Scheme to redact the Research Project

PHD IN <u>ASIAN, AFRICAN AND MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES</u>

1– Title of Research Project

Female Characters in the Folk Ballads of Late Qing Dynasty
----A Study on the Libretto of Shisu Ciqu Collected in the Library of L'Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale

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2 - Scientific-disciplinary sector to which the project refers

Philosophy programme of Department of Asian, African and Mediterranean studies

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3 - Project abstract

The creation of ancient Chinese literature can be classified as "Refined" and "Popular". Most of the first products have been transmitted and copied, since they enjoyed a high popularity and prestige; but popular literary works were hardly accepted by people from the upper echelons, who were the main group recording and transmitting, hence most of them have been lost to history.

However, some of them survived in the works of Ming and Qing eras, and some far-sighted scholars gathered folk ballads intentionally, such as LIU Fu and LI Jia-rui, who collected 6044 folk ballads during 15 years (1917-1932), and published the General Draft of Chinese Folk Music, that is the richest collection in China.

In European museums and libraries there are many collections about Chinese folk ballads, too. The latest discovery is the one collected in the library of L'Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale. Its name in Chinese is Shisu Ciqu and was composed of an unknown number of volumes, only four of which have survived, and the author is unverifiable. However, hundreds of late Qing ballads and stories were recorded completely. Different from those in other European museums and libraries, Shisu Ciqu is a hand-written libretto book with masterful calligraphy.

The academic value of Shisu Ciqu is unique.

When comparing with other known collections in Europe, Shisu Ciqu depicts a diverse late Qing society with plenty of stories and folk ballads collected from different provinces of China, revealing a variety of life styles with distinct regional features. However, ballads in other European collections mainly depict the society in south of China, especially in Canton.

A preliminary comparison between the General Draft of Chinese Folk Song and Shisu Ciqu shows that part of the ballads in Shisu Ciqu are recorded in the General Draft of Chinese Folk Song, while the remaining ones are newly discovered works. Even for those ballads that are collected in both books, the comparison between the two versions would certainly be valuable. Most importantly, all of the folk ballads in Shisu Ciqu are the complete, while the General Draft of Chinese Folk Song is a sort of catalogue, containing only part of the original work.

On the surface, the folk ballads in the General Draft of Chinese Folk Song are not connected with each other. Nevertheless, female characters in the four volumes, as a group, composed a late Qing microcosm of female society, about which we have not known much in previous literary creation and research. Female characters in the Dream of Red Chamber (Hong-Lou-Meng) are worth mentioning, however, their lives belonged to upper echelons of society and were very different from that of most ordinary Chinese people. Very likely, Shisu Ciqu depicts an ordinary-class female society in the late Qing era for the first time.

Therefore, with the study of Shisu Ciqu, the aim of this project is to explore the identities of ordinary women in late imperial China by drawing the link between the individual and society. This project will draw on the ideology of aesthetic from Terry Eagleton (1991) as epistemology, and the social gender theory of feminism, represented by Joan W. Scott (1986), will be the theoretical and methodological foundation.

4 - State of the art

Chen (2015) argues that Romance of the West Chamber (Xi-Xiang-Ji), which is one of the masterpieces of Yuan poetic dramas (Yuan-zaju), directly affected the birth of Chinese folk ballads in three aspects. First, the anti-feudal spirit of Romance of the West Chamber were highly praised by people of citizen stratum who benefited from new capitalist economy and were against the Neo-Confucianism after Mid-Ming dynasty. The following creation of folk ballads from different areas and periods have the same "voice" as that of Romance of the West Chamber. Secondly, the libretto of Romance of the West Chamber is one of the most important resources for creations of folk ballads. There are plenty of folk ballads created from specific plots of Romance of the West Chamber through both Ming and Qing eras. Thirdly, musical forms of Romance of the West Chamber are samples of folk ballads, since the singing of Romance of the West Chamber is expressed in the style of Northern opera (Beiqu) and Southern opera (Nanqu), which was known to all and was so flexible in structure that folk ballads artists could easily edit or recompose the tunes and lyrics as needed.

Modern sense of the study of folk ballads in Ming and Qing dynasties began in the early 20th century. Scholars in China, such as LIU Fu, Gu Jie-gang, WU Li-mo, YAO Yi-zhi and FU Xi-hua, etc., had edited a few catalogue books of folk ballads. Even though they hold different views on the relationship between the musical form and the lyric text, the concepts of folk ballad and folk song were distinguished. They defined folk ballad on aspects of music and literary creation.

Folk ballad is a kind of music characterized by fixed melodies which can be used with different lyrics on various topics. Influenced by traditional Chinese music studies, the research on folk ballads focuses on the origin and development of music brands and their rhythms, which LI Jia-rui and YANG Yin-liu have made outstanding contributions in their works such as Peiping Folk Music (1933) and Draft of Chinese Music History (1981).

Other scholars such as ZHU Zi-qing and ZHENG Zhen-duo carried out their researches from the aspect of literary creation. In Chinese Folk Songs of ZHU Zi-qing (1957), he had studied the folk songs with traditional methods of textual research, exploring the name of folk songs, origin and development, history, classification, structure and rhetoric. Especially the three chapters of this book, "the classification of folk songs", "the structure of folk songs" and "the rhetoric of folk songs", play an exemplary role in the study of literary expression of folk ballads in Ming and Qing dynasties. Nevertheless, in his History of Chinese Popular Literature, ZHENG Zhen-duo's research (1957) takes a different approach that the structure of the book is consistent with that of literary history. In this book, the definitions, scopes, and characteristics of popular literature works such as folk ballads are clearly listed from the beginning, and many examples are given for illustrating the features of each popular literary form.

In 1990s, CHE Xi-lun, ZHANG Ji-guang, QIU Jiang, ZHANG Xiao-ying, LI Qiu-ju and JIANG Shou-wen had published five new-edited catalogues of folk ballads, that focusing on exploring distinctive regional characteristics.

With more than ten works on Ming and Qing folk ballads, Xu (2001, 2002, 2006) has done a series of textual research to explore the origin of names for more than 240 folk ballads. Particularly, he praises the sincere erotic descriptions and beautiful music tunes while studying a number of folk ballad collections, such as Shan-ge, Gua-zhir in Ming dynasty,and Nishang-xupu, Baixue-yiyin in Qing dynasty. He also argues that Ma-tou-diao (the only Qu-tune with notation) recorded in Baixue-yiyin could be a bridge of musical forms connected Ming dynasty and nowadays.

Liu (2014, 2015) has studied the development and spread of folk ballads, which began to arise in the north of China, then spread throughout the country and even to other countries. In the spreading process, rap and opera styles of folk ballads were getting stronger and stronger. Classifying and sorting out the literatures on different resources in Ming dynasty, such as literati notes or postscripts, LIU makes statistics on folk music brands, revealing the living conditions of literati and ordinary people in folk ballads.

In the Institute of Oriental Culture of Tokyo University, and libraries of other Asian universities, such as Nankai University and Sun Yat-sen University in China, Waseda University in Japan, some new collections have been discovered in recent years, but none of them have been studied yet.

Nevertheless, folk ballads and other popular literary works collected in European libraries and musems have been given more attention. Cui (2015, 2016, 2018) and Liu (2016, 2019) have introduced the collections in the libraries and museums in UK, German, France and

Portugal, studying the varieties of folk librettos and versions, and preliminarily discussing the story outlines and literary values of rare editions.

The protagonists of quite a lot of folk ballads are ordinary women in Ming and Qing eras. However, they were ignored in the former researches. With hundreds of stories about ordinary class women, Shisu Ciqu offers a more promising area of research.

5 - Bibliography

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Rationale

Brief introduction to Chinese folk ballads

In traditional Chinese literary creation there is a gap between what was known as "Refinement" and "Popularity". TAO Jie (2014) illustrated that refined literary creation always thoroughly and deeply reflects the world, exploring the essence of life; in contrast, the exploration of popular literature is usually not profound enough, and always focused on individual life. According to Tao, the purpose of refined literary creation is to express the author's deep feelings, turning an irrational impulse into a universal artistic understanding. During the creation, the author actually expresses the emotion of the whole human condition. The aim of popular literary creation, instead, is just to entertain or to arouse the audience's emotion, which would have eventually been turned into lust or anger. Correspondingly, the language style of the popular literary creation, which is colloquial or even vulgar, is also different from the elegant literary expression. Therefore, authors from the upper echelons of society, who were the main group for literary recording and transmission, usually looked at those popular works with disdain. This is probably one of the main reasons why complete popular literary works such as folk ballads are so hard to find today. These ballads originated during the Sui Dynasty, or even earlier, and flourished during the Ming and Qing imperial eras, but most have already been lost to history.

Among a few resources available, some visionaries tried to transmit these folk works to future generations. During the Ming dynasty, there were specific records in SHEN De-fu (1578-1642)'s work about the spread of ballads in the whole country, including 19 Qu tunes. By the early Qing, Pu Song-ling (1640-1715) recorded 53 kinds of ballads in his Liao Zhai Folk Collection. In the 1920s, ZHENG Zhen-duo (1898-1958) had collected around 12,000 ballads, which, unfortunately, were completely destroyed during the war in 1932. Research conducted by YANG Yin-liu (1899-1984), based on 15 libretto materials, showed that around 1,000 Ming dynasty ballads and more than 1,700 Qing Dynasty ballads had been found. But the most fruitful collection of ballads can be found in the General Draft of Chinese Folk Music, published in 1932, by LIU Fu and LI Jia-rui etc., who had spent around 15 years collecting a total of 6,044 ballads.

Recently, a new collection of traditional folk ballads has been discovered in L'Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale. Its name in Chinese is Shisu Ciqu. As a hand-written libretto book of ballads by an unknown author, it was composed of a number of volumes, only four of which have survived (volumes 1, 2, 4 and 6). Fortunately, the library of L'Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale has kept hundreds of these late Qing ballads and stories in its archives.
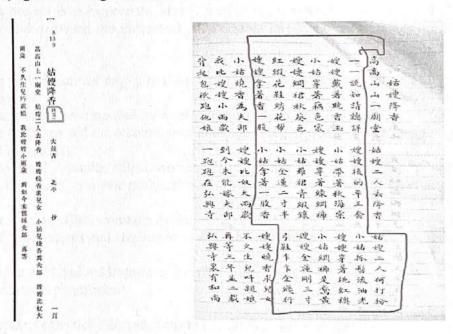
The academic value of the Shisu Ciqu

Similar Qing Dynasty documents have been dug up by various European museums and libraries in recent years. However, most of them are mill-block-copies, or machine-printed copies (Liu 2016, 2017; Cui 2015, 2018), which makes the Shisu Ciqu even more unique,

being one of the few examples of hand-written librettos. Even when comparing with other hand-written books, such as the ones relating to Shadow Opera and Cantonese Opera, which can be found in the Museu do Oriente of Lisbon (Liu 2017), Shisu Ciqu is a masterpiece, when just considering the quality of its calligraphy.

Courtesy of the library of L'Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale, I was able to take some notes from the Shisu Ciqu. After a preliminary comparison between the General Draft of Chinese Folk Music and my notes, Shisu Ciqu began to show its value. Only part of the ballads in Shisu Ciqu are recorded in the General Draft of Chinese Folk Music, while the remainder is newly discovered material. Even for those ballads, which exist in both books, such as "Gu Sao Jiangxiang (Sisters-in-law go praying in the temple)", the comparison between the two versions would certainly be useful. As noticed in the General Draft of Chinese Folk Music (left), there were several missing words, which were, however, perfectly recorded in the Shisu Ciqu (right). In this case, this related to a detailed literary description of Qing-era clothing and attire.

Liu (1923, 1927) argued that the study of folk ballads can be carried out focusing on four different aspects: literature, customs, language and music. And other well-known scholars such as ZHOU Zuo-ren (1923), LI Jia-rui (1933) and HU Shi (1936) all agree in conducting their research from multiple angles. There has been a large of fruitful reasearch in the past few decades, but nonetheless, the Shisu Ciqu offers a much more promising area of study. It is a microcosm of society with hundreds of complete, vivid stories. In comparison, the General Draft of Chinese Folk Music is more like a catalogue of ballads, in which only the first few words of each story have been recorded. The reason for this is that, as Liu and Li (1932) pointed out themselves, the manual collection of these folk songs was such a huge undertaking for just one or two people to work on that they had to limit themselves to creating a sort of catalogue.

After a cursory glance at these stories, the life of a group of women struck me as particularly interesting. It is well known that it was hard for women to become active participants in a patriarchal society such as that of the the late Qing. Accordingly, women usually would not be protagonists in literary works. Female characters in Dream of the Red Chamber, as a group, were those who "woke up" for the first time, but they were from the upper echelons of society, and had very different lives from most ordinary Chinese people living in late imperial China. Especially with regards to the life of ordinary women, what we know is very limited. However, the ordinary women as depicted in the Shisu Ciqu, come from all kinds of different backgrounds (such as prostitutes, deserted wives, remarried women, widows, etc.), and are portrayed in a wider, vivid world, with their joys and sorrows. More research is needed in order to reveal more about their lives, habits and feelings and more broadly, to better understand Qing society in general.

Research questions

The aim of this project is to explore the identities of ordinary women in late imperial China by drawing the link between the individual and society. Two research questions are to be answered:

(1) How were their identities recognized by traditional Chinese culture as well as by its society as a whole?
a. What were the restrictions imposed on women by such a patriarchal society?
b. What kind of problems did the institution of marriage bring to women (such as polygamy, remaining a widow etc.)?
c. How did traditional morality affect women? With issues such as chastity, "a woman without talent is virtuous" and "the prohibition of any contact between an unrelated man and woman".
d. How did foot binding affect women's lives?
e. What kind of expectations and requirements did families have for women as mothers and wives?
f. What restrictions did boudoirs impose on girls?
g. How did clients treat prostitutes?

(2) How did women consider their positions in a male-dominated society?
a. How did they maintain beauty of appearance?
b. How did they perceive their talents?
c. What were their attitudes towards love and marriage?
d. How did they define their roles in a family?
e. How did they face the pain brought by traditional morals and customs?
f. How did prostitutes deal with clients in such a humiliating relationship?

Research design

Theoretical approach

This project will draw on the ideology of aesthetic from Terry Eagleton (1991) as epistemology, which can provide a philosophical entry point for feminist literary criticism

and give attention to the political nature and aesthetic character that are indispensable in the identity of female images.

Since one of the key words of this project is female identity, social gender theory of feminism, represented by Joan W. Scott (1986), will be the theoretical and methodological foundation, which has two basic propositions: gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes; gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power. On this basis, gender involves four interrelated elements: first, culturally available symbols that invoke multiple and often contradictory representation. Second, normative concepts that set forth interpretations of the meaning of the symbols, that attempt to limit and contain their metaphoric possibilities. Third, the gender relationship in social institutions and organizations must be analyzed. Fourth, the subjective identity of gender. Historians need instead to examine the ways in which gendered identities are substantively constructed and relate their findings to a range of activities, social organizations, and historically specific cultural representations (FANG Jin-lian, 2008).

Methodology

I intend to conduct the research using the following steps:
First, I shall read through all the available volumes of the Shisu Ciqu, and select all the ballads related to women of various categories;
Second, I shall make an introduction and analysis using a comparative approach on librettos of ballads recorded in different documents, which may possibly be collected in libraries and museums of different countries;
Third, I shall create a database, in which specific information for the whole female group could be categorized for different research purposes regarding the names of the women, related people, creative times of the ballads, descriptions of making-up of women, descriptions of dresses, abstracts of the stories and their attitudes (towards love and marriage, foot-binding, boudoirs, etc.).

Limitations

One of the challenges faced by in this project is to confirm determine whether or not some of the ballads of found in the Shisu Ciqu had have been recorded in other documents, which may be found in libraries and/or museums of different countries, and Therefore some international travels travelling might be necessary be needed. A second challenge is associated to creating with the creation of the database, in for which technical supports might also be needed as well.

Time-line

They are attached to the scheme.

7 - Expected results and application effects

With the study of Shisu Ciqu, the aim of this project is to explore the identities of ordinary women in late imperial China by drawing the link between the individual and society. It works in two ways. One is the collective identity recognized by the society and cultural system. Another one is the female feature's self-identity, which is the understanding and confirmation about themselves under influence of male-dominated social cultural ideology.

The folk ballads in Shisu Ciqu bring together the social group's aesthetic imagination about female body images, behavior patterns and personal temperament. The unifying of the identity construction of female features from body images and behavior patterns to personal temperament is the process of the identification from physiological gender to social gender.

Meanwhile, female features in Shisu Ciqu show strong identification of dignity, love and sense of honor, even though they worry about their situation and complain about their lives. These ballads show the mutual influence between "ideal types" and "true experience" of their self-identification, and reflect a sense of self-awareness and subjectivity to a certain extent.

As a group of ordinary-class female features in late Qing era, they have not been noticed in former studies. This project is expected to take a step forward in revealing more of their life, habits and feelings and, conversely, more of the Chinese population of that era's life.

It is hoped that this research can make a contribution to the further studies on rare editions collected in the library of L'Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale. As one of the most important libraries of the Oriental field, its treasures will be shining brilliantly with more and more studies.

Data Collection Time-line

	Year 2019	Year 2020			
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Reading through and picking out the texts	▓				
Text analysis		▓	▓		
Creating a database		▓	▓	▓	
Summarizing and classifying the data			▓	▓	▓

Time-line for 3-academic years PhD program

	Year 2019		Year 2020				Year 2021				Year 2022	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Revise proposal so as to serve as preliminary literature review draft	▓	▓										
Develop research design		▓	▓	▓								
Data collection (see timeline in proposal)		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓						
Revise research design to serve as draft methods chapter			▓	▓								
Write analysis/main chapters (prepare separate timeline)				▓	▓	▓						
Revise literature review								▓				
Draft introduction and conclusion									▓			
Submit complete draft to supervisors										▓	▓	▓
Final proofreading, copy-editing, copying, binding										▓	▓	▓