

Chinese Export Paintings of the Qing Period in The British Library Volume

第
陸
卷

大英圖書館特藏
中國清代外銷畫精華

王次澄 吳芳思 宋家紐 盧慶濱 趙雲
André Lo Song Jiaqi Wang Tai-Cheng Frances Wood

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Volume VI

Andrew Lo Song Jiayu Wang Tzi-Cheng Frances Wood

閱覽



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十二 戲劇組畫

12. Paintings of Scenes from Drama





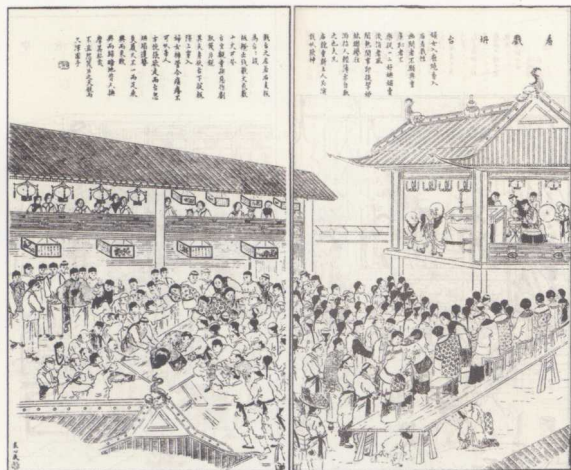
演出傳奇隨意唱 流管清絲韻最長

——戲劇組畫概述

盧慶濱

這組戲劇組畫共36幅，是1806年左右與一批外銷畫作同時為東印度公司圖書館所收藏，1982年轉歸大英圖書館。專家們認定它們是1800—1805年（嘉慶五年至十年）的作品。^① 這36幅戲劇組畫之劇目及其故事背景時代涵蓋頗廣，可分為春秋時代：由基射叔、崔子弑齊君、齊王哭殿；秦末：項王別姬；漢代：昭君出塞、誤斬姚奇、漁女刺驥；三國時代：三戰呂布、華容釋曹、義釋嚴顏、單刀赴會、威逼魏主；唐代：薛父取璽、李白和番、克用借兵、回書見父；五代：斬四門、匡胤盤殿；宋代：五郎救弟、轅門斬子、琵琶詞、王朝結拜、包公打鑾、醉打山門、醉打門神、擒一丈青、賣皮絃、金蓮挑簾、瘋僧罵相；元代：射花雲；明代：建文打車、酒樓戲鳳、遇吉罵闖、貞娥刺虎；清代：菜刀記。另有“周清成親”一齣戲，時代背景待考。

這組畫的風格，也屬於工筆一類，每一幅畫傳達的是一齣戲的一個場景。在畫面下方正中中間，書有劇目，但場景中角色名稱則闕如。人物的服飾及桌椅、砌末等，畫工十分細緻，然而各武將面部化妝比較簡單，沒有勾臉。



良心繪版畫，載《點石齋畫報》第四集下，第775頁。

The Stage, Late Qing period. Illustration by Genxin in *Dianshizhai Huabao* (Illustrated magazine from the Dianshi Studio), fourth series, 775.

36幅畫所代表的36齣戲的劇種，則不易一一說明，蓋因明清時期廣東戲劇發展、融合與消長頗為複雜。弋陽腔、昆腔在明代已傳入廣東，而高腔、京腔則在清初相繼傳入。雍正年間出現本地藝人組成的戲班，聚集於廣州府題扇橋演出，唱的是“一唱眾和，蠻音雜陳”的廣腔。

乾隆年間，隨着廣

州對外貿易的興盛，外省戲來粵者日眾，包括徽劇、昆劇、贛劇、湘劇、豫劇、桂劇、秦腔等戲班，與本地班對立，統稱為外江班，於乾隆二十四年（1759），在廣州創建粵省外江梨園會館。外江班帶來的聲腔，除高腔、昆腔以外，多屬梆子、亂彈諸腔。本地班向外江班汲取經驗，藝術漸臻成熟，並逐漸形成自己的特色，至嘉慶、道光間，已與外江班各樹一幟。^②

咸豐、同治年間遊幕廣東的俞洵慶，在其《荷廊筆記》中，介紹19世紀初期和中期廣東戲劇的外江班和本地班如下：

嘉慶季年，粵東嶺南李氏，家蓄雛伶一部，延吳中曲師教之，舞態歌喉，皆極一時之選，工昆曲、雜劇，關目節奏，咸依古本。咸豐初，尚有老伶能演《紅梨記》、《一文錢》諸院本。其後轉相教授，樂部漸多，統名為外江班。距今數十年，何戲老去，笛板飄零（按：何戲為唐代長慶間著名樂人），班內子弟，悉非舊人。康昆命琵琶，已染邪聲（按：康昆命，指文人康海（1475—1541），彈奏琵琶，自比俳優），不能復奏大雅之音矣。猶目為外江班者，沿其名爾。設有梨園會館，為諸伶聚集之所，凡城中官宴、賽神，皆係外江班承值。

其由粵中曲師所教，而多在郡邑、鄉落演劇者，謂之本地班，專工亂彈、秦腔及角觥之戲，腳色甚多，戲具衣飾極炫麗，伶人之有姿首聲技者，每年工值，多至數千金。各班之高下，一年一定，即以諸伶工值多寡，分其甲乙。班之著名者，東阡西陌，應接不暇。伶人終歲居巨舸之中，以赴各鄉之招，不得休息，惟三伏盛暑，始一停絃，謂之散班，設有吉慶公所……與外江班各樹一幟。

逐日演戲，皆有整本，整本者，全本也。其事情連串，足演一日之長，然曲文說白，均極鄙俚，又不考事實，不講關目，架虛梯空，全行臆造，或竊取演義小說中古人姓名，變易事跡，或襲其事跡，改換姓名，顛倒錯亂，悖理不情，令人不可究詰。^③

俞氏將兩班的唱腔、曲文，演出特色、地區，及其轉變、消長等作了概略敘述。似乎外江班原以“古雅”吸引城市觀眾；而本地班以“通俗”流



行於鄉間阡陌之間。道光時廣東梅縣人楊懋建在《夢華瑣簿》中，則更明確指出兩班的優劣：

廣州樂部分爲二，曰外江班，曰本地班。外江班皆外來妙選，聲色伎藝並皆佳妙……本地班但工技擊，以人爲戲。所演故事，類多不可究詰，言已無文，事尤不經。又每日爆竹煙火，埃塵漲天，城市比屋，回祿可虞。賢宰官視民如傷，久中厲禁，故僅許赴鄉村搬演。鳴金吹角，目眩耳聾。然服飾侈，每登場金翠迷離，如七寶樓臺，令人不可逼視。雖京師歌樓，無其華靡。^④

其實清初以來，廣東戲的外江班和本地班常處於較量狀態，同時也相互融合，如：兩班同臺演出聲腔相同的戲碼；外江班和本地班共同參與慈善活動等。但總的戲劇情勢是，外江班在廣州、佛山和粵東的某些鄉鎮佔有壓倒性的優勢；而本省各劇種的戲班則佔有廣州以外的廣闊鄉鎮的戲臺，形成了本地班以鄉鎮爲基地包圍大城鎮的格局。^⑤惟乾嘉時代，幾乎可確定廣州的劇壇基本是外江班的天下，從以下所列廣州粵省外江梨園會館的碑文，得見廣州乾隆和嘉慶時期外江班的興盛風貌：

1. 廣州建造會館碑記 (乾隆二十七年)(1762)，記載15個戲班名稱。
2. 廣州不知名碑記 (乾隆三十一年)(1766)，原碑文字有所損缺，碑文記有集唐、華合、集湘、洋行、姑蘇紅雪5個戲班捐錢數目。
3. 廣州外江梨園會館碑記 (乾隆四十五年)(1780)，記載15個戲班名稱。
4. 廣州重修梨園會館碑記 (乾隆五十六年)(1791)，記載17個戲班名稱。
5. 廣州梨園會館上會碑記 (乾隆五十六年)(1791)，記載湖南21個，姑蘇(昆劇) 14個，安徽7個，江西5個，共47個戲班。
6. 廣州重修聖帝金身碑記 (嘉慶五年)(1800)，記載5個戲班名稱。
7. 廣州重修會館碑記 (嘉慶十年)(1805)，記載6個戲班名稱。
8. 廣州重修會館各殿碑記 (嘉慶十年)(1805)，捐金重修者有3個戲班，上會銀者有7個戲班。^⑥

由以上資料顯示，乾隆五十六年 (1791)，廣州共有47個外江班，當爲頂峰時期。再者，據載1793年12月19日，兩廣總督等高級官員曾在廣州河南的館舍園林中以劇宴招待英國馬戛爾尼 (Macartney) 使團，當時所僱用的戲班也是特別派人前往南京重金請來的。^⑦

本畫冊的36幅水彩畫，爲1800年至1805年所繪，在時間上正是外江班之頂盛時期稍後，從上述1800—1805年的第6、7、8項碑文中所記載的戲班中，剔去重複的戲班名字之後，最少有12個外江班。就廣州戲劇的發展趨勢推想，大英圖書館的戲劇組畫所呈現的劇種可能大部分是外地的劇目。

爲了瞭解戲劇組畫是否爲外地劇目，可將同時代的外地戲劇目和廣東

戲劇目做一比對，或許能得到進一步的概念。僅以北京當時曾演出的劇目作品爲參照對象，結果發現至少有十一齣的戲劇內容與外銷畫的戲劇內容是相近的，如《消寒新詠》(1794) 與組畫 Add. Or. 2081 的“建文打車”；《日下看花記》(1803) 演員經常演出的《出塞》、《琵琶》、《弑齊》、《挑簾》、《戲鳳》、《皮絃》、《刺虎》與組畫 Add. Or. 2048 “昭君出塞”、Add. Or. 2049 “琵琶詞”、Add. Or. 2064 “崔子弑齊君”、Add. Or. 2072 “金蓮挑簾”、Add. Or. 2076 “酒樓戲鳳”、Add. Or. 2079 “賣皮絃”、Add. Or. 2082 “貞娥刺虎”等；《聽春新詠》(1810) 中最熱門的《殺四門》、《刺梁》、《盤殿》與組畫 Add. Or. 2071 “斬四門”、Add. Or. 2078 “漁女刺驢”、Add. Or. 2083 “匡胤盤殿”等，都是大同小異的劇情。^⑧

由於缺乏嘉慶時期廣州本地班的詳細劇目，未能做一可靠的直接比較，只能根據《中國戲曲志·廣東卷》所列的劇目相比對，惟此書所載的一部分劇目準確上演的年份頗難考核，所以比較的結果僅能供參考。此志中共有9個與戲劇組畫相近的劇目，如：《昭君出塞》、《秦香蓮》、《沙陀國》、《齊王求將》、《五郎救弟》、《李三娘》、《三下南唐》、《刺梁冀》和《轅門斬子》等，與組畫中的“昭君出塞”、“琵琶詞”、“克用借兵”、“齊王哭殿”、“五郎救弟”、“回書見父”、“斬四門”、“漁女刺驢”、“轅門斬子”等，如出一轍。^⑨

在資料缺乏的情況之下，我們目前不能完全確定大英圖書館戲劇組畫的劇種，但依據以上的說明，其多數是屬於外江班所演的戲碼成分比較高。再者，從目前所掌握的資料，我們亦無從說明是屬於外來的哪些戲種，因此，在解說各圖的內容時，只能依據畫面，敘述大概的情節。

36幅戲劇組畫的風格當與中國傳統的戲曲畫有所關聯。中國戲曲方面的形象資料，簡略言之，包括宋代戲曲畫，金代戲曲石刻綫畫，元代的戲曲壁畫、雜劇磚雕和石刻戲曲畫，明代的戲曲版畫，清代名伶傳真肖像、戲曲燈畫、扮相戲譜和戲齣年畫等。此中可分爲兩類：一類是繪者依據劇情想像繪製的，如戲曲版畫；一類是如實地描摹戲劇舞臺場景的寫真畫，如戲曲年畫。王樹村在《戲齣年畫》中曾解說：

戲曲版畫從概念上說，多指古代戲曲文學書籍中的插圖而言。戲曲版畫每一幅只表現戲齣的某一個場面或情節，畫面上的人物造型與裝扮也不同於戲曲舞臺上的角色行當。故單一而觀，只是一般的故事插圖，並不表現戲曲舞臺上的表演藝術。戲齣年畫則以表現戲曲舞臺上的表演藝術爲目的，即使畫面上畫的是真山真水，活馬實車，從人物的裝扮和身段表情，也可看出那是在演戲。^⑩

王樹村對戲曲文學書籍中版畫的分析未必完全正確，因爲我們也可以



在這種讀物中找到實際舞臺演出場面的描繪。劉龍田刊本《重刻原本題評音釋西廂記》中的《佛殿奇逢》場面描繪，就是“演出場景的真實再現”，但總的來說，他的見解基本上是對的。^①

36幅的戲曲組畫是表現舞臺的畫作，即屬於戲齣年畫和扮相戲譜的系統。以戲曲為題材的年畫，盛行於清中葉以後，主要產地有河北楊柳青、江蘇桃花塢等。楊柳青的戲曲年畫，“有乾隆年間的《百花公主》、《辛安驛》、《瑞草園》等數種，取材戲曲故事，人物刻畫與舞臺扮相有相近處，但由於受了明代戲曲劇本版畫插圖的傳統影響，多增添山水、樓臺花木等背景。嘉慶、道光以後作品漸多，至光緒年間最為興盛。其畫風也有明顯改變，不但題材是戲曲的，而且演員的身段工架、舞臺場面調度、服飾、臉譜以及砌末等，幾乎都依照舞臺演出如實地描繪”。^②

扮相戲譜方面，則主要為流傳下來的清代宮廷戲曲畫，共有四種。故宮博物院藏有以下三種：

1.《性理精義》兩冊，共100幅。絹本，工筆設色。每幅約高40釐米，寬28釐米。畫的內容有“群英會”、“打金枝”、“罵曹”等44齣戲。每齣戲畫兩幅，間或有畫四至六幅的。每幅畫劇中主要角色一人，全身。畫面下角書劇中人物名。每齣戲的一組畫中，其第一幅上角寫明劇目。

2.《戲齣畫冊》，四冊，共160幅。絹本，工筆設色。每幅約高56.5釐米，寬56釐米。畫有近百齣戲，每幅畫為一齣戲的一個場面，角色多寡不

等。下角寫明劇目。劇中人物名分別寫於靠近角色的畫面空隙處。

3.《清人戲齣冊》，一冊，共15幅。絹本，工筆設色。每幅約高56釐米，寬56.5釐米。每幅畫為一齣戲的一個場面，角色多寡不等，共畫14齣戲。畫下角寫明劇目。劇中人物名分別寫於靠近角色的畫面空隙處。

另外，還有一種戲曲人物畫，原存升平署，辛亥革命後從宮中流散出來，現今中國藝術研究院戲曲研究所、國家圖書館、首都圖書館及私家均有收藏。其數量不詳，當有數百幅。絹本，工筆設色。每幅約高27釐米，寬21.5釐米，共畫近百齣戲。每齣戲畫二至八幅不等，每幅畫繪的是一個角色的大半身。畫面上角書劇中人物名。每齣戲的一組畫中，其第一幅上角寫明劇目，下端有一行小字：“穿戴臉兒俱照此樣。”

上述各種戲曲畫均無作者名款和作畫年月。依畫的劇目查考，乃是道光(1821—1850)、咸豐(1851—1861)以來北京的徽班常演的戲碼。據升平署檔案資料顯示，咸豐年間這些戲劇始入宮廷，在此之前，宮中戲班演出只限於昆腔和弋腔。由此推論，畫冊也當是咸豐以後陸續畫成的。從畫的風格判斷，應出於內務府如意館畫士們之手。^③

大英圖書館所藏的36幅1800—1805年繪製的戲劇水彩組畫，比上述清代的宮廷戲曲畫早了五十年左右，可視為清代宮廷戲曲畫的先驅。由於同一時代的戲齣年畫保存下來的不多，所以這組畫甚為珍貴，其研究價值不容小覷。

① 阿奇爾(Mildred Archer):《印度事務部圖書館中的公司繪畫》(英文版),第254頁。

② 中國戲曲志編輯委員會、《中國戲曲志·廣東卷》編輯委員會編:《中國戲曲志·廣東卷》,第71頁;賴伯疆:《廣東戲曲簡史》,第84頁。

③ 梁鼎芬等修:《番禺縣續志》卷四四,第625頁。

④ 賴伯疆:《廣東戲曲簡史》,第105頁;張次溪編纂:《清代燕都梨園史料》,第350頁。

⑤ 賴伯疆:《廣東戲曲簡史》,第112頁。

⑥ 見中國戲曲志編輯委員會、《中國戲曲志·廣東卷》編輯委員會編:《中國戲曲志·廣東卷》,第448—450頁。

⑦ 卡蘭馬-炳(J. L. Cranmer-Byng):《一個到中國的使團:1793—1794年馬戛爾尼勳爵謁見乾隆皇帝日記》(英文版),第203頁。

⑧ 張次溪編纂:《清代燕都梨園史料》,第1005、75、73、66、86—87、70、83、197、206、198、161頁。

⑨ 中國戲曲志編輯委員會、《中國戲曲志·廣東卷》編輯委員會編:《中國戲曲志·廣東卷》,第138、147、128、124、114、124、109、133、114頁。

⑩ 王樹村:《戲齣年畫》,第18頁。

⑪ 見徐燕琳:《明代劇論與畫論》,第290頁。

⑫ 中國大百科全書總編輯委員會《戲曲曲藝》編輯委員會等輯:《中國大百科全書·戲曲曲藝》,第295頁。

⑬ 中國大百科全書總編輯委員會《戲曲曲藝》編輯委員會等輯:《中國大百科全書·戲曲曲藝》,第294—295頁。



The dramatic piece composed, players sing to their delight; the flowing flutes and pure stringed instruments are most melodious — Paintings of scenes from drama

Andrew Lo

There are altogether thirty-six paintings in this group of paintings of scenes from drama. It came into the collection of the Library of the Honourable East India Company around 1806 with other export paintings, and the British Library in 1982, and experts are of the opinion that they were painted between 1800 to 1805.^① The titles of these dramatic scenes and the stories cover a broad historical period, and they can be divided into the following periods:

Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC): Yang Youji shoots Dou Yueshu, Cui Shu assassinates the Duke of Qi, The King of Qi cries in his palace.

Late Qin period (221-206 BC): The hegemon Xiang Yu bids farewell to his concubine.

Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 220): The Illustrious Consort goes to the frontier,

Executing Yao Qi by mistake, The fisherman's daughter assassinates Liang Ji.

Three Kingdoms period (220-280): Three battle Lü Bu, Releasing Cao Cao at Huarong Path, Releasing Yan Yan for the sake of righteousness, Attending a banquet with a single halberd, Forcing the King of Wei.

Tang dynasty (618-907): Bidding farewell to father and taking the imperial seal, Li Bai appeases the nomads, Li Keyong lends his troops, Bringing a letter back to see father.

Five Dynasties period (907-960): Cutting down generals at the four gates, Zhao Kuangyin questioned at the palace.

Song dynasty (960-1279): Fifth-son saves his younger brother, Executing his son outside headquarters, The lyrics accompanied by the *pipa* lute, Wang Chao swears an oath of brotherhood, Lord Bao smashes the imperial carriage, Smashing the temple gate while drunk, Beating Doorgod Jiang while drunk, Capturing Ten-foot-green (Hu Sanniang), Selling leather bowstrings, Pan Jinlian lifts the door screen, The mad monk scolds the prime minister.

Yuan dynasty (1279-1368): Shooting at Hua Rong.

Ming dynasty (1368-1644): The Jianwen emperor put into a cart for convicts, Teasing the phoenix at the tavern, Yu Ji scolds the Charging King, Fei Zhen'e assassinates Li Hu.

Qing dynasty (1644-1911): The kitchen knife.

Period to be ascertained: Zhou Qing gets married.

The paintings are drawn in the traditional Chinese *gongbi* style, characterised by fine brushwork and close attention to detail, each painting depicting one scene from a work in Chinese drama. At the bottom centre of each painting, there is the

title of the play, but the names of the characters are not given. The costumes, and stage props, such as chairs and tables, are painted in fine detail, but the makeup on the faces of the military figures is relatively simple, and there are no painted faces.

It is not possible to distinguish the different regional operas these thirty-six paintings represent. This is because in the Ming and Qing periods, the development of opera in Guangdong Province was quite complicated, with various strains of development and fusion. In the Ming dynasty, the Yiyang and Kunshan modes of singing had already spread to Guangdong Province, while the High style and Beijing styles of singing entered in the early Qing period. In the Yongzheng period (1723-1735), there appeared opera troupes formed by local artists, giving performances in the Guangdong style of singing at Inscribing Fan Bridge of Canton City, where "one player sang, and other harmonised, and where southern barbaric sounds filled the air."

In the Qianlong period (1736-1795), along with the flourishing of foreign commerce, many troupes from other provinces came to Canton, including opera from Anhui, Kunshan, Jiangxi, Hunan, Henan, Guilin and Clapper opera, etc. There were lumped together and referred to as "troupes from the outer rivers" (areas around Yangzi River and the northern provinces), in opposition to the local troupes, and in the twenty-fourth year of the Qianlong period (1759), they formed the Guangdong Guild Hall of Actors from Outer Provinces. The styles of singing that they brought to Canton mostly belonged to various styles of clapper opera, besides the High style and Kunshan style. The local troupes gained from the experience of these outer troupes, and their art gradually matured and developed their own characteristics. By the Jiaqing (1796-1820) and Daoguang (1821-1850) periods, they were on an equal position with the outer troupes, each with its own characteristics.^②

Yu Xunqing, who went to Canton to work as a secretary for an official in the Xianfeng (1851-1861) and Tongzhi (1862-1874) periods, describes the outside and local troupes of Guangdong in the early and mid nineteenth century as follows:

In the late years of the Jiaqing period (1796-1820), Mr Li, a salt merchant of Canton, kept a troupe of young actors at home. He employed singing teachers from Suzhou to teach them, and their dance gestures and singing became the best of their times, and they were proficient in the Kunqu style and the *zaju* style. The plots and rhythms all followed the old editions. In the early Xianfeng period (1851-1861), there were still old actors who could



perform various *zaju* and *chuanqi* drama such as *Hongli Ji* (The red pear) and *Yiwenqian* (One cash). Later, they taught others in turn, and the number of troupes increased, and they are together called the “outer river troupes.” Several decades have passed, and singers comparable to He Kan, the famous musician from the Changqing era of the Tang dynasty (821-824), have grown old, and the flute and clapper players have become scarce. The players in the troupes are all new people. The *pipa* lutes, equal in charm to the one played by the scholar Kang Hai (1475-1541), who compared himself to an entertainer, have taken on unorthodox sounds, and cannot perform grand and proper tunes anymore. They are still called outer river troupes, and this is following in name only. There is an Actor’s Guild Hall where the players meet, and in the city, the performances given at official banquets and performed in honour of the gods are all done by these outer river troupes.

Those who are taught by singing masters from Guangdong Province, and who perform mostly in the prefectures and villages, are called local troupes. They specialize in various styles of clapper opera and acrobatic skills. There are many types of roles, and the stage props and costumes are dazzling and beautiful. Actors who have the looks, voice and skills may make up to several thousand taels of silver each year. The ranking of these troupes are done once a year, and this is done by calculating the salaries of the actors. Famous troupes are invited here and there, without pause. The actors stay in huge boats throughout the year to go to various districts. They do not get any rest except during the hot days of summer. Then the music stops, and this is referred to as “dispersing the troupe.” They have set up the Auspicious Celebration Guild Hall... They are equal to the external troupes, and each has its own characteristics.

Their performances run for the whole day, and there are complete performances, meaning complete operas. The events are linked together, and are long enough for a day’s performance. However, the lyrics and dialogue are crude and vulgar. No attention is paid to historical accuracy or plot structure. They are completely fictional, or they might steal the names of ancient characters from historical novels and change the exploits, or they might copy the exploits and change the names. Everything is turned upside down and does not make sense, and one cannot figure out the truth of the matter.^③

Yu Xunqing has given us a summary of the singing style, lyrics, performance characteristics, area and development of these two different types of troupes. It would seem that the outer troupes attracted the audience in the city with their old elegance, while the local troupes were well-received in the local districts with their popular and lowbrow style. In the Daoguang period (1821-1850), Yang Maojian, from Mei District, Guangdong Province, stated even more clearly in his *Menghua Suo Bu* (Notes on a dream of splendour) the differences between the two

types of troupes.

The opera troupes in Canton are divided into the outer troupes and the local troupes. The players in the outside troupes are all marvellous selections from the outside provinces, and they are wonderful in voice, looks and technique... Those in the local troupes are only good at martial arts, and the actor dominates the play. The sources of many of the stories they perform cannot be fathomed. The lyrics and dialogue are not polished, and the events are especially absurd. Each day, dust fills the sky from firecrackers and fireworks, and there is a danger of fires in the city, because of the closely packed buildings. The virtuous officials worried for the people, and for a long time, have prohibited these troupes from performing, and they are only allowed to perform in villages. Playing loud musical instruments, the eyes are dazzled, and the ears become deaf. However, the costumes are lavish, and each time the players come on stage, the gold and blue dazzle the eyes, like a seven-storey precious tower, which one cannot inspect at close range. Even the opera halls in the capital cannot match their opulence.^④

From the early Qing period, the outer troupes and the local troupes were often in competition, and at the same time, learned from each other. For example, they might perform operas with the same singing style on the same stage, or participate in the same charity performances. However, the general situation was that the outside troupes had a dominant position in Canton, Foshan and some towns, while the local troupes, also comprised of several types of opera, occupied the stages in the numerous towns outside Canton, resulting in their town and village base surrounding the city and large towns.^⑤ In the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods, however, we can almost be certain that the outside troupes dominated the operatic arena in Canton City. From the inscriptions on commemorative steles of the Outside Opera Troupes Guild Hall in Canton, we can appreciate the flourishing outside troupes in Canton of those periods.

1. Stele inscription of 1762, commemorating the building of the Guild Hall, Canton, which records the names of fifteen troupes.

2. Stele inscription of 1766, Canton. The title is not clear because some of the characters are missing. This records the sums donated by the five troupes of Tang Ensemble, Chinese Ensemble, Hunan Ensemble, Foreign Brokerage Firms, and Red Snow from Suzhou.

3. Stele inscription of 1780, of the Outside Rivers Opera Troupes Guild Hall, Canton, which records the names of fifteen troupes.

4. Stele inscription of 1791, commemorating the refurbishment of the Opera Troupes Guild Hall, Canton, which records the names of seventeen troupes.

5. Stele inscription of 1791, commemorating membership of the Opera Troupes Guild, Canton, which records twenty-one troupes from Hunan Province, fourteen Kunqu troupes from Suzhou, seven troupes from Anhui Province, and



five troupes from Jiangxi Province, totalling forty-seven troupes.

6. Stele inscription of 1800, commemorating the re-gilding of the Sagely Emperor (Guan Yu), Canton, which records the names of five troupes.

7. Stele inscription of 1805, commemorating the refurbishment of the Guild Hall, which records the names of six troupes.

8. Stele inscription of 1805, commemorating the refurbishment of the halls in the Guild Hall, and includes the donations from three troupes for refurbishment, and the guild subscriptions of seven troupes.^⑥

From the material above, we can see that in the fifty-sixth year of the Qianlong period (1791), there were forty-seven outer troupes in Canton, and this was probably a peak period. Again, on 19 December 1793, the Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces and other high officials put on an opera banquet in the garden of the accommodation halls in the Henan area of Canton City for the Macartney Embassy, and it is recorded that they had specially sent someone to go to Nanjing to employ a troupe there.^⑦

Our thirty-six watercolours were painted between 1800 and 1805, just some years after the peak period of 1791 of the outer troupes in Canton. From the sixth, seventh and eighth stele inscriptions between 1800 and 1805, we can see that there were at least twelve outer troupes during the period, after discounting troupe names that appear more than once. From the general development of opera in Canton, the majority of the British Library paintings probably depict plays performed by outer troupes.

In order to have an idea of whether the paintings are of plays from other provinces, we can compare our titles with those from other provinces and local plays of the Guangdong area. First, in comparing our plays with those performed in Beijing of the same period, we find that at least eleven have a similar content. For example, in *Xiaohan Xinyong* (New Poems to get rid of the cold), there is the play “The Jianwen emperor put into a cart for convicts,” which we have in Add. Or. 2081; In *Rixia Kanhua Ji* (Admiring the flowers in the capital) of 1803, the actors often perform the plays “[The Illustrious Consort] goes to the frontier”, “[The lyrics accompanied by] the *Pipa* instrument,” “[Cui Shu] assassinates the Duke of Qi,” “[Pan Jinlian] lifts the door screen,” “Teasing the Phoenix [at the tavern],” “[Selling] leather bowstrings,” and “[Fei Zhen’e] assassinates Li Hu,” and we have similar plays in Add. Or. 2048, 2049, 2064, 2072, 2076, 2079, and 2082, etc. In *Tingchun Xinyong* (New poems on listening to spring melodies) of 1810, the popular “Cutting down generals at the four gates”, “[The fisherman’s daughter] assassinates Liang Ji” and “[Zhao Kuangyin] questioned at the palace” probably have a similar content to those plays in Add. Or. 2071, 2078 and 2083.^⑧

Because we do not have detailed information of the names of local operas performed in Canton in the Jiaqing period, we cannot make a direct comparison. We can make a comparison with the titles listed in *Zhongguo Xiqu Zhi*:

Guangdong Juan (A history of Chinese opera: Guangdong Province), but the earliest dates of some of the operas are difficult to ascertain, so the results can only be rough. In this work, we find that there are nine operas similar in content to those in our paintings. These are “The Illustrious Consort goes to the frontier,” “Qin Xianglian,” “Shatuo Kingdom,” “The King of Qi seeks generals,” “Fifth Son saves his brother,” “Li Sanniang,” “Thrice to the Southern Tang,” “Assassinating Liang Ji” and “Executing his son outside headquarters,” etc., and they are similar to “The Illustrious Consort goes to the frontier,” “The lyrics accompanied by the *Pipa* instrument,” “Li Keyong lends his troops,” “The King of Qi cries in his palace,” “Fifth Son saves his younger brother,” “Bringing a letter back to see father,” “Cutting down generals at the four gates,” “The fisherman’s daughter assassinates Liang Ji,” and “Executing his son outside headquarters” in our paintings respectively.^⑨

Because of the lack of sources, we cannot ascertain at this moment the type of regional opera(s) in our paintings, but from the above, there is a greater possibility that the majority are plays from the outer troupes. Also, we cannot say for certain which types of regional operas(s) they depict, and so, in our description of each painting, we can only give a general description of the content, whereas there might be different twists and details in reality.

The style of painting in these thirty-six paintings can be related to traditional Chinese depictions of drama. Visual material on Chinese drama includes paintings of the Song period; line engravings on stone in the Jin dynasty (1115-1234); wall paintings, brick engravings of *zaju* drama and stone engravings of the Yuan period; woodblock prints of the Ming period; portraits of famous actors, lantern paintings, opera character manuals and New Year prints of the Qing period. These can be divided into two groups, those based on the dramatic plots and drawn through imagination by the artist, such as woodblock prints of drama of the Ming period, and realistic depictions based on actual performance on the stage, such as New Year prints of drama. Wang Shucun notes in his *Xichu Nianhua* (New Year prints on drama acts) the following,

Woodblock prints on drama mainly refer to the illustrations found in drama texts of the pre-modern period. These prints only represent a scene or point in a story, and the character and costume is different from the role character and his theatrical costume on the actual stage. Basically, they are just illustrations to a story, and do not present the artistry of performance on stage. The New Year prints of drama acts aim however, to present the artistry of the performance on stage, and even if there are realistic mountains, rivers, horses or carriages on the prints, we can see from the theatrical costumes, postures and expressions of the characters that they are performing.^⑩

There may be exceptions to Wang Shucun’s blanket statement on woodblock prints in drama texts, where we may find representations of actual scenes of



performance. In the Liu Longtian edition of *Xixiang Ji* (The Western wing), the illustration to the scene “Marvellous meeting at the Buddha hall” is a “realistic representation of the scene in a performance,” but in general, Wang’s view is correct.^⑪

Our thirty-six paintings depict actual scenes on stage, and belong to the group of New Year prints of drama acts and character role manuals. New Year prints on drama flourished from the middle period of the Qing dynasty, and were mainly produced at Yangliuqing, Hebei Province and Taohuawu, Jiangsu Province, etc. For the New Year prints of Yangliuqing, there are “the ‘Princess of the Hundred Flowers,’ ‘Xin’an Post Station,’ ‘Auspicious Plant garden,’ etc. from the Qianlong period. They are based on dramatic stories, and the depiction of the characters are a bit similar to how they might appear on stage, but because of the influence of woodblock illustrations from Ming period drama texts, they have added a background of landscape, pavilions and plants, etc. New Year prints on drama increased from the Jiaqing and Daoguang periods onwards, and reached a peak in the Guangxu period (1875-1908). The style also changed, and not only was the content based on drama, the depiction of the postures of the actors and actresses, the layout of the stage, the costumes, types of facial makeup and the stage props was almost all based on actual stage performances.”^⑫

Manuals on the makeup and costumes of characters are mainly those on dramatic performances from the Qing palace, and there are four examples. The Palace Museum has the following three manuals:

1. *Xingli Jingyi* (Precise meanings of nature and principle), two volumes, one hundred illustrations. These are painted in colour in the detailed *gongbi* style

on silk. Each painting measures 40 by 28 cm. Scenes from forty-four operas are depicted, including for example, “The meeting of the braves,” “Beating Gold Twig,” “Cursing Cao Cao,” etc. There are two paintings for each opera, although occasionally there are four to six. Each painting is a full length portrait of a main character. At the bottom corner, the name of the character is noted. For the paintings of each opera, the name of the opera is written on the upper corner of the first painting.

2. *Xichu Huace* (Painting album of drama scenes), four volumes, 160 illustrations. These are painted in colour in the detailed *gongbi* style on silk. Each painting measures approximately 56.5 by 56 cm. Around one hundred operas are depicted. Each painting depicts a scene from an opera, and the number of characters varies. The name of the opera is written on the lower corner. The names of the characters are written on empty spaces next to the characters.

3. *Qing Ren Xichu Ce* (Album of drama scenes of the people of the Qing), one volume, fifteen paintings. These are painted in colour in the detailed *gongbi* style on silk. Each painting measures approximately 56 by 56.5 cm. Each painting depicts a scene from an opera, and the number of characters varies, and there are altogether fourteen operas. The name of the opera is written on the lower corner. The names of the characters are written on empty spaces next to the characters.

Besides these three albums, there is another group of paintings on drama characters, originally kept in the Court Theatrical Office, but after the 1911 revolution, these left the palace, and can now be found in the Drama Institute of the Chinese Academy of Art, National Library, Capital Library and in private collections. The total number of paintings is unclear, but there must be several



hundreds. They are painted in colour in the detailed *gongbi* style on silk. Each painting measures approximately 27 by 21.5 cm., and there are around one hundred operas. Each opera is illustrated by two to eight paintings. Each painting depicts a character down to the waist, and the name of the character is written on the upper corner. For the paintings of each opera, the name of the opera is written on the upper corner of the first painting, and below this, there is a line of small characters which read "For the costume and facial makeup, follow this model."

We do not know the painters of the above works and the dates of composition. From the opera titles, we can see that they are operas often performed by the Anhui troupes in Beijing from the Daoguang (1821-1850) and Xianfeng periods (1851-1861) onwards. From the records in the archives of the Court Theatrical Office, these operas only started to be performed in the palace in the years of the

Xianfeng period, and before this, the performances in the palace were limited to the Kunqu and Yiyang styles. These albums were then probably painted in various periods from the Xianfeng era onwards. From the painting styles, they were probably painted by the painters who served in the Institute of Indulgences under the Imperial Household Department.^⑬

These thirty-six watercolour paintings of opera in the British Library collection, painted between the years 1800 to 1805, are about fifty years earlier than the palace opera paintings described above, and could be regarded as forerunners. At the same time, there are few remaining New Year paintings on operas of the same period. Our paintings are to be treasured, and their research potential not to be ignored.

① Mildred Archer, *Company Drawings in the India Office Library*, 254.

② Zhongguo Xiqu Zhi Bianji Weiyuanhui (中國戲曲志編輯委員會), *Zhongguo Xiqu Zhi: Guangdong Juan Bianji Weiyuanhui* (《中國戲曲志·廣東卷》編輯委員會), eds., *Zhongguo Xiqu Zhi: Guangdong Juan*, 71; Lai Bojiang (賴伯疆), *Guangdong Xiqu Jianshi*, 84.

③ Liang Dingfen (梁鼎芬) et al., comps., *Panyu Xian Xu Zhi*, juan 44, 625.

④ Lai Bojiang (賴伯疆), 105; Zhang Cixi (張次溪), ed. *Qingdai Yandu Liyuan Shiliao*, 350.

⑤ Lai Bojiang (賴伯疆), 112.

⑥ See Zhongguo Xiqu Zhi Bianji Weiyuanhui (中國戲曲志編輯委員會), *Zhongguo Xiqu Zhi: Guangdong Juan Bianji Weiyuanhui* (《中國戲曲志·廣東卷》編輯委員會), eds., 448-450.

⑦ J. L. Cranmer-Byng, *An Embassy to China: Being the Journal Kept by Lord Macartney During his Embassy to the Emperor Ch'ien-lung 1793-1794*, 203.

⑧ Zhang Cixi (張次溪), ed., 1005, 75, 73, 66, 86-87, 70, 83, 197, 206, 198, 161.

⑨ Zhongguo Xiqu Zhi Bianji Weiyuanhui (中國戲曲志編輯委員會), *Zhongguo Xiqu Zhi: Guangdong Juan Bianji Weiyuanhui* (《中國戲曲志·廣東卷》編輯委員會), eds., 138, 147, 128, 124, 114, 124, 109, 133, 114.

⑩ Wang Shucun (王樹村), *Xichu Nianhua*, 18.

⑪ Xu Yanlin (徐燕琳), *Mingdai Julun yu Shulun*, 290.

⑫ See Zhongguo Xiqu Zhi Bianji Weiyuanhui (中國戲曲志編輯委員會), *Zhongguo Xiqu Zhi: Guangdong Juan Bianji Weiyuanhui* (《中國戲曲志·廣東卷》編輯委員會), eds., 295.

⑬ Zhongguo Xiqu Zhi Bianji Weiyuanhui (中國戲曲志編輯委員會), *Zhongguo Xiqu Zhi: Guangdong Juan Bianji Weiyuanhui* (《中國戲曲志·廣東卷》編輯委員會), eds., 294-295.





圖畫與考釋
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