

A Study on Structural Changes of Chinese Local Plays in Chiang-nan during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries(VI)

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As discussed in the last installment of this study, the village community play in Chiang-nan separated into the clan play and the market play after the mid-Ming. This gave the local play in Chiang-nan, which had hitherto been confined to the limited boundaries of the village, an opportunity to go beyond the village and become diffused nationwide. The two types of diffusion are as follows:

(1) Diffusion of the clan play

Clan plays were performed during celebrations for the coming of age of sons, marriages, funerals, or other celebrations of the like. Though the influential lineage groups of Chiang-nan were usually physically far removed from each other, they were often related by marital ties or linked by social meetings through their position as officials. Therefore, the plays of one lineage from a certain place could spread to another place through the social gatherings of various lineages. In such situations, performances were given either of Northern Drama (Pei-ch'ü), which was sung in the common language of the officials (the official language, i. e. Mandarin), or of *K'un-ch'ü*, which was sung in the Wu dialect, the dialect spoken in the economically advanced regions of Chiang-nan. Especially the *K'un-ch'ü* gradually spread nationwide through this inter-lineage route.

(2) Diffusion of the market play

Plays were performed virtually wherever there were markets. As one market was linked to another by travelling merchants, a play from the native places of influential travelling merchants could be

spread nationwide through their network of market contacts. In this way, the Hui-chou (Hsin-an) merchants, who had controlled the network of markets in Chiang-nan since early Ming times, spread the plays of their home towns, *Hui-tiao* (the tunes characteristic of Hui-chou Drama) and *I-yang ch'iang* (the tunes characteristic of I-yang Drama) nationwide through actors from their home towns.

Discussion also focuses on the combination that resulted from the bringing together of *K'un-ch'ü* and *I-yang ch'iang* in the form of *K'un-I Er-ch'iang*. This occurred through the influence of Hsin-an merchants and An-hui theatrical troupes. In sum, the argument is as follows:

Originally the *K'un-ch'ü* of clan plays were "elegant drama tunes" and the *I-yang ch'iang* of market plays were "vulgar drama tunes", i. e. contrasting types of tune. However, at remote places where these types of plays spread, both the *K'un-ch'ü* and *I-yang ch'iang* were (when compared with the local plays sung in the vernacular) respected as the plays of central Chiang-nan. The status of *I-yang ch'iang* was thus raised. In fact, during the mid-Ch'ing, many *I-yang ch'iang* troupes from Chiang-hsi, Hu-nan, etc., entered Kuang-chou in Kuang-tung. These troupes sang a combination of *K'un-ch'ü* and *I-yang ch'iang* at various banquets. Also the script of the *P'i-p'a chi* taken recently from a tomb in Chieh-yang 揭陽 County reveals that, though fundamentally of the *K'un-ch'ü* type, the play was strongly influenced by *I-yang ch'iang* and that in Ming times it had spread to Ch'ao-chou 潮州 in Kuang-tung. Such a combination of tunes (*K'un-I Er-ch'iang*) was promoted by An-hui troupes (originally *I-yang ch'iang* in orientation, but later with *K'un-ch'ü* additions) and received the support and patronage of Hsin-an merchants. One can thus say that through the Hsin-an merchants, two kinds of plays which had developed from the same type of village community play, namely clan plays and market plays, to a certain extent come back together again.

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