was also inherited from nanxi. Of course, these principles were further developed: in later xiqu forms each

252 Xu Wenzhao, ed., Jiang Shi, Fengyue jingnang (Brocade pouch of romances) 367.

253 Xu Wenzhao, ed., Du Fu you chun (Du Fu going sight-seeing in spring), Fengyue jingnang (Brocade pouch of romances) 523.

254 Each of these role categories is designated in terms of one of the distinguishing features of their costumes.

of the four role categories is further subdivided according to gender, age and personalities.

The role category system promotes the performance techniques of each role category subdivision. As Elizabeth Wichmann rightly points out,

Performers of each role type specialize in the display of certain selected performance skills. And the performance of each role type is characterized by certain physical and vocal conventions and patterns of stylization specific to it.²⁵⁵

Because of the specialization of performance techniques, performers are able to thoroughly perfect the performance requirements of their role categories. This enables talented performers to enrich the enactment of their role categories, bringing out the fullest potential of xiqu performance.

Acting

Generally speaking, the acting techniques and conventions that were practiced in nanxi are lost to us. Possibly some vestiges of them remain in living xiqu forms

²⁵⁵ Elizabeth Wichmann 7. She is of course referring to the role system of Beijing opera, the epitome or representative of contemporary xiqu, but her remarks are also applicable to the role systems of other contemporary xiqu forms.

such as kungu, puxian xi and liyuan xi.²⁵⁶ These acting techniques and conventions, however, have been altered or revised and mixed with the new creations of generations of performers so that they can no longer be identified as the original forms of nanxi. Nanxi's acting thus can only be known today from studying the acting directions, and from examining the characters' speaking and singing parts.

The original nanxi scripts offer very brief acting directions. These often consist of only several words or phrases, such as "taking a drink of wine,"²⁵⁷ "falling down on his knees,"²⁵⁸ and "eating and then vomiting."²⁵⁹

In nanxi scripts, three types of acting directions can be identified: one specifies body movements, a second suggests facial expressions, and a third lists vocal sound effects. The first type of acting directions are frequently used to indicate postures, gestures and movements of the limbs and the trunk. These examples are typical:

256 For descriptions of puxian xi and liyuan xi, see "The Origins of Nanxi" section of Chapter 2.

257 Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu (Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of *The lute*) 62.

258 Xu Wenzhao, ed., Guer (The orphan of the Zhao family), Fengyue jingnang (Brocade pouch of romances) 291.

259 Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu (Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of *The lute*) 120.

(The chou plays a matchmaker; carrying shoes, scales and other things, [he] enters and sings.)²⁶⁰

(A eunuch bearing the imperial edict enters and sings.)²⁶¹

(The mo kicks the door open; the jing runs off; the mo chases and tries to kill him.)²⁶²

The second type of acting directions describe facial expressions, such as smiling,²⁶³ frowning,²⁶⁴ and weeping.²⁶⁵ Of course, in actual performance, performers might use these facial expressions in unison with physical gestures, such as hand movements.

The third type of acting directions are very interesting, but are offered in only a few cases. One example from chu 23 of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie suggests how these vocal sound effects are employed:

Jing: (Offstage, imitates the barking of a dog)

Jing: (Enters and speaks)

²⁶⁰ Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu (Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of *The lute*) 75.

²⁶¹ Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu (Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of *The lute*) 93.

²⁶² Qian Nanyang, comp. 287.

²⁶³ Qian Nanyang, comp. 83.

²⁶⁴ Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu (Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of *The lute*) 84.

²⁶⁵ Xu Wenzhao, ed., Liu Zhiyuan (The name of the hero of The white rabbit), Fengyue jingnang (Brocade pouch of romances) 318.

Xiaoer, go outside to take a look! I'm afraid that somebody is stealing chickens. (Imitates the clucking of chickens)²⁶⁶

Here, the jing makes sound effects with his voice.

Similarly, in the tenth chu of the same play, the chou imitates with his voice the sound of knocking at the door.²⁶⁷

These two examples are from the actions of comic roles and probably achieved comic effects in performance.

In nanxi, conventional movements were used. As mentioned above, the acting directions were very brief, sometimes consisting of only one Chinese written-character--jie (action). For instance, in Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career, after Wanyan Shouma joins the Wang family troupe, there is the following passage:

Sheng: (Enters and speaks)

At home I was a fine young master,
on the way I am a wandering actor.

(Jie)

Sheng: (Sings) ...²⁶⁸

Here, it appears that the playwright did not have to give any concrete descriptions of this jie, because actors would act according to conventions they already knew. Another possibility is that the playwright did write concrete

²⁶⁶ Qian Nanyang, comp. 120.

²⁶⁷ Qian Nanyang, comp. 56.

²⁶⁸ Qian Nanyang, comp. 252.

descriptions of this jie, but actors omitted it later since they knew how to perform this type of conventional part.

Another example from The Lute seems more easily understood. The winners in the imperial examination attend the celebration entertainment. Each of them is invited to compose a poem. Cai Bojie, the first place scholar, writes first:

Sheng: (Speaks)
Let me think.

(Jie)

Sheng: I have a poem.

Jing and chou: (Speak)
Please recite it for us.

Sheng: (Speaks) ...²⁶⁹

Since so many nanxi plays tell stories of young scholars, and composing poems was an indispensable activity for scholars at that time, it is reasonable to believe that a convention for composing poems was created and was regularly employed on the stage.

More hints found in scripts prove that conventional movements were employed in nanxi. For example, at the beginning of the chu portraying the reunion of the hero and heroine in The White Rabbit, context suggests that Liu Zhiyuan is outside a mill while Li Sanniang is grinding grain

²⁶⁹ Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu
(Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of The Lute) 61.

inside the mill. Liu Zhiyuan then tries to get into the locked mill to see his first wife who has been mistreated by her brother and sister-in-law for seventeen years.

Dan: My darling, the key has been taken away by my brother and sister-in-law.

Sheng: You get out of the way. Let me kick the door open.

(Kicks the door open)²⁷⁰

Apparently, before Liu enters the mill, there must be an imaginary wall and door between these two characters; the action of kicking the door open is a conventional movement.

Another example of breaking a door has been mentioned above. In Little Butcher Sun, the mo playing the title role tries to find evidence of his sister-in-law's adulterous affair:

(The mo kicks the door open; the jing runs off; the mo chases and tries to kill him.)²⁷¹

Here, the action of kicking the door open is also probably a conventional movement.

In Lin Zhaode, the young man playing the title role is trying to catch an oriole; he jumps over the wall of a beautiful garden and climbs a leafy tree.²⁷² The actions of

²⁷⁰ Xu Wenzhao, ed., Liu Zhiyuan (The name of the hero of The white rabbit), Fengyue jingnang (Brocade pouch of romances) 318.

²⁷¹ Qian Nanyang, comp. 287.

jumping over a wall and climbing a tree must be conventional movements, since realistic settings were not used in nanxi.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine from the written materials how these conventional movements are elaborated and whether they are similar to the dance-like conventions we see in performances of living xiqu forms such as kungu and Beijing opera. In these living xiqu forms, talented performers sometimes use elaborate dance-like conventions to present the audience with vivid images of the characters' surroundings which do not physically exist on stage. At the Crossroad (Sanchakou) is a characteristic example of using elaborate dance-like conventions in Beijing opera. This play presents a scene in which a general and a warrior fight in the room of an inn at night. On the stage, illuminated with a bright light, the martial sheng and the martial chou act as though they are trying very hard to find each other in complete darkness. In their elaborate dance-like conventional movements, the audience can sense the darkness and such non-existent objects as the door and the walls of the room.

Dance was definitely employed in nanxi. At the end of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, the mo (holding an umbrella), the chou (bearing the bridegroom's flowered hat), and the jing (carrying lanterns) dance together in the remarriage

²⁷² Xu Wenzhao, ed., Lin Zhaode (The name of the hero), Fengyue jingnang (Brocade pouch of romances) 553.

ceremony of the hero and heroine.²⁷³ In the third chu of The Lute, an old woman, played by the jing, and a maid, played by the chou, dance together for fun.²⁷⁴ In the fortieth chu of The Xuande Edition of The Gold Hairpin, a group of barbarians dance at their king's banquet.²⁷⁵ All three of these dance passages are inserted into plays as interludes, and are interwoven with singing. Apparently, they are different from the type of pantomimic dances which are used to convey the characters' surroundings.

There is little evidence to prove that there was specialization of performance techniques for different role categories in nanxi, except for a line in First Place Scholar Zhang Xie that offers information concerning the jing's voice. In this play, when the mo and the jing first enter, the mo teases the jing in the voice of the actor rather than the character:

Mo and jing: (Hum songs when entering, and then speak)

How are you!

Mo: As soon as you enter, you speak so loudly
...²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Qian Nanyang, comp. 213-214.

²⁷⁴ Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu (Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of The lute) 15-16.

²⁷⁵ Yang Yue, et al., 74-76.

Here, the mo's line suggests that the jing's voice is loud and sonorous. In living xiqu forms like kunqu and Beijing opera, jing usually employ both chest and nasal resonance to increase the volume of their voices. Their resounding voices probably can help us to imagine the jing's voice in nanxi.

There are two main reasons for the scarcity of data regarding the specialization of performance techniques. First, Chinese scholars believe that in nanxi, the performance techniques for each role category may not yet have been as developed as they would be in later xiqu forms.²⁷⁷ Second, information concerning the performance techniques of nanxi was not completely recorded.

Another convention in nanxi was that actors of comic roles sometimes directly informed the audience of their identities as actors. The chou's monologue in the sixteenth chu of The Lute can serve as an example:

I am the district head. ... Yamen runners and officials tyrannize over me in a thousand ways. ... If they mistreat me again, I will ask for justice; "I am not the district head! I am not the village chief either. Do not beat the wrong person. [You may ask] who I am? I am a comic actor."²⁷⁸

276 Qian Nanyang, comp. 13.

277 See Zhang Geng, et al, 1: 430; see also Huang Kebao, "Juese hangdang (Role categories)," ZDBQXQ 170.

278 Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu (Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of The lute) 99.

Similarly, in First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, the jing twice reveals his identity as an actor to the audience.²⁷⁹ Application of this convention surely created comic effects. This convention was apparently never employed for non-comic roles like those of the sheng and the dan.

In sum, because of the scarcity of visual and written materials, it is impossible to represent in detail the acting of the extinct nanxi. Nonetheless, from the various acting directions and the characters' language, we are able to conclude that the acting of nanxi was at least in part conventional.

Make-up and Stage Properties

In terms of pictorial evidence for later generations, nanxi has not been as lucky as its rival, Yuan zaju. A surviving wall painting from the Yuan dynasty depicts a scene of Yuan zaju in performance, and this supplies visual references about the costumes and make-up of this xiqu form for modern scholars.²⁸⁰ Regarding the make-up of nanxi, no

²⁷⁹ Qian Nanyang, comp. 157 and 171.

²⁸⁰ See Plate 13 "Shanxi Hongdong Mingyingwang dian Yuan zaju bihua (The wall painting of Yuan zaju in the

such visual references have so far been found, and even the written materials are very scanty.

Most of the information concerning the make-up of nanxi is embedded in First Place Scholar Zhang Xie. In the second chu of the play, when the sheng describes the performance of his troupe, he offers this phrase, "daubing black powder and dabbing white chalk" (motu chahui).²⁸¹ It seems that in nanxi at least the colors black and white were employed for character's make-up.

A passage from the eleventh chu of this play describes the chou's appearance. This passage also helps us to understand the phrase--"daubing black powder and dabbing white chalk":

Chou: I once saw her standing in front of the temple. I talked to her: "Sister Pinnü, you are so lonely, and my skin looks so fair and clear."

Mo: But your lips are black.

Chou: Why don't you simply marry me? ...²⁸²

It appears here that the facial base of the chou was white and that his lips were black. A line spoken by the chou from chu 27 further suggests that the chou's lips were black:

Mingyingwang temple in Hongdong county, Shanxi province)," ZDBQXQ 8.

281 Qian Nanyang, comp. 13.

282 Qian Nanyang, comp. 63.

Chou: ... I wish I had a piece of chalk and a tablet of Chinese ink so that I could use the ink to paint my lips black and draw a white deer on the door with the chalk.²⁸³

Similarly, the jing's lines from the same play reveal information about his make-up: when the jing plays female roles, he disguises himself as a woman. Before Zhang Xie goes to the capital to take his examination, his wife asks for financial aid from Li's family:

Dan: As a river runs fast, the affair is urgent. Zhang Xie is a scholar. Since Grandmama has arranged for him to marry me, I hope you will help him. [As the old saying goes,] when asking for help, ask a great man (da zhangfu).

Mo: A friend in need, a friend indeed.

Jing: (Smiles)
[A great man!?] You [had better] ask everyone: I dab rouge and daub with powder, and I wear a skirt. Am I a great man? ...²⁸⁴

The jing's lines indicate that he is made-up as a female, and that he wears female costume as well.

With few exceptions, traditional xiqu utilized no sets on stage.²⁸⁵ This is one of the principal reasons that, in

283 Qian Nanyang, comp. 136.

284 Qian Nanyang, comp. 99.

285 During the late Ming dynasty, scenery was employed in private xiqu performances (see Zhang Dai, Taoan Mengyi [Taoan's memoir] [Hangzhou: Xihu Shushe, 1982] 67-68).

traditional xiqu, performers create elaborate dance-like conventions to visually create their characters' surroundings. This also corresponds to the epical or chronological structure of xiqu plays, in which locations freely shift from one to another.

In nanxi, the earliest xiqu form, no realistic sets were employed. In comic scenes from First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, actors were in fact employed as sets--in this case, as the door of a temple:

Jing: ... I, a god, think that the outside door was damaged and doesn't look good. Ask a little ghost to come here. You both temporarily act as the two leaves of the door.

Mo: I am the judge of hell. How can I act as the door?

Jing: Ask a little ghost to come here and discuss it.

...

Chou: (playing a little ghost, enters and sings)
...

Chou: I can only act as one leaf of a door. Who will do the other?

Jing: The judge of hell is on the left and you are on the right.

...

(Mo and chou act as the door).²⁸⁶

286 Qian Nanyang, comp. 55.

By the same token, the chou acts as a table in the sixteenth chu;²⁸⁷ the mo acts as a chair for the prime minister in chu 21.²⁸⁸ However, in all known nanxi plays after First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, this convention was apparently no longer employed.

Although nanxi did not utilize large objects for sets on stage, this xiqu form widely used small articles as properties in performance. For example, a bottle and cups are seen in First Place Scholar Zhang Xie;²⁸⁹ scales,²⁹⁰ an imperial edict,²⁹¹ a bowl²⁹² and a Chinese zither²⁹³ are employed in The Lute. These properties are small and therefore easily acquired and utilized on stage. Their use supported the acting in nanxi.

287 Qian Nanyang, comp. 87.

288 Qian Nanyang, comp. 112.

289 Qian Nanyang, comp. 87.

290 Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu
(Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of *The lute*) 75.

291 Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu
(Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of *The lute*) 93.

292 Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu
(Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of *The lute*)
121.

293 Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu
(Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of *The lute*)
127.

In sum, then, due to the loss of reference sources, our view of the overall visual style of nanxi is very limited. We know little more than that nanxi employed a simple and unadorned visual language in its performance.

CHAPTER 5
THE CREATORS AND AUDIENCES OF NANXI

As we have seen, nanxi is a xiqu form originally popular in the folk tradition; the creators of nanxi were primarily non-literati. Unquestionably, in the historical development of this xiqu form, Gao Ming's contributions should not be ignored.²⁹⁴ Nonetheless, I will not specifically discuss his activities here. To do so would lead to analyzing other literati's activities as well, and would conflate this study of a non-literati artistic form with activities of the literati. Instead, I will concentrate on the activities of the anonymous creators of this principally folk-based art form, including the "talented men" of writing societies and performers of nanxi.

²⁹⁴ Gao Ming (?-1359) was a playwright of nanxi and a poet as well. He was an official for a time at the end of the Yuan dynasty. After resigning, he wrote The Lute based on Chaste Woman Zhao. One common view claims that with the appearance of The Lute, the dramatic literature of nanxi became comparable in literary value to that of Yuan zaju (see Yan Changke, "Gao Ming," ZDBQXQ 83-86).

Writing Societies

Writing societies (shuhui) were associations of writers for performing arts.²⁹⁵ The members of writing societies were called "talented men" (cairen).

It is unclear when writing societies arose, but at the latest, the term writing societies appeared during the Southern Song dynasty. In his Old Affairs in Wulin (Wulin jiushi), Zhou Mi (1232-1298) listed the names of a large number of artists in Hangzhou during the Southern Song dynasty. Under the title "The Writing Society," he listed six people's names. Among them, three wrote for storytelling and ballad singing, while the emphases of the other three were not indicated.²⁹⁶

In the prologue of First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, the mo's lines suggest that there was more than one writing society in Wenzhou--the birth place of nanxi--during the Southern Song dynasty: "You enacted The Story of First Place

²⁹⁵ Qian Nanyang believed that writing societies were also performing troupes (Qian Nanyang 221; see also Qian Nanyang, comp. 6).

²⁹⁶ Zhou Mi, Wulin jiushi (Old affairs in Wulin), Dong jing meng hua lu: wai si zhong (Memoirs of the eastern capital: with four other documents) (Beijing: Zhongguo Shangye Chubanshe, 1982) 130.

Scholar Zhang Xie last time, but now this writing society will contend for the reputation of the best performance."²⁹⁷

The sheng's lines from the second chu of the same play indicate that this play was written by the Jiushan Writing Society. When the sheng introduces information about this production, he brags in song:

Indeed, in the Pear Garden²⁹⁸ style,
except for that Academy, who can rival our wit and
humor?
The Jiushan Writing Society recently rewrote this
play,
which [now] has a special flavor.²⁹⁹

Jiushan was one of the old names of Wenzhou³⁰⁰.

During the Yuan dynasty, writing societies may have been even more active. In this era, from the ninth year of the reign of Emperor Taizong (1237) to the third year of the reign of Emperor Renzong (1314), the imperial examinations were stopped.³⁰¹ Intellectuals were denied a formal route to office and thereby to their normal livelihood. Many of them

297 Qian Nanyang, comp. 2.

298 The Pear Garden (liyuan) was the imperial performance academy established by Emperor Xuanzong (also called Minghuang, reigned 712-756) of the Tang dynasty.

299 Qian Nanyang, comp. 13.

300 Sun Chongtao 106.

301 Song Lian, et al., Yuan shi (The history of the Yuan dynasty), 8 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1976) 4: 2017-2018.

became involved in writing texts for xiqu and other performing arts in order to earn a living.

As discussed in Chapter Two of this study, during the Yuan dynasty, Hangzhou was an important center for the performance of nanxi. In the Register of Ghosts,³⁰² a poem written by Jia Zhongming (1343-?) mentions "the Wulin Writing Society".³⁰³ Wulin is one of the old names of Hangzhou. In the same book, Jia Zhongming also mentions the Yujing writing society³⁰⁴ and the Yuanzhen writing society.³⁰⁵ However, these two societies were in Dadu (the modern Beijing), and only connected to the playwrights of Yuan zaju.

The authorship of two plays, Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career and Little Butcher Sun, is respectively given under their titles as "the talented man [or men] of old Hangzhou (gu Hang[zhou])" and "the writing society of old Hangzhou." The word "old" (gu) may have been added before Hangzhou because that city had been the capital of the Southern Song, the dynasty preceding the Yuan, when these plays were created.

302 For specifics, see "The Spread of Nanxi" the section of Chapter 2.

303 Zhong Sicheng, ZGXLJ 2: 252.

304 Zhongguo Xiqu Yanjiuyuan (The China Institute of Xiqu Research), "Lu qui bu tiyao (A precis of the Register of Ghosts)," ZGXLJ 2: 97.

305 Zhong Sicheng, ZGXLJ 2: 204

The authorship of The Chenghua Edition of The White Rabbit is not given under its title. Instead, it is introduced in its prologue, just as we have seen in First Place Scholar Zhang Xie. In the prologue of this play, the mo says:

... Which chuangqi³⁰⁶ play and whose story will be presented? It is that "Li Sanniang receiving an official seal in the hemp field and Liu Zhiyuan returning to his hometown in silken robes"--The White Rabbit. How wonderful is this chuangqi play! Who wrote it? It was the talented man [or men] of the Yongjia Writing Society who, beside a lamp and a window, ground the ink black, dipped his [or their] writing brush[es] fully [in the ink], and then wrote down this first-class story about filial piety and righteousness.³⁰⁷

As mentioned previously, Yongjia is another old name for Wenzhou.

By the same token, in the prologue of The Orchid (Lanhua ji), the mo declares, "This play The Orchid was newly written by the talented man [or men] beside a lamp."³⁰⁸ Unfortunately, his words do not specify which writing society the author[s] of this play belonged to.

³⁰⁶ Here, the term chuangqi refers to nanxi. For details, see the "Multiple Names for Nanxi" section of Chapter 1.

³⁰⁷ Ming Chenghua ben baitu ji (The Ming dynasty Chenghua edition of The white rabbit) 2.

³⁰⁸ Xu Wenzhao, ed., Lanhua ji (The orchid), Fengyue jingnang (Brocade pouch of romances) 391.

In addition, Zhang Dafu, a dramatist and critic in the early Qing dynasty, remarked that The Thorn Hairpin "was written by Ke Danqiu, a scholar from the Wu³⁰⁹ Jingxian Writing society."³¹⁰

It seems that there were no writing societies during the Ming dynasty, since this term almost disappears from the materials surviving from that time. Qian Nanyang conjectured that writing societies disbanded in the early Ming dynasty because of severe laws. At that time, only professional performers³¹¹ could conduct theatrical practices. If army men learned to sing, they would have their tongues cut off. If common people sang and danced, they would be hung upside down by their feet for three days until dead. On the other hand, the social status of intellectuals at that time was much higher than it had been during the Yuan dynasty. Intellectuals naturally wished to become officials by passing the imperial examinations rather than use their talents in writing societies.³¹²

309 Located in the modern Suzhou area.

310 Zhang Dafu, "Zongmu (A general list)," Nanqu pu (The Metrical patterns of the southern arias qtd. in Jin Ningfen, Nanxi yanjiu bianqian (Changes in the study of nanxi) 217.

311 This profession was related to prostitution in the early Ming dynasty (see Xu Fuzuo, Qulun [On xiqu] ZGXLJ 4: 243).

312 For example, see Qian Nanyang 44.

Indeed, the rulers of the Ming dynasty strengthened the system of the imperial examinations precisely in order to attract the elite class and to make them obediently serve their dynasty. For instance, the "eight-part essay" (baguwen) became the focus of the imperial examinations during the Ming dynasty. This prescribed and rigid form restricted examinees in the expression of their original ideas. The eight-part essay directly influenced the Ming style of writing (including that of nanxi³¹³), and the Ming system of imperial examinations profoundly impacted the spiritual state of Ming intellectuals.

Of course, in the early Ming, there were still some intellectuals writing nanxi scripts. However, they were no longer the talented men of writing societies. For these literati playwrights, creation was an individual activity, in general separated from theatrical practice. These intellectuals did not need to make a living from selling scripts and they did not like to mix with performers.

However, it is clear that writing societies were the primary creative organization during the Song and the Yuan dynasties, in both south and north China. The members of

313 When Xu Wei criticized The Perfume Pouch, he pointed out: "Writing nanxi in the style of the eight-part essay did not appear in the end of the Yuan, nor at the beginning of this dynasty. The evil method began in The Perfume Pouch." (Xu Wei, ZGXLJ 3: 243.)

writing societies, the talented men, wrote texts for nanxi, Yuan zaju, and a variety of storytelling and ballad singing forms. In nanxi scripts, the names of writing societies are sometimes indicated. So far, we have uncovered five names of writing societies directly involved in the creation of nanxi. These are: Guhang or Hangzhou, Jiushan, Yongjia, Wulin, and Jingxian.

Performers and Troupes

Generations of performers created the brilliant performing arts of xiqu, which have charmed innumerable audiences. However, most activities of these performers were not recorded, because society has looked down on performers through most of Chinese history.

Compared with Yuan zaju and chuanqi, accounts regarding nanxi performers are even more scarce. During the Yuan dynasty, the Brothel Collection, the earliest specialized document concerning xiqu performers, briefly introduced more than a hundred performers of Yuan zaju. During the Ming dynasty, a few literati, such as Pan Zhiheng (c. 1556-1622?), described in their writings the practices of chuanqi performers. Nevertheless, there are no such documents regarding nanxi performers except an item of account found in the Brothel Collection. Hence it is impossible to draw an

elaborate overall picture of the performers and troupes of nanxi. This section, then, can only sketch a little of what can be surmised concerning the performances of nanxi.

There is evidence to prove that female impersonation existed in nanxi. In First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, the dan, a female lead, was apparently played by a man. After Zhang Xie places first in the imperial examinations, his wife comes to the capital to look for him. Outside of Zhang Xie's mansion, she has the following dialogue with Zhang's steward and entrance guard:

Mo: Lady, what's the matter? Please speak out.

Dan: May I ask where I might find the mansion house of the new first place scholar?

Mo: Here is his temporary house. Ask the entrance guard for details.

Dan: I extend my greetings.

Jing: [towards the audience]
This is a fake lady.

...

Dan: I have come to see the first place scholar.

Jing: You want to see the first place scholar? If you wore an official uniform, I would report your arrival.

Dan: I'm a woman.

Jing: You are a woman! Why don't you bind

your feet?³¹⁴

The jing's lines suggest that in this play the dan is played by an actor.

In the early Ming dynasty, there were also female impersonators in nanxi. As discussed in Chapter Two of this study, Men Da, a secret policeman, arrested some actors from Wu because they played female roles. Nevertheless, it seems that, unlike in the Wu area, female impersonation was very unusual in the capital--Beijing--at that time.

The item of account found in the Brothel Collection indicates that women also performed in nanxi. Three nanxi actresses are introduced in the following passage:

Longlou Jing³¹⁵ and Danchi Xiu are both Jin Men'gao's daughters. They are very pretty, and specialize in nanxi. ... Later on, Furong Xiu, a native of Wuzhou,³¹⁶ sings nanxi and popular songs as well as those two beauties.³¹⁷

Unfortunately, this account does not specify what kind of role categories these three actresses portrayed. We are therefore unable to ascertain whether women acted the roles of men in nanxi, as they often did in Yuan zaju.

314 Qian Nanyang, comp. 160.

315 Here, the three actress seem to be called by their artistic names.

316 Wuzhou is located in modern Jinhua. See map.

317 Xia Tingzhi, ZGXLJ 2: 32.

There is no record relating to the organization of nanxi troupes. However, from the relevant information in nanxi scripts, we can infer the size of a nanxi troupe.

As pointed out in the preceding chapter, supporting role categories in nanxi, such as the mo, jing and tie, often played different characters in a play. Interestingly, the different characters played by the same role category do not simultaneously appear in the same chu. It is reasonable to conjecture then that most nanxi troupes only had one performer for each of its role categories.

In The Chenghua Edition of The White Rabbit, both Li Sanniang's father and uncle are played by the wai role category. These two characters do not meet even though the plot would seem at times to require it. For instance, the uncle is the matchmaker between Liu Zhiyuan and Li Sanniang,³¹⁸ but he does not attend their wedding hosted by her father. It appears that these two characters are played by the same actor so that they cannot be present on stage at the same time.

Similarly, in First Place Scholar Zhang Xie, both Shenghua, the prime minister's daughter, and Yefang, a maid, are played by the hou (or tie). The maid does not appear in the play until Shenghua dies. However, the context of this

³¹⁸ This plot is introduced to the audience by the father in his monologue (see Ming Chenghua ben baitu ji [The Ming dynasty Chenghua edition of The white rabbit] 12).

play shows that she is not a new maid and had served Shenghua before her death.³¹⁹

In the same play, the jing plays both a god and Grandmama Li. Before Zhang Xie's wife leaves for the capital to seek Zhang Xie, Grandpapa Li comes to the temple where she stays to see her off. Usually, Grandpapa Li is accompanied by Grandmama Li, but this time the Grandmama does not appear, probably because the jing is already on stage as a god. After these two characters pray in front of the god, Zhang Xie's wife says: "Grandpapa, thank you for coming! I will [go to your home to] say good bye to Grandmama." Then the jing makes a joke: "No need. I'm Grandmama myself."³²⁰ This line directly tells the audience that the same jing plays both the god and Grandmama Li.

Another apparent example of an actor playing more than one role can be seen in the fifth chu of Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career. Wanyan Shouma's father finds out that his son has fallen in love with an actress. He angrily orders his servant (played by an actor of the mo role category) to summon the actress' father (also played by an actor of the mo role category) to his mansion. After the servant exits and before the actress' father enters, there is a stage

319 Qian Nanyang, comp. 189.

320 Qian Nanyang, comp. 157.

direction: "The mo changes his disguise and then enters."³²¹
This stage direction suggests that there was only one mo in the production of this script; otherwise, the mo would not have to rush from one character to the other.

By the same token, in the sixteenth chu of The Yuan Edition of The Lute, the chou successively plays the district head, a beggar and a famine victim.³²² After the beggar exits and before the famine victim enters, there is a stage direction: "The chou changes his disguise and then enters."³²³

If the view that a nanxi troupe only had one performer for each of its role categories is tenable, we are able to further conjecture that a nanxi troupe consisted of, at the most, around ten people. As indicated in the preceding chapter, there were seven role categories in nanxi before the Ming dynasty, and a few new role categories were added during the era of transition from nanxi to chuanqi. It can be assumed that, for economic reasons, performers might have also played musical instruments and sung in the helping chorus in a nanxi troupe.

321 Qian Nanyang, comp. 233.

322 Jean Mulligan mistranslated this scene so that the district head (village head in Mulligan's translation) successively disguises himself as the beggar and the famine victim (see Jean Mulligan 128-133). The translator mixed up the chou and the character represented by this role category.

323 Qian Nanyang, ed., Yuan ben pipa ji jiaozhu (Collated and annotated Yuan dynasty edition of The Lute) 100-101.

Of course, the nanxi imperial court troupe was in a different situation. In the early Ming dynasty, there were thousands of performers in the court troupe, and some of these performers played nanxi.³²⁴ Non-palace troupes, obviously, did not have such luxurious conditions.

During the Yuan and the Ming dynasties, performers were considered outcasts. The laws of the Yuan dynasty prohibited performers from marrying ordinary people.³²⁵ In the early Ming dynasty, performers often had to wear a special style of clothing in daily life and were not allowed to walk in the middle of a road, but instead were required to travel on the sides; actresses were prohibited from wearing gold or silver ornaments and from wearing silk.³²⁶ The nanxi performers during the Yuan and the Ming dynasties had to follow these prohibitions and lived a restricted life.

Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career presents a picture of the life of performers from the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. Although this play does not directly describe a

³²⁴ Shen Guangren, Theatre Performance in the Ming Dynasty, diss., U of Hawaii, 1994 (Honolulu: U of Hawaii, 1994) 41-43.

³²⁵ For instance, see Sun Chongtao and Xu Hongtu, comp. and ed., Qinglou ji jianzhu (Notes and commentaries on The brothel collection) 13.

³²⁶ Xu Fuzuo, ZGXLJ 4: 243.

nanxi troupe,³²⁷ it is more or less related to nanxi performers. In the course of rewriting this play,³²⁸ the talented men of Hangzhou possibly added their own experience about performers (including those of nanxi) into the play, since they had a close relationship with them. It is therefore appropriate to use this play as a glimpse into the lives of performers at that time, as long as we do not use it as an historical record concerning nanxi.³²⁹

In Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career, the Wang family troupe wanders hither and thither performing to make living. Even when Wang Jinbang, who plays the leading roles, feels sick, she still must perform in order to feed the family. When local authorities order her to offer a private

327 Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career is a nanxi play. However, the performers described in this play are not those of nanxi. This play portrays a troupe in the Jin Kingdom. At that time, the Southern Song Kingdom and the Jin Kingdom were at war, and nanxi could not be brought from the south to the north.

328 This play was adapted from Yuan zaju, but the original was lost (See Liao Ben, "Nanxi Huanmen zidi cuo lishen yuanchu bei zaju tuikao [A study: the nanxi play--Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career was transplanted from the northern zaju].")

329 When discussing the instrumental accompaniment of nanxi, some scholars include some musical instruments mentioned by the characters in Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career (see Qian Nanyang 253; see also Zhang Geng, et al, 1: 422). I believe this inclusion is problematic because these musical instruments might have belonged to Yuan zaju rather than nanxi. As pointed out above, this play does not directly describe a nanxi troupe.

performance in their mansion house, the troupe has to abandon its public audiences and immediately fulfill its duty; otherwise, the troupe will be punished. The love between the actress and a young aristocrat is forbidden, and it leads to the troupe being driven out of the area. Simply put, despite the excellence of their art, these performers were often mistreated in daily life.

Audiences

Fragmentary and indirect materials indicate that nanxi once had a large audience that included members from various walks of life.

As mentioned in "The Spread of Nanxi" in Chapter Two of this study, Wang Huan, a love play about the title hero and a prostitute, was enthusiastically received in Hangzhou between the years 1268 and 1269:

... Wang Huan xiwen was in vogue in the capital,
... After watching [the performance of] this play,
the concubines of a warehouse officer all eloped.³³⁰

This account demonstrates that women attended nanxi performances at the end of the Southern Song dynasty. However, from this account, we are unable to ascertain

³³⁰ Liu Yiqing, Qiantang yishi (Incidents in Qiantang) qtd. in Hu Ji 59.

whether these women watched the popular nanxi play in a public or private place.

Another account from the Yuan dynasty narrates how a contemporary incident was written into a nanxi play and caused strong repercussions among audiences. Zu Jie, a powerful and corrupt Buddhist monk in Wenzhou, kept a beautiful woman in his temple. Soon, she became pregnant. To avoid disgrace, Zu Jie ordered Yu Sheng, the eldest son of one of his disciples, to marry her. The monk, however, maintained his relationship with her. Yu Sheng could not bear his neighbors' gossip, so he led his wife to escape. Zu then brought a false charge against Yu. After being tortured, Yu appealed to higher authorities but suffered more beating because of Zu's bribery. Yu decided to go to the capital to appeal for redress of the wrong. Zu ordered his servants to catch Yu's entire family and drown them. The authorities were bribed, and did not punish the monk for a long time.

People felt indignant and were afraid that Zu Jie would be unpunished. Somebody wrote this story into a xiwen play, and widely performed it. Later on, under public pressure, the authorities had Zu Jie killed in jail.³³¹

Of course, when Zhou Mi wrote this account, his attention focused on the incident itself rather than the nanxi play

³³¹ Zhou Mi, Guixin zazhi (Records of Guixin street), ed. Wu Qiming. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1988) 261-263.

about it. Nevertheless, his record provides the information that a large number of audiences saw this play. This suggests that mass audiences attended nanxi performances in public places during the Yuan dynasty in the Wenzhou area.

During the early Ming dynasty, nanxi plays were performed in the imperial court, and began to receive a royal audience. In Nanjing, the first emperor of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang, frequently required actors to present The Lute,³³² and also ordered officials of the court institution of music and dance to create innovations in the music of nanxi.³³³ In Beijing, Emperor Yingzong (the sixth emperor of the Ming dynasty), Zhu Qizhen, watched a performance given by nanxi actors from Suzhou, and then admitted them into his court troupe.³³⁴ Although the royal audience comprised only a small group of people, this special audience increased the legitimacy and public acceptance of nanxi.

Those literati who were fond of xiqu formed another special audience for nanxi that should be mentioned. Xia Tingzhi must have seen numerous xiqu performances in Hangzhou so that he could write the Brothel Collection, and introduce more than a hundred performers including three nanxi

³³² For details, see the section on "The Spread of Nanxi," Chapter 2.

³³³ For details, see the section on "Music," Chapter 4.

³³⁴ For details, see the section on "The Spread of Nanxi," Chapter 2.

actresses. Xu Wei was born in Zhejiang, and later he often traveled in Guangdong, Fujian and Jiangxi, the areas in which nanxi circulated. Xu had opportunities to see a large number of nanxi plays and then to write An Account of Nanxi, the earliest significant treatise on nanxi. The tendency to revise nanxi plays in the transition from nanxi to chuanqi also implies that a number of literati must have seen nanxi performances often, eventually involving them in the revision and alteration of this xiqu form.

It is possible that audience members freely entered and left performances during the course of watching a nanxi play, behaving just like audiences for Beijing opera during the Qing dynasty. The length of most nanxi plays suggests that a complete presentation might have taken several days. Few could stay and watch for so long. In nanxi, recapitulation is often used. The purpose of these recapitulations seems calculated to keep the latecomers informed of the background and the progression of a story; otherwise, these recapitulations would be simply repetitious.

CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As we have discussed, nanxi, the earliest xiqu form, originated at the latest in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, around the third decade of the twelfth century. This xiqu form was primarily circulated in the south and east of China, including Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Jiangsu, Jiangxi and other provinces; it also crossed the Yangtze River to reach Beijing, the northern capital. For more than three hundred years, nanxi attracted audiences that included people from diverse walks of life, from common people to literati to emperors.

At first, nanxi was a small-scale folk theater form. By the early thirteenth century at the latest, when First Place Scholar Zhang Xie came out, this form was synthesizing stories with song and dance in performances that were conventionalized. In other words, by the middle of the Southern Song dynasty, nanxi definitely possessed the generic characteristics of xiqu.

In the music of nanxi, vocal music plays a dominant role. Nanxi employs a joined-song structure, in which a large number of pre-existing gupai are organized in each play

into different aria sets. Originally, the gupai of nanxi were from southern music; after north and south China were united during the Yuan dynasty, nanxi began to incorporate northern gupai from Yuan zaju. The musical accompaniment of nanxi seems to have been simple, with an off-stage helping chorus often added to support the on-stage singing of dramatic characters.

In nanxi, all characters were classified into different role categories, primarily according to their genders, ages and personalities. In nanxi's early period, there were seven role categories; later on, several new role categories were added into this system. The specialization of performance techniques for each of these role categories might have been in the embryonic stage. In this conventional theater form, female impersonation existed; comic roles sometimes left their dramatic persona to address the audience and even to directly inform the audience of the actors' identities. Despite its simple and unadorned visual language, nanxi employed make-up, costumes, and properties, though it did not utilize sets on stage. Generations of performers created the performing arts of this xiqu form. Nevertheless, their activities and names have vanished in the long river of history. Only the names of three nanxi actresses from the Yuan dynasty have come down to us through a brief mention in a contemporary non-official document.

The majority of nanxi plays tell stories about love, marriage, or other domestic situations, though in its later period a few nanxi plays related political and military struggles. Nanxi constructed its dramatic action using an epical or chronological structure, allowing the plays freedom from the temporal limitations of the performance and the spatial restraints of the stage. In nanxi, the characters' language includes aria lyrics and speech passages. The former were usually employed to express the characters' emotion, although lyrics were also sometimes written to develop plots; by contrast, passages of speech were primarily used to develop plots. Because nanxi was a xiqu form originally popular in the folk tradition, most authors of nanxi plays before the end of the Yuan dynasty were anonymous, with authorship of some plays attributed to writing societies. The first non-anonymous nanxi play is Gao Ming's The Lute, written at the end of the Yuan dynasty.

From the end of the Yuan dynasty, the literati gradually participated in the creation of this xiqu form. This prompted nanxi to progressively lose the attributes of folk theater, so that it eventually evolved into chuanqi around the middle of the Ming dynasty. Becoming fashionable, then, this descendant of nanxi gradually extended throughout most of the entirety of China.

During the course of its expansion, chuanqi absorbed different dialectal usages and regional musical styles from the areas into which it spread, thus generating a number of subordinative genres, such as yiyangqiang and kunshangqiang or kunqu. These two principal subordinative genres of chuanqi exerted further influence on the xiqu forms that came after them.

Nanxi's impact on later xiqu forms can be seen in many respects. A number of names of nanxi qupai still exist in puxian xi, liyuan xi and kunqu. The off-stage helping chorus is used in chuanju and xiangju. The role category system of nanxi was inherited by chuanqi, through which it further influenced all xiqu forms that followed. The stories of The Lute, Thorn Hairpin, The White Rabbit and The Moon Pavilion, representative pieces of nanxi, have been widely performed in various regional xiqu forms. Some approaches or principles of nanxi, such as the making of moral judgments about characters and the presentation of time and space through conventional, stylized methodologies, have become integral parts of xiqu aesthetics.

For various historical reasons, nanxi was disdained for a long time and was not included in any official historiography or other formal records. Moreover, most nanxi play scripts were destroyed in wars or otherwise lost through

the centuries; some of them were altered arbitrarily by Ming literati. These revised or rewritten play scripts deviated from the original editions and were mistakenly regarded as later chuanqi texts for a long time. After the middle of the sixteenth century and before the twentieth century, few were aware that there had once been a xiqu form called nanxi. For a long historical period, the traditional view incorrectly considered that Yuan zaju was the forefather of chuanqi and other later xiqu forms as well.

The discovery of Volume 13,991 of the Great Collectanea of Yongle in 1920 had an epoch-making significance for studies of xiqu. The discovery of the three original nanxi play scripts preserved in the Collectanea offered the first concrete proof of nanxi's existence. First Place Scholar Zhang Xie especially verified the long tradition of this xiqu form. As an independent discipline, studies concerning nanxi began in the 1930's. Later on, a series of discoveries of additional original scripts greatly encouraged and promoted research on nanxi. Due to their diligent work, Chinese scholars such as Qian Nanyang have made great achievements in textual and literary studies concerning nanxi. Their work has supplied the reliable materials necessary for further studies in this discipline.

This dissertation has used the result of the textual studies conducted by previous scholars as much as possible,

but has treated nanxi as a theatrical form rather than solely as dramatic texts. In addition, I have viewed nanxi from the large perspective of the whole history of xiqu rather than from the limited sight of just one form. Nonetheless, due to the scarcity of written and visual materials, this study has drawn but a sketch of nanxi, and is unable to further elaborate a broad picture of this form. I anticipate that subsequent appearances of more archaeological relics, including written and even visual materials, will one day provide evidence to better judge the conjectures and hypotheses I have made in this dissertation.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF DYNASTIES

Xia dynasty	c. 2100-1600 BC
Shang dynasty	c. 1600-1100 BC
Zhou dynasty	1100-256 BC
Qin dynasty	221-206 BC
Han dynasty	206 BC-AD 220
Three Kingdoms	AD 220-280
Jin dynasty	265-420
Northern and Southern dynasties	420-589
Sui dynasty	581-618
Tang dynasty	618-907
Five dynasties	907-960
Northern Song dynasty	960-1127
Southern Song dynasty	1127-1279
Liao dynasty	907-1125
Jin dynasty	1115-1234
Yuan dynasty	1206-1368
Ming dynasty	1368-1644
Qing dynasty	1616-1911

APPENDIX B: LIST OF CHINESE WRITTEN CHARACTERS

This list includes Chinese theatrical, musical and literary terms, and play titles as well, but excludes the names of people, places and dynasties.

<u>baquwen</u>	八股文
<u>Baitu ji</u>	白兔記
<u>Baiyue ting</u>	拜月亭
<u>baixi</u>	百戲
<u>banqiang ti</u>	板腔體
<u>banshi</u>	板式
<u>bili</u>	筚篥
<u>cairen</u>	才人
<u>cangqu</u>	蒼鶻
<u>canjun</u>	參軍
<u>canjunxi</u>	參軍戲
<u>chanqduan</u>	唱段
<u>chenzi</u>	襯字
<u>chou</u>	丑
<u>chu</u>	出
<u>chuanju</u>	川劇
<u>chuanqi</u>	傳奇

<u>chuantong xi</u>	傳統戲
<u>ci</u>	詞
<u>cuyulin</u>	簇御林
<u>daiyanti</u>	代言體
<u>dan</u>	旦
<u>daqu</u>	大曲
<u>dashi diao</u>	大石調
<u>da yingxi</u>	大影戲
<u>diliuzi</u>	滴溜子
<u>dizi</u>	笛子
<u>Dongchuang ji</u>	東窗記
<u>duchang</u>	獨唱
<u>Dufu youchun</u>	杜甫遊春
<u>erchongchang</u>	二重唱
<u>fanxun</u>	反訓
<u>foqu</u>	佛曲
<u>fujing</u>	副淨
<u>fumo</u>	副末
<u>fuyan guanmu</u>	敷演關目
<u>fuding ge</u>	福清歌
<u>ge</u>	歌
<u>fuzhou ge</u>	福州歌
<u>geju</u>	歌劇
<u>gewuxi</u>	歌舞戲
<u>qongan ju</u>	公案戲

<u>gongche pu</u>	工尺譜
<u>gongdiao</u>	宮調
<u>gu</u>	鼓
<u>guanmu</u>	關目
<u>guansheng</u>	冠生
<u>guoqu</u>	過曲
<u>hangdang</u>	行當
<u>hangdang tizhi</u>	行當體制
<u>he</u>	合
<u>hechang</u>	合唱
<u>hou</u>	后
<u>huaci</u>	花詞
<u>huameixu</u>	畫眉序
<u>huangmei xi</u>	黃梅戲
<u>huangyinger</u>	黃鶯兒
<u>huangzhong gong</u>	黃鐘宮
<u>Huanmen zidi cuo lishen</u>	宦門子弟錯立身
<u>huawen</u>	話文
<u>huling shengsou</u>	鶻伶聲嗽
<u>Jiang Shi</u>	姜詩
<u>jie</u>	介
<u>Jinchai ji</u>	金釵記
<u>jing</u>	淨
<u>Jingchai ji</u>	荆釵記
<u>jingju</u>	京劇

<u>jingxi</u>	京戲
<u>jinsheng</u>	巾生
<u>Jinyin ji</u>	金印記
<u>juzhong</u>	劇種
<u>kejie</u>	科介
<u>kaichang mo bai</u>	開場末白
<u>kunqu</u>	昆曲
<u>kunshanqiang</u>	昆山腔
<u>Lanhua ji</u>	蘭花記
<u>laodan</u>	老旦
<u>lianqu ti</u>	聯曲體
<u>Lin Zhaode</u>	林招得
<u>liyuan</u>	梨園
<u>liyuan xi</u>	梨園戲
<u>luo</u>	鑼
<u>meixiang</u>	梅香
<u>minjian xiaoxi</u>	民間小戲
<u>Ming feng ji</u>	鳴鳳記
<u>Ming-Qing chuanqi</u>	明清傳奇
<u>mo</u>	末
<u>moni</u>	末泥
<u>motu chahui</u>	抹土搽灰
<u>Muyang ji</u>	牧羊記
<u>nan bei he tao</u>	南北合套
<u>nanlü gong</u>	南呂宮

<u>nanqu</u>	南曲
<u>nanqu xiwen</u>	南曲戲文
<u>nanxi</u>	南戲
<u>nan xiwen</u>	南戲文
<u>pipa</u>	琵琶
<u>Pipa ji</u>	琵琶記
<u>po</u>	破
<u>puxian xi</u>	莆仙戲
<u>qian</u>	虔
<u>qupai</u>	曲牌
<u>qupo</u>	曲破
<u>quwen</u>	曲文
<u>rou kuilei</u>	肉傀儡
<u>Sanchakou</u>	三岔口
<u>sanchongchang</u>	三重唱
<u>sanqu</u>	散曲
<u>sanxu</u>	散序
<u>Shaouou ji</u>	殺狗記
<u>shang diao</u>	商調
<u>sheng</u>	生
<u>shuang diao</u>	雙調
<u>shuhui</u>	書會
<u>Shuihu ji</u>	水滸記
<u>shuobai</u>	說白
Song <u>ci</u>	宋詞

Song-Yuan <u>nanxi</u>	宋元南戲
Song-Yuan <u>xiwen</u>	宋元戲文
Song <u>zaju</u>	宋雜劇
Tang <u>shi</u>	唐詩
Tang-Song <u>chuanqi</u>	唐宋傳奇
<u>taoshu</u>	套數
<u>tie</u>	貼
<u>timu</u>	題目
<u>wai</u>	外
<u>Wang Huan</u>	王煥
<u>Wang Kui</u>	王魁
<u>weisheng</u>	尾聲
Wenzhou <u>zaju</u>	溫州雜劇
<u>wu</u>	巫
<u>xiachangshi</u>	下場詩
<u>xiandai xi</u>	現代戲
<u>xiangju</u>	湘劇
<u>Xiangnanq ji</u>	香囊記
<u>xianlü gong</u>	仙呂宮
<u>xiao</u>	簫
<u>xiao</u>	小
<u>xiaodan</u>	小旦
<u>xiaosheng</u>	小生
<u>Xiao Suntu</u>	小孫屠
<u>xiaowai</u>	小外

<u>xiepisheng</u>	鞋皮生
<u>xiqu</u>	戲曲
<u>xiwen</u>	戲文
<u>Xunqin ji</u>	尋親記
<u>xushiti</u>	敘事體
<u>yinxi</u>	引戲
<u>yinzi</u>	引子
Yongjia <u>xiqu</u>	永嘉戲曲
Yongjia <u>zaju</u>	永嘉雜劇
<u>you</u>	優
Yuan <u>zaju</u>	元雜劇
<u>yue diao</u>	越調
<u>Yueli ji</u>	躍鯉記
<u>yiyangqiang</u>	弋陽腔
<u>za</u>	雜
<u>zaju</u>	雜劇
<u>Zhang Xie zhuangyuan</u>	張協狀元
<u>Zhaoshi guer</u>	趙氏孤兒
<u>Zhao zhennü</u>	趙貞女
<u>Zhao zhennü Cai erlang</u>	趙貞女蔡二郎
<u>zhe</u>	折
<u>zheng</u>	箏
<u>zheng gong</u>	正宮
<u>zhiweisheng</u>	雉尾生
<u>zhonglü gong</u>	中呂宮

<u>zhongqing</u>	中淨
<u>zhuanggu</u>	裝孤
<u>Zhuanyuan Zhang Xie zhuan</u>	狀元張叶傳
<u>zhugongdiao</u>	諸宮調
<u>zhuyingyaohong</u>	燭影搖紅
<u>Zhu Yingtai</u>	祝英台
<u>zibao jiamen</u>	自報家門

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