LI MINGRUI'S PRIVATE TROUPE
AND
ITS SPECTATORS (1644-62)

by

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ABSTRACT

Scholars of vernacular Chinese plays such as *Mudan ting* (Peony Pavillion) by Tang Xianzu (1550-1616) have paid much attention to the texts of the plays, their readership, and the historical development of performances of them, but their studies to date have revealed little about the spectatorship of performances. In this thesis, I will explore the private troupe of Li Mingrui (1585-1671)—known for performing *Mudan ting* and *Moling chun* (Spring in Moling) by Wu Weiye (1609-71)—and endeavor to discover how the spectators interpreted performances by this troupe. Information about the troupe and about spectators’ interpretations will be revealed by analyzing dozens of extant poems that were written especially during household performances, and due attention will also be paid to the political and cultural climate of the time when they were written. The purpose of this study is to provide a detailed picture of a typical private troupe during the Ming-Qing transition, to consider the degree of continuity of performance elements from late Ming to early Qing, and to deepen our understanding of the mentality of the literati world during this transitional period.

Li Mingrui’s particular fondness for *Mudan ting* and *Moling chun* stems from his close relationship with both playwrights. A protégé of Tang Xianzu, the preeminent late-Ming playwright, and mentor of Wu Weiye, whose play reflects the dilemmas of political and cultural identity post-1644, Li Mingrui is ideally situated for a study of this kind. His troupe of eight actresses, which was created around 1646 and forced to disband in the spring of 1662, was able to perform *Mudan ting*, for which eight roles are designated, as well as *Moling chun*, for which twelve roles are designated, with the added participation of amateurs and other household servants who knew how to perform plays.
Li Mingrui was independent from partisan strife between the Donglin and eunuch factions during the late Ming period, and was forced to serve under the Manchus for several months in 1644. Despite his service under the Manchus, he enjoyed good relations with other scholars in the early Qing, and the spectators of his troupe included both Ming loyalists and scholars who had served both the Ming and Qing. Both groups attended the same gatherings and performances and wrote poems at them. Nearly all the spectators viewed Chinese music and the Ming-style costumes onstage as nostalgic reminders of the fallen Ming. Even more important, these performance elements came to symbolize Han-Chinese Ming culture. In their poems these spectators distinguished Han-Chinese culture from Manchu culture, using references to performance elements to drive this distinction home.

A politically charged term such as "Ming loyalist" does not adequately encompass the evidence of these poems, which reveal beliefs shared by men who were otherwise deeply divided politically. The aforementioned spectators can be more aptly described as "cultural loyalists" whose social activities sustained Chinese culture during the transition from the Han-Chinese Ming to the Manchu Qing Dynasty.
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**Fig. 1: The Map of Nanchang City (1588).**


A: *Yonghe men* 永和门 (Gate of Eternal Peace).

B: *Yiyang Wang fu* 飞阳王府 (Mansion-of Yiyang Prince), which was re-constructed into the Garden of Elysium by Li Mingrui.

C: *Dantai ci* 澹台祠 (Memorial Temple to Dantai Mieming).

D: *Xihu* 西湖 (Western Lake)

E: *Zhangjiang* 章江 (the Zhang River), i.e., the Gan River.
The block engraving, originally in the chuanqi drama *Hehua dang* (Lake of Lotus) published in the Chongzhen period, describes the performance of a play in the Kun style. The actor performing on the mat is wearing the Ming-style official costume.
On the stage, one actor is wearing a gauze hat (shamao 纱帽), and another a scarf (futou 花头). Both of them are wearing Ming-style costumes.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While assembling information on Li Mingrui and his associates, I came to understand their dilemma of cultural identity during the transition from the Han-Chinese Ming Dynasty to the “barbarian” Manchu Dynasty. Any change of circumstances requires a psychological readjustment. I have enjoyed writing this thesis with lots of support and encouragement, and I wish to express my thanks to professors and friends.

Under Professor Catherine Swatek’s supervision, I become accustomed to Western academic regulations, a tradition different from what I have learned in China. She also edited and has critically commented on the entire draft. Her patience and scrupulousness made me believe that she did much painstaking work for an international student such as me. Ms. Joni Low proofread and edited Chapters 4, 6 and 7 and her work has promoted its readability, for which I express my thanks. Professors Jerry D. Schmidt and Alison Bailey have encouraged me while I was writing this thesis, and have read the draft and given me some suggestions.

I also reserve debts of thanks to Mr. Yi Chen of Boston and Mr. Xiaohe Ma of the Harvard-Yenching Library, who helped me obtain primary materials helpful to my study.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Private troupes, owned by gentry, nobles, and wealthy merchants, were the most important performers of chuanqi drama from the late sixteenth century, when the Kun style became the dominant style of the literati chuanqi drama, to the late eighteenth century, when "the practice of maintaining household troupes declined."\(^1\) Directed, supervised, and nurtured by gentry who composed nearly all chuanqi playtexts and who knew theatrical arts much better than others,\(^2\) private troupes were better able to promote the development of drama in this period than were the public professional troupes that wandered in towns and villages, or the court troupes that performed exclusively within the imperial palace.\(^3\) The private troupes to be discussed below are those owned by the gentry, for several reasons: (1) it is the gentry who played a decisive role in the development of chuanqi drama in this period; (2) original records by and about the gentry are much easier to find than those by and about either

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\(^1\) According to Guo Yingde, chuanqi drama as a genre came into being during the period of 1465 to 1586, while the Kun style was reformed by Wei Liangfu 魏良辅 (1501-84) and utilized in the creation and performance of chuanqi drama by Liang Chenyu 梁辰魚 (1519-91). See Guo Yingde, Ming Qing chuanqi shi 明清戏曲史 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 2001 rpt.), pp. 38-76. During the Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns (1662-1795), officials were prohibited "from enjoying theatricals either in public or in private," and during the Kangxi and Yongzheng reigns (1662-1735) a "playwright-dominated drama centered in household troupes" shifted to an "actor-dominated one centered in professional troupes based in urban areas." See Catherine C. Swatek, Peony Pavilion Onstage: Four Centuries in the Career of a Chinese Drama (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, 2002), pp. 151, 134, 341n. 180.

\(^2\) John Hu, "Ming dynasty drama," in Colin Mackerras, ed., Chinese Theater: from Its Origins to the Present Day (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), p. 61. According to Guo Yingde, chuanqi drama in the Ming and Qing dynasties includes court drama (gongting chuanqi), folk drama (minjian chuanqi) and literati drama (wenren chuanqi), the third of these outnumbering the other two. Literati playwrights, who mainly came from gentry, had decisive influences on their counterparts who were employed by emperors or by public professional troupes. See Guo Yingde, Ming Qing chuanqi shi, p. 12.

\(^3\) Qi Senhua provides an interesting discussion of how private troupes were advantaged when it came to promoting theatrical arts in the Ming and Qing dynasties. See Qi Senhua, "Shilun Mingdai jiyue," in Hua Wei and Wang Ailing, eds., Ming Qing xiqu guoji yantaohui lunwen ji (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiusuo choubeichu, 1998), pp. 317-19.
imperial clansmen or merchants (two other groups keenly interested in drama); and (3) owners of private troupes in this period came chiefly from the gentry.\textsuperscript{4}

Although bondservants who amused their masters by singing and dancing, actors and actresses in private troupes established the traditions of Kun Opera, developed performances of extracted scenes, encouraged the literati playwrights, and disseminated the Kunshan style of singing as they traveled about with their owners.\textsuperscript{5} We have some information concerning the circumstances under which private troupes operated (e.g., the number of actors or actress in a typical private troupe, their training, places and occasions of performances, regulations governing actors/actresses).\textsuperscript{6} As for the functions of private troupes, the academic consensus is that they not only entertained gentry families, but also mediated social intercourse between the owners and their guests.\textsuperscript{7} In seventeenth-century China, “not only individual actors, but

\textsuperscript{4} No statistics about private troupes are available; thus we do not know the percentages of those owned by gentry, nobles, and merchants respectively. Liu Shuiyun collects the names of over 500 owners and hypothesizes that there were at least thousands of private troupes in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Based on the materials he has collected, he claims that most troupe owners came from the gentry. See Liu Shuiyun, “Jiayue tengyong: Ming Qing xiju xingsheng de yinxing beijing,” \textit{Wenyi yanjiu} 1 (2003), pp. 94, 95. Citing Lu Eting, who lists some thirty-two owners of private troupes from the mid-Ming to early Qing in his study, Sophie Volpp thinks that the practice of raising private troupes was likely not so widespread as proposed. See Volpp, \textit{Worldly Stage: the Figure of the Theater in Seventeenth-Century China} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, forthcoming).


\textsuperscript{7} Lu Eting, \textit{Yanchu shigao}, pp. 118-19, 123; Qi Senhua, “Mingdai jiaoyue,” pp. 311-22; and Liu Shuiyun, “Jiayue tengyong,” pp. 97-98. Liu also provides some examples to illustrate that the performances of a private troupe would be used by the owner to do his filial duty to his old parents. According to Judith Zeitlin, You Tong 你侗 raised his private troupe mainly with the intention of commemorating his father, who had enjoyed drama while living. See “Spirit writing and performance in the work of You Tong (1618-1704),” \textit{T’oung Pao} 84.1-3 (1998), pp. 133-35.
entire troupes were bestowed upon friends, bequeathed upon relations, bought and sold. Their circulation served to create and maintain networks of social exchange." An owner would ask his private troupe to perform when he held a banquet, or would be accompanied by his actors or actresses on his travels. Even when the literati held a meeting as members of a society, they would book a private troupe to perform, whether that troupe was owned by one member or by someone outside their society. Whether enlivened with simple performances or elaborate ones, such gatherings were regarded as so elegant, solemn, and distinguished that the attendees would compose poetry, known as guanju shi 观剧诗 (poetry on watching plays), as records of the performances and their thoughts about them.

Questions then arise: What did the performances of private troupes mean to the gentry in this period? Did contemporary events external to the performance influence the gentry’s reception of it? If so, how did these events (e.g., the political context) during this transitional period transform the meaning of a performance for those in attendance? In this study, gentry will be viewed as spectators rather than playwrights, directors, and designers of performances, and more attention will be paid to the actual responses of spectators than to the subjective intentions of the playwrights and performers. By examining the audience’s interpretations of performance elements such as music, costumes, and libretto, a different perspective emerges that will enable us to explore fresh questions about the performance and spectatorship histories of these plays.

Poems written while watching plays are sources that enable us to explore how the

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8 Volpp, *Worldly stage.*

9 Liu Shuiyun provides examples that illustrate how private troupes functioned as media of social intercourse. See “Jiayue tengyong,” pp. 97, 98. He also explores the relationship between meetings of literati societies and theatrical performances, including those of private troupes, in the Ming and Qing dynasties. See “Mingmo Qingchu wenren jieshe yu yanju huodong,” Nantong shifan xueyuan xuebao 17.1 (March 2001): 52-56.
literati—who wrote plays themselves—responded to these troupes and performances as spectators. In fact, the attitude of literati towards performances by private troupes has been discussed by such scholars as Lu Eting, Grant Shen, and Sophie Volpp. Lu argues that what literati sought from performances was relaxation and, more important to them, sexual stimulation. While focusing on the aesthetic contributions of private troupes to the development of Chinese drama, Shen also discusses the erotic dimension of singing and dancing, the two basic elements of a performance for literati spectators. Sophie Volpp, in her case study of liaisons between literati and actors, explores a triangular relationship between Chen Weisong 陈维崧 (1626-82), a famous poet, Xu Ziyun 徐紫云 (d. 1675?), an actor in a private troupe, and Mao Xiang 冒襄 (1611-93), the troupe’s owner and Chen Weisong’s patron. The performance of plays during the late Ming and early Qing was an important medium of social exchange amongst the literati, and an indispensable element of gentry gatherings. Since the medium of chuanqi drama reached its zenith when such gatherings were socially influential, we must explore the possibility that private troupes provided more than simply a divergence from reality and an erotically appealing spectacle.

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11 Grant Shen, “Private Theatre of the Ming Dynasty,” pp. 69, 70.


13 Liu Shuiyun explains the functions of appreciating performances at meetings of literati societies in the Ming and Qing dynasties as follows: (1) it was regarded as an elegant fashion and a vehicle for enhancing
Methodology

Roger Chartier’s idea of “historical reading,” which he uses to coax out the implications of the play *George Dandin* by Molière (1622-73) for different spectators ranging from the French court, nobility, and burghers, can help us to explore these questions concerning responses to *chuanqi* plays among the literati. According to Chartier, historical reading “involves weaving together three strands of analysis”: (1) gaps between the texts of different genres on the one hand, and between “situations in the theater and situations in the social world that served as their matrix” on the other; (2) “the forms in which the text was given,” for example, stage performance vs. printed edition; and (3) receptions reflected in “contemporary accounts” and later descriptions. Studying how a play is received, Chartier thinks, requires investigating how the text led its spectators or its readers to mobilize social knowledge fed by current events and based on ways of perceiving and judging.... Thus it will require moving from the contents of the text and from discourses and practices on which the text is based towards the thoughts that those contents were capable of eliciting.\(^{14}\)

In an historical reading of a play, Chartier adds, “anything that operated outside the text to lend it meaning” is worth noting.\(^{15}\) Inspired by this audience-centered approach, I will explore the particular theatrical and political circumstances that influenced literati reception of *chuanqi* plays during the transition from Ming to Qing.

Some scholars of Chinese drama have discussed the relationship of texts and their

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15 Chartier, *Forms and Meanings*, p. 50.
receptions to social contexts. In her study of the representations of *Si fan* 思凡 (Longing for the secular life) in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Beijing, Andrea S. Goldman compares the texts of *Si fan* as Kun Opera and *Zidi shu* 子弟书 (scions’ tales) and exposes differences between them by coaxing out “differing social dynamics between performers and audiences in the two performances.”\(^{16}\) She argues that as Kun Opera *Si fan* “is in many ways a product of the commercial, urban theater hall; that is, its production values were enhanced, if not shaped, by the audience/performance dynamics of the commercial playhouse.”\(^{17}\) Unlike Chartier, however, Goldman does not consider how Chinese spectators responded to performances by mobilizing “social knowledge fed by current events and based on ways of perceiving and judging.” Some studies exploring the reception of the Ming and Qing dramatic literature such as *Mudan ting* focus on readers’ responses to the original texts but not spectators’ responses to or interpretations of the performance elements.\(^{18}\) In this thesis, I will try to apply Chartier’s “historical reading” to the exploration of the performances of plays during the Ming-Qing transition.

Why Li Mingrui’s Private Troupe as a Case Study?

In this thesis, I will use the private troupe of Li Mingrui 李明睿 (zi Taixu 太虚;

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\(^{16}\) Andrea S. Goldman, “The nun who wouldn’t be: Representations of female desire in two performance genres of ‘Si fan’,” *Late Imperial China* 22.1 (June 2001): 75.

\(^{17}\) Goldman, “The nun who wouldn’t be;,” p. 107.

1585-1671) for a case study of these questions. A famous litterateur who lived in the late Ming and early Qing, Li owned a private troupe that was well known, as indicated by a comment to the effect that “Master Li has had Mudan ting (the Peony Pavilion) and the newly written Moling chun (Spring in Moling) performed in his [Canglang Pavilion], where many celebrities gathered and composed poems to make a record of their fine points.” Such poems not only enable us to gauge how plays were received, they can also help us to identify specific plays on which to focus our attention.

The title of a series of quatrains written by Zhu Zhongmei 朱中楣 (hao Yuanshan 远山, b. 1621), wife of Li Yuanding (b. 1595), also mentions a performance of Mudan ting by Li Mingrui’s troupe, this time paired with Yanzi jian (The Swallow Letter) by Ruan Dacheng 阮大铖 (1586-1646):

In the early spring of the year dingyou (1657), the former minister of rites Li Taixu visited me together with his wife and accompanied by their company of young actresses, who performed Yanzi jian and Mudan ting. I presented a quatrain to each actress, eight poems in total.

As for other plays performed by Li’s actresses, a poem by Chen Hongxu (1597-1665) mentions a performance of Xixiang ji (The Story of the Western Wing), the perennially popular romance by Wang Shifu 王实甫 (ca. 1260-1336), and hints at the

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19 Qiu Junhong, Xijiang shihua (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1973), p. 816. Qiu (juren 1696; Xinjian 新建, Nanchang Prefecture) was a poet and critic. Moling chun is a chuanqi drama by Wu Weiyue (1609-71). The Canglang Pavilion was Li Mingrui’s villa in the suburb of Nanchang City. For more details about Li’s relationship with Wu and his villa, see Chapter Two.

spectators’ response to it:

After years spent studying maps and histories in a land of water and clouds,
The old gentleman suddenly wears Daoist garb.
But his amorous desires still exist,
As he watches The Western Wing by the waves’ reflected light.  

几年图史水云乡，
元老翩然羽客装。
只有情缘今尚在，
绿波影里看西厢。

Rounding out this preliminary survey are two poems that mention performances of

*Caihao ji* 彩毫记 (A Tale of the Multicolored Brush), a *chuanqi* play about the Tang poet Li Bai (701-62) by Tu Long (1543-1605), another late Ming *chuanqi* playwright.\(^2\) In another poem by Chen Hongxu, references to the content of Tu’s play are oblique but unmistakable:

The Auxiliary Academician sang Concubine Yang’s praises that year,
In an embroidered robe, where could [Li Bai] find a beauty?
The current Hanlin Academician is also named Li,
But his fate excels that of the Yelang exile.  

供奉当年咏太真，
锦袍何处觅佳人。
今日翰林还姓李，
遭逢却胜夜郎身。

A poem by Li Yuankuan (1596-1675), a close friend of both Chen Hongxu and Li Mingrui, is more explicit in its reference to a performance of the play, with its comparison of the actors onstage to their counterparts offstage and the mention of the beautiful women who

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\(^{22}\) Tu Long’s *Caihao ji* is included in *Guben xiqu congkan chu ji* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1954), vols. 87-88.

\(^{23}\) Qiu Junhong, *Xijiang shihua*, p. 818; also Mao Xiaotong, *Ziliao huibian*, pp. 1179. In 756 Li Bai was suspected of joining the rebellion led by Li Lin (d. 756) and was banished to Yelang (today’s Guizhou). See Liu Xu et al., *Jiu Tang shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 190:5053-54; Ouyang Xiu and Song Qi, *Xin Tang shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 202:5763. For more details about Li Bai and the rebellion, see Part Four of Chapter Two.
graced the occasion, presumably Li’s actresses:

The gauze hat onstage defies us,
The Academician still wears his embroidered robes.
The tale of wiping off vomit with dragon’s towel has long made the rounds,
But how can that compare to embracing a beauty tonight?²⁴

Since Li Mingrui’s private troupe was famous for performing Mudan ting and Moling chun
and since Li enjoyed close relations with both Tang Xianzu (1550-1616) and Wu Weiye (1609-71) as I will demonstrate shortly, I will focus this study on performances of Mudan ting and Moling chun rather than those of Xixiang ji and Caihao ji.²⁵

Neither a playwright in his own right nor a director of his troupe, Li was an afficionado who enjoyed watching plays. The spectators of his private troupe, most of whose poems about the performances are extant, include both Ming loyalists and officials who

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²⁴ Qiu Junhong, Xijiang shihua, p. 817; also Mao Xiaotong, Ziliao huibian, p. 1178. For an abstract of Caihao ji, see Guo Yingde, Ming Qing chuanqi zonglu (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997), pp. 154-56. As an Auxiliary Academician in 743 Li Bai was often drunk and Emperor Xuanzong had to order to awake him by wiping his face with cold water so that Li Bai could compose edicts or poems. See Huang Xigui, Li Taibai nianpu (Beijing: Zhongguo chubanshe, 1958), p. 13; also Liu Xun, Jiu Tang shu, 190:5053; Ouyang Xiu and Song Qi, Xin Tang shu, 202:5763. That anecdote was integrated into scene 13 of Caihao ji, in which drunk Li Bai is summoned to compose some poems to present Emperor Xuanzong and his Concubine Yang who are enjoying peonies in their garden. See Tu Long, Caohao ji, 1:36b. In scene 20, after his dismissal in 744, Li Bai rides his donkey to Huayin to visit his friend Yuan Danqiu but is suspected as a spy and arrested. In his confession, Li says, “I, the confessor, have no given name or surname, but once I was wiped on my face with the dragon towel, enjoyed the soup served by the Son of Heaven himself. [When I composed a poem,] the powerful eunuch [Gao] Lishi took off my shoes and [Yang] Guifei herself held the ink stone for me. I could ride my horse in front of the emperor’s palaces, but I am prohibited to ride my donkey in Huayin County.” See Tu Long, Caihao ji, 1:59a.

²⁵ Besides performing chuanqi drama such as Mudan ting, Yanzi jian, Moling chun, Xixiang ji, and Caihao ji, Li Mingrui’s private troupes also performed zaju such as Jingzhao hua mei 京兆画眉, Taohua renmian 桃花人面, Jiangan jiepei 江干解佩, and Yanzi xianjian 燕子衔笺. See Zhu Zhongmei, “Yinchun ri yan ji, zongbo nian sao yin ming nüji yan zaju sishou 迎春日延集, 宗伯年僕因命女伎演杂剧四首” (During the feast on the Beginning of Spring, the wife of the ex-minister of rites asked her actresses to perform zaju, so I composed four poems), in Li Yuanding, Shiyuan quanji, p. 113. Since Li Mingrui’s troupe was known for performing chuanqi drama, its performance of zaju will not be covered in this thesis.
served under both the Ming and the Manchu regimes. As I will describe in Chapter Two, Li Mingrui was aloof from the political strife between the Donglin clique and eunuch partisans during the Ming period, but had relations with members of both political groups under the two regimes. The spectators of his troupe differed in their political experiences in the Ming period and in their political attitudes towards the new regime. However, they attended the same gatherings, watched the same performances, and exchanged poems about these performances. Their poems reflect changes in the literati world that were caused by the collapse of the Ming and the invasion of the Manchu armies and analyzing these poems will enable us to understand what softened their political differences and drew them together as aficionados of the theatre.

Li’s troupe differed from those of playwrights who personally influenced their actors by directing them and sometimes even performing with them, and also from those of wealthy merchants who were opera aficionados but had little interaction with literati. His private troupe can be regarded as a typical one in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a period when “private theatrical entertainments became de rigueur among the elite” and “the notion of theatricality was so alive in all aspects of literati cultural production.” This is also the time when the Han-Chinese Ming Dynasty declined and the Manchu regime rapidly rose. The period of dynastic transition coincides with Li Mingrui’s life, and the performances by his troupe which existed from about 1646 to 1662 lie at the center of this study of how household performances were interpreted by literati spectators during this turbulent period of Chinese history.

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26 Sophie Volpp, *Worldly stage.*
Sources

I failed in getting Li Mingrui’s works, but for the purposes of this study, which focuses on those who attended performances by his troupe, sufficient information can be gleaned from other primary sources. Nonetheless I list his works here and what I have been able to learn about them:

(1) *Sibugao* 四部稿 (Draft on the Four Branches), which includes works probably in the Ming period. The earliest edition that I have identified was not published until 1624; it was subsequently entitled *Langyuan sibugao* 闳园四部稿 (Draft on the Four Branches in the Garden of Elysium) in a Qing dynasty edition. A revised and enlarged edition published in the Kangxi period (1662-1722) was possibly entitled *Sibugao wenchaot* 四部稿文钞 (Selected Essays from the *Draft on the Four Branches*).

(2) *Dachuntangji* 大椿堂集 (Great Cedar Hall Collection), with a preface by Wang Siren (zi Jizhong, 1575-1646), who also wrote a commentary to *Mudan ting*. This edition probably was published between 1629 and 1630. It was included in *Chongzhen ba dajia shi*...
xuan 崇祯八大家诗选 (Selected Poems of Eight Great Poets in the Chongzhen Period) published in 1633.32

3) Bailudong gao 白鹿洞稿 (Draft from White Deer Cave), which includes prose and poetry composed after 1644.33

4) Xiaojing jianzhu 孝经笺注 (Commentary to the Classic of Filial Piety).34

5) Xiaojiang ji 萧江集 (Xiao River Collection). A collection of Li’s poems composed after he was forced to disband his troupe in 1662. It has a preface by Shi Runzhang (1618-1683).35

6) Xianyinpu 仙音谱 (A Register of Immortal Sounds), commonly entitled Yuzhang xianyinpu 豫章仙音谱 (A Register of Immortal Sounds from Yuzhang), published in the Kangxi period, which includes poems composed by Li and his friends.36 According to Qian Qianyi (1582-1664), most of the poems are about watching the performances of Li’s private troupe.37 This work is therefore of great interest for this study, but to date I have not been able to locate a copy of it.

According to Wang Siren, Li asked him to write a preface for Dachuntang ji while Li was on leave in Nanchang.


33 Wei Yuankuang, Nanchang xianzhi, p. 1548; also Zhao Zhiqian et al., Jiangxi tongzhi, p. 2335.

34 Wei Yuankuang, Nanchang xianzhi, p. 1548; also Zhao Zhiqian et al., Jiangxi tongzhi, p. 2165.


36 Sun Dianqi, Fanshu ouji, p. 531. Yuzhang is the ancient name of Nanchang.

37 Qian Qianyi, “Du Yuzhang xianyin pu man ti ba jueju... 读豫章仙音谱谩题八绝句...” (Eight quatrains composed randomly upon reading the Register of Immortal Sounds from Yuzhang...),” in Qian Qianyi, Muzhaiyouxue ji (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996), pp. 522-24.
The above works, though inaccessible to me, do reveal something about Li Mingrui’s life. Both *Xianyinpu* and *Xiangjiang ji* are inspired directly by the creation and disbandment of his private troupe, and they illustrate clearly that the troupe would have been of great importance in Li’s life under the Manchu regime. That said in my study I will analyze many materials other than works authored by Li Mingrui to assemble information about his life, his private troupe, and its spectatorship. Among these materials are hosts of poems composed by those spectators and their contemporaries, which tell stories about Li Mingrui, about his troupe and its performances, and about the poets’ opinions of those stories. When I cite the poems, I will examine the historical plausibility of the descriptions within them by quoting from official records and studies of the Ming-Qing transition, in the spirit of a traditional scholar who cites poems while carrying out evidential research (*kaozheng* 考证).

* * *

Li Mingrui was not a playwright or a director but just an afficionado of plays, not a Ming loyalist politically but in close relations with both Ming loyalists and the officials serving the Manchu regime as spectators of his private troupe. Since both Ming loyalists and Qing officials gathered and watched performances by his private troupe on the same occasion and described them in dozens of poems, the gatherings provided a stage on which all spectators also played their roles and expressed themselves. Analyzing those expressions will help us understand Li’s private troupe and the spectators’ responses to its performances.

In what follows, I will investigate Li’s life in Chapter Two and assemble information about his troupe in Chapter Three. In Chapter Four, I will introduce those among his friends and associates whose poems I will utilize for this study and analyze these poems for what they tell us about their authors’ responses to the performances. In Chapter Five, I will explore...
how meaning is created by spectators as they watch a performance and, in Chapter Six, consider to what extent that meaning was also embraced by other literati such as Qian Qianyi and Gong Dingzi (zi Zhilu 芝麓, 1616-73), the leading two scholars in Li Mingrui’s time who were not among the spectators of Li’s troupe. In the conclusion, I will discuss why Ming-style performance elements survived the political and military conquest of the Manchus, argue that the term “cultural loyalist” is a more useful term for describing the literati world of the Ming-Qing transition than the politically charged term “Ming loyalist,” and explore the special manifestation of cultural identification of literati with performers/courtesans during this period.
CHAPTER II
LI MINGRUI’S LIFE AND TIMES

Little is known about Li Mingrui’s life. Since there are no detailed accounts of him in *Ming shi* 明史 (History of the Ming) or *Qing shi gao* 清史稿 (Draft History of the Qing), I have pieced together information from other sources, which form a rough sketch of three aspects of Li’s life: (1) his relationships with Tang Xianzu and Wu Weiye, which help explain why he paid special attention to *Mudan ting* and *Moling chun*; (2) his official career in the Ming period, which will demonstrate his complicated involvement in the partisan strife that was rife during the Ming-Qing transition; and (3) his life under the Manchu regime, which illustrates the change in political culture experienced by the gentry at this time.¹

2.1. Li Mingrui and Tang Xianzu

Li Mingrui was born into a poor family in a village called Chуча 潢槎, forty li away to the northeast of Nanchang in Jiangxi Province.² From this humble background Li went on to study in the Prefecture School of Nanchang and then became a protégé of Tang Xianzu, a man thirty-five years his senior who was the most famous playwright in the country by the

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¹ Shi Zuyu provides an outline of Li’s life, but misses some important original materials and even makes some wrong interpretations. In this part, I will not repeat materials that I think Shi uses or analyzes correctly. See Shi Zuyu, “Li Mingrui gouchen,” *Fudan xuebao* 5 (2002): 134-40.

² Shi Zuyu’s research concerning the years of Li’s birth and death is excellent. See Shi Zuyu, “Li Mingrui gouchen,” pp. 134-35. He thinks that Li and his family originally lived within the City of Nanchang, but according to the gazetteer for Nanchang, it is very likely that they were villagers in Chуча until Li succeeded in the 1622 metropolitan examination and took office in Beijing. See Wei Yuankuang, *Nanchang xianzhi*, pp. 52, 920; and also his “Nanchang jiangyu shuidao tu 南昌疆域水道图” (Map of the territory and irrigation works for Nanchang) in *Nanchang xianzhi*. For the poverty and simplicity of Li’s father, see Tan Yuanchun, *Xiaoyi Li Taigong zhuan 恤义李太公传* (Biography of the filial and righteous old gentlemen Li [Zhensuo]), in Tan Yuanchun, *Tan Yuanchun ji*, ed. Cheng Xingzhen (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998), pp. 574-76; also Wang Siren, “Li Zhensuo xiansheng xiaoyi zhuan 李貞所先生孝義傳” (The filial and righteous life of Mr. Li Zhensuo), in *Wang Jizhong xiansheng wenji*, pp. 19448-51.
time of their association.

2.1.1. When Was Li Mingrui under Tang Xianzu’s Supervision?

In a note in which he accepted Li Mingrui as his protégé and attached a poem, Tang wrote:

In spite of the snow you dispensed with trivial burdens and studied in my humble home, and for this you deserve praise as a man of some accomplishment. In accepting Taixu [as my protégé], there is sure to be future glory in view of past promise. In acknowledging me as his master, Taixu hopes to achieve much with each passing day and to contribute much with each passing month. Tonight I have extemporized a quatrain to present him, as follows:

When did your youth chivalry come into being?
You gave up drinking and arrived here from home.
Plum blossoms in spring snow at midnight,
Voice reciting by lamp-light at a small window.³

Li Mingrui had been under Tang’s supervision for seven years, as indicated in a poem by Li himself that contains the line, “In seven years’ time I became proficient in the Lisao and Wenxuan 七岁熟精骚选理.”⁴ There is no evidence of the exact date Li began to study under Tang Xianzu, “Jian menren Li Taixu 東门人李太虚” (A note to my protégé Li Taixu), in Tang Xianzu quanji, ed. Xu Shuofang (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 1999), p. 1484.


⁴ Li Mingrui, “Linchuan Tang shi wenye duonian...临川汤师问业多年...” (Master Tang in Linchuan had been tutoring me for many years...), in Mao Xiaotong, Ziliao huibian, pp. 278-29. From Li Laitai (d. 1681; jinshi 1652), we learn that Laitai’s father, Li Xuemin 学旻, studied together with Li Mingrui under Tang’s direction and lived in the same bedroom for three years, information that does not contradict what we learn from Li Mingrui here. See Li Laitai, “Ji zongbo xueshi jia Langweng shu 祭宗伯学士家朗翁叔” (Funeral oration for my uncle Langweng, the former academician and minister of rites), in Li Laitai, Lian kan ji (Jinan: Qi Lu shushe, 1997), p. 215; also in Mao Xiaotong, Ziliao huibian, p. 279. Li Mingrui’s reference to “seven sui” cannot refer to Tang Xianzu, since we know that Tang began to study Wenxuan only at twenty sui and was
Tang’s supervision, but it must have been after Lu Tingxuan 卢廷选 (jinshi 1592) became Prefect of Nanchang Prefecture in 1606, because of a comment we have by Li’s father, Li Zhensuo, which furnishes a clue. The comment, preserved in a biography of the father written by Tan Yuanchun 谭元春 (zi Youxia 友夏; 1586-1637), one of the founders of the Jingling School, refers obliquely to a memorial Mingrui had submitted to the Emperor Chongzhen requesting leave to return home to care for his father:

Who asked you to inform the emperor of my story? When you were a government student appreciated by Prefect Lu, you spoke to him [about me], and he planned to visit my house. When you were studying under the supervision of Master Tang in Linchuan, he wrote “Cooking for mother in the snow hut” to praise me; here too this gesture was occasioned by your speaking to him. 

Lu Tingxuan had held office in Cangzhou and then in Beijing before coming to Nanchang. While in Nanchang he often met with students in the prefecture school, and in Wanli 35 (1607) he had ordered that district schools in Nanchang and Xinjian be repaired. Such action typically was undertaken just after taking a new post and it is reasonable to infer that Lu became Prefect of Nanchang in 1606. Moreover, Tang Xianzu visited Nanchang several times from 1607 on until his death in 1616, and every time he visited, local scholars and not well-versed in this collection until his thirty or forty sui. See Xu Shuofang, Wan Ming qujia nianpu (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1993), vol. 3, p. 232; also Tang Xianzu, “Yu Lu Jingye 与陆景邺” (A letter to Lu Jingye), in Tang Xianzu, Tang Xianzu quanji, p. 1436.


Tan Yuanchun, “Xiaoyi Li Taigong zhuan,” in Tan Yuanchun ji, p. 575. Li Mingrui’s grandfather had died, and the dedication by Tang Xianzu mentioned here praises Li Zhensuo for his filial care of his mother.


For the bibliography of Lu Tingxuan, see Song Ruolin et al., Putian xianzhi (Taibei: Chengwen chubanshe youxian gongsí, 1968), pp. 560-61.
students sought direction from him or asked to be his protégé.\(^9\) Since Li Mingrui tells us that he had been under Tang’s tutelage for seven years and Tang died in 1616,\(^10\) it is likely that he became Tang’s protégé formally sometime around 1608 when he was 23 years old.

2.1.2. Tang Xianzu’s Influence on Li Mingrui

As a protégé of an elderly Tang, Li Mingrui was greatly influenced by him. Tang’s thought had undergone a dramatic change in his late years, after his dismissal for failure in the evaluation of 1598. Commenting on changes in the style of his own prose and poetry, Tang informed one of his friends,

> When I began to study as a young man, I already realized to attack Wang [Shizhen王世贞, 1526-90] and Li [Panlong 李攀龙, 1514-70], and abandoned myself to the euphuistic style of parallel couplets, following the models of the Six Dynasties [poets]. After a long time, I began to spurn this style. In this sense I too became a follower of Wang and Li. Having indulged in drama and connived at my passions for several years, I began to read works by the scholars of the past and natives of Jiangxi and became interested in the thoughts of Zeng Gong 曾巩 [a native of Nanfeng; 1019-83] and Wang Anshi 王安石 [a native of Linchuan; 1021-86].\(^{11}\)

Qian Qianyi reiterated these comments in his biography of Tang, remarking that Tang was

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\(^9\) According to Xu Shuofang, Tang Xianzu visited Nanchang in 1607, 1608, 1609, 1612, and 1614. See *Wan Ming qujia nianpu*, vol. 3, pp. 425, 435, 437, 446, and 456. In the preface to an anthology of works by Nanchang poets, Tang wrote, “Every time I visited Zhangmen, groups of scholars would come to ask me for supervision in the Pavilion for Embracing Scenery, where they had grand meetings. 余每如章门，前后校业者，往往而至，会揽秀楼中甚盛.” See Tang Xianzu, “Lanxiulou wenxuan xu 揽秀楼文选序” (Preface to Literary selections from The Pavilion for Embracing Scenery), in *Tang Xianzu quanji*, pp. 1136-37. Constructed in Wanli 34 (1606), Lanxiulou was a favorite place where literati in Nanchang gathered and composed prose and poetry. See Chen Hongxu, *Jiangcheng mingji*, 4:1 la-b. Tang Xianzu wrote a rhapsody about it in 1608. See *Tang Xianzu quanji*, 1999, pp. 1039-48; also Xu Shuofang, *Wan Ming qujia nianpu*, vol. 3, p. 435. It is likely that the preface was also written in 1608.

\(^{10}\) Xu Shuofang, *Wan Ming qujia nianpu*, vol. 3, p. 465.

\(^{11}\) Qian Qianyi, “Tang Yireng xiansheng wenji xu 汤义仍先生文集序” (Preface to the Collected prose of Mr. Tang Yireng), in Qian, *Muzhai chuxue ji* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), pp. 905-06.
proficient in *Wenxuan* (Selections of Refined Literature) in his youth, studied music in middle age, and changed his writing style after forty *sui*, modeling his poetry on that of Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) and Su Shi 苏轼 (1036-1101) and his prose on that of Zeng Gong and Wang Anshi.¹³

Wang Shizhen and Li Panlong were two leaders of the Latter Seven Masters who represented the Archaist School of Ming literature.¹⁴ Wang Shizhen abided by the fundamental principle of archaism, which modeled itself on the prose of Qin and Han and the poetry of the High Tang, although he also acknowledged the accomplishments of Song poets including Su Shi.¹⁵ Tang Xianzu was unfriendly to Wang Shizhen’s family and disagreed with Wang Shizhen on literary theory. As mentioned above, he followed the style of the Six Dynasties in his early years and then changed to venerate the works of Zeng Gong, Wang Anshi, Su Shi and Bai Juyi; he never followed the works that the Archaist Masters honored.¹⁶

Scattered sources suggest that Li Mingrui carried on these tendencies of Tang’s

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¹² Throughout this thesis, I adopted the customary Chinese system for counting age.


¹⁴ For Wang Shizhen’s biography, see L. Carrington Goodrich, *Ming Biography*, pp. 1399-1405. For Li Panlong’s, see Goodrich, pp. 845-47.


mature thought. As early as 1624, in the preface to *Sibu gao*, Huang Daozhou compares Li Mingrui to Su Shi in experience and the style of his prose.\(^{17}\) Zhou Lianggong (1612-72; *jinshi* 1640) agrees with Qian Qianyi’s view of the changes in Tang Xianzu’s late works and makes the direct claim that Li Mingrui inherited Tang’s mantle:

> Master [Tang] Yireng had been following the style of the Six Dynasties to compose his prose and poetry. He did not spurn what he had written [as a young man] until his late life, when he realized to model his works on those of Zeng Kong and Wang Anshi. […] Mr. [Li Taixu] carried on Tang’s thought.\(^{18}\)

A more detailed and vivid description of the style of Li Mingrui’s poetry and prose was provided by Wang Siren:

> [Li Taixu’s] *yuefu* poems are pure and classical, unrestrained as a falcon flying in the sky; his modern-style poems are momentous and unrepressed, like a whale roaming in the sea; his ballad poems are as rushing and lively as a heavenly steed galloping down the slope; his eight-legged essays and letters, with precise allusions and true forms, are like a seasoned peasant talking about farming; his memorials are penetrating and earnest, like an excellent physician writing out a prescription.\(^{19}\)

Wang Siren did not explicitly say that Li Mingrui’s works were influenced by Tang, but his description of Li’s style could also be applied to the works of Bai Juyi, Su Shi, Zeng Gong, and Wang Anshi, all exemplars of Tang’s late years.

According to Li Mingrui himself, Tang taught him and his fellow students to “explore all learning from our innate sensibilities and not live life out of books; to refine our thoughts


\(^{19}\) Wang Siren, “Li Taixu *Dachuntang ji xu,*” in *Wang Jizhong xiansheng wenji*, p. 19335.
by following the Confucian way and not seek success from the eight-legged essays.

Here Tang emphasized directly the role of xingling (innate sensibility) in scholarship and writing, and as I will argue, Li upheld his supervisor’s teaching.

The idea of xingling, as a literary concept, was developed most fully by the Gong’an School (also known as xingling pai, or the School of Innate Sensibility) in opposition to the Archaist School. Its leader, Yuan Hongdao (1568-1610), used the term xingling interchangeably with xingqing, to refer to self-expression as the source of literary creation. As personal nature within one’s bosom, xingling means “not only a combination of personality and spirit, but also a synthesis of feeling and emotion,” and in writing, it is “revealed through spontaneous outbursts and not through deliberate contemplation.” After Yuan Hongdao’s death in 1610, the Jingling School has been viewed as the successor of xingqing to the Gong’an School, and its founders Zhong Xing and Tan Yuanchun also “stressed the importance of individual innate sensibility,” even though the Jingling writers were critical rather than supportive of Yuan Hongdao and his brothers.

According to Chih-p’ing Chou, “xingling” has different meanings in different historical contexts and academic discourses, but Tang Xianzu’s understanding of the term

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21 Chou, Yuan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School, p. 46. For Yuan Hongdao’s biography, see Goodrich, Ming Biography, pp. 1635-38.

22 For Zhong Xing’s biography, see Goodrich, Ming Biography, pp. 408-09.

23 Chou, Yuan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School, pp. 113-18.

24 Chou examined the origins of xingling and investigated its meanings. See Chou, Yuan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School, pp. 44-45.
is similar to its meaning in the Gong’an literary theory. In fact, Tang was a major ally of the Gong’an School. Both he and Li Zhi 李贽 (1527-1602), one forerunner of the Gong’an School, were influenced by the teachings of Wang Yangming 王阳明 (1472-1528), especially the ideas of the Taizhou 泰州 thinkers, and their intellectual pursuits of “innate sensibility” were interrelated, as Pei-kai Cheng has argued. Given their shared interest in xingqing, Tang supported the principles of both the Gong’an and Jingling Schools. In his late years, he published five essays by Tan Yuanchun and praised the author highly in his preface to the collection.

That Li Mingrui accepted Tang Xianzu’s interpretation of xingqing is illustrated in Li’s preface to Xu Hangyoucao 徐杭游草 (Draft of Travels to Xuzhou and Hangzhou), an anthology of poems by Fang Wen (1612-69), and also in his relationship to Tan Yuanchun, one of the founders of the Jingling school. In his preface, Li emphasized his belief that the six classics of Confucianism, including the Book of Songs, were essentially narrative works. He emphasizes the importance of xingqing in poetry, and argues that all poems in the Book of Songs were composed to express the minds and feelings of loyal officials, filial sons, sentimental women, and men at war, who indulge in their passions and sentimental attachments. All of them express an idea, and both feeling and scene are found in them.


27 In a letter to his friend, Tan wrote, “Master Tang in Linchuan once sent me the prologue to the Five Essays of Master Tan, but I did not reply to him before he passed away. A note to one of Tan’s poems says, “Tang [Xianzu] once wrote a preface to and published five essays of Mr. Tan (A poem sent to Mr. Huang Zhenfu and to commemorate Tang Linchuan), in Tan Yuanchun ji, p. 65.
How can they be compared to the work of later poets, who ignore their own sensibilities and gather up other peoples’ dregs, swallowing them raw and whole in the name of “seeking after poems”?  

As one of the two founders of the Jingling school, Tan Yuanchun advocated a literary theory grounded in *xingling*. Tan had been unsuccessful in several provincial examinations until Li Mingrui supervised the examination in Hubei in 1627, during which Tan was selected as the Number One Graduate, and since then, he showed deep gratitude for Li’s recognition, and the two men maintained a close relationship until Tan’s death in 1637. Two essays Li wrote discuss Tan’s poems and ideas, and it is highly likely that Tang Xianzu’s estimate of Tan’s talent influenced Li’s.

2.2. Li Mingrui and Wu Weiye

Li Mingrui and Wu Weiye became acquainted in 1616, when Li and Weiye’s father Wu Kun 吳琨 (zi Yuyu 禹玉, Yunyu 蘭玉; 1584-63) were tutoring the sons of Wang Zaijin 王在晋 (zi Mingchu 明初; hao Huyun 島雲; 1564-1643; jinshi 1592) in Taicang and when Weiye was also under his father’s tutelage. According to Niu Xiu 钮琇 (fl. the 17th century),

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28 Li Mingrui, "Xu Hang youcao xu 徐杭游草序" (Preface to the *Draft of Travels to Xuzhou and Hangzhou*), in Fang Wen, *Xu Hang youcao* (included in *Tushan ji*, vol. 5. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979), 1a.

29 For one view of Tan Yuanchun’s place in the Jingling school, see Chou, *Yuan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School*, pp. 113-18.


31 Ma Daoyuan, ed., *Wu Meicun nianpu*, in *Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan*, ed. Shen Yunlong
Li appreciated Weiye’s exercises in composition and predicted that the child would be a great man. At the end of the lunar year, Li became drunk at a feast and smashed a jade cup that his host used specially to press the tutors to drink. Teased by his disciples for this lapse, Li left for Nanchang with tael of silver given by Wu Kun to cover his traveling expenses. A likely date for this incident is the end of 1620 or beginning of 1621.32

In 1630, Wu Weiye was successful in the provincial examination, and it was said that Li managed to get Wu’s examination paper and showed it to his colleagues in Beijing. The following year, with Li as his examination mentor, Wu became the number one graduate in the metropolitan examination and second in the palace examination.33 However, his success was soon challenged. According to Cheng Muheng 程穆衡 (jinshi 1737), some of Li Mingrui’s enemies demanded that Wu’s honor be revoked because of his failure to follow proper procedure in listing Li as the examination mentor who recommended him. Li rejected this demand,34 but referred to the incident in a preface and explained his reasons for singling out Wu’s paper.35 Whether Wu Weiye’s honor was deserved or not, we can conclude that Li

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32 After describing how Li Mingrui argued with his host and went home, Niu Xiu mentioned that he was successful in the provincial examination in the autumn of the year when he came home from Taicang. According to the Jiangxi tongzhi, Li became the number one graduate in the 1621 provincial examination in Jiangxi. See Niu Xiu, Gu sheng, 1:10b-11a; and Tao Cheng et al., Jiangxi tongzhi (n.p., 1732), 55:28b. Citing Gu Shishi 颜师轼, Ma Daoyuan thought that Li left Wang Huyun’s family in 1622. See Ma Daoyuan, Wu Meicun nianpu, p. 16-17. This is unconvincing, because Li was successful in the metropolitan examination in Beijing in the spring of 1622.

33 Ma Daoyuan, Wu Meicun nianpu, pp. 20-22; Niu Xiu, Gu sheng, 1:11a.

34 Cheng Muheng, “Loudong qijiu zhuan 善东耆旧传” (Biographies of old respected scholars of Loudong), in Wu Weiye, Wu Meicun quanji, ed. Li Xueying (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), p. 1411.

35 The paper was written in a style that differed completely from that favored in the examinations for
Mingrui’s part in his success was not a small one.

Lu Shiyi 陆世仪 (1611-72), a native of Taicang, provides more details about Wu’s success. According to him, Weiye’s success was promoted intentionally by Li Mingrui and Zhou Yanru 周延儒 (1588-1644), the chief examiner and longtime associate of Weiye’s father. Their promotion of Wu was hailed as nepotism by some enemies of the Donglin clique to which Zhou Yanru belonged, but Emperor Chongzhen dismissed the impeachment since he also appreciated Wu Weiye’s paper. An argument then arose between Li Mingrui and Zhang Pu 张溥 (zi Tianru 天如; 1602-41), Wu’s tutor prominent in literati circles, when Wu’s paper was published with not Li Mingrui’s name but Zhang Pu’s as the appraiser before the text. Dissatisfied with Wu’s failure to follow proper procedure, Li Mingrui wanted to revoke his honor but relented and abandoned this plan when Wu, accompanied by friends, apologized and explained that it was a publishing mistake. It was the principle of proper procedure that Li Mingrui was advocating, not to have his own name replace Zhang Pu’s. However, Zhang Pu became very angry and remained hostile towards him. Bad relations between them may explain, in part, why no poem can be found in Wu Weiye’s extant collected works about the close relations between Wu and Li during the Ming period.

Other than this, we know little about relations between Li Mingrui and Wu Weiye in the waning years of the Ming dynasty. During the Ming period, their last traceable meeting

the past one hundred years. See “Xiong Yubin ji xu 熊濤熊集序” (Preface to Xiong Yubin’s Collected Works), in Wei Yuankuang, ed., Nanchang wen zheng, pp. 319-20.

36 For the biography of Zhou Yanru, see Zhang Tingyu et al., Ming shi, 308:7925-31; Goodrich, Ming Biography, pp. 277-79.

37 For the biography of Zhang Pu, see Hummel, Eminent Chinese, pp. 52-53.

took place in Beijing in the spring of 1637, when Wu paid a visit to inform Li that Tan Yuanchun had died. According to Wu’s own account, their next meeting did not take place until some time between Shunzhi 8 (1651) and 9 (1652), when Li sought refuge in Yangzhou from the Nanchang rebellion and met Wu at Tiger Hill in Suzhou. This meeting is recorded in a series of poems Wu addressed to Li, in which Wu wrote:

Separated by mountains and passes we still hoped to meet each other,  
Terrified by the army horses we wetted kerchiefs with tears.  
[...]  
We looked at each other, having both lost our way,  
Shaking hands we talked about our hardships.  

关山思会面,  
戎马涕沾巾。  
......  
相看同失路,  
握手话艰辛。  

It is difficult to date precisely the first meeting of the two men in the Qing period, but a close examination of the arrangement used in editions of Wu Weiye’s poems enables us to

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39 Li Mingrui, “Zhong Tan hezhuan,” in Tan Yuanchun, Tan Yuanchun ji, p. 959. As discussed below, Li was stripped of his qualification to be an official in this year, so it is conceivable that Wu came to see Li off to Nanchang, perhaps also composing some poems for the occasion that have been lost. Tan Yuanchun died in a hostel in a Beijing suburb.

40 In 1654 when Li was at the age of 70 sui, Wu composed an essay to congratulate him, in which he wrote, “After he arrived at Yangzhou, he met me at Tiger Hill. I found that he looked much younger even though we had been parted for fifteen or sixteen years... 其之维扬也, 与伟业相遇于虎丘, 别十五六年矣, 于我加少...” According to Chinese reckoning, fifteen or sixteen years separated 1637 from 1651-52. Ma Daoyuan dates the essay to 1658, when Wu was at the age of 50 sui; his mistake is made due to a sentence in the text that reads “I think I am twenty years younger than my master 自数其齿少于师二十岁.” In fact, as indicated above, Li was twenty-five years older than Wu. Perhaps the character wu 五 has been lost between shi 十 and sui 岁. See Wu Weiye, “Zuoshi Li Taixu xiansheng shou xu” (Preface to birthday congratulations for Mr. Li Taixu, my examination mentor), in Wu Weiye, Wu Meicun quanji, p. 765. See also Ma Daoyuan, Wu Meicun nianpu, pp. 66-67; Shi Zuyu, “Li Mingrui gouchen,” p. 135.

41 Wu Weiye, “Zuozhu Li Taixu shi cong Yandu bei gui, xun yi Nanchang bing bian bi’nan Guangling, fu cheng 座主李太虚师从燕都北归, 寻以南昌兵变避难广陵, 赋呈” (Master Li Taixu, my examination mentor, came south from the capital Beijing and not long after he was forced to seek refuge in Guangling [Yangzhou] because of the rebellion in Nanchang. I composed the series of poems to present to him),” poem 8, in Wu Weiye, Wu Meicun quanji, p. 116. More discussion of this series of poems can be found in Part 4 of this chapter.
arrive at an approximate date. Jin Rongfan 靳荣範 (1728-84), who edited Wu shiji lan (Overview of Wu [Weiye’s] Collected Poems), arranged the poems according to their form and then their date. The same arrangement is followed in two other editions of Wu’s poetry, and with this in mind we can examine other poems from the chapter containing the series in question for dates. A poem in this chapter following the series is entitled “Hai yi 海溢” (“Tsunami”) and is dated the eighth lunar month of Shunzhi 7, or September of 1650. Working back from this precisely dated poem, we come to another titled “Suimu song Mu da Yuanxian wang Tonglu sishou 岁暮送穆大苑先往桐庐四首” (“Four poems to see Mu Yuanxian off to Tonglu at year’s end”), which indicates that it was composed at the end of Shunzhi 6 (i.e., sometime between December of 1649 and January of 1650). A poem before this one titled “Chu chun ye zuo Jihuaishi 初春夜坐寄怀室” (“Staying at the Studio for Venting Feeling on a Spring Night”) must have been written in the spring of 1649, and thus “Zuozhu Li Taixu shi cong Yandu bei gui 座主李太虚师从燕都北归” (“Examination mentor Li Taixu Came South from Beijing [...]”) was likely written in 1649, i.e., one year after the rebellion broke out in Nanchang in 1648. This inference contradicts what Wu himself tells us but is nonetheless credible. As for the series of poems by Wu about Li Mingrui’s villa at Nanchang, the Garden of Elysium, they can be dated to 1651. Before he

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42 Wu Weiye, Wu shiji lan, ed. Jin Rongfan (n.p.: Lingyun ting, 1770), fanli, 4b.

43 According to Gu Shishi, “In the eighth lunar month [of Shunzhi 7 (1650)], a gale and tsunami broke out and Wu composed a poem to describe them [顺治七年]八月大风，海溢，有诗.” Cited in Ma Daoyuan, Wu Meicun nianpu, p. 52.

44 For the sequence of these poems, see the table of contents in Wu Weiye, Meicun shiji jianzhu, ed. Yan Rong, comm. Chen Muheng (n.p., 1990), 4a; also the table of contents for Wu Weiye, Wu Meicun quanji, vol. 1, p. 4.

45 The series, entitled “Langyuan shi shishou bingxu 阊园诗十首并序” (Ten poems about the Garden of Elysium, with a preface), comes before poems presented to a local official in Zhejiang in the spring.
was forced to leave for Beijing to take office in the ninth lunar month of Shunzhi 10 (late October- mid-November of 1653), Wu Weiye can be regarded politically as a Ming loyalist, and there is evidence from his oeuvre that he regarded his mentor as a Ming loyalist too.

To congratulate Li on his seventieth birthday in the spring of 1654, Wu Weiye composed a series of poems and an essay. In the essay, he briefly rehearsed Li’s political, literary, and academic experiences, from his success in the metropolitan examination in 1622 to his reclusive life since 1649. In addition to praising Li Mingrui in the two series of poems mentioned above, Wu congratulated him now for surviving the hardships of life under the Qing Government with an open mind, while he (Wu) found that strain and stress had aged him prematurely. Wu had been recommended for an official post in Beijing in 1652, and having initially refused the offer he had eventually gone north in the ninth lunar month of 1653. Prior to that, he had paid a special visit to Nanjing with the intention of refusing the recommendation, and he may have passed through Yangzhou and met with Li at this time, composing the essay and poems of congratulation in advance.

It is unclear whether Li exerted any influence on Wu or vice versa. What we can say is that they shared feelings about the fall of the Ming and the period of transition to the Qing, as will become more evident in what follows.

of 1652, which dates them to 1651. See Ma Daoyuan, Wu Meicun nianpu, pp. 53-54. For the series of ten poems about the Garden of Elysium, see Wu Weiye, Meicun shiji jianzhu, 8:17a-21a; and Wu Meicun quanji, pp. 120-24.

46 Ma Daoyuan, Wu Meicun nianpu, pp. 56-59.

47 Wu Weiye, “Shou zuoshi Li Taixu xiansheng sishou” (Four poems to congratulate Master Li Taixu, my examination mentor), in Meicun shiji jianzhu, 13:7b-8a; and in Wu Meicun quanji, pp. 414-15. See also “Zuoshi Li Taixu xiansheng shou xu,” pp. 763-65. For Li’s birthday, see Shi Zuyu, “Li Mingrui gouchen,” p. 135.

48 Ma Daoyuan, Wu Meicun nianpu, pp. 55-59.
2.3. Li Mingrui’s Political Career in the Ming Period

Li Mingrui was not as successful or influential as some other candidates who succeeded in the metropolitan examination in 1622,\(^{49}\) nor as some other officials who were natives of Jiangxi Province in the late Ming Dynasty. He cannot be regarded as a member of the Donglin faction or as a follower of the eunuch faction.\(^ {50}\) Although he expressed his own views on political events and once became a victim of partisan strife, Li appeared to have kept an independent stance throughout the partisan strife of the late Ming period.

He received the *jinshi* degree in April of 1622 and was selected as a Hanlin bachelor (*shujishi*) on August 1. In March of 1624 he was appointed as an examining editor (*jiantao*) in the Hanlin Academy\(^ {51}\) and, in July 1627, as chief examiner of the provincial examination in Huguang, where he selected Tan Yuanchun as the number one graduate.\(^ {52}\) However, the materials most revealing of his political views are those concerned with political events during the Chongzhen period (1628-44).

Among the graduates in the metropolitan examination in 1622 are some famous Donglin members, men such as Wen Zhenmeng 文震孟 (1574-1636), Huang Daozhou, and Ni Yuanlu 倪元璐 (1593-1644).\(^ {53}\) Of these, only Huang Daozhou was close to Li. In some

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\(^{49}\) For the list of graduates who succeeded in the metropolitan examination in 1622, see Zhu Baojiong and Xie Peilin, eds., *Ming Qing jinshi timing beilu suoyin* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), pp. 2598-2601.

\(^{50}\) For an excellent recent study of the Donglin faction and the embroiled politics of the late Ming, which are the backdrop of Li Mingrui’s early life, see John Dardess, *Blood and History: The Donglin Faction and its Repression, 1620-1627* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).


\(^{52}\) Tan Qian, *Guo que*, p. 5376.

\(^{53}\) For Donglin members succeeding in the metropolitan examination in 1622, see Li Yan, *Donglin dangji kao* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1957), pp. 184-85. For the biography of Wen Zhengmeng, see Goodrich, *Ming Biography*, pp. 1467-71; for those of Huang Daozhou and Ni Yuanlu, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period*, pp. 345-47, 587.
name lists of Donglin members compiled by the eunuch faction during the Tianqi period (1621-27), there are at least sixteen members who were natives of Jiangxi Province, but Li’s name is not among them. Zou Yuanbiao 邹元标 (1551-1624), one of the leaders of the Donglin faction, was from Jiangxi, and since officials from the same province typically stuck together, Li’s independence from the Donglin faction is a surprise; what is even more surprising is that he came under attack by Donglin members and their allies.

In May of 1628, Wang Yehao 王业浩 impeached Li Mingrui, accusing him of listing the names of some eunuchs in his preface to a memorial that reported the results of the 1627 provincial examination of Huguang. Wang’s memorial of impeachment implies that Li had relations with some members of the eunuch faction and, as we shall see, Li appears to have had a good relationship with Ruan Dacheng, an adoptive son of the powerful chief eunuch Wei Zhongxian 魏忠贤 (1568-1627). Since no other evidence was uncovered that might flesh out the context of Wang Yehao’s memorial or his attitude towards the Donglin and eunuchs, it is not clear what the impeachment meant to Li’s official career. What is clear, however, is that the memorial prompted Li to submit a memorial that defended his conduct as examiner and requested leave to return home to do his filial duty, but Emperor Chongzhen neither faulted him for misconduct nor approved his request, at least initially. From Tan Yuanchun’s biography of the father we learn that Li Mingrui told the emperor about his

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54 For Donglin members from Jiangxi, see Qian Renlin, Donglin biecheng (Mimeographed edition. Guangzhou: Zhongshan tushuguan, 1958), 11b and passim.


father’s diligent care of his own mother (Mingrui’s grandmother), and his account so moved the emperor that he finally consented to Li’s request for a leave. These events took place in Chongzhen 2 (1629). From this we can also infer that Li returned to Beijing before the end of Chongzhen 3 (1630), in time to serve as Wu Weiye’s mentor in the metropolitan examination held in 1631, in which Wu emerged as zhuangyuan and Zhou Yanru was the chief examiner. Since Li Mingrui was one of the mentors for this examination, this places him in Beijing in the spring of 1631.

Li’s differences with Donglin members, which emerged during these contentious years, can be illustrated with reference to their attitudes on two important political issues: the question of how to deal with the Sanchao yaodian (Essential Documents of Three Reigns), and debates over what Emperor Chongzhen should do as Li Zicheng (1606-1645) marched towards Beijing at the head of a rebel army.

57 Tan Yuanchun, “Xiaoyi Li Taigong zhuan,” in Tan Yuanchun ji, p. 575. As for the year when Li visited his father in Nanchang, some clues can be found in Tan’s works. When Li was home attending his father, Tan wrote a letter saying that he should have visited Li that year but did not because his second brother died in the autumn, and promising to visit Nanchang at some time between spring and summer of the next year. See Tan, “Ji Li Taixu zuoshi” (Letters to Li Taixu, my examination mentor),” letter 1, in Tan Yuanchun ji, pp. 871-72. According to the epitaph by Tan, his brother Tan Yuanhui 谭元晖 (zi Xiaomi 小米) died in the autumn of the year jisi, or Chongzhen 2 (1629). See his “Jia zhong shi muzhi” (Epitaph for my younger brother),” in Tan Yuanchun ji, pp. 700-02. For the seniority of Tan’s brothers, see his “Xian fujun zhiming” (Epitaph for my father),” in Tan Yuanchun ji, pp. 696-97.

58 Tan Qian, Guo que, p. 5555.

59 No evidence illustrates the relations between Li Mingrui and Zhou Yanru. Zhou once was on the lists of Donglin members (see Qian Relin, Donglin biecheng, 5b and passim), but in Chongzhen 2 (1629), he succeeded by means of a dirty trick in getting the position of grand secretary in a contest with Qian Qianyi. He had served as grand secretary and concurrently minister of rites from January 1630 to July 1633 to little credit, and was denounced by most Donglin members for his personal morality and political ability. According to Tan Yuanchun, Li did something against Zhou when he campaigned for the position of grand secretary, although Tan did not provide any more details about what Li did. See his “Bu shou Li laoshi wushi xu” (Belated congratulations on the fiftieth birthday of Mentor Li), in Tan Yuanchun, Tan Yuanchun ji, p. 838. As I will demonstrate below, Li Mingrui and Qian Qianyi had relations after 1644, so it is safe to say that Li supported Qian in his contest with Zhou. Additionally, Tan composed these birthday congratulations to Li in the spring of 1634, in which he illustrated Li’s fair-mindedness by mentioning that he had done something to Zhou. If Li had supported Zhou, Tan’s praise of him here would have irritated most scholars. Thus Li’s attitude to Zhou most likely was similar to that of most Donglin members. For the contest between Zhou and Qian for the position of grand secretary, see Mote and Twitchett, Cambridge History, pp. 614, 619-21.
The compilation of the *Sanchao yaodian*, a document intended to legitimate the power of the eunuchs and discredit the Donglin, began in February 1626 under the directions of Wei Zhongxian. For many, it symbolized the eunuchs’ stranglehold on power, and after ascending the throne, Emperor Chongzhen moved to obviate this usurpation of power and dispel Wei Zhongxian’s influence. In response, Wei hanged himself in December of 1627.

Chongzhen’s next step was to cope with the *Sanchao yaodian* properly and effectively, and on the twenty-fifth day of the fourth lunar month of Chongzhen 1 (28 May 1628), Ni Yuanlu, also a Donglin member, submitted a memorial proposing that all copies of and blocks for printing the *Sanchao yaodian* be destroyed because the book was Wei Zhongxian’s “private work.” Ni thought that it would be impractical to revise the book, and suggested that an annalistic veritable record be compiled to replace the *Sanchao yaodian* as a more trustworthy record of the Tianqi era. In his comment on this memorial, Emperor Chongzhen wrote that it would be unnecessary to keep the *Sanchao yaodian*, since the veritable record was about to be compiled, but he asked for more discussion of so crucial a recommendation.

On 1 June 1628, Li Mingrui weighed into the debate and submitted a memorial clearly aimed at Ni, which suggested that the *Sanchao yaodian* might as well be preserved, as a reference from which the emperor could draw lessons. Li wrote:

60 Tan Qian, *Guo que*, pp. 5319-20.

61 For some information about *Sanchao yaodian*, see Mote and Twitchett, *Cambridge History*, pp. 609, 613.

62 Tan Qian, *Guo que*, p. 5432-33; *Chongzhen changbian*, vol. 7, pp. 447-452, For the whole text of Ni’s memorial and the comment by Emperor Chongzhen, see Ni Yuanlu, *Ni Wenzheng gong wenji*, ed. Ni Huiding (n.p., 1772), 1:12a-14b. The memorial is dated 1 June 1628 in *Chongzhen changbian*, but at the end of the original text included in his collection, Ni wrote, “I wrote and sent [this memorial] on the twenty-fifth day, the fourth lunar month, the first year of Chongzhen,” that is, 28 May 1628. For a study on Ni Yuanlu, see Ray Huang, “Ni Yuan-lu: ‘realism’ in a Neo-Confucian scholar-statesman,” in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 415-49. Ray Huang mentioned Ni Yuanlu’s crucial encouragements to Chongzhen to prosecute the eunuch partisan and recall the Donglin members in 1628 (p. 418).
There are two opinions in the current discussion—to preserve it or destroy it. To those
who ask to destroy it, it should be destroyed; to those who claim to preserve it, why not
preserve it? If it is preserved, Your Majesty will be able to exile and dismiss those
officials who are praised in it, so that any punishment will not be delayed in the
discerning and wise Court. Your Majesty will be able to get and appoint the wise
officials who are deprecated in it, so that Your Majesty need not seek inspiration from
dreams and divination. Basically, the officials regarded as treacherous in the book are
actually virtuous [...] and the officials viewed as virtuous are actually treacherous. ...
Now, when we discuss the book, we will not suggest preserving or destroying it, but
just leave it alone to be preserved or destroyed. . . . The Essential Documents in the
Three Reigns may not be called a “private work;” rather, it refers directly to public
opinion, which can be brought forth provided that one reads it from a point of view the
opposite [of its authors]. [...] I suggest preserving it temporarily so that it will be
affirmed or denied by later generations and help them discern the worthiness and
treachery within. 63

今之争者有存毁二说，然曰毁则诚宜毁，曰存则亦何必不存？存而后皇上之放殛
所遗者，可尽得于其所是，不至稽诛于极辨之朝；皇上之所侧席而求者，可尽得
于其所非，不必更劳乎梦卜。盖凡要典之曰奸者，即贤也， . . .要典之曰贤者，
乃奸也。 . . .今日论是书，不当言存毁，当任其存毁 . . .然则三朝要典，
又可不曰私书，而直曰公议，盖以为反观而公议出焉耳。 . . .臣且欲姑留之而听
是非于万世，反贤奸于此书耳。

Clearly, Li was more tolerant of the existence of a book that many others thought confounded
right and wrong politically, and unlike Ni Yuanlu, Li seemed independent from partisan
strife. However, his were the views of the minority in the discussion, and he created enemies
for himself besides those in the Donglin group. He singled out some officials as opportunists,
who by trickery fawned on and were praised by some in both the eunuch faction and the
Donglin faction, and suggested that evidence of their political thievery could be found in the
book. Qu Shisi 瞿式耜 (1590-1650), a member of the Donglin, had complained in a
memorial that some opportunists were still in important positions at this time, 64 and Li also
implied that his colleagues, as official historiographers, should be held accountable for the


64 Qu Shisi was a protégé of Qian Qianyi, a member of the Donglin faction, and a firm Ming loyalist.
For his complaint, see Tan Qian, Guo que, p. 5434. For his biography, see Hummel, Eminent Chinese, pp. 199-
201.
Sanchao yaodian, since an honest historiographer should not “shift all blame onto others but attribute all merit to himself.”\textsuperscript{65} These same historiographers, Li felt, would not necessarily understand the Emperor’s intentions or know what principles and criteria to follow were they ordered to revise the book. Li himself did not know what the emperor had in mind, since he criticized Chongzhen indirectly in his response to Ni’s memorial by referring to the emperor’s vagueness on the issue.

In fact, Emperor Chongzhen was more concerned with settling the dispute as soon as possible, finally ordering the woodblocks and all copies of the book destroyed on 10 June. In his edict, he declared that “[f]rom now on, officials will not be praised or vilified according to this work and men of talent will not be promoted or demoted according to it. . . . Do not provide any more different suggestions.”\textsuperscript{66}

Probably it was his independence that isolated Li Mingrui and cut him off from help once he was attacked. Li’s father passed away at the end of the year renshen (sometime from the end of 1632 to the beginning of 1633). Li should have hurried home for the funeral, but according to Tan Yuanchun he had not reached Nanchang by the time that Tan’s personal representative arrived there with an elegy of condolence, on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month of the year guiyou (22 February 1633).\textsuperscript{67} After the funeral, Li also should have observed mourning for three years, but in Chongzhen 7 (jiaxu, 1634), we learn that he visited Zhejiang and Jiangsu and bought a boatload of Song editions back to Nanchang from

\textsuperscript{65} Wei Yuankuang, \textit{Nanchang wen zheng}, p. 125.

\textsuperscript{66} Tan Qian, \textit{Guo que}, p. 5435.

\textsuperscript{67} In the elegy of condolence, Tan wrote, “My mentor has not come home yet by a skiff from Beijing one thousand \textit{li} distant 翼舟千里，师归未遑.” See his “Nancheng diaoyan ci 南昌吊唁词” (Elegy of condolence to Nanchang), in \textit{Tan Yuanchun ji}, pp. 732-33; also “Xiaoyi Li Taigong zhuan,” pp. 574-76.
Li’s performance as eldest son during the period of mourning was censured, and was one of two reasons for his failure in the regular capital evaluation of 1635 and dismissal from office on 31 March. During the evaluation, Li was impeached as unfilial to his father and disloyal to the emperor. He was both humiliated and angered by the censure, declaring that “one can do without being an official, but cannot do without being a man.”

A struggle ensued to recover Li’s good name. Tan Yuanchun wrote several letters to Li’s examiners and friends seeking their support, but almost nothing is known of these efforts. They must have had some effect, because in Chongzhen 10 (1637) Li was permitted to defend himself in Beijing. In February of that year he accused Jiang Yueguang (d. 1649), a

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68 In a letter to Li Mingrui, Tan Yuanchun wrote, “I was informed from afar that you, my mentor, came back from Wuxia 遥传师吴下归来.” This letter follows one written in Chongzhen 6 (1633), in which Tan discusses the biography of Li’s father. See Tan Yuanchun, “Ji Li Taixu zuoshi,” letter 4, in Tan Yuanchun ji, p. 873. The information about Li’s purchase of books is from Chen Hongxu, Jiangcheng mingji, 2:52a.

69 Tan Qian, Guo que, p. 5693. In the Ming Dynasty, officials in Beijing were evaluated every six years, “The officials of the fourth rank and higher are required sending their self-confessions to be accessed by the emperor. As for the officials of the fifth rank and lower, the results of their assessments will be listed in a special memorial to the emperor and they will be retired, reappointed, promoted, demoted, or dismissed. This is called the 'capital evaluation.'” See Zhang Tingyu et al., Ming shi, 71:1723. Li declared that he was dismissed from the position of “daily lecturer, companion of the left secretariat for the heir apparent” and, concurrently, “expositor-in-waiting in the Hanlin Academy,” both rank 6a. See Wei Yuankuang, Nanchang wen zheng, p. 633; and Charles O. Hucker, A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 422.

70 Tan Yuanchun, “Ji Ge Qizhan laoshi 寄葛屺瞻老师” (Letters to my mentor Ge Qizhan), letter 1; and “Ji Ling Mingke 寄凌名柯” (A letter to Ling Mingke), in Tan Yuanchun ji, pp. 876, 877.

71 At least five letters are available, and these indicate that Tan Yuanchun sought support for Li from three of his associates: Luo Yuyi 罗喻义 (zi Xiangzhong 湘中; hao Yujiang 黄江; jinshi 1613), Ge Yinliang 葛寅亮 (zi Qizhan 赵瞻; jinshi 1601), and Ling Yiqu 凌义渠 (zi Mingke 范柯; 1593-1644; jinshi 1625). Luo was Li’s examination mentor in 1622, and Ge, a friend and mentor, once was an official in Jiangxi. For the letters, see Tan Yuanchun, “Ji Li Taixu zuoshi,” letters 5 and 6; “Ji Ge Qizhan laoshi,” letters 1 and 2; and “Ji Ling Mingke,” in Tan Yuanchun ji, pp. 874-76, 876-77, and 877-78 respectively. I have gleaned information on Luo Yuyi and Ling Yiqu from Zhang Tingyu et al., Ming shi, 216:5717-18 and 265:6852-53; see also Zhao Zhiqian et al., Jiangxi tongzhi, pp. 324, 2688, and Gong Jiajun, Hangzhou fuzhi (Taibei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1974), p. 2409 (for information on Ge Yinliang); also an editor’s note in Tan Yuanchun ji, pp. 740-41, which mentions that Luo Yuyi was Li Mingrui’s examination mentor in 1622.
Donglin member from Nanchang, of opening one of his private letters covertly. However, the outcome of this effort was that Li was deprived of his qualification to hold office on 13 May. Tan Yuanchun had received the degree of juren (provincial graduate) and had never held office, and the officials he contacted on Li’s behalf had little influence in the official world of the late Ming. Li’s dismissal was likely the result of irrational partisan strife since he did not belong to Donglin or eunuch factions and an independent official would be attacked without any protection of a faction during this period. The capital evaluations, which were conducted by the Ministry of Personnel with the help of censorial officials, were often used to attack and weaken political opponents in the late Ming, and by this time Li was quite isolated.

In 1641, Li was employed by local Jiangxi officials as chief-lecturer of the famous White Deer Academy in Lushan. Then, in the eighth lunar month of Chongzhen 16 (September of 1643) he was summoned by the emperor to Beijing at the recommendation of Li Banghua 李邦华 (d. 1644) and Lü Daqi 吕大器 (d. 1646; jinshi 1628), to consult on policy concerning the rebellion led by Li Zicheng. Because the imperial envoy was delayed by the war Li Mingrui did not set out until December, and on the eve of his departure he was visited by several Donglin members who were natives of Jiangxi, who offered

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72 For Jiang’s biography, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 143-44. He was appointed right vice-minister of rites and acting concurrent chancellor of the Hanlin Academy in 1635 and was Li Mingrui’s immediate chief.

73 Tan Qian, *Guo que*, pp. 5775, 5782.


76 For the biography of Li Banghua, see Zhang Tingyu et al., *Ming shi*, 265:6841-46. For that of Lü, see 279:7141-43.
encouragement. Li Banghua and Li Daqi were staunch and famous Donglin members too. Such associations indicate that Li Mingrui was appreciated by some Donglin members and that there was some consensus between him and them about what was needed at this critical time in the history of the dynasty. But differences appeared as soon as Emperor Chongzhen asked them to discuss what he should do as the rebels were approaching Beijing. Li Banghua and other Donglin members suggested that the emperor should stay in Beijing and his heir apparent move to Nanjing to command the army reserves, but Li Mingrui proposed instead that the emperor himself move south to command the army there, because the heir apparent was too young to have either the prestige or the administrative ability to assume command.

Swayed by conservative officials, the emperor rejected any suggestion that he should move to Nanjing, and as a result he committed suicide by hanging, bringing the Ming Dynasty to an end. But for Li Mingrui, the emperor’s rejection of his counsel perhaps marked the apex of his political career and he made a detailed record of the emperor’s summons and the proposals he had offered. After reading this record, Zhao Yi, a former Ming official,

77 The Jiangxi officials who visited Li included Xiong Mingyu (jinshi 1601), Jiang Yueguang, Yang Tinglin (d. 1646; jinshi 1631), and Wan Yuanji (1603-46; jinshi 1625). See Li Mingrui, “Guwei tezhao ji 告未特召记” (A record of the special summons in the year guiwei), in Wei Yuankuang, Nanchang wen zheng, p. 633. For biographies of Xiong, Yang, and Wan, see Zhang Tingyu et al., Ming shi, 257:6629-31; 278:7113-15; and 278:7116-21 respectively.


79 Li Mingrui, “Guwei tezhao ji,” “Zhaodui ji yi 召对记一” (Record of interviews with the emperor: Part I), and “Zhaodui ji er 召对记二” (Record of interviews with the emperor: Part I), in Wei Yuankuang, Nanchang wen zheng, pp. 633-40. Nearly all that we know about Li is found in these discussions about whether and how to move south. For examples, see Tao Cheng et al., Jiangxi tongzhi, 70:33a; and Xu Zi, Xiaotian jinian, pp. 26-27, 69-71; Wei Yuankuang, Nanchang xianzhi, p. 920; Zhang Tingyu et al., Ming shi, 24:334 and 265:6846.
composed a long poem describing what Li had done in 1644 and opining that Emperor
Chongzhen would not have died nor the Ming have ended had Li’s advice been adopted. In
1661 Fang Wen in turn claimed to have read and planned to print this poem, adding
comments about the affair. Li’s rejected proposals thus brought him fame with
contemporary literati.

It thus appears that in the Ming period Li Mingrui kept aloof from partisan strife,
maintaining relations with one or two members of the eunuch faction and also sustaining
good relations, on the whole, with Donglin members. It is unclear whether his independent
stance was influenced by Tang Xianzu’s independent political attitude towards the Donglin.
In a poem of congratulations on Li’s seventieth birthday in 1654, Wang Youding 王猷定 (zi
Yuyi 于一; 1598-1662), the son of a Donglin member, wrote of how “The stele of the
Yuanyou Party commemorates Sushui [Sima Guang] 于党碑怀涑水,” an allusion to
partisan strife in the Northern Song that refers to the corresponding situation in the Ming. Wang’s allusion implies that Li’s name would have been on the list of names of Donglin
members, but it more likely refers to the circumstance that Li became a victim of late Ming
partisan strife because of his independence. In an essay he wrote to congratulate Li on his
birthday, Wang was appreciative of Li’s independent stance when he wrote:

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80 Fang Wen, “Luling Zhao Guozi Yi du Li Taixu xiansheng Zhaodu lu...庐陵赵国子窥读李太虚
先生召对录…” (Zhao Yi, whose zi is Guozi, of Luling read of Master Li Taixu’s Records of interviews with
the emperor). Fang composed this poem in 1661. See Fang Wen, Xijiang youcao 西江游草 (Draft of travels to
Xijiang. Included in Tushan ji, vol. 6), 3b-4a. Xijiang is an alternative name of Jiangxi.

81 Wang Youding, “Shou Li zongbo Taixu xiansheng 寿李宗伯太虚先生” (Birthday congratulations
to Master Li Taixu),” in Wang Youding, Sizhaotang shiji, in Yuzhang congshu, comp. Hu Sijing (Nanchang,
1916), vol. 160, 3:14a. For Tang Xianzu’s independence from the Donglin and his agreements and differences
with them, see Xu Shuofang, “Tang Xianzu xiqi de qiangdiao he tade shidai,” Zhongguo wen zhe yanjiu
3.1 (March 1996), pp. 6-10. In 1102 Cai Jing 蔡京, Emperor Huizong’s prime minister, inscribed the
names of 309 officials and their so-called criminal acts on a stone tablet erected in front of the gate to the
Imperial University, among which was the name of Sima Guang (1019-83), a native of Sushui, Shanxi. See
As for the disaster of the treacherous eunuchs, I don’t blame the little people but the gentlemen. The kingdom could not but be thrown into disorder, and gentlemen rejoiced in it as a means to make names for themselves—a terrible pain for the country! Those officials who flattered the eunuchs disordered the realm by means of the Essential Documents [in the Three Reigns], and Master Li did not wish to provoke more disputes with respect to this one book. . . . Not long after, Master Li was wounded by slander and then dismissed. In [Chongzhen] 10 (1637), the rebels ran rife... and the capital fell [into their hands]. Where were the officials who had indulged in partisan strife then? Master Li was detained in a dangerous city and tortured by the rebels.... He did not dare to die even when he was beaten unconscious. Then, barefoot and weeping tears of blood, he advocated the plan for burying his dead emperor. Alas! That human talent and the state of the realm should reach such a pass!82

夫逆珰之祸，吾不罪小人而罪君子。天下不得已而有事，君子乐之以立名，国之大痛也。彼媚珰者以要典乱天下，先生不欲事是非于一书，……亡何先生伤于谑，去国。十年，巨寇突突，……神京沦陷，向之朋党安在哉？先生困危城，被盗拷掠，……昏仆中不敢死，乃徒跣泣血，倡谋以葬先帝。嗟乎，人才国势，至于如此。

In Wang Youding’s view, the Donglin party members ignored practical and effective measures to repress the power of eunuchs, indulging in partisan strife even on the eve of the fall of Beijing. Compared with the officials who engaged in factional strife, Li was more loyal to Emperor Chongzhen and more worthy of praise.83

Since his success in the metropolitan examination in 1622, Li Mingrui had kept aloof from the partisan controversy that crippled the government during the Tianqi and Chongzhen reigns (1621-27 and 1628-44 respectively). He had relations with eunuch-partisans such as Ruan Dacheng, and also with some Donglin members, sharing their moral and political views but disagreeing on some details of policy and strategy. Independence hindered his official career in the Ming period, but when considered together with his conduct under the new

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83 In his funeral oration for Li Mingrui, Li Laitai expressed an idea similar to Wang Youding’s about Li Mingrui’s political stance. He emphasized Mingrui’s independence from partisan controversy and appreciated his loyalty to the fallen Ming under the Manchu regime. See Li Laitai, “Ji zongbo xueshi jia Langweng shu,” in Li Laitai, Lian kan ji, pp. 215.
regime outlined in the next part, enabled a stance whereby he could maintain close relations with some Ming loyalists and with officials who served the Manchu conquerors, and invite members of both groups to watch performances by his private troupe.

2.4. Li Mingrui in the Qing Period

Li Mingrui arrived at Beijing in early February 1644, and had his first interview with Emperor Chongzhen on 10 February.\(^\text{84}\) On 25 April, the rebels took over Beijing and the emperor committed suicide by hanging. As were other officials in Beijing, Li was seized, beaten, and held for ransom by the rebels.\(^\text{85}\) He was released when Li Zicheng marched east to campaign against Wu Sangui 吴三桂 (1612-78) and the Manchus in May.\(^\text{86}\) On 7 June, the Manchus took over Beijing. On 8 June, Dorgon (1612-50),\(^\text{87}\) the Manchu prince regent, ordered that sacrifices be performed and a funeral held for Emperor Chongzhen and his Empress. On 19 June, Li Mingrui was recommended for the office of the left vice-minister of rites and coerced into accepting the post. In that capacity he assisted Yang Rucheng 杨汝成, the right vice-minister in planning for and presiding over the funeral ceremonies.\(^\text{88}\) Li would have thought it his duty to bury his emperor and empress with proper ritual ceremonies, but he seemed reluctant to take any office under the Manchus. Even Wang Youding, a firm Ming


\(^{85}\) Tan Qian, *Guo que*, p. 6061-62. For the experiences of the Ming officials during the stay of the rebels in Beijing, see Wakeman, “The Shun interregnum of 1644,” in Spence and Wills, *From Ming to Ch’ing*, pp. 57-58, 66-71; and Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, pp. 287-90.

\(^{86}\) Xu Zi, *Xiaotian jinian*, p. 131. For the biography of Wu Sangui, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 877-80.

\(^{87}\) For the biography of Dorgon, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 215-19.

\(^{88}\) Tan Qian, *Guo que*, pp. 6083, 6085. For Dorgon’s coercion of Li, see Wakeman, “The Shun interregnum of 1644,” in Spence and Wills, *From Ming to Ch’ing*, pp. 74-75.
loyalist, believed that Li took the office for the sole purpose of planning the funeral, as indicated in his birthday essay cited at the end of Part Three. In any event, Li was dismissed from this post on 1 December 1644, on the grounds of disrespectful behavior during an audience with either the Emperor Shunzhi or the Prince Regent. As an official in the Ministry of Rites and a specialist on the *Classic of Filial Piety*, Li would certainly have known the outcome of such conduct, and it is safe to conclude that it was intended to result in his dismissal.

Li Mingrui’s arrival in Nanjing was reported to Emperor Hongguang by Liu Zeqing 刘泽清 (d. 1648) on the nineteenth day of the third lunar month of Hongguang 1 (15 April 1645), that is, the first lunar anniversary of Emperor Chongzhen’s death. On the same day, the Ming government in Nanjing held a ceremony to mourn the dead emperor. Emperor Hongguang received a poem said to have been composed by Emperor Chongzhen before he died and decreed that Chen Mingxia’s 陈名夏 (1601-54) surrender to the Manchus be investigated. It was reported that Li Mingrui’s arrival was praised by Emperor Hongguang and in his memorial, Liu Zeqing also recommended Li, who was not a Donglin member, by comparing him to Chen Mingxia, a Donglin member who had surrendered to the Manchus. It is unclear whether Li Mingrui brought with him the emperor’s posthumous poem and list of officials who had surrendered, but he was coldly received by some Nanjing officials who

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89 Shi’er chao donghua lu (Shunzhi chao) (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1963), 2:29a.


91 Tan Qian, Guo que, p. 6198. For the biography of Liu Zeqing, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 531-32; for Chen Mingxia’s, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, p. 95. Chen Mingxia (1605-54) was a native of Liyang 溧阳, Jiangsu.

thought themselves loyal and upright. According to Li Qing (1602-83), then serving in Nanjing, Li did not have an interview with Emperor Hongguang after his arrival but instead met with Ruan Dacheng on the outskirts of Nanjing for several days. A memorial he submitted to Hongguang, in which he possibly described his experiences in Beijing after it fell to the Manchus, was regarded by many as a pretext for defending himself.\(^93\) It was also said that Ruan Dacheng attempted to incite Li into attacking Jiang Yueguang, a grand secretary in Nanjing who was hostile to Ruan, but Li refused to do so.\(^94\) These stories further illustrate Li’s independence from but sympathy with the Donglin faction. At this time Li corresponded with Huang Daozhou, a staunch Donglin member who was debating whether to resign from his position in Nanjing,\(^95\) possibly to inform Huang of his experiences in Beijing. In his reply, Huang seemed willing and able to understand Li’s actions under the Manchus and he confirmed Li’s moral quality and loyalty, saying:

> Excepting surrender [to the barbarians] as a personal taint, there are the alternatives of considered speech and careful deliberation. Even though one cannot stand shoulder-to-shoulder with [Bo] Yi and [Shu] Qi, why can one not compare with [Liuxia] Hui and [Shao] Lian? [...] As for my writing, it falls short of yours, and as for my conduct, I know well what is superior or inferior, present or lacking in it. What need is there for you to have words with the likes of them?\(^96\)

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\(^94\) Wen Bing, *Jia yi shi an* 甲乙事案 (Notes to the events in the years of *jiashen* and *yiyou*), cited in Shi Zuyu, “Li Mingrui gouchen”, p. 137.

\(^95\) Hong Si et al., *Huang Daozhou nianpu*, eds. Hou Zhenping and Lou Zengquan (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1999), pp. 28, 87, 115.

\(^96\) Huang Daozhou, “Da Li Taixu shu 答李太虚书” (A reply to Li Taixu), in Huang, *Huang Zhangpu Quanjí* (n.p., 1826), 16:5b-6a. Huang addressed Li as “nian weng 年翁” (old men who succeeded in the civil examination in the same year), since both of them succeed in the metropolitan examination in 1622, making Li sixty sui in 1644, old enough to be addressed in this manner. Thus I think it likely that Huang replied to Li’s letter in late 1644 or early 1645. Bo Yi 伯夷 and Shu Qi 叔齐 were famous hermits who refused the appointments from the Zhou after the collapse of the Shang. See Sima Qian, *Shiji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 61:2121-29.
In this reply Huang alludes to Liuxia Hui and Shao Lian, men who took office under chaotic dynasties but were still regarded as noble recluses by Confucius, since they acted morally and rationally. This is Huang’s way of saying to Li that although he took office under the Manchus, he too could be regarded as a noble recluse. At the end of the letter Huang suggests that Li need not care about impeachment by their colleagues nor need he dispute with the officials who reproach him, since he had done nothing wrong.

Before Li’s arrival at Nanjing, the minister of punishments in Nanjing had sent several memorials advising punishments of former colleagues of Li and Huang who had surrendered to the rebels and/or the Manchus in Beijing. On 10 March 1645, a censor named Zhou Yuantai sent up a memorial suggesting that the ministry of punishments arrest Yang Rucheng, Li’s partner in Beijing, and Cao Rong (1613-85), who had surrendered to the Manchus. On 9 April, Emperor Hongguang received one more memorial of this kind but ignored it. Although those punishments were not actually implemented because of the incompetence, indolence, and disorder of Emperor Hongguang and his government, Li Mingrui risked being arrested when he appeared in Nanjing on the

97 Confucius said, “It may be said of Hui of Liu-hsia, and of Shao-lien, that they surrendered their wills, and submitted to taint in their persons, but their words corresponded with reason, and their actions were such as men are anxious to see. This is all that is to be remarked in them.” See Ruan Yuan ed., Shisanjing zhu shu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), pp. 2590-30. The English translation is cited from James Legge, “Confucian Analects,” in The Chinese Classics (2nd and rev. ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893), vol. 1, pp. 336-37.

98 At least two similar memorials were sent by the minister of punishment in Nanjing, one on 8 September 1644, the other on 7 February 1645. See Tan Qian, Guo que, pp. 6136-37, 6175.

99 Tan Qian, Guo que, p. 6184. For the biography of Cao Rong, see Hummel, Eminent Chinese, p. 740.

100 Tan Qian, Guo que, p. 6195.

101 For such conditions under the Hongguang regime, see Mote and Twitchett, Cambridge History,
anniversary of Emperor Chongzhen’s death. His decision to go there in spite of this risk illustrates his loyalty to the fallen Ming and distance from the rising Qing.

Less than two months after Li’s arrival, Emperor Hongguang fled the city and the Manchu army occupied Nanjing. Although Li’s life after the fall of Nanjing in 1645 is not well documented, it is possible to discover some information concerning his activities in this period. He lived in Nanchang until 1649, sometimes traveling about in Jiangsu and Zhejiang as a merchant and at other times living in Lushan as a recluse while lecturing at the White Deer Academy. Facts about his activities directly relevant to the concerns of this thesis are: (1) his refusal to join in but moral support of a rebellion led by Jin Shenghuan 金声桓 and Wang Deren 王得仁 against the Manchus in Nanchang in 1648; (2) his mentality that was similar to that of a Ming loyalist, even though he once held office under the Manchus; (3) accumulation of property as a merchant.

After the fall of Nanjing, according to Wu Weiye, Li may have lived as a recluse in Lushan, collecting materials with an intention to write a historiography about the rise and fall of dynasties. When Jin Shenghuan and Wang Deren rebelled in 1648 in Nanchang, Li was sympathetic to the rebellion, but refused an invitation from the rebels to join them. Wu

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102 Much information about Li in this period can be found in Wu Weiye’s poems. See Wu Meicun Quanji, pp. 114-16, 120-24, 414-15, 763-65.


104 Wu Weiye, “Zuoshi Li Taixu xiansheng shou xu;” “Zuozhu Li Taixu shi cong Yandu jiandao bei gui...,” poem 2; “Langyuan shi shishou bing xu;” poem 9, in Wu Meicun quanji, pp. 764, 114, 123, respectively.

105 In the poem presented to Li, Wu wrote of how:

out of pity for the bones of the newly vanquished,
He climbed the terrace alone as the sun set.
refers to Li’s disinclination to join in the rebellion by way of allusions in two of his poems.

In the first of them, he claims that Li informed him of the rebellion by a letter:

From the River’s islet at night comes the sound of the watchman’s knocker,  
From each River City precinct, carriages emerge.  
In the end it proved difficult to enlist Li Bai,  
who kept to his bed in Kuanglu.  

江渚宵传柝，  
江城里出车。  
终难以李白，  
卧病在匡庐。

The second line refers to the thousands of people who were forced to do corvée for the Manchu army during the siege of Nanchang, a description corroborated in other sources.  

The allusion to Li Bai in the last two lines of Wu’s poem refers to the An Lushan Rebellion, when Li Bai took refuge in Jiangxi and was employed as a private advisor by Li Lin (d. 756), the Prince of Yong. In 756, Li Lin rebelled and Li Bai dwelt in seclusion at the same place where Li Mingrui chose to reside during the turbulent period immediately after the Manchu conquest.  

In the preface to his series of poems about the Garden of Elysium, Wu used another

可怜新战骨，  
落日独登台。  


106 The phrase “li chu ju 里出车” (from each precinct carriages emerge) comes from Zhouli zhushu and Han shu. In the commentaries to the Rites of Zhou, “fu 赋” (labor levy) is defined as “sending out carriages and labors to do corvée” (chu che tu ji yaoyi 出车徒给徭役). See Zhouli zhushu, in Shisanjing zhushu, p. 712. For Wu’s poem, see Wu, “Zuozhu Li Taixu shi cong Yandu jiandao bei gui...,” poem 5, in Wu, Meicun shiji, 8:14b-15a. For another reference to forced labor for the Manchu army during the siege of Nanchang, see Xu Shipu, Jiang bian jilue, in Baibu congshu jicheng (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1970), 2:la-4a. According to Xu’s account, thousands of people, most of them old men and women, dug trenches along the city wall, built ramparts, and set up pontoon bridges across the Gan River. Many died of exhaustion and others were sold into slavery.

107 For Li Bai’s attendance in Li Lin’s office, see Ouyang Xiu and Song Qi, Xin Tang shu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 202:5763. For the rebellion of Li Lin, see Liu Xu et al., Jiu Tang shu, 107:3264-66; Ouyang and Song, Xin Tang shu, 82:3611-12.
allusion to illustrate Li’s political attitude when he wrote:

Yunqing abandoned his herb garden and did not return,
Shaoling left Rangxi and resided elsewhere.  

云卿弃药圃而不归，
少陵辞瀼西而又往。

Su Yunqing was a recluse in Nanchang in the thirteenth century and once was a close childhood friend of Zhang Jun, a Southern Song general famous for his resistance against the Jurchens. As prime minister, Zhang Jun sent a special envoy to invite Su to work together, but after the first meeting Su left his house without indicating his future whereabouts.

The warfare at Nanchang caused the death of Li’s son Li Que and also damaged his urban villa, the Garden of Elysium. Li Que was a bagong (graduate for preeminence) and once served as jiaoyu (instructor) in the district school of Shangrao, Jiangxi Province. He was killed by Manchu soldiers, possibly while doing forced labor, in Xinjian, a county neighboring to Nanchang. Li Mingrui grieved this loss for a long time, according to Wu Weiye. The Garden of Elysium, one of the most

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108 Wu Weiye, Preface to “Langyuan shi shishou bing xu,” in Wu Meicun quanji, p. 121; also the preface to “Langyuan shi 阖园诗” (Poems about the Garden of Elysium), in his Meicun shiji jianzhu, 8:17b.

109 Tuotuo et al., Song shi, 459:13459-60. For the notation to the sentences cited, see Wu, Meicun shiji jianzhu, 8:18b-19a. For the allusion to Du Fu and Rangxi, see the next page.

110 Wei Yuankuang, Nanchang xianzhi, p. 1101.

111 In a poem, Wu wrote:

How pitiful thinking of his beloved son,
He vents his feelings in the Canglang Pavilion.

可怜思爱子，
托付在沧浪。
famous gardens in Nanchang and originally the urban mansion of the Yiyang Prince, was close to Yonghe men (the Gate of Eternal Peace), one of the eastern gates of Nanchang, and to Dantai ci, a memorial temple to the south (see Figure 1). During the siege of Nanchang, the Manchu commander Tantai Holhui established his headquarters six or seven li away from Yonghe men and ordered that a terrace be built just two li away from this gate, to be used as a watchtower and a battery. The Manchu army shelled the Dantai ci on the day when Wang Deren married and bombarded the city on 1 March 1649, finally putting the rebellion down. Li’s garden could easily have been damaged seriously or destroyed as Wu Weiye hinted in his poem and elsewhere.

After declining the rebels’ invitation, Li Mingrui left by way of Jiujiang to seek refuge and then lived in Yangzhou. He likely did not live in one place for a long time, but

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112 Chen Hongxu, Jiangcheng mingji, 2:52a. Li Mingrui was proud of his garden (see his poems cited in Chapter Three). For the relative positions of the garden, temple, and gate, see “Nanchang fuzhi tu 南昌府治图” (Map of the area under the jurisdiction of Nanchang Prefecture), and “Nanchang fuzhi mailuo tu shuo 南昌府治脉络图说” (Notes to the map of the area under the jurisdiction of Nanchang), in Fan Lai and Zhang Huang, Xinxiu Nanchang fuzhi (1588. Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1990), pp. 27, 28, 29. The Dantai ci was constructed to commemorate Confucius’s protégé Dantai Mieming (zi Ziyu; b. 512 BC), possibly the first scholar to espouse Confucian ideas in Jiangxi. See Sima Qian, Shi ji, 67:2205-06, 121:3116.

114 In the preface to his series of poems about the Garden of Elysium, Wu wrote, “The immortal’s medicine mortars and carts were sent up to heaven. Can the Prince’s pearl screen and painted pillars still be in this world? 将仙人之药臼车箱，供移天上；岂帝子之珠帘画栋，尚出人间？” See Wu’s preface to “Langyuan shi shishou bing xu,” in Wu Meicun quanji, p. 121. For the allusions used here, see Meicun shiji jianzhu, 8:18b-19a.

115 Wu Weiye made reference to these travels in the following couplet:

Just as the wind stiffened at Mount Madang,
He turned the helm towards Pencheng.

马当风正稳，
捩柁下湓城。
rather moved from one place to another, just as Du Fu moved to Dongtun after living in Rangxi for several months. In Zhenjiang or Yangzhou Li wrote to Wu, informing him of the rebellion and his current situation and agreeing to meet with him. This meeting would be the one mentioned above as their first encounter in the Qing period. After that, Li possibly traveled about in Zhenjiang, Yangzhou, Nanjing, Suzhou, Hangzhou, and naturally


116 In the late spring of 767, Du Fu lived in Rangxi and around the end of this year he moved to Dongtun. See *Du Fu nianpu*, ed. Sichuan Sheng Wenshi Yanjiu Guan (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1958), 108b-125b.

117 Couplets from two poems of a series by Wu Weiye supply this information. The first of them mentions a letter that Li wrote to Wu while still in Zhenjiang:

In Nanxu, close to the mountain scenery,
he wrote in reply to Hou Ba.

南徐山色近，
题语报侯芭。

The second couplet, from a poem immediately after the first, mentions their meeting:

We looked at each other, both having lost our way,
shaking hands and talking about our hardships.

相看同失路，
握首话艰辛。

See Wu, “Zuozhu Li Taixu shi cong Yandu jiandao beigui…,” poems 7 and 8, in *Wu Meicun shijizhui jianzhu*, 8:15a-b. In the first couplet Wu casts himself in the role of Hou Ba, protégé of Yang Xiong 扬雄 (53 BC-AD 18), a famous scholar in the Western Han Dynasty (see Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 87:3585). In *Wu Meicun quanji*, “Nanxu 南徐” is inexplicably changed to “Nan Qi 南齐.” See p. 116. Nanxu is the ancient name for Zhenjiang.

118 According to Wu Weiye, Li asked Ji Zongmeng to compose a rhapsody and “Master Zhao” to make a painting of his destroyed villa, the Garden of Elysium. That happened in Zhenjiang, where Mount Beigu exists and in Yangzhou, where the Great Canal starts. As Wu put it in a couplet, “Hopefully, the continuous peaks of Mount Beigu will seem like Censer Peak; the Great Canal with tide gushing will seem like Penkou 庭口.” See Wu, Preface to “Langyuan shi shishou bing xu,” in *Wu Meicun quanji*, p. 121. For more discussion about the rhapsody and painting, see below. According to Fang Wen, Li was living in Nanjing in 1664. See Fang, “Li Langweng yu Shiyinyuan, zhao tong Huang Ziwen Chen Yugong xiaojia 李间翁宿市隐园，招同黄子威、陈俞公小集” (Li Langweng, living in Shiyinyuan, invited me to drink together with Huang Ziwei and Chen Yugong), and “Song Li Taixu xiansheng huan Nan chang 送李太虚先生还南昌” (See Master Li Taixu off back to Nanchang), in Fang Wen, *Tushan xuji* 烙山续集 (included in *Tushan ji*, vols. 7, 8), 3:7b-8a; 1:18a-b.
Nanchang. In Shunzhi 10 (the year guiši, 1653), he was living in Nanchang. In the spring of that year a grand meeting was held at Tiger Hill in Suzhou, which several thousand scholars from nine prefectures attended. As a leader of the literati, Wu Weiye was invited to mediate a dispute between the Tongsheng she 同声社 (Same Voice Society) and the Shenjiao she 慎交社 (Cautious Relation Society), both made up of young scholars.\footnote{Another source puts the attendance at about 500. See Cheng Muheng’s notation to Wu’s poems on this meeting, “Guisi chunri xiyin sheji jishi 癸巳春日禊饮社集即事” (Extempore poems composed during the sacrificial festival and society meeting in spring of the year guiši), in Wu Weiye, Meicun shiji jianzhu, 12:5b; Gu Shishi 顾仲赋, “Meicun xiansheng nianpu 梅村先生年谱” (Chronological Biography of Master Meicun),” in Wu Weiye, Wu Meicun quanji, p. 1463.} During the meeting, Wu asked for information about Li in one of the poems he composed during the gathering and hinted that Li was presently in Nanchang by way of an allusion:

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Any letter from Luling recently?
He vents his feelings in Canglang Pavilion as Zimei did.\footnote{Wu Weiye, “Guisi chunri xiyin sheji jishi,” in Meicun shiji jianzhu, 12:5b.}
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近得庐陵书信否？
寄怀子美在沧浪。

According to one commentator, Luling alludes to Li Mingrui and Zimei refers to Su Shunqin (zi Zimei, 1008-48), a poet in the Northern Song Dynasty who constructed the Canglang Pavilion in Suzhou after his dismissal,\footnote{Tuotuo et al., Song shi, 442:13081.} just as Li Mingrui built a pavilion of the same title in the suburb of Nanchang after the fall of Nanjing in 1645.

In the summer of 1654, Shi Runzhang visited Hangzhou and met Li at West Lake. By his account Li looked distressed and poor, drifting about on a boat together with his private troupe.\footnote{Shi Runzhang wrote:}

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Singing sadly after many disasters with only four walls left,\footnote{Shi Runzhang wrote:}
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However, as I will argue, Li was running businesses and collecting properties
enough. According to Shi, before 1654 Li had joined a “Fragrant Hill Society” (Xiangshan she 香山社) together with some old scholars in Hangzhou. Originally the name of a society organized by Bai Juyi in Xiangshan with eight old scholar-officials, “Xiangshan she” here refers to a “Society of Five Old Gentlemen of Mount Gu” (Gushan wu lao hui 孤山五老会), which Li formed together with Wang Ruqian (zi Ranming 然明; 1577-1655), Feng Yuanchu (zi Yunjiang 云将), Zhang Suichen (hao Qingzi 卿子; d. ca. 1670), and someone surnamed Gu (zi Lindiao 林调). Of these, Zhang Suichen lived in seclusion in Hangzhou after the collapse of the Ming Dynasty and was definitely a Frustrated in his remaining years, he lives in a little boat.

……
A spring breeze sets long sleeves dancing as he plays the silver zither,
At a joyous feast on a moonlit night, the iron flute is put away.

多难徬歌歔四壁,
残生潦倒一孤舟。
……
春风舞袂银筝弄,
夜月弦篷铁笛收。

See Shi, “Xihu zuihou chou Li zongbo 西湖醉后酬李宗伯” (Reply Master Li, the ex-minister of rites while drunk at West Lake), in Shi Yushan ji, vol. 3, p. 436. In a note to another poem composed for Li at West Lake, Shi says, “Any guest who visits him will be accompanied in drinking by his boy-singers 客至，出歌儿佐酒.” See “Xihu cheng Li Taixu zongbo 西湖呈李太虚宗伯” (Presented to Li Taixu, the ex-minister of rites, at West Lake), in Shi Yushan ji, vol. 4, p. 195.

123 In a note to a poem presented to Li, Shi describes how, “[f]orced by the warfare, [Li] lives in Hangzhou. He has some excellent singers in his private troupe and has created a Fragrant Hill Society together with some old scholars at West Lake [李]被兵后侨寓西冷，蓄善歌者，与湖上耆旧为香山社.” See “Xihu zuihou chou Li zongbo,” in Shi Yushan ji, vol. 3, p. 436. The word “Xileng 西冷” (Western cold) is the name of a bridge at West Lake.

124 For the Fragrant Hill Society created by Bai Juyi, see Liu Xu et al., Jiu Tang shu, 166:4356; Ouyang and Song, Xin Tang shu, 119:4304.

125 Wang Ruqian, “Tong Li Taixu xiansheng, Feng Yunjiang, Gu Lindiao, Zhang Qingzi ding Wulao Hui 同李太虚先生、冯云将、顾林调、张卿子订五老会” (I form the Society of Five Old Gentlemen in Mount Gu together with Master Li Taixu, Feng Yunjiang, Gu Lindiao, and Zhang Qingzi), in Wang, Chunxingtang shiji, in Congmu Wang shiyishu (Changsha, 1886), 5:5b-6a. See also “Xiao zhuang,” 1a; 5:1b. Mount Gu is an islet in West Lake.
Ming loyalist. According to Qian Qianyi, Wang and Feng both were Ming loyalists, as I will argue in Chapter Four.

Li’s relations with and fame among Ming loyalists can be viewed partly as indicating that his mentality was that of a Ming loyalist, even though he was criticized by some of them for having served under the Manchus in Beijing for more than half a year. Such criticism of him is illustrated by a story that came into being after Xu Shipu (zi Juyuan; d. ca.1653), a famous poet and essayist in Jiangxi, was killed by a robber in his villa. Zhao Yi (1727-1814), a famous scholar, heard the story from Jiang Shiquan (zi Xinyu 心馀; 1725-85), a playwright, and wrote it down:

Li Taixu was the examination mentor of Wu Meicun and one of the chief ministers in the Chongzhen period. He did not die during the national misfortune but surrendered to Li Zicheng. He did not escape home until the Manchus had unified the country and set up the Qing Dynasty. One Xu Juyuan, a provincial graduate and son of a man [who passed the metropolitan examination] in that same year [as Li did], once derided Li. [...] He wrote a play in which, after Taixu and Gong Zhilu surrendered to the rebels, they heard that Qing troops had entered [Beijing] and fled south in a hurry. After arriving at Hangzhou they were followed by Manchu soldiers and hid between the iron thighs of Qin Hui’s wife at the front of Yue Fei’s tomb. Just then she happened to menstruate, and after the soldiers had gone, the heads of the two men were befouled with blood. This play already had been performed among the people, when Taixu got some word of it. When Zhilu was demoted from the position of the chief minister of the Imperial Parks Administration and was exiled to Guangdong, he passed through Nanchang and also heard about this. He and Taixu secretly summoned performers and watched a midnight performance [of the play]. At the moment when the two men came out from beneath the thighs [of the statue], blood dripping over their faces, they looked at each other and cried aloud, “Our good names and integrity have been dragged through the dust. What more can we say? Since we have been insulted so terribly by this youngster, we must kill him to revenge the humiliation.” Then they sent someone to wait for Juyuan at his hostel and stab him to death.

For the biography of Zhang Suichen, see Gong Jiajun et al., Hangzhou fuzhi, p. 2811; and Deng Zhicheng, Qing shi jishi chu bian (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), pp. 246-47.

The above account is not credible and contains numerous falsehoods. (1) Li cannot be referred to as a chief minister, since he was dismissed from the position of *Hanlin yuan shijiang* (expositor-in-waiting in the Hanlin Academy, rank 6a) in 1635 and was appointed as *You shuzi* (Right Mentor in the Secretariat of Heir Apparent, rank 5a) in 1644. 128 (2) Li did not surrender to the rebels led by Li Zicheng who took over Beijing, and he was dismissed from the position of the left minister of rites, which he had been coerced into accepting and never actively sought. He possibly was attacked by some Manchu soldiers who were irritated by his arrogance, but was never searched by them. 129 (3) Xu Liangyan, 130 Shipu’s father, succeeded in the metropolitan examination in Wanli 26 (1598), 131 while Li succeeded in 1622, so Shipu could not be addressed as the “son of a graduate in that [same] year” (*nianjia zi* 年家子). (4) Gong Dingzi did surrender to Li Zicheng. He also surrendered to the Manchus when their army arrived in Beijing and went smoothly on to an official career in the Qing period. 132 Gong and Li may have known each other, but their relations likely were not as close as the above story suggests, since no strong evidence of such can be found in Gong’s collected works. (5) According to other sources, Xu Shipu was killed by a robber in his own

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128 Tan Qian, *Guo que*, p. 6021.
129 Li Qing, *San yuan biji*, pp. 130-31.
130 For the biography of Xu Liangyan, see Qian Qianyi, *Liechao shiji xiaozhuan*, pp. 555-56.
131 Zhu Baojiong and Xie Peilin, eds., *Ming Qing jinshi timing beilu suoyin*, p. 966.
house, not in a hostel.¹³³

None of the extant works of Xu Shipu indicates his relationship to Li Mingrui. A falling out between them is probable, perhaps caused by Li’s independence from the Donglin faction to which Xu’s father belonged as a famous and firm member. It is said that Xu Shipu was “of great talent, impetuous, and always self-indulgent. He failed in the civil examinations repeatedly. After the national misfortune, he lived as a recluse in the mountains and gave up all hope of succeeding in the civil examinations.”¹³⁴ His distance from Li possibly also stemmed in part from differences in their personalities. As a friend of Xu Shipu, Ming loyalist, and son of a Donglin member, Wang Youding was more tolerant and enjoyed a closer relationship with Li.

It is safe to say that Li’s brief service under the Manchus was one, but not the only, factor that influenced his relations with his contemporaries. It is also safe to say that remaining loyal to the fallen Ming or serving under the Manchus were not the only principles by which scholars decided with whom to associate in the early Qing. In fact, the story of Li and Gong sending an assassin to kill Xu is found in only one source. If Li and Gong actually did this, then Qian Qianyi, Chen Hongxu, and Wang Youding, all close friends of Xu Shipu, would have left some hint of the incident in their writings. In the eighteenth century, Quan Zuwang (1705-55), a specialist on Ming history, questioned the story in a letter to his friend, thinking it stupid for Li and Gong to plot against Xu just when he was being courted and

¹³³ In 1652, Chen Mingxia suggested that offers of office be made to famous scholars. He sent a special envoy to visit Xu with money and clothing as gifts, asking him to serve under the Manchus. Xu refused the invitation and gifts. After the envoy had left, a robber entered his house with the intention of stealing the gifts that Xu had refused. Angry and frustrated, he then dispatched Xu. See Wu Dexuan 吳德旋, “Chuyuelou wenjian lu 初月楼闻见录,” Li Huan 李桓, “Guo Chao qixian leizheng chu bian 国朝耆献类征初编;” Xu Zi, “Xiaotian ji zhuan 小腆纪传;” “Qing shi lie zhuan 清史列传,” in Qingdai zhuanji congkan 清代传记丛刊, comp. Zhou Junfu 周俊夫 (Taipei: Mingwen chuju, 1985), vols. 19, pp. 109-10; 187, p. 449; 69, pp. 812-13; 104, pp. 684-85, respectively.

Quan thinks that Xu’s friends concocted this story, based on conflicts that may or may not have existed.\textsuperscript{135}

Although Li’s temporary service under the Manchus may have invited ridicule, his mentality was the same as that of a Ming loyalist. Though he did not join in the 1648 rebellion in Nanchang, he mourned Emperor Chongzhen and remembered fondly the fallen Ming. Poems written by friends about Li late in his life describe him as a hermit nostalgic for the fallen dynasty. For example, a poem by Wu Weiye contains a couplet recalling his friend’s service in the Hanlin Academy during the Ming:

\begin{center}
A ten-year dream outside Golden Horse Gate, 
is still recollected in the evening clouds.\textsuperscript{136}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
十年金马梦,  
回首暮云中。
\end{center}

Another of Wu’s poems pictures Li fondly remembering Emperor Chongzhen’s kindness to him even in the midst of warfare that put his family members in great peril:

\begin{center}
Fishing in mist-covered water he thought of former favors,  
Midst clash of arms ten mouths broke through the tight siege.\textsuperscript{137}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
烟水一竿思旧德,  
兵戈十口出重围。
\end{center}

Lines from a poem by Wang Youding convey nostalgia for the Ming in the guise of


\textsuperscript{136} Wu Weiye, “Zuozhu Li Taixu shi jiandao cong Yandu bei gui...,” poem 2, in Wu Meicun quanji, p. 114. Here “jin ma” (golden horse) refers to the Golden Horse Gate, where academicians waited for edicts from the emperor in the Western Han Dynasty (for some examples, see Ban Gu, Han shu, 58:2617, 64:2821, 65:2843, 78:3284, 87:3574, 100:4256). As demonstrated in Part Three of this Chapter, Li Mingrui had been an official in Hanlin Academy for about ten years in the Ming period.

\textsuperscript{137} Wu Weiye, “Shou zuoshi Li Taixu xiansheng sishou 寿座师李太虚先生四首,” poem 3, in Wu Meicun quanji, p. 415. The second line means that ten members of Li Mingrui’s family survived the siege in 1648 Nanchang and followed him to seek refuge in Yangzhou.
references to two allusions, one to the partisan controversy in the Yuanyou period (1086-94) of Song, the other to the fallen Western Han Dynasty:

The stele of the Yuanyou Party commemorates Sushui [Sima Guang],
At the ruined palaces of the Western Capital he misses the Numinous Brilliance.  

138

Li himself also declared his loyalty to the Ming. While in Zhejiang in 1654, some scholars congratulated him on attaining the age of seventy sui, to which he responded by citing an allusion to Wang Kun [王琨], who lamented his longevity having witnessed the forced abdication of Emperor Shun 顺帝 of the Song Dynasty in 479.  

139 After Li returned to Yangzhou, scholars there also tried to celebrate his birthday, but he refused them and accepted only the congratulations of a few close friends, such as Wang Youding and Wu Weiye. In his essay for the occasion, Wang praised Li’s continual recollections of the favors that Chongzhen had conferred on him.  

140 It seems that Li wanted others to find his mentality to be similar to that of a Ming loyalist, and that he believed that Wang and Wu would understand him more than others.

138 Wang Youding, “Shou Li zongbo Taixu xiansheng 寿李宗伯太虚先生” (Birthday congratulations for Master Li Taixu, the ex-minister of rites), in Wang, Sizhao tang shiji, 3:14a. For the allusion to the Yuanyou Partisan strife in the first line, see Part Three of this chapter. The second line alludes to King Gong in Lu of the Western Han, whose Hall of Numinous Brilliance was the only one to survive the warfare at the end of the dynasty. Wang Yanshou 王延寿 (zi Wenkao 文考), an Eastern Han writer, visited the hall and composed a rhapsody about it filled with nostalgic reminiscences about the prosperity of the former dynasty. See Wang Yanshou, “Lu Lingguang Dian fu 魯靈光殿賦” (Rhapsody on the Hall of Numinous Brilliance in Lu), in Zhaoming wenxue, comp. Xiao Tong (Taipei: Wenhua tushu gongsi, 1975), pp. 151-55. For the English translation of Wang Yanshou’s rhapsody, see David R. Knechtges, trans., Wen xuan, or Selectons of Refined Literature, vol. 2: Rhapsodies on Sacrifices, Hunting, Travel, Sightseeing, Palaces and Halls, Rivers and Seas (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 263-78.

139 For Wang Kun’s story, see Li Yanshou, Nan shi (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 23:628. Emperor Shun was forced to abdicate by one of his own generals, who founded the Southern Qi Dynasty (479-502).

140 Wang Youding, “Li Taixu xiansheng qishi shou xu” (Preface to the seventieth birthday wishes for Master Li Taixu), in Wang, Sizhao tang wenji, 5:2b-4b.
Around 1650 when he was in Zhenjiang, Li missed his destroyed garden in Nanchang so much that he asked one “Master Zhao” to make a painting of it and Ji Zongmeng (juren 1636) to compose a rhapsody about it. He insisted that the painting and rhapsody be made so as to conjure up memories of his garden and hometown, and said as much when he met Shi Runzhang in 1654 in Hangzhou. But Wu Weiye thought that Li actually was expressing nostalgia for the fallen Ming with the painting and rhapsody:

He has ordered a boat to Huaiyin earlier,  
But still visits the pavilion beside the Yangzi River.  
In the morning, he looks on Mount Beigu,  
Which places seem like Nanzhou?  
Pools and terraces of the Wangs and Xies have vanished,  
Trees wither over the tombs of Qi and Liang.  
Far from home he weeps for his country,  
Are his tears shed just for his hometown?  

早买淮阴棹,  
仍登江上楼。  
晓来看北固,  
何处似南州?  
王谢池台尽,  
齐梁寂树秋。  
天涯忧国泪,  
岂为故乡流？

In the Shunzhi period, Li perhaps owned a very little farmland, and he made a

141 Wu Weiye, Preface to “Langyuan shi shishou bing xu,” in *Wu Meicun quanji*, pp. 120-21; see also *Meicun shiji jianzhu*, 8:17a-19a. According to Wang Zhuo, Li showed the rhapsody to Zhao Kaixin (zi Dongmen jinshi 1634) and Li Kai See Wang Zhuo, *Jin shishuo* 今世说, in *Qingdai zhuanji congkan*, vol. 18, p. 49. Zhao Kaixin was dismissed in 1646 and summoned to Beijing to take his former office in early 1651, so the rhapsody possibly was finished in 1650. The painter could not be Zhao Kaixin, since Cheng Muheng, citing Wang Zhuo, notes that Ji Zongmeng composed the rhapsody but that he does not know who the painter is. I think that Zhao Yi is the painter since, as a native of Jiangxi, he would have visited Li’s garden and known it well.

142 Shi Runzhang, “Xihu cheng Li Taixu zongbo,” in *Shi Yushan ji*, vol. 4, p. 195. One line from the poem mentions the painting, “Mount Kuang is the prototype of the landscape painting 五老峰 is a mountain in Jiangxi.” A note adds that “Master Li misses his destroyed villa, the Garden of Elysium, and has had a picture of it drawn 先生思乡章故园，尝绘为图.” Mount Kuang is an alternative name of Lushan in Jiangxi.

living mainly by running a business. In a poem composed after watching a performance by Li’s private troupe, Li Yuankuang observed how,

After a luxurious feast he again shakes the True Man’s sword,  
In his study he sometimes trims a merchant’s sail.  

绮筵复动真人剑，  
书幌时摇估客帆。

One measure of his wealth is that he bought lots of valuable flowers and plants from Suzhou and shipped them to Nanchang. The flowers and plants were so well known that some famous poets composed poems in praise of them. Li may have purchased them for his birthday in 1654 when he attained the age of 70 sui. In 1655, Sun Zhiwei (1620-87) enjoyed them at the Ou tai 欧台 (Ouyang Terrace) in Nanchang and wrote in a poem that “the flower boat came from Tiger Hill recently 花船新自虎丘来.” Shi Runzhang also enjoyed them when he was the Assistant Administration Commissioner of Huxi Circuit in 1661 and mentioned them in a poem:

The flowers were bought from distant central Wu,  
[...]  
carried aboard ship, with gold spent unstintingly.  

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144 Another poem by Wu Weiye remarks that “[h]e is hospitable but has less than two qing of land 好客从无二顷田.” See “Shou zuoshi Li Taixu xiansheng sishou,” poem 2, in Wu Meicun quanji, p. 414.

145 See Qiu Junhong, Xijiang shihua, p. 817. The first line refers to Li’s study of Daoism in middle age.

146 Sun Zhiwei, “Ou tai tong Wang Yuyi, Du Canglue he Li Taixu zongbo 欧台同王于一、杜苍略和李太虚宗伯” (Reciprocate the ex-minister of rites Li Taixu, together with Wang Yuyi and Du Canglue at the Ouyang Terrace), in Sun, Gaitang ji (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979), 9:2b-3a. He composed the poem in the year yiwei, that is, in 1655. The Ou tai (Ouyang Terrace) is a historic site at which Ouyang Dong, a scholar in the Tang Dynasty, studied. See Shi Runzhang, “Zi zhi ge 紫芝歌” (A song on the purple glossy ganoderma), in Shi Yushan ji, vol. 2, pp. 350-51.

147 Shi Runzhang, “Langyuan mudanhua xia zui ge 郭园牡丹花下醉歌” (Singing drunk amidst the peony shrubs in the Garden of Elysium), in Shi Yushan ji, vol. 2, p. 380. For the year when Shi took office in Jiangxi, see He Qingshan and Yang Yingqin, “Shi Yushan nianpu jian bian 施愚山年谱简编” (A brief chronological biography of Shi Yushan), in Shi Yushan ji, vol. 4, p. 300.
Wang Youding provides an explanation for why the cost of the flowers and plants was so extravagantly high in the following poem:

The Academician is a generous and unrestrained recluse,
He has bought a boatload of Jiangnan spring.
[...]  
With a value of one hundred thousand cash,
They make one feel refreshed at a glance.
[...]  
This spring, snow suddenly fell three feet deep,
In Fujian recruiting officers spread out through the fields.
Officials seized boats and pressed for beans and fodder,
Those with boats did not fit them for flower merchants.
I felt distress even before I saw the soldiers,
Had just heard a city’s archers were all lost in southern campaigns,
When I got up and saw one man walking among the flowers.  

学士磊砌历落之畸人，
一船买尽江南春。
[...]
价值青钱十数万，
使人瞥见冷心脾。
[...]
今春陡然雪三尺，
闽海征兵动阡陌。  
官吏捉船急豆刍，
有船不装买花客。  
我未见兵愁已生，
但闻满城弓箭尽南征，
起看一人花里行。

It is clear from this poem that the cost of flowers and plants had become much higher because of the difficulty of hiring a large vessel to ship them to Nanchang. While the

148 Wang Youding, “Mai hua ge: wei xueshi Li Langweng fu 买花歌：为学士李阆翁赋” (A song about the purchase of flowers, composed for Academician Li Langweng), in Sizhaotang shiji, 1:17a-b.
Manchus were being attacked by Zheng Chenggong's naval forces, their officials commandeered large vessels throughout South and East China. In traditional China, enjoying valuable flowers and plants has been viewed not only as symbolic of one's highmindedness but also an indispensable part of the reclusive lifestyle. It is reasonable that Li Mingrui preferred to remove himself from active service of the Manchu authorities during a period of turmoil.

Li also collected bronzes, tablets, and valuable jewelry. Although most of his property had been destroyed during the rebellion in Nanchang in 1648, he managed to keep his private troupe and several years later was sufficiently rich that he could afford to buy valuable flowers and plants. To recover his finances so quickly, one reasonable and practicable way would have been to go into business.

In this chapter, I have explored Li Mingrui's relationship with Tang Xianzu. As Tang's protégé, Li carried on his ideas about *xingqing* as an essential principle of literary creation. This sense of being Tang's protégé, as well as his memories of the man, account for his enjoyment of performances of the *Peony Pavilion*. As for Wu Weiye, I have not been able

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149 In 1645 and 1655, Zheng Chonggong's naval forces attacked the Manchus along the shore of the Eastern Sea at least three times. See Zhao Erxun et al., *Qing shi gao*, 5:136-37, 138, 139, 143, 144. For the biography of Zheng, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 108-10. Wu Weiye provides a good description of the Manchus' seizure of vessels to carry their soldiers. See Wu, "Zhuo chuan xing (Ballad of seizing the boats)," in *Wu Meichun quanji*, p. 86.

150 According to Wu Weiye, Li hoped to be an excellent historiographer and spent much money collecting primary materials such as bronzes and stone tablets. Wu wrote, "He is fond of ancient things and knowledgeable. He has been searching for bronzes, tablets, and inscriptions, and once he finds what he likes, he does not stint even if he has to empty his purse Assessment of this purchase is not necessary."

151 Shi Zuyu surmises that Li Mingrui ran a business but provides no evidence. See "Li Mingrui gouchen," pp. 138-39.
to find much evidence concerning the relationship of his ideas to those of Li Mingrui, but I have been able to document that Wu well understand Li’s nostalgic memories of the fallen Ming and Emperor Chongzhen and shared them. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Six, Wu Weiye created *Moling chun* out of such memories, and this play was also often performed by Li’s private troupe. Their common memories, which I have excavated from sources in this chapter, provide a context in which to understand Li’s enjoyment of performances of *Mudan ting* and *Molin chun*, which are the subjects of Chapters Five and Six.

Li Mingrui’s independent but sympathetic stance vis-a-vis the Donglin faction, his forced service under the Manchu rulers in Beijing, and his close relations with both Qing officials and Ming loyalists, produced tensions between the times in which he lived and his mentality. As will also become apparent in the following chapters, Li Mingrui’s associates, whether loyal to the fallen Ming or willing to serve the Manchus, faced the same tensions and sought release from them by watching plays.
CHAPTER III
LI MINGRUI’S PRIVATE TROUPE

As a wealthy merchant, Li Mingrui was much richer than his mentor, Tang Xianzu, and able to afford an excellent private troupe that brought him and his associates much enjoyment. In this chapter, I will explore how his private troupe was assembled and disbanded and discuss what can be learned about the performers, as well as other details that can be elicited from the materials at hand. The discussion in this chapter, I hope, will illuminate more features about a typical private troupe in the period covered by this thesis.

I have found no evidence that precisely indicates when Li Mingrui’s private troupe came into being. Shang Rong (b. 1785) reports that Li Mingrui bought some girls in Suzhou to form his private troupe just after having failed to secure a position in Nanjing with Ruan Dacheng’s recommendation, in 1645.¹ According to Wu Weiye, Li Mingrui enjoyed performances by his troupe even before his Garden of Elysium was destroyed during the rebellion of Nanchang, which broke out in February 1648.² From this we can infer that Li Mingrui’s troupe came into being between late 1645 and 1647.

3.1. The Actresses of the Troupe

According to Zhu Zhongmei, Li Mingrui’s private troupe was composed of eight actresses in the early spring of the year dingyou (1657), when Li Mingrui and his wife,

¹ Shang Rong, “Li Taixu biezhuan 李太虚别传” (An unofficial biography of Li Taixu), in Shang Rong, Chiyatang wenji (Chengdu, 1868), 3:13b. As I will demonstrate later, at least one actress was a native of Pingyang 平阳, a place famous for its actresses and singing girls. See Part One of this chapter.

accompanied by the troupe, visited Li Yuanding and Zhu Zhongmei. During this gathering, Zhu composed eight quatrains, one for each of the actresses, who played respectively the roles of sheng 生, dan 旦, xiaosheng 小生, xiaodan 小旦, mo 末, wai 外, jing 净, and chou 丑. In this section, I will investigate the actresses, especially the two who played the roles of sheng and dan.

Of the actresses of Li's private troupe in 1657, only five can be identified by name: Yanbo 烟波 (Mist-covered Water), Huixue 迴雪 (Whirling Snow), Xiaohan 晓寒 (Dawn Cold), Yanwan 燕婉 (Swallow Charm), and Zhuying 朱樱 (Vermillion Cherry). These identifications can be made using poems by Li himself and by friends and associates who attended performances by the troupe.

(1) Yanbo and Huixue.

In a poem, Li Mingrui wrote:

Huixue plays the jade flute facing the wind,
Yanbo washes the ice jar while admiring the moon.

迴雪临风吹玉管，
烟波弄月濯冰壶。

The note adds, “Huixue and Yanbo are the names of Master’s two actresses.” They would be the leading actresses, having been mentioned most often and taking the roles requiring

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3 Zhu Zhongmei, “Dingyou chuchun, jia zongbo Taixu xie furen xie xiao nüji guo wo, yan Yanzijian, Mudan ting zhu ju, yin ge zeng yi jue, de bashou” (In the early spring of the year dingyou [1657], the former minister of rites Li Taixu, visited me together with his wife and accompanied by their company of young actresses, who performed Yanzijian and Mudan ting. I presented a quatrain to each actress, eight poems in total), in Li Yuanding, Shiyuan quanji, pp. 109-110.

4 Qiu Junhong, Xijiang shihua, pp. 815-16.

5 In the poems accessible now about Li’s private troupe, Yanbo is mentioned more than the others. For example, in a poem composed by Zhu Zhongmei entitled “Chu chun ji zongbo nian sao, bing yi Yanbo, Xiaohan zhu nulin 初春寄宗伯年嫂, 并忆烟波、晓寒诸女伶” (In the early spring, I sent the poem to the wife of the ex-minister of rites, with some memories of such actresses as Yanbo and Xiaohan). See Li Yuanding,
the most beauty and talent, that of *sheng* and *dan*. In the poem presented to the *dan* actress of Li’s troupe, Zhu Zhongmei admiringly wrote that:

> Newly made up, supple and full at fifteen sui,  
> She finishes singing *Liangzhou*, amazing all the guests.  
> Even were Consort Zhen to appear today,  
> She would have to yield to this young “state toppler.”

Lines three and four allude to Empress Zhen (d. 230), prototype of Fufei 宴妃, the Luo River Goddess described in “Luoshen fu 洛神赋” (the Rhapsody on the Luo River Goddess) by Cao Zhi 曹植 (zi Zijian 子建, 192-232). “Huixue” also alludes directly to the Luo River Goddess, who was described appearing to Cao Zhi:

> She is dimly described like the moon obscured by light clouds,  
> She drifts airily like whirling snow in streaming wind.

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Shiyuan quanji, p. 112. Mao Xiaotong attributes the authorship of this poem to Li Yuanding, in *Ziliao huibian*, p. 1169. Furthermore, Fang Wen singles out these two in a poem he wrote about the disbanding of Li’s troupe, translated in Part Two of this chapter.

6 In *Taohua shan* (Peach Blossom Fan), Li Xiangjun 李香君, the beautiful courtesan and female protagonist, is recruited into the Court Troupe to perform for Emperor Hongguang. Ruan Dacheng hates her and tries to force her to play the roles of *jing* and *chou*, but Hongguang, appreciating her beauty and talent, orders her to play the role of *dan*. See Kong Shangren, *Taohua shan* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1998), scene 25, “Xuan you 选优” (Recruiting the Players), pp. 167-73. Although deciding what role a performer is to play is a complicated business, beauty and singing talent are the most essential qualities for those who play the *sheng* and *dan* roles.


> The Luo River’s goddess of gusting snow is fit only to fold your robes.
Born in 1643 according to the 1657 poem cited above, Huixue performed the dan roles in the troupe and Yanbo the sheng roles. Yanbo was a native of Pingyang, a place famous for producing actresses who excelled at singing and dancing. According to Zhu Zhongmei, Yanbo was the most talented actress in Li’s troupe:

The songs and dances of Pingyang are renowned as of old,
And preeminent at romance is this one sheng.\(^9\)

Her excellence is attested further by Zhou Lingshu’s 周令树 adoration for her. Zhou (zi Jibai 计百, jinshi 1655) was a Prefecture Judge in Ganzhou from 1658 to 1661.\(^10\) In a note to a poem composed in 1662 concerning the disbanding of Li’s troupe, Fang Wen comments that, “My friend in Qianzhou (today’s Ganzhou) once tried to marry Yanbo with one

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\(^9\) Zhu Zhongmei, “Ding you chu chun, jia zongbo Taixu xie furen xie xiao nüji guo wo…,” poem 1, in Li Yuanding, Shiyuan quanji, p. 109; Mao Xiaotong, Ziliao huibian, p. 1169.

thousand taels of silver as the betrothal gift, but failed.”

A year later, in a poem composed especially about Zhou’s studio, Fang Wen alluded again to Zhou’s chagrin over his loss:

There is only this occasion for some sadness,
Yanbo never did come onboard the five-lake boat.

A note adds that, “Yanbo is a girl from the Wu area. Jibai planned to make her his concubine but she was seized away by a bully. So it is said.” The bully refers to is Wu Sangui, as will be explained below. Inasmuch as Zhou was willing to pay one thousand taels of silver as the betrothal gift and continued to regret the failure of the marriage due to Wu Sangui’s interference, Yanbo must have been an exceedingly attractive and talented actress.

Zhu Zhongmei also mentioned some of the roles Huixue and Yanbo played. In 1658, Li Mingrui’s wife invited her to the performances of four zaju, one of which is Taohua renmian (A Beautiful Face amidst Peach Blossoms) by Meng Chengshun (ca. 1600-ca. 1684). Huixue played the role of the female protagonist (dan), as Zhu indicates in a poem she wrote for the occasion:

Huixue stands slim and graceful in white light silk,  
Her peach-blossom face is beautiful enough to topple city walls.

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11 Fang Wen, “Wen Li zongbo jiaji bing qian, shang zhi 闻李宗伯家伎并遣，伤之” (At the news of the disbanding of the private troupe of Li, the ex-minister of rites, I am saddened by it), in Fang Wen, Xijiang you cao (included in Tushan ji, vol. 6), 30b.

12 Fang Wen, “Ti Zhou Jibai Kanshanlou ti jie” (For Mountain-Watching Studio of Zhou Jibai), in Fang Wen, Tushan xujji (included in Tushan ji, vols. 7, 8), 4:12b.

13 For more about Yanbo’s story, see Part Three of this chapter.

In 1660, Zhu described Yanbo and Huixue’s performance of *Moling chun* in the following poem:

Real Pearl is outstanding among the attendant screen in the Pan Valley,
Yanbo’s singing skill should be rare in the world.
Fluttering and whirling, Huixue looks beautiful enough to compete,
The two of them fly side by side in the spring scenery.\(^{15}\)

Clearly, in the performance of *Moling chun*, Yanbo played the male protagonist (*sheng*) and Huixue the female (*dan*), since the role of *dan* requires more skill at dancing than the role of *sheng*.

(2) *Xiaohan*.

The title of another poem by Zhu Zhongmei mentions Yanbo and another actress in Li’s troupe: “In the early spring, I send a poem to the wife of the ex-minister of rites, with some memories of such actresses as Yanbo and Xiaohan.”\(^{16}\) However, I have been unable to determine what role she played based on available materials.

(3) *Yanwan*.

This actress is mentioned in a poem about the troupe by Jin Yingsheng (zi Bixing 壁星, hao Chao 茶坡, 1605-63):

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\(^{16}\) In Li Yuanding, *Shiyuan quanji*, p. 112; Mao Xiaotong, *Ziliao huibian*, p. 1169.
Among sweetly singing voices and engaging girls,
Yanbo can be dimly discerned in red attire.
Lovely Yanwan is still bashful before guests,
And only glances back at the romantic old vice-minister.¹⁷

宛转歌喉窈窕娘，
烟波缥缈出红妆。
可怜燕婉犹羞客，
只顾风流老侍郎。

There is no evidence what role she played.

(4) Zhuying.

Wang Youding possibly was enamored of this actress, since he composed a poem especially to present to her, in which he appreciated her eyes, as limpid as autumn waters:

Don’t fix your sights on a pilgrim to the mountain,
As one song mounts the wind you will feel an ease beyond ease.
Even were one to write of the Luo River Goddess, who can compare with her?
Only the autumn waves are left to lighten the world of men.¹⁸

莫将定眼对朝山，
一曲凌风闲外闲。
便写洛神谁得似，
只留秋水照人间。

Wang described Zhuying’s beauty in another poem, as follows:

By the by one can recognize Zhuying among the flower shrubs,
And again hear the first sounds of the spring parrot.
I want to describe the extreme purity of her eyes’ pupils,
Smoky pools whose layers cannot be fathomed.¹⁹

等闲花里识朱樱，

¹⁷ Qiu Junhong, Xijiang shihua, p. 819; Mao Xiaotong, Ziliao huibian, p. 1179.

¹⁸ Wang Youding, “Zhuying kouhao 朱樱口号” (A song to Zhuying), in Sizhaotang shiji, 4: 4b. The same poem was included by Qiu Junhong as the second one of a series entitled “Li zongbo Canglang Ting shang guan nüyue, zuo liren shi 李宗伯沧浪亭上观女乐，作丽人诗” (Poems on the beauties, composed after watching the performance of the actresses in the Canglang Pavilion of Li, the ex-minister of rites). See Qiu Junhong, Xijiang shihua, p. 814. Thus Zhuying was certainly an actress of Li’s private troupe.

¹⁹ Wang Youding, “Guan ju 观剧” (Watch plays), poem 1, in Wang, Sizhaotang shiji, 4:4a.
3.2. The Disbanding of the Troupe

For reasons yet to be determined, Li Mingrui was forced to disband his troupe in the early spring of 1662. In the fall of 1661, Shi Runzhang was appointed Assistant Administration Commissioner of Huxi Circuit and watched performances by Li’s troupe in Nanchang. Li Mingrui possibly wrote to Shi informing him of what he had to do, and Shi replied in the spring of 1662, attaching a poem that reads, in part:

As the plum blossoms were about to fall the beauties have gone,  
In one night sorrow of parting rose like spring waters.

Clearly, although Li and Shi were good friends, Shi was too weak to help Li out of his difficulties. In the same spring, Shi visited Li again after coming back to Nanchang and found that the troupe had already been disbanded:

After our parting in late fall, I came by once more,  
And saw again waves of spring waters on East Lake.  
The dancing butterflies and singing orioles have all scattered,  
By the banks of blossoming pomegranate broken hearts are many.

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20 Shi Runzhang, “Li shangshu ye yan dengwu ge 李尚书夜宴灯舞歌” (A song for the lamp dance in a night banquet held by Minister Li), in Shi Yushan ji, vol. 2, p. 346; “Nanpu bie Li Taixu zongbo zhi Qingjiang 南浦别李太虚宗波之清江” (Parting from Li Taixu, the ex-minister of rites, at Nanpu Pavilion enroute Qingjiang), in Shi Yushang ji, vol. 3, p. 246. The second poem was composed on the third day of the ninth lunar month of Shunzi 18 (25 October 1661).

21 Shi Runzhang, “Da Li zongbo shu man ti zhi wei 大李宗波书谩题纸尾” (A poem written randomly at the end of a reply to Li, the ex-minister of rites), in Shi Yushan ji, vol. 3, p. 472.

22 Shi Runzhang, “Chong guo Li zongbo 重返李宗伯” (Return visit to Li, the ex-minister of rites),
Fang Wen provides more details about the disbanding of the troupe in two poems written when he first learned of it. In the first of them, he wrote that:

The group of rainbow skirts were once immortals,  
Only fit to form ties with literati.  
For what do they belong to that humble servant?  
In the grieving wind and foul rain I weep for the beauties.

霓裳一部本群仙，
祇合文人与结缘。
底事同归厮养卒？
酸风腥雨哭婵娟。

Fang’s second poem alludes obliquely to a departure under escort by boat, from the perspective of an aggrieved admirer:

At the order to board the boat, tears flowed frequently,  
Yanbo and Huixue were even much sadder.  
The heart of a wanderer to the Zhang River was the first to break,  
Let alone the man who planned to marry Yanbo in Qianzhou.\(^\text{23}\)

闻说登舻涕泪频，
烟波匝雪更悲辛。
章江游子肠先断，
况是虔州纳采人。

Clearly, Li Mingrui’s private troupe was disbanded by force, and the powerful man who

\(^{23}\) Fang Wen, “Wen Li zongbo jiaji bing qian, shang zhi 闻李宗伯家伎并遣，伤之” (At the news of the disbanding of the private troupe of Li, the ex-minister of rites, I am saddened by it), in Fang Wen, *Xijiang you cao* (included in *Tushan ji*, vol. 6), 30b. The two poems were composed in the spring of the year *renyin* (1662). The Zhang River, together with the Gong River, empties into the Gan River in Ganzhou whose ancient name is Qianzhou, where Zhou Lingshu was the Prefecture Judge as mentioned above. But in Li Mingrui’s time, the Gan River was named the Zhang River. (See Map 1) So, in his second poem cited, the third line refers to Fang Wen himself and the forth, Zhou Lingshu.
seized the actresses is vulgar from the scholars’ point of view.

Li remained sad about the loss of his troupe for a long time and often recalled his actresses when watching performances by other troupes. In a long poem composed as a reply to Li’s, Shi Runzhang refers to such sad memories:

With flutes and strings, one more feast is held at nightfall,
Sweet songs recall a sudden memory of the hibiscus faces.
Saddened that the Luo River shining pearl will not return,
Dancing sleeves have changed into westward flying swallows.  

管弦日暮重开宴，
娇歌忽忆芙蓉面。 
洛浦明珠怅不还， 
舞衫化作西飞燕。

In 1669, Sun Zhiwei visited Li in Nanchang and had no heart to mention the disbanding, as he recorded in a poem:

Once I watched a red-cheeked girl 
give an interpretation of “Green-headed Duck.”


The note to the first two lines of Shi Runzhang’s poem says that Li composed a poem after the disbanding of his troupe, in which two lines read as

My family lost the hibiscus faces, 
While you gentleman still keeps the Hibiscus House.

Shi named his mansion in Huxi Circuit as “Hibiscus House” since one hibiscus in the mansion were in full bloom when he arrived there. See Shi, “Xiaojiang changhe ji xu 薛江倡和集序” (The preface to the collected poems to reciprocate in Xiao River), in *Shi Yushan ji*, vol. 1, p. 60.
Today I come to visit Mentor Bai,
but cannot bear to inquire after Poplar Twig.\(^{25}\)

解唱绿头鸭，
曾看红颊儿。
今来寻白傅，
不忍问杨枝。

“Green-headed Duck” is the title of a Tang Dynasty tune; and “Mentor Bai” refers to Bai Juyi, who was once appointed Taizi shaofu (Junior Mentor of the Heir Apparent).\(^{26}\) “Poplar Twig,” refers to Fan Su, Bai’s female attendant, whose nickname was taken from the tune she excelled at singing,\(^{27}\) and here is used to refer obliquely to Li Mingrui’s actresses.

More details about the whereabouts of the actresses are provided by Liu Jian (fl. 1720) in the following prose account:

Bamian Guanyin (the Boddhisattva of eight faces), together with [Chen] Yuanyuan (1624-81), was favored especially [by Wu Sangui] and had been one of the female attendants of Li Mingrui, the former minister of rites in Nanchang. The ex-minister had once had over ten female attendants, whose singing and looks were the pick of their day, and Bamian Guanyin was the best of them. Among them, Simian Guanyin (the Boddhisattva of four faces) also had beautiful looks and figure, but was inferior to Bamian Guanyin. My father [Liu Kun (jinshi 1659)] once saw them sing and dance at the house of the ex-minister, and [told me] they really were beauties. When the ex-minister was old, Bamian Guanyin and Simian Guanyin were taken by the Supervising Secretary, Gao An, who later presented them to [Wu] Sangui. When Kunming was taken in the year xinyou (1681), Yuanyuan was the first to die, while Bamian Guanyin was married to the Distance Pacifying General Cai Yurong (1633-99) and Simian Guanyin to the Southern Conquering General Muzhan (d. 1683).\(^{28}\)

\(^{25}\) Sun Zhiwei, “Chong fang Li Taixu zongbo yu Nanchang, liu yin Langyuan 重访李太虚宗伯于南昌，留饮阎园” (I return to visit Li Taixu, the ex-minister of rites, in Nanchang, and was invited to stay to drink), in Sun Zhiwei, *Gaitang ji*, 3:8a.


\(^{28}\) Liu Jian, *Ting wen lu*, in *Yuzhang congshu, shibu 2*, ed. Jiangxi Sheng gaoxiao guji zhengli lingdao xiaozu (Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002), p. 495. Cai Yurong and Muzhan were commanders...
Liu Jian’s account is credible, since his father, Liu Kun, once had been an official in Yunnan Province when Wu Sangui had both civil and military control of the province. When Wu Sangui rebelled in 1673, Liu Kun refused an appointment from him and was exiled to Tengyue Prefecture (today’s Tengchong, Yunnan). After the rebellion was crushed, Liu Kun was promoted at Cai Yurong’s recommendation. Having both watched performances by Li Mingrui’s troupe and had relations with Wu Sangui and Cai Yurong, Liu Kun’s account to his son is a first-hand one. It is also likely that Shang Rong, Li Mingrui’s biographer, is referring to Liu Jian’s account when he states in Li’s biography that Bamian Guanyin and Simian Guanyin were the best actresses in the troupe.\footnote{Shang Rong, “Li Taixu biezhuan,” in Chiyatang wenji, 3:13b-14a.}

3.3. Yanbo and the Troupe

If Bamian Guanyin is the nickname of Yanbo, her story would tell us more about Li Mingrui’s troupe. Accordingly, before I leave the subject of Li’s troupe and its make-up, I will briefly give reasons for believing that Bamian Guanyin and Yanbo are one and the same person.

Among the spectators of Li Mingrui’s troupe, Zhu Zhongmei is the only one to who put down Wu Sangui’s rebellion (1673-81). For Cai’s biography, see Hummel, Eminent Chinese, pp. 734-36; For Muzhan’s, see Zhao Erxu et al., Qing shi gao, 254:9744-47.

\footnote{For Wu Sangui’s civil and military control of Yunnan Province from 1659 to 1681, see Hummel, Eminent Chinese, p. 878. For the biography of Liu Kun, see Zhang Geng 张庚, “Liu Kun zhuan 刘昆传” (Liu Kun’s life), attached to Liu Jian’s Ting wen lu in Yuzhang congshu, shibu 2, pp. 508-09.}
mention the existence of a beauty called Bamian Guanyin. In the late spring of the year
jichou (Shunzhi 6, i.e., 1649), Zhu, accompanying her husband Li Yuanding, left for
Yangzhou by boat after a sojourn of ten years in Beijing and Tianjin. Later that year, in
Yangzhou or someplace nearby, she found a poem on the fan owned by a beautiful woman
named Yanyan 燕燕 and composed a joking response to the same rhyme, in which three lines
are accompanied by notes:

Each expression is suffused with autumn water’s [gleam], (Note: She is called the
Boddhisattva of eight faces)
Gracefully she treads on fallen flowers. (Note: Her gold lotuses are small).
A new swan has come from a distant frontier,
At whose house did the old swallow stay? (Note: Once she was an attendant of the
former prime minister)

面面盈秋水，（注：号八面观音）
婷婷步落花。 （注：金莲甚小）
新鸿来远塞，
旧燕泊谁家。（注：故相姬）

31 Li Yuanding, “Guizhou chu fa Jinmen, ci youren yun ershou 归舟初发津门，次友人韵二首” (I
will leave Jinmen by boat for the south, so I composed two poems following the rhyme used by one friend), in
Li, Shiyuan quanji, p. 41; “Zhou fa Jinmen 舟发津门” (We will leave Jinmen by boat), and Zhu Zhongmei’s
reply, in Shiyuan quanji, pp. 74-75. In “Zhou fa Jinmen,” Li Yuanding wrote:

Three trails could not be constructed along the Mirror Lake, (Note: Jishui)
One high branch to stay on is to be found in the Thunder Pool. (Note: Yangzhou)
Difficult to look back at ten years adrift,
Would not the misty water of ten thousand 里 break hearts?

三径未能营鉴曲（注：吉水），
一枝高标寄雪塘（注：扬州）。
十年飘泊难回首，
万里烟波岂断肠？

Jinmen is an alternative name of Tianjin. The Mirror Lake is in Shaoxing, Zhejiang, where the Tang Poet He
Zhizhang 贺知章 (659-744) once lived as a recluse (see Ouyang and Song, Xin Tang shu, 196:5606-07, esp.
5607). Here the allusion just means a place to live in as a recluse. The Thunder Pool is in Jiangdu County, not
far from Yangzhou. For more details about the experiences of Li Yuanding and his wife in this transitional
period, see Chapter Five.

32 Zhu Zhongmei, “Ou jian Yanyan shantoushi, yin qi yun chao zhi 偶见燕燕扇头诗，因其韵嘲之” (Occasionally I found the poem on Yanyan’s fan, thus I composed one with the same rhyme to joke with
her), in Li Yuanding, Shiyuan quanji, p. 88. This poem can be dated according to the sequence of poems before
and after it.
Clearly, “Yanyan” is Bamian Guanyin’s alternative name, and having once been an attendant of a former Ming minister, she had been sold or dismissed after her owner died. Since we know that Li Mingrui left Nanchang in 1648 to seek refuge in Yangzhou and sometimes traveled in Jiujiang, Zhenjiang, and Nanjing in 1649, thus he and Li Yuanding would have had opportunities to meet, most likely in Yangzhou, although no evidence of such a meeting has come to light. Since Bamian Guanyin had once been Li Mingrui’s attendant according to Liu Jian, the woman called Bamian Guanyin whom Zhu Zhongmei met must be the same woman mentioned by both Liu Kun and Liu Jian. That Zhu Zhongmei dredged up Yanyan’s old stories and made joking reference to them in the poem indicates that Bamian Guanyin was not Li Mingrui’s concubine but only an attendant. Zhu’s notes to her own poem give details of Bamian Guanyin’s history before she became Li Mingrui’s attendant, and suggest that the name Yanyan dates back to the time she served in the household of a nameless prime minister.

It is thus reasonable to suppose that Yanyan was renamed as Yanbo after she had been enlisted into Li Mingrui’s troupe, and that the “Bamian Guanyin” mentioned by Liu Jian refers to Yanbo. It was common practice for an actress or a female attendant to be renamed by the new owner when she was presented, seized or purchased. Qian Qianyi refers to this practice in one poem of the series presented to Li Mingrui, when he wrote that:

In cloud blue sleeves the girls are all “state toppling” beauties,  
As one by one, they give thanks by lamplight for their names.33

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33 Qian Qianyi, “Du Yuzhang Xian yin Pu man ti ba jueju...,” in Muzhaiyouxueji, p. 523. According to the commentator, the second line originates from two lines by Liu Yuxi 刘禹锡 (772-842), which read:

Twisting strings, they play the new music beside flowers,  
Put down plectrums, and by lamplight give thanks for changing names.  
燃絃花下新曲,
Moreover, Zha Jizuo (1601-76), an associate of Li’s, changed the name of an actress whom Li Mingrui presented to him to Yexie, to accord with the names of the other performers in his private troupe, all of whose names ended with the character “xie”\(^{35}\). So, it is quite likely that Bamian Guanyin was renamed Yanbo from Yanyan after she was enlisted into Li Mingrui’s troupe.

Since Bamian Guanyin (i.e., Yanbo) had been an attendant of a high Ming official before she served Li Mingrui, she must have been more than eighteen sui when Zhu Zhongmei met her in 1649. In late Ming and early Qing, a girl was thought most suitable to train as an actress of a private troupe at the age of twelve or thirteen sui.\(^{36}\) It is thus reasonable to suppose that Bamian Guanyin become an attendant of the nameless Ming prime minister at the age of at least twelve sui in 1644 when the Ming Dynasty fell, and she must have been born in or before 1633. Yanbo’s partner Huixue was born in 1643 as mentioned above, and became one member of Li Mingrui’s troupe in or after 1654. Thus

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\(^{34}\) For the biography of Zha Jizuo, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 18-19.

\(^{35}\) Shen Qi, *Zha Jizuo nianpu*, ed. Wang Maohe (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), p. 32. Zha Jizuo’s private troupe was known as *Shi xie ban* 十些班 (the Troupe of ten xie), all names of whose performers ended with the character “xie”. Lu Eting has made an excellent study of Zha’s troupe. According to Lu, Zha Jizuo’s private troupe consisted of actors and mainly actresses. See Lu, “Zha Jizuo he Li Mingrui 查继佐和李明睿” (Zha Jizuo and Li Mingrui), in Lu, *Qingdai xiqujia congkao* (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1995), pp. 21-26, esp. 24.

Yanbo was at least ten years older than Huixue, and when Huixue came to Li’s family Yanbo had been there for at least five years since Yanbo must have been enlisted into Li’s troupe in or before 1649. Actually, it is also reasonable to suppose that Yanbo came into Li’s family when the troupe formed during the period from late 1645 to 1647. So, Yanbo (Bamian Guanyin) quite likely witnessed the appearance and disbanding of Li’s troupe.

Since Yanbo, who played the *sheng* roles, and Bamian Guanyin are the same person, and since, according to Liu Jian, she and Simian Guanyin were the most talented two actresses in Li Mingrui’s troupe, it is natural to identify Huixue, who played the *dan* roles, with Simian Guanyin.

Commonly, to sustain high levels of the performance and beauty in a troupe, older actresses would be dismissed and younger ones recruited. In some private troupes, actresses would be admitted at the age of about thirteen *sui* and married at the age of twenty *sui*.

But Yanbo was an actress in Li Mingrui’s troupe until she was taken away to Yunnan in 1662 when she would have been at least thirty *sui*. This example suggests that in the late Ming and early Qing period, an exceptional actress, even one much older than her partners, might be kept for a long time rather than be dismissed or married when of the age to become a wife or a concubine.

Another way to maintain the artistic vitality and sexual fascination of a private troupe was to send or accept an actor/actress as a present. Yexie, the actress renamed by Zha Jizuo, began to perform at the age of fifteen *sui* and was sufficiently talented that Du Jun 杜濬 (*zi* Yuhuang 于皇; 1611-87), a famous poet, wrote a poem especially to praise her. Since

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38 Shen Qi, *Zha Jizuo nianpu*, p. 32. According to Liu Zhenlin and Zhou Xiang, Du Jun composed
spectators of private troupes generally concerned, appreciated, and praised actresses who played the dan and sheng roles much more than those who played other roles during the late Ming and early Qing, and since Yanbo had been playing the sheng roles since Li Mingrui’s troupe formed as I argued above, it is quite likely that Yexie played the dan roles in Li’s and Zha’s troupes. Thus, before Huixue joined Li’s troupe in or after 1654, Yexie, who played the dan roles, must have been paired with Yanbo who played the sheng roles. It is unclear if Huixue was more talented and beautiful than Yexie, but it is certain that the artistic vitality and sexual fascination of Li’s troupe was maintained even after Yexie left. We can also think that, although the dan roles were played first by Yexie and then by Huixue, it is likely that the composition of Li’s troupe basically remained the same over the period of 15-17 years of its existence.

One other source contains Bamian Guanyin’s story beyond the point when she was seized by General Cai Yurong. According to it, Cai Yurong presented Simian Guanyin to Emperor Kangxi but kept Bamian Guanyin for himself. Kangxi then ordered Cai to submit Bamian Guanyin to the court, but she died en route to Beijing. However Kangxi believed that Cai had killed her and imprisoned the general in Manchuria. In protest—according to this account—troops under Cai’s command revolted in 1688. Such an explanation of the cause of Cai’s being imprisoned contradicts the official record, according to which he was banished in 1687 to Heilongjiang because he was found having given a bribe of nine hundred taels of the poem to present to Rouxie. See Liu and Zhou, Dongshan waiji 东山外纪 (Unofficial Records from the Eastern Mount), in Zha Jizuo nianpu, p. 116.

Lu Eting thinks that the sheng and dan roles were especially stressed in private troupes, while not only the sheng and dan but also the jing and chou roles were simultaneously stressed in public troupes, during the late Ming and early Qing. See Lu, Kunju yanchu shi gao, p. 80.

Kawaguchi Choju, Taiwan geju zhi (Taipei: Taiwan yinhang and Zhonghua shuju, 1957), pp. 80-81.
silver to an official investigator in Yunnan and having taken a granddaughter of Wu Sangui
to be his concubine in 1681.\textsuperscript{41} It is unimportant whether General Cai Yurong married Wu
Sangui’s granddaughter or not, but it is certain that Yanbo (Bamian Guanyin) was seized by
Cai Yurong after Wu Sangui’s rebellion was put down in 1681 and she died before 1687.

3.4. The Roles and the Possible Performance of a Whole \textit{Chuanqi}

As mentioned above, Li Mingrui’s private troupe consisted of eight actresses, who
were trained to perform the eight most essential roles: \textit{sheng, dan, xiaosheng, xiaodan, mo, wai, jing,}
and \textit{chou}. In this section, I will explore the possibility that his troupe performed
whole \textit{chuanqi} plays, in addition to \textit{zaju} and extracted scenes.

In the late Ming and early Qing a top-flight private troupe would commonly be
composed of twelve performers, because the role system for Kun opera consisted of twelve
role categories in the Qianlong period, having elaborated from the six basic roles (\textit{sheng, dan, jing, mo, chou,}
and \textit{wai}) that were used in Southern Drama.\textsuperscript{42} The size of a private troupe
depended on the financial ability of its owner and the kinds of plays he enjoyed.\textsuperscript{43} We know
that Li Mingrui was rich enough to afford more than eight actresses, and that his troupe
performed \textit{chuanqi} plays, \textit{zaju}, and extracts. Why, then, did his troupe lack the full
complement of performers?

\textsuperscript{41} Hummel, \textit{Eminent Chinese}, p. 735.

\textsuperscript{42} Hu Ji and Liu Zhizhong, \textit{Kunju fazhan shi}, pp. 193-97. For the roles used in the Southern Drama
and their influences on the role system for Kun opera, see William Dolby, \textit{A History of Chinese Drama}
2(1998): 105-07. The role category system for the Southern Drama sometimes is said to consist of seven roles, that is, it
includes the \textit{tie} role besides the six roles already mentioned. See Zhang and Guo, \textit{Zhongguo xiqu tongshi}
(Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1992), pp. 436-40, 770. According to both Su, Zhang and Guo, the \textit{tie}
actually originated from and supports the \textit{dan}.

\textsuperscript{43} Hu Ji and Liu Zhizhong, \textit{Kunju fazhan shi}, p. 197.
It is plausible to link the size of his troupe to the style of chuanqi plays that Li favored. The Yihuang style popular in Li Mingrui and Tang Xianzu’s native Jiangxi featured eight roles: sheng, dan, jing, mo, chou, wai, tie, and laodan 老旦. Tang Xianzu created Mudan ting originally in the Yihuang style, specifying these eight roles in his text.\(^4^4\) Even after Tang’s four plays were adapted to the Kun style and widely disseminated, they were still performed in the Yihuang style in Nanchang and Li Mingrui enjoyed such performances of them.\(^4^5\) The eight actresses of Li Mingrui’s troupe were sufficient to play all the roles in Mudan ting, and it is safe to say that this smaller troupe would work well in performing some whole chuanqi plays.

There is also evidence that Li Mingrui could augment his troupe when necessary using other members of his household. According to Liu Jian, Li Mingrui had “over ten female attendants whose singing and looks were the pick of their day.”\(^4^6\) Not all who were able to perform plays would necessarily become trained members in a private troupe. The private troupe of Zha Jizuo, one of Li’s associates, was composed of ten actors and actresses acquired for the troupe, but more than twelve of his household attendants also knew how to perform plays.\(^4^7\) Li Mingrui’s household also surely had more than eight servants able to join

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\(^4^5\) Su Ziyu, “Tang Xianzu, Mei Dingzuo juzuo de qiangdiao wenti,” pp. 22-23.

\(^4^6\) Liu Jian, Ting wen lu, p. 495.

\(^4^7\) Lu Eting, “Zha Jizuo he Li Mingrui,” in Qingdai xiqujia congkao, pp. 21-26, esp. 24.
eight actresses on the stage, as occasion required. Li Mingrui also kept boy-actors, as Shi Ruizhang mentions in a note to a poem presented to Li at Hangzhou’s West Lake in 1654. Since Zha Jizuo’s troupe consisted of both actors and actresses as Lu Eting has suggested, Li Mingrui also likely asked his boy-actors to support the actresses when necessary. With the participation of other servants who could play supporting roles, Li’s private troupe would have been able to perform plays in which more than eight roles were designated and even tackle a whole chuanqi drama.

According to Li Yuanding and Zhu Zhongmei, Li Mingrui’s troupe performed the whole chuanqi play Moling chun. Li Yuanding’s poems about the performance were written in the late winter of 1659 and Zhu Zhongmei’s in the beginning of 1660. The performance was likely arranged especially to celebrate the Spring Festival of the year gengzi (1660) and completed within several nights, long enough to perform the whole play. In his ten poems, Li Yuanding refers to the main plot of the play. For example, the third of them refers to scene 32, “Ying gui” 恩归 (Return of the Soul), in which the female protagonist Huang Zhanniang 黄辰娘 fully recovers from an illness with the combining of her soul with her body. In the fourth and fifth poems, Li Yuanding mentions scenes 29, “Te shi 特试” (Special Examination), 31, “Ci yuan 辞元” (Title of the Number One Graduate Refused), 34, “Bei yuan 杯圆” (Reunion with the Jade Cup), and 40, “Zhen hun 真婚” (The Real Wedding), in


49 Li Yuanding, “Dong ye tong ji Canglang Ting guan nuji yan Moling chun, ci Xiong Shaozai yun shishou 冬夜同集沧浪亭观女伎演林鞍山，次熊少宰韵十首” (On a winter night, I joined a gathering together with others in the Canglang Pavilion, and watched the actresses perform Spring in Moling. I composed ten poems with the rhyme that Mr. Xiong, the ex-vice minister of personnel, used), in Shiyuan quanji, p. 58. Zhu Zhongmei, “Zongbo nian sao xiang qi Canglang Ting guan nuji yan Moling chun,” in Shiyuan quanji, p. 108. The two series of poems can be dated according to the sequence of the poems before and after them. For more details about Moling chun and its performance, see Part Two of Chapter Five and Part Three of Chapter Six.
which the male protagonist Xu Shi 徐適 is specially offered the title of Number One Graduate by the Song emperor and marries both the maid Niaoyan 襁烟 and Zhanniang formally. In the sixth, seventh, and eighth poems, scene 41, “Xian ci 仙祠” (Sacrificial Temple for Immortals), the last scene of the play, is referred to, in which Xu Shi sends a pipa-lute as a gift to Cao Shancai 曹善才, once a musician of Xu Shi’s dead emperor and now willing to become a monk for the emperor, and Cao plays the lute and sings about the emperor’s life and his story in Heaven where the emperor and his concubines appear as immortals. In the second, fifth, seventh, and ninth poems of the series, Zhu Zhongmei refers to the love story between Xu Shi and Huang Zhanniang, which Wu Weiye describes in scenes 2-27 of his play. The twenty poems of Li Yuanding and Zhu Zhongmei can be viewed as a summary of Wu Weiye’s Moling chun. Wu designated twelve role categories for the play: sheng, dan, xiaosheng, xiaodan, jing, mo, chou, wai, fujing 副净, tie, xiaochou 小丑, and laodan. For Li’s eight actresses to have performed the entire play would have required the support of amateurs or other servants to play the roles of fujing, tie, xiaochou, and laodan.

In this chapter, I have identified by name five actresses of Li Mingrui’s private troupe and have coaxed out some information about Yanbo, the most talented of them. We know that she played the sheng roles and was at least ten years older than her partner Huixue, who played the dan roles. Only eight actresses were in Li Mingrui’s private troupe, but with the cooperation of other female attendants and even boy-actors in Li’s household, they were able to perform a whole chuanqi play.
CHAPTER IV

WHO WERE THE SPECTATORS?

This chapter assembles information about the spectators of performances by Li Mingrui’s troupe, which I will organize into categories according to their political standing during the Ming-Qing transition. The first group includes the spectators who were Ming loyalists, the second group is comprised of spectators who served both Ming and Qing, and the third group consists of spectators who passed the metropolitan examinations and took offices under the Manchu regime. This classification scheme will aid in understanding how the shared cultural notions could co-exist with different political attitudes during this transitional period.

The following groups of spectators are drawn from information reflected in Sun Dianqi’s (1894-1958) notations to Yuzhang xianyinpu (hereafter YZXYP), the poems in Xijiang shihua (hereafter XJSH), as well as other prose and poems directly indicating the act of performance spectatorship. Although certain sources are not a direct record of spectatorship, I choose to view the author as a spectator of Li Mingrui’s troupe, since evidence does indicate close relations between the writer and Li. According to Shi Runzhang, Li was so hospitable that “any guest who [visited] him [would] be accompanied to drink by his boy-singers”—that is, any guest of Li would have ample opportunities to watch the troupe perform, whether pure singing (qingchang 清唱) alone, or in tandem with costumes and movement.

The following groups will indicate Li Mingrui’s good relations, not only with some firm Ming loyalists but also with scholars who served the Manchus; this list will illustrate the
variety of political and intellectual groups who derived meaning from performances by Li’s troupe.

4.1. The Spectators as Ming Loyalists

1. **Li Yuankuan** 黎元宽 (zi Bo’an 博庵; 1596-1675; *Jinshi* 1628; Nanchang). Fifty of his poems were included in *YZXYP*; six poems in *XJSH*.¹ Once the *tixue fushi* 提学副使 (assistant surveillance commissioner of the Education Intendant Circuit) in Zhejiang during the Ming period, he refused to take an office after 1644 on the pretext of his filial duty to his old mother.²

2. **Chen Hongxu** 陈弘绪 (zi Shiye 士业; 1597-1665; Xinjian 新建, Nanchang Prefecture). Fifteen of his poems were included in *YZXYP*; three poems in *XJSH*.³ Son of a Donglin member, Chen never succeeded in the civil examinations but was recommended to serve in some local posts during the Ming. After 1644, he refused to take any office under the Manchus, but instead, he compiled a work about Song loyalists to demonstrate his loyalty to the fallen Ming.⁴

3. **Wang Youding** 王猷定 (zi Yuyi 于一; hao Zhenshi 铨石; 1598-1662; *bagong*; Nanchang). Three of his poems were included in *YZXYP*; two poems in *XJSH*.⁵


² For the biography of Li Yuankuan, see Tao Cheng, *Jiangxi tongzhi* (n.p., 1732), 70:33b; Wei Yuankuang, *Nanchang xianzhi*, pp. 903-04.


⁴ Zhao Erxun et al., *Qing shi gao*, 484:13320-21. For a more detailed biography of Chen, see Shi Runzhang, “Gu zhengjin Jinzhou zhizhou Chen gong muzhiming” (The epitaph to Mr. Chen, a summoned scholar and once the prefect magistrate of Jinzhou), in *Shi Yushan ji*, vol. 1, pp. 403-06.

Donglin member, Wang never succeeded in any civil examination and remained loyal to the fallen Ming until his death.6

4. Zha Jizuo 查继佐 (zi Yihuang 伊璜; hao Yuzhai 与斋; 1601-76; juren 1633; Haining 海宁, Zhejiang). Zha Jizuo passed the 1633 provincial examination in Zhejiang as the Number One Graduate when Li Yuankuan supervised the examination as the provincial assistant surveillance commissioner. Zha and Li Mingrui once asked their private troupes to perform publicly at the same time at the same occasion in Yangzhou.7 As mentioned above, Li Mingrui once sent an actress as a gift to Zha who then named her Yexie. Zha was a staunch and famous Ming loyalist in Zhejiang.8

5. Jin Yingsheng 靳应昇 (zi Bixing 璧星; hao Chabo 茶坡; 1605-63; gongsheng; Huai’an 淮安, Jiangsu). Five of his poems were included in YZXYP; one poem in XJSH.9 Jin Yingsheng attended the palace examination in Shunzhi 13 (1656) as a gongsheng, but he had been viewed as a Ming loyalist because his poems were included in several collections of the Ming loyalist poetry.10

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8 In Zha Jizuo nianpu, Shen Qi provided the details about the life of Zha Jizuo as a Ming loyalist. For an English biography of him, see Hummel, Eminent Chinese, pp. 18-19.

9 Sun Dianqi, Fanshu ouji, p. 531; Qiu Junhong, Xijiang shihua, p. 819.

10 Jin Yingsheng’s attendance in the 1656 palace examination was provided by Deng Zhicheng, in Deng, Qing shi jishi chu bian (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), pp. 540. For Jin’s relations with other Ming loyalists, see Wang Yu, comp., Jiangsu shi zheng (Jiaoshan: Haixian shizheng ge, 1821), 141:9a-10a. For his biography, see Wei Zhezhi et al., Huaiyuan fuzhi (1748) (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe youxian gongsi, 1983), p. 2433. Zhang Qigan 张其涤 (b. 1859) praised Jin Yingsheng directly as a Ming loyalist. See Zhang Qigan, Mingdai qian yimin shi yong 明代千遗民诗咏 (Poems to Praise One Thousand Ming Loyalists), in Qingdai zhuanti congkan, vol. 66, pp. 642-43. Zhuo Erkan included one of Jin’s poems in the collected poems by the
6. **Huang Wenxing** 黄文星 (zi Ziwei 子威; hao Cun’an 存庵; b. 1611; Nanchang).

According to Li Mingrui, Huang once advised He Tengjiao 何騰蛟 (1592-1649; juren 1621), the Governor-general of six provinces including Hubei and Hunan from January 1645 to 1649, on how to defend against the Manchu attack, but his suggestions were not accepted. Subsequently, Huang returned disappointed to Nanchang, lived as a recluse with Li’s family for a long time, and tutored Li’s grandson. In his academic career, Huang focused more on public affairs and economics than on literature, as he witnessed the rebellion led by Zhang Xianzhong 张献忠 (1605-47) and the invasion of the Manchu forces.\(^{12}\)

7. **Du Jun** 杜濬 (zi Yuhuang 于皇; hao Chacun 茶村; 1611-87; gongsheng 1638; Huanggang 黄冈, Hubei). As mentioned above, he presented a poem to Yexie, the actresses presented by Li Mingrui to Zha Jizuo. Due to the rebellion led by Zhang Xianzhong, he was forced to seek refuge in Nanjing, lived there for roughly forty years, and then died in Yangzhou.\(^{13}\) As I will demonstrate, his brother Du Jie 杜芥 had relations with Li Mingrui who had been roaming about in Yangzhou, Nanjing, and Hangzhou as we know. Thus, Du Jun definitely watched performances by Li Mingrui’s troupe.

8. **Fang Wen** 方文 (zi Erzhi 尔止; 1612-69; zhusheng; Tongcheng 桐城, Anhui).

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\(^{11}\) For He Tengjiao’s biography, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 290-91.


\(^{13}\) For Du Jun’s biography, see Deng Zhicheng, *Qing shi jishi chu bian*, vol. 1, pp. 184-85; Zhao Erxun et al., *Qing shi gao*, 501:13859; For his life in Nanjing and Yangzhou, see Fang Bao, “Du Chacun xiansheng mujie 杜茶村先生墓碣” (The memorial tablet to Master Du Chacun), in Fang Bao, *Fang Bao ji*, ed. Liu Jigao (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983), pp. 400-01.
Fang Wen never served in any post during the Ming, and after the fall of the Ming he made a living by practicing medicine and divination.\textsuperscript{14} In late October of 1661, Fang Wen traveled by boat from Nanjing to Nanchang, then to Qianzhou where he met Zhou Lingshu. Since he returned to Nanchang at the end of the year, we can deduce that he stayed there until the early spring of 1662.\textsuperscript{15} On 2 November 1661, Fang Wen was invited by Li Mingrui to a feast and composed a poem, the last two lines of which read:

\begin{quote}
I heard your green eyebrows excel in singing,
When will they play reed pipes?\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

他闻有翠眉工度曲，
何时方一奏笙簧？

He certainly seemed to have been anticipating a performance by Li’s troupe. Since he stayed in Nanchang until the spring of 1662, and since Shi Runzhang arrived at Nanchang in the fall of 1661 and watched the performance by Li’s troupe as mentioned in Chapter Three, Fang Wen likely also watched its performance during his stay.

9. Gui Zhuang 归庄 (zi Xuangong 玄恭; 1613-73; Kunshan 昆山, Jiangsu). He was a famous Ming loyalist.\textsuperscript{17} Four of his poems were included in \textit{YZXYP}; one poem in \textit{XJSI}.\textsuperscript{18}

10. Du Jie (hao Canglue 苍略; 1617-93; gongsheng; Huanggang, Hubei). He was Du Jun’s younger brother and had been living in Nanjing as Du Jun had since they came to seek

\textsuperscript{14} For Fang Wen’s life, see \textit{Qingdai zhuanji congkan}, vol. 19, pp. 164-65; vol. 24, pp. 93-95; vol. 68, pp. 525-26; vol. 189, pp. 325-27.

\textsuperscript{15} Chen Hongxu, “\textit{Xijiang You Cao xu} 西江游草序” (Preface to the draft of the travel to Xijiang), in Fang Wen, \textit{Xijiang you cao} (included in \textit{Tushan ji}, vol. 6), 1a.

\textsuperscript{16} See Fang Wen, “Chongjiu hou er ri tong Cheng Shiye yin Li Taixu xiansheng zhai tou 重九后二日同陈士业饮李太虚先生斋头” (On the eleventh day of the ninth lunar month, I drank with Chen Shiye in the studio of Master Li Taixu), in Fang, \textit{Xijiang you cao} (included in \textit{Tushan ji}, vol. 6), 22a.

\textsuperscript{17} For the biography of Gui Zhuang as a Ming loyalist, see Hummel, \textit{Eminent Chinese}, p. 427.

\textsuperscript{18} Sun Dianqi, \textit{Fanshu ouji}, p. 531; Qiu Junhong, \textit{Xijiang shihua}, p. 819.
refuge there due to the rebellion in the late Ming.\textsuperscript{19} According to Sun Zhiwei, Du Jie once met Li Mingrui at the Ouyang Terrace (\textit{Ou tai}), together with Wang Youding and Sun.\textsuperscript{20}

11. Song Jicheng 宋继澄 (\textit{zi} Chenglan 澗岚; \textit{juren} 1627; Laiyang 莱阳, Shandong). Only one of his poems was included in \textit{YZXY}.\textsuperscript{21} He refused to serve in any post after the fall of the Ming.\textsuperscript{22}

12. Sun Zhiwei 孙枝蔚 (\textit{zi} Baoren 豹人; 1620-87; Sanyuan 三原, Shanxi 陕西). Ten of his poems were included in \textit{YZXY}; one poem in \textit{XJSH}.\textsuperscript{23} After his campaign against the Shanxi rebellion failed, he escaped to Yangzhou and had been living there until his death. In 1679, he was forced to attend the examination of \textit{boxue hongru} 博学鸿儒 (erudite scholasticus) and intentionally did not complete the examination.\textsuperscript{24} Such an examination was given only once by the Manchu regime with an intention “to entice reclusive Chinese scholars into the officialdom.”\textsuperscript{25} Refusing to attend it or intentionally failing means refusing to cooperate with the Manchus.

13. Wang Ruqian (\textit{zi} Ranming; 1577-1655; Hangzhou). (See below)

14. Zhang Suichen (\textit{hao} Qingzi; d. 1670; Hangzhou). (See below)

\textsuperscript{19} For Du Jie’s biography, see \textit{Qing shi gao}, 501:13859-60. More details were provided by Fang Bao, “Du Canglue xiansheng muzhiming 杜苍略先生墓志铭” (The epigraph to Master Du Canglue), in \textit{Fang Bao ji}, p. 250-51.


\textsuperscript{21} Sun Dianqi, \textit{Fanshu ouji}, p. 531.

\textsuperscript{22} For Song Jicheng’s biography, see Wang Pixu et al., \textit{Laiyang xianzhi} (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe youxiang gongsi, 1968), pp. 1031, 1348-51.

\textsuperscript{23} Sun Dianqi, \textit{Fanshu ouji}, p. 531; Qiu Junhong, \textit{Xijiang shihua}, p. 819.

\textsuperscript{24} For Sun Zhiwei’s biography, see \textit{Qing shi gao}, 484:13355. For a recent study on him, see Zhang Bing, “Qing chu Guanzhong yimin shiren Sun Zhiwei de jiaoyou yu chuangzuo,” \textit{Ningbo daxue xuebao} 13.1 (March 2000): 13-17, esp. 13-14.

\textsuperscript{25} Hucker, \textit{A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China}, p. 388.
15. **Feng Yuanchu** (zi Yunjiang; Hangzhou). (See below)

We know that the three mentioned above, together with Li Mingrui and Gu (zi Lindiao), formed the Society of Five Old Gentlemen of Mount Gu. Among them, Gu Lindiao’s whereabouts and political standing are ambiguous, but sources do indicate that Zhang Suichen lived in seclusion practicing medicine in Hangzhou after the Ming collapse, and was definitely a Ming loyalist. Both Wang Ruqian and Feng Yuanchu, according to Qian Qianyi, were Ming loyalists. In the epitaph to Wang Ruqian, Qian Qianyi wrote, “Ranming is definitely a virtuous man in the world, a gentleman of long life in the country, an aged hermit retired from the age of peace, and a loyalist who survived the disaster.”

In a letter to his friend, Qian Qianyi mentions the late life of Feng Yuanchu:

> In Hangzhou I have an old friend of fifty years named Feng Yuanchu. [...] Now he is at the age of eighty-seven sui. He has closed his gate and lives in complete seclusion. [...] He cultivates orchids and washes bamboo [...] and is not inferior to the hermits of antiquity.

No evidence was found that directly indicates these three were spectators of Li Mingrui’s troupe. But, as mentioned by Shi Runzhang who met Li Mingrui in Hangzhou in 1654, Li was accompanied by his troupe when he joined the Society of Five Old Gentlemen of Mount

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26 For the biography of Zhang Suichen, see Gong Jiajun et al., *Hangzhou fuzhi* (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1974), p. 2811; Deng Zhicheng, *Qing shi jishi chubian*, pp. 246-47.

27 See Qian Qianyi, “Xin’an Wang Ranming hezang muzhiming” (The epitaph to Wang Ranming of Xian’an, buried with his wife), in Qian, *Muzhaiyouxue ji*, p. 1155.

28 See Qian Qianyi, “Yu Song Yushu” (A letter to Song Yushu),” in Qian, *Muzhai chidu* (Shanghai: Shangwu yin shu guan, 1936), 1:34a-b.
According to Shi, Li Mingrui was so welcoming that he would ask his boy-singers to accompany any guest who visited him to drink, as I described in Part Four of Chapter Two. So, from the intersection of the sources, we can deduce that Wang Ruqian, Zhang Suichen, and Feng Yuanchu probably watched the performance by Li Mingrui’s troupe.

4.2. The Spectators Who Served Both the Ming and Qing.

16. **Li Kai** 李楷 (zi Shuze 叔则; hao Anweng 岸翁, Wutang 雾堂; juren 1624; Chaoyi 朝邑, Shanxi 陕西). Twelve of his poems were included in *YZXYP*. From Shunzhi 2 (1645) to Shunzhi 4 (1647), Li Kai was the zhixian 知县 (district magistrate) of Baoying 宝应 County. After he resigned from the post, he lived in Yangzhou for several years, where he collaborated with Li Mingrui in editing a book.

17. **Li Yuanding** 李元鼎 (zi Meigong 梅公; 1595-1670+; jinshi 1622; Jishui, Jiangxi). Four of his poems were included in *YZXYP*; two poems in *XJSH*. Once the guanglushi shaoqing 光禄寺少卿 (vice minister in the Court of Imperial Entertainments) in the Ming period, he surrendered to Li Zicheng and then to the Manchus in 1644 Beijing. He had been the bingbu you shilang 兵部右侍郎 (right vice-minister of war) from 1645 to 1647

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29 In the headnote to a poem presented to Li Minrui, Shi Runzhang said, “[Li Mingrui was] forced to live at Xileng in Hangzhou due to the rebellion in Nanchang. He raised some excellent singers, and formed the Society of Fragrant Hill with other old gentlemen in the West Lake.” See Shi, “Xihu zui hou chou Li zongbo,” in Shi Yushan ji, vol. 3, p. 436.

30 Sun Dianqi, *Fanshu ouji*, p. 531.


and again from 1651 to 1653, but was dismissed twice, once for his recommending a rebel to the governor of Shuntian 顺天 Prefecture, and the other for bribery.\footnote{Qing shi lie zhuang, in Qingdai zhuanji congkan, vol. 105, pp. 765-66; Deng Zhicheng, Qing shi jishi chu bian, pp. 861-62. For more details about Li Yuanding and his wife Zhu Zhongmei, see Chapter Five.}

18. **Zhu Zhongmei** 朱中楣 (zi Yuanshan 远山; hao Yuanshan furen 远山夫人; b. 1621; Jishui, Jiangxi). Born in the Ming imperial clan, Zhu Zhongmei married Li Yuanding in 1639 and went north to Beijing with her husband in 1640. She composed some poems about Li Mingrui’s private troupe and its performances, as cited in Chapter Three. She is the only female spectator whose poems about Li Mingrui’s troupe and its performance are accessible to me. As a daughter of the Ming imperial clan and as wife of an official who served the Ming and then the Qing, she, on behalf of herself and her husband, composed poems from which we can find dark but ever-lasting nostalgia for the fallen Ming and Chinese culture which it represented, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Five and Six.

19. **Wu Weiye** (zi Jungong; hao Meicun; 1609-71; jinshi 1631; Taicang 太仓, Jiangsu). His relations with Li Mingrui were demonstrated in Chapter Two. I believe he composed some poems about the performances by Li Mingrui’s troupe although they were lost.

20. **Xiong Wenju** 熊文举 (zi Gongyuan 公远; hao Xuetang 雪堂; 1660-69; jinshi 1631; Xinjian, Nanchang Prefecture). Sixty-eight of his poems were included in YZXYP.\footnote{Sun Dainqi, Fanshu ouji, p. 531.}

Once the **libu langzhong** 吏部郎中 (director in the Ministry of Personnel) during the Chongzhen period, he surrendered to Li Zicheng and then to the Manchu conquerors in 1644 Beijing. In 1646 he resigned from the position of **libu you shilang** 吏部右侍郎 (right vice-minister of personnel), but in 1651 he was summoned to Beijing and appointed **libu zuo**
shilang 吏部左侍郎 (left vice-minister of personnel).36

21. **Zhou Lianggong** 周亮工 (zi Yuanliang 元亮; 1612-72; jinshi 1640; Kaifeng, Henan). In 1642 and 1643, Zhou, as the district magistrate of Wei County, Shandong, defended successfully against the Manchu army. In 1644, he escaped from the arrest by the rebels in Beijing and fled to Nanjing, where his family had lived for dozens of years. Zhou did not serve during the reign of Hongguang, but surrendered to the Manchus in 1645 when Nanjing fell. As mentioned above, he wrote a preface to Li Mingrui’s *Sibu gao*.37 No poem was found about Li Mingrui’s troupe and its performances in Zhou’s extant works, but Zhou would have inevitably watched performances by Li’s troupe, since Li often visited Nanjing accompanied by his troupe.

22. **Cao Rong** 曹溶 (zi Jiangong 鉴躬; 1613-85; jinshi 1637; Jiaxing 嘉兴, Zhejiang). There is direct evidence that Cao was a spectator of Li’s troupe, since Cao composed a *ci* poem specifically about the performance by the troupe.38 Once a censor during the Chongzhen period, he surrendered to Li Zicheng and then to the Manchus in 1644 Beijing.39

23. **Zhu Hui** 朱徽 (zi Suichu 遂初, Zimei 子美; jinshi 1631; Jinxian 进贤, Jiangxi). Forty-seven of his poems were included in *YZXYP*; two poems in *XISH*.40 Once the *xingke jishi* (supervising secretary in the Office of Scrutiny for Justice) in the Chongzhen period, he surrendered to the Manchus in 1644 and was promoted to the position of *du jishi* (chief

36 *Qing shi lie zhuang*, in *Qingdai zhuanji congkan*, vol. 105, pp. 762-63.


39 For Cao Rong’s biography, see Zhao Erxun et al., *Qing shi gao*, 484:13326-27; Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, p. 740.

supervising secretary). In 1645, he resigned from the post and went south to his hometown.

In the year renchen (1652), he was appointed the bingbei fushi 兵备副使 (vice commissioner of the Military Defense Circuit) in Guyuan 固原, Ningxia, a post he resigned later.\(^{41}\)

24. **Ji Zongmeng** 姚宗孟 (zi Shuzi 叔子; juren 1636; Huai’an, Jiangsu). As mentioned in Chapter Two, Ji was the district magistrate of Yuyao 余姚 and then prefecture magistrate of Hangzhou, where Li Mingrui had lived for several years. Ji Zongmeng composed a rhapsody about Li Mingrui’s Garden of Elysium destroyed during the Nanchang rebellion in 1648.\(^{42}\) Since he was close to Li Mingrui, we can be certain that Ji watched performances by Li’s troupe.

25. **Zhao Kaixin** 赵开心 (zi Lingbo 灵伯; hao Dongmen 洞门; d. 1664; jinshi 1634; Changsha 长沙, Hunan). According to Wang Zhuo 王晫 (b. 1636), Li Mingrui once showed Ji Zongmeng’s rhapsody to Zhao Kaixin and Li Kai.\(^{43}\) Zhao Kaixin was dismissed from the position of the zuo qian du yushi 左佥都御史 (left assistant censor-in-chief) in 1646, summoned to Beijing to serve in the former post in 1651, and then dismissed once more in 1652.\(^{44}\) From one of Zhu Zhongmei’s poems presented to Zhao Kaixin’s wife, Zhao and his wife left Beijing in the late spring of 1652 to Yangzhou,\(^{45}\) where Zhao had been staying and

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\(^{41}\) For Zhu Hui’s brief biography, see Tao Cheng, Jiangxi tongzhi, 70:33b.

\(^{42}\) For more details of Ji Zongmeng’s life, see Wu Kuntian et al., Chongxiu Andong xianzhi (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1975), p. 190; Qi Zhaonan et al., Wenzhou fuzhi (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1983), pp. 880.

\(^{43}\) Wang Zhuo, Jin shi shuo, in Qingdai zhuangji congkan, vol. 18, p. 49.

\(^{44}\) For Zhao Kaixin’s biography, see Qing shi gao, 244:9605-07; more details about the dates were provided in Han ming chen zhu nan 汉名臣传 (Biographies of the Famous Chinese Officials), in Qingdai zhuangji congkan, vol. 38, pp. 72-80.

\(^{45}\) Zhu Zhongmei, “Ji chun song zongxian Zhao Dongmen furen gui Guangling ershou 季春送总宪赵洞门夫人归广陵二首” (In the late spring, I saw off the wife of Zhao Dongmen, the left censor-in-chief, back
had ample opportunities to watch performances by Li Mingrui's troupe until Zhao was
summoned to Beijing in the following spring.

4.3. Spectators Who Received Degrees and/or Held Offices during the Qing

26. Shi Runzhang 施闰章 (zi Shangbai 尚白; hao Yushan 愚山, Juzhai 矩斋; 1618-
83; jinshi 1649; Xuancheng 宣城, Anhui). I mentioned details about Shi Runzhang's
descriptions of Li Mingrui's troupe and its performance in Chapter Three. The record of his
spectatorship matched the performances in Hangzhou, 1654, and in Nanchang, 1661.

27. Zhou Lingshu 周令树 (zi Jibai 计百; jinshi 1655; Weihui 卫辉, Henan). Four of
his poems were included in YZXYP; one poem was included in XJSH.46 I expanded on his
adoration for Yanbo in Chapter Three.

28. Xiong Yixiao 熊一潇 (zi Hanruo 汉若; hao Weihuai 卫怀; 1638-1706; jinshi
1664; Nanchang). Eight of his poems were included in YZXYP. Xiong was the protégé of
Huang Wenxing, and studied in the Garden of Elysium together with Li Mingrui’s grandson.

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to Guangling, and I composed two poems), in Li Yuanding, Shiyuan quanji, p. 91. In the second poem, Zhu
mentioned that both Zhao and his wife went south to Yangzhou:

You are admired holding the tray level with your eyebrows,
Now, you are about to go home, hands by hands.

齐眉人共羡，
携手暂同归。

These two lines indicate that Zhao Kaixin, together with his wife, went to Yangzhou at this time. The two
poems was arranged after the one composed on the twelfth day of the eighth lunar month of the year renchen
(14 September 1652) and before the one composed on the late spring of the year guisi (1653). I think such an
arrangement is wrong because Zhao was dismissed in the second lunar month of Shunzhi 9 (1652) and
summoned to Beijing in the second lunar month of Shunzhi 10 (1653). See Han ming chen zhuan, in Qingdai
zhuanji congkan, vol. 38, pp. 72-80.

He was once the minister of works under the Manchus.\textsuperscript{47}

29. Xiong Feiwei 熊飞渭 (zi Yubin 渔滨; b. 1628; jinshi 1664; Nanchang).

According to Li Mingrui, Xiong Feiwei studied under the supervision of Huang Wenxing in the Garden of Elysium, together with Xiong Yixiao and Li’s grandson.\textsuperscript{48}

* * *

Some spectators are mentioned in YZXYP, but there exists no other traceable information about these individuals to compile their identities in this thesis. Since they do appear on record as nonetheless present, I will list them here briefly: Luo 罗 (hao Yuezhai 约斋), Cheng 程 (zi Mingdong 鸣东), Cheng 程 (zi Loudong 娄东), Zhao Yi 赵嶷 (zi Guozi 国子) whose poems about the performances are also included in YZXYP.\textsuperscript{49} Zhao Yi was quite possibly a Ming loyalist, since, as mentioned in Chapter Two, he was inspired enough by Li Mingrui’s records about his special summons by Chongzhen, to compose a long poem in the memory of the Emperor. Shen 沈 (zi Zhonglian 仲连) listed in YZXYP was a military officer in Zhejiang, and once had close relations with Cao Rong.\textsuperscript{50} Since Li Mingrui was so

\textsuperscript{47} For Xiong Yixiao’s biography, see Jiang Shiquan, “Gongbu shangshu Xiong gong Weihuai xiangsheng mubiao 工部尚书熊公蔚先生墓表” (The epitaph to Mr. Xiong Weihuai, the ex-minister of works), in Jiang, Zhongyatang ji jiaojian, eds. Shao Haiqing and Li Mengsheng (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993), pp. 2249-52.

\textsuperscript{48} Li Mingrui, “Xiong Yubin ji xu 熊漁濱集序” (The preface to the Collected works of Xiong Yubin), in Wei Yuankuang, ed., Nanchang wen zheng, pp. 319-20.

\textsuperscript{49} Sun Dianqi, Fanshu ouji, p. 531.

\textsuperscript{50} In a poem about the feast hosted by Shen Zhonglian, Cao Rong wrote:

\texttt{The military leader can drink with abandon,}
\texttt{I, an old man, am feeble and dull.}

豪饮推诚帅，
衰迟愧老夫。

See Cao Rong, “Shen Zhonglian zhao yin Shouzhong Tang 沈仲连招饮守中堂” (Shen Zhonglian invited me to
hospitable as I described in the beginning of this chapter, it would make sense that over thirty-four scholars and officials mentioned above would have watched the performances by his private troupe.

I will focus more on the first two groups—those staunchly loyal to the Ming, and those who served in both Ming and Qing dynasties—partially because of the nature of the sources, but more importantly because these groups clearly represent the political transition and cultural integration in the period covered in the thesis. Also, since the third group began to enjoy the benefits of the transition and integration, their attitudes towards the Manchu regime and the fallen Ming dynasty were less emotionally charged. The spectators’ ideas about these performances, which I will reveal in the following chapters, will help to vividly illustrate the political transition and cultural integration of this period.

drink in his Shouzhong Hall), poem 4, in Cao, Jingtitang shiji (Baozhou: 1725), 22:9a. For more poems about the relations between Cao and Shen, see Cao, “Yu zhaoshou Zhonglian gong ji, yi yu buguo, zuo ci ji zhi 欲招仲连共集，以雨不果，作此寄之” (I planned to invite Zhonglian to meet, but failed because of the rain. So I am writing the poems to send him), in Jingtitang shiji, 22:7b; Cao, “Zhonglian yao tong Shihu fanzhou 仲连邀同石湖泛舟” (Shen Zhonglian invited me to sail in the Stone Lake), Jingtitang shiji, 28:5a-b.
WHAT DID SPECTATORS DRAW FROM THE PERFORMANCES?

Both the singing and women of Li’s private troupe were extremely beautiful and Li declared clearly that the aim of raising the troupe was to produce sensual pleasure. On a night of bright moonlight and cool breezes, Li asked his actresses to perform and to accompany him in drinking. He composed four poems to describe his enjoyment of the occasion, three of which read:

Just as wind and moon find it hard to be alone,
Can we dispense with songs and dances on a pleasant night?
Facing the moon and encountering flowers, wine is often poured,
Birdsong amidst the flowers urges lifting of the pot.

In Paradise there is another West Lake,
Once at West Lake, did I recognize this or not?
Excepting the Penglai Isle and Garden of Elysium,
It is hard to find such fairylands in the world of men.

In the moonlight, pearly dew covers flowers’ faces,
Under crabapple trees, they lean against banisters.
Only this place remains suitable for strings and pipes,
“Rainbow Skirt” issues from the [Palace of] Enveloping Cold.¹

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¹ Qiu Junhong, *Xijiang shihua*, pp. 815–16. In the second poem, the former West Lake refers to the one in Nanchang City while the latter refers to the one in Hangzhou. We know that Li Mingrui once lived in Hangzhou. For West Lake in Nanchang in Li Mingrui’s time, see Figure 1.
Women, singing, dancing, scenery, flowers, and wine—all elements necessary to a scholar-official’s enjoyment—are mentioned in these poems. Most of the spectators mentioned in the previous chapter lavished praise on the acting ability and beauty of the actresses, at times in frivolous or lecherous tones. Li Yuankuan suggested that one should seize every opportunity to enjoy women and song; thus would he be released from the dilemmas caused by life under the Manchus. Such observations support opinions mentioned in Chapter One about the sensual functions of a private troupe.

However, some spectators drew much more from the performances. In what follows, I will apply Chartier’s audience-centered method of “historical reading” to analyze some poems written by the spectators about performances. The spectators’ interpretations will be revealed by discussing their responses to performance elements of music and costume, to stories that plays tell, and to texts or individual lines of plays in the historical context of the

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3 In one poem about watching a performance, Li Yuankuan wrote:

What lingers in my heart will be released temporarily with sacrificial meeting,
Fragrances spread when the eight beauties are talking.
The atmosphere of today’s meeting is just excellent,
I am worrying about tomorrow to rain unbrokenly.

See Qiu Junhong, Xijiang shihua, p. 817. Li refused the invitation from Emperor Shunzhi who promised to offer him a post. See Tao Cheng, Jiangxi tongzhi, 70:33b; Wei Yuankuang, Nanchang xianzhi, pp. 903-04.
Ming-Qing transition.

5.1. What Did Ming Loyalists Draw from the Performances?

As mentioned above, *Mudan ting* and *Moling chun* were the most important plays in the repertoire of Li’s troupe. When the two plays were performed, Li Mingrui invited his friends and associates to watch, and the spectators wrote poems to record the performances and gatherings.\(^4\) Among the spectators, Li Yuankuan, Chen Hongxu, and Li Yuanding had different ideas about the plays and performances of them. Like other hermits whose political aspirations were shattered but whose loyalties to the fallen Ming remained, Li Yuankuan was much concerned with enjoying *Mudan ting*, an erotic play, performed by sexually desirable actresses:

Unable to simultaneously exhaust Orchid Pavilion’s scenic sights,  
We get drunk, float cups, and then roll the curtains up.  
The rouged and powdered surround us, redolent with flowers’ scent,  
*As Peony Pavilion* is sung resoundingly, rhyme tallies are drawn.\(^5\)

兰亭胜迹未能兼，  
尽醉流觞再卷帘。  
红粉围来花气转，  
牡丹唱彻韵筹添。

Li Yuanding, on the other hand, was more attuned to Du Liniang’s plight as a wandering ghost, which he associated with his own situation after the fall of the Ming:

Lovers of ancient and modern times all praise Yuming,  
From lingering dreams and deep distress,  
I sigh at the windblown thistle’s [rootlessness].\(^6\)

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\(^4\) Qiu Junhong, *Xijiang shihua*, p. 816.

\(^5\) Qiu Junhong, *Xijiang shihua*, p. 817. “Orchid Pavilion,” the site of revels for the calligrapher-poet Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361, or 321-379) and his friends, here refers to Li Mingrui’s Canglang Pavilion.

\(^6\) Li Yuanding, “Mu chun xie Xiong Xuetang shaozhai, Li Bo’an xuexian yan ji Taixu zongbo Canglang Ting, guan nuji yan *Mudan Ting*...” 景春偕熊雪堂少年、黎博庵学宪变集太虚宗伯沧浪亭，观女
In a poem especially written about the gatherings and performances, Chen Hongxu does not refer to the two plays, but he made an association between performances he had watched and his nostalgia for the fallen Ming:

Songs and pipes in the clouds have transformed into dust,
Tears have been shed in the desert smoke for fifteen years.
Once again, I heard the Zhenyuan court songs,
And was shocked by seeing the Jade Hall person as I was drinking.\(^7\)

The second line indicates that this poem was composed in Shunzhi 15 (1658). The third line originates from one poem by Liu Yuxi, which describes the decline of the Tang Dynasty caused further by the Zhu Ci Rebellion \(\text{朱泚之乱 (783-84).}\)^8 The Jade Hall refers to the

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7 Qiu Junhong, *Xijiang shihua*, p. 818.

8 Liu Yuxi, “Ting jiu gong zhong yueren Mu shi change 听旧宫中乐人穆氏唱歌” (Listen to Lady Mu, once a musician in the court, singing), in Liu Yuxi, *Liu Yuxiji*, p. 333. In the poem, Liu wrote:

Do not sing any Zhenyuan court song,
Just a few officials have survived that time.

休唱贞元供奉曲，
当时朝士已无多。

For the rebellion led by Zhu Ci (742-84), see Liu Xu, *Jiu Tang shu*, 200:5385-91; Ouyang and Song, *Xin Tang*
Hanlin Academy, and "the Jade Hall person" means the Hanlin academician, here referring to Li Mingrui. In his poem, Chen Hongxu views the performances as symbols, to which he lends some political and historical meanings. So, the questions arise: to what extent is Chen Hongxu's association reasonable? And what does it mean to those who try to explore his contemporaries' ideas about performances during this transitional period?

Southern Drama, including Kun opera, reached a peak of popularity in the late Ming and Early Qing, especially in Nanjing, Yangzhou, and Hangzhou, and Mudang ting was one of the most popular plays onstage after it left Tang Xianzu's hand. During this period of transition, scholars who wrote poems in response to dramatic performances read political, historical, and cultural meanings into plays more than dramatic meanings, irrespective of their political loyalties. For them, the brilliance of plays onstage symbolized the flourishing of the Jiangnan region and the Ming, but they also symbolized one of the causes of the collapse of the Ming, whose rulers had indulged themselves in enjoying plays too much to attend to government affairs. Kun opera, the style of Southern drama most favored by the literati, came to symbolize Chinese cultural superiority for some Ming loyalists in the early years of Manchu rule.

5.1.1. Music: Chinese and Barbarian

In a series of eighteen short tunes (qu 曲), Wu Weiye recalled the prosperity of the Jiangnan region in the late Ming, cataloguing the excellence of gardens, food, pets,

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9 For the prosperity of the Southern Drama including Kun opera in this period, see Lu Eting, Kunju yanchu shi gao, pp. 89-257; Hu Ji and Liu Zhizhong, Kunju fazhan shi, pp. 135-509.

10 For the popularity and performance of Mudan ting in this period, see Swatek, Peony Pavilion Onstage, pp. 2-7. 101-57.
marketplaces, fruits, temples, gambling houses, and especially music, plays, and women.

Commenting on these tunes, Jin Rongfan wrote:

The rise and fall of the Ming Dynasty were both witnessed in the Jiangnan region, an ancient land of fame and culture, prosperity and good government. When recalling the advantages of this region, [Wu] Meicun might have mentioned things important and profound, but in those eighteen tunes, he only touched on implements for games, the prosperity of marketplaces, and the amusements of women and songs—all so-called “games for boys and girls.” Why? After crossing the Yangzi River [in 1644], those both high and low [in the Ming regime] indulged in frivolities, “singing clearly in a leaking boat and drinking lustily in a burning house,” in the words of Chen Wozi. Meicun witnessed this himself and faithfully recorded it as a substitute for “feelings no words can express.” All those eighteen tunes are history through poems. [...] Some consider them to be account books about women and wine, but I fear that they have misunderstood the author’s painstaking efforts. 11

Some other scholars would have connected the performances to the prosperity and collapse of the Ming in the same way as did Wu Weiye. For example, among loyalist spectators, Du Jun composed a long poem in which he associated the plays and songs of Nanjing with the transition from Ming to Qing and illustrated the history of the Ming from the time of Zhang Juzheng 张居正 (1525-73) to the end of the Southern Ming in 1645. At the end of the poem, he sorrowfully wrote:

Drumbeats scald like hot water, stab like horns,
Feelings I should feel are stopped up in my heart.

[...]

Adrift in Jiangnan for most of my life,
I once heard the sounds of yesterday’s coda,

11 For the eighteen tunes, see Wu Weiye, *Wu Meicun quanji*, 533-38, 1151. For the commentary of Jin Rongfan, see *Wu Meicun quanji*, p. 538. Lu Eting cites these tunes and Jin’s commentary to illustrate scholar-officials’ indulgence in plays. See Lu Eting, *Kunjuyanchu shi gao*, p. 116. “Meicun” is Wu Weiye’s hao, and “Wozi” is Chen Zilong’s (1608-47) zi.
And now hear the opening notes of today’s regime.\(^{12}\)

采汤挝鼓複藜刻，
应有心肝碍胸次。

……

此生流落江南久，
曾听当时煞尾声，
又听今朝第一声。

Sun Zhiwei composed a poem in a similar elegiac way after he watched the performance by

Li’s troupe:

Each time I heard the Water Tune I felt sad,
How could I know that the immortal wanted to detain his guest?
Without the jade girls to serve the wine,
What chances have I to see ancient Yangzhou?\(^{13}\)

曾闻水调每关愁，
岂意神仙爱客留。
不是行觞仍玉女，
何缘得见古扬州?

The first three lines contain references to tunes created by Emperor Yang (560-618) of the

Sui Dynasty, including a “Water Tune” composed on a visit to Yangzhou. In the Ming and

Qing periods, “shui diao 水调” refers to “shui mo diao 水磨调” (water-polished music), that

is, the Kun musical style.\(^{14}\) With this allusion to Emperor Yang’s visits to Yangzhou in the

\(^{12}\) Du Jun, “Zai wen dengchuan guichui ge 再闻灯船鼓吹歌” (Song upon hearing drums and pipes

on the lamplit boats once more), in Du Jun, Dun Chacun yi gao (MS in Puban Collection, Asian Library, UBC)

(n.p., n.d.)

\(^{13}\) Sun Zhiwei, “Taixu zongbo yuan zhong guan nüyue 太虚宗伯园中观女乐” (Watching the

actresses in the garden of Taixu, the ex-minister of rites), in Sun, Gaitang ji, 9:3a. In the second and third lines,

“The immortal detains guest” and “Jade girls serve wine” are tunes created by Emperor Yang of the Sui

Dynasty, according to the note to this poem. Wang Zhuo (the 12\(^{th}\) century) suggests that originally and

essentially “Water Tune” sounds sorrowful. See Wang Zhuo, Biji man zhi, in Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu

jicheng (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1959; the 4\(^{th}\) print, 1982), pp. 136-37.

\(^{14}\) Dolby, A History of Chinese Drama, p. 92. In a long poem, Wu Weiye described the popularity of

the Kun style, which he called “water tune,” in the late Ming and early Qing:

For more than one century the music in the southern style has been played,
Sui Dynasty, Sun Zhiwei refers to a dramatic performance that reminded him of the prosperity of Yangzhou in the Ming period.

To other Ming loyalists, simply recalling the prosperity of cities such as Nanjing and Yangzhou meant improperly forgetting the collapse of the Ming. Fang Wen, a friend of both Sun Zhiwei and Li Mingrui, lamented the nonchalance of some young scholars who continued to indulge in playgoing even after the Manchu cavalry had taken over the Jiangnan region. In a poem composed in Yangzhou in 1648, he rebukes those who fondly speak of the urbanity of the former dynasty with no thought for the holocaust that ended it:

Several thousands of willows along the Sui Dyke,
Fifteen disastrous fires in the City of Yangzhou.
Pavilions and terraces of the former dynasty all perished,
Fragrant powder of the beauties has not completely vanished.

[...]

Songs of Bamboo Twigs and Water Tune have been sung in the Wu dialect.
Wei Lingfu from my province composed the music,
Liang Bolong, a hermit, wrote words to the melody.

百年来风操南风，
竹枝水调讴吴侬，
里人度曲魏良辅，
高士填词梁伯龙。

See Wu, “Pipa xing 琵琶行” (Ballad of pipa-lute), in Wu, Meicun shiji jianzhu, 4:14b; Wu Meicun quanji, p. 56. Wei Liangfu (b. 1501; native of Nanchang, but lived in Taicang, Wu Weiye’s hometown) is the founder of the Kun style, in which Liang Chenyu (zi Bolong, 1519-91; Kunshan, Jiangsu) composed the chuanqi drama Huansha ji 洗纱记 (Washing Silk) for the first time. For the contributions of Wei Liangfu and Liang Chenyu to the Kun style, see Dolby, A History of Chinese Drama, pp. 91-92.

In 1645, Fang Wen was invited to watch the performance by the private troupe of his friend Liu Xuanjiu, and composed a poem in which the last two lines read:

Some guests are confused as if dreaming,
They do not know the sorrowful rhapsody by Zishan.

有客迷离疑是梦，
不知曾赋子山哀。

See Fang Wen, “Liu Xuanjiu zhaoji Weiyuan guan jiaji 刘显九招集韦园观家伎” (Liu Xuanjiu held a meeting in the Wei Garden, with watching the performance of his private troupe), in Fang, Tushan ji, 6:22a. Yu Xin (zi Zishan; 513-81) composed the Rhapsody “the Lament for the south.” For more about this allusion, see Part Two of Chapter Two.
I am shocked by young men after the massacre, who still urbanely talk about the former dynasty.  

“Massacre” here refers to the bloodbath committed by the Manchus at Yangzhou, which reportedly lasted for ten days.  

For his part, Fang Wen insisted that,

Until the seas dry up and rocks decay,
This hatred will not transform into cold smoke.

Fang Wen thought that Chinese singers should not sing barbarian music but only Chinese songs. Such sentiments are expressed in two poems he wrote in 1657 to present to actresses who were natives of Zhejiang now enslaved by the Plain Red Banner. I translate one of them here:

Only the Jie drum can be heard at the Northern Frontier,
How can they know the Southern songs as soft as the song of an oriole?
Cai Yan was unwilling to end her days in the desert,
Now sing the Song of Weicheng as He Kan did.

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16 Fang Wen, “Guangling huaigu 广陵怀古” (Cherish the past in Guangling), in Fang, Tushan ji, 7:12b.


18 Fang Wen, “San yue shijiu ri zuo 三月十九日作” (Composed on the nineteenth day of the third lunar month), in Fang, Tushan ji, 7:9b.
Obviously, Fang Wen hopes the singers would play Ming music instead of Manchu music. In a poem written the following year, Fang exhorted a scholar named Xu to sing only proper Chinese tunes, not foreign ones:

The music with short flute is the most affectionate,
especially when the moon over the stream is bright.
Just sing Willow Branch and Plum Blossoms,
Don’t play the notes of Mahā and Tūla. 20

Central Wu was the heartland of Kun Opera.
Cai Yan (b. ca. 177), a woman poet once seized by the Hun Xiongnu army and married to a Hun king, was redeemed from the Mongolian tribe with the aid of Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220). For the biography of Cai Yan, see Fan Ye, Hou Han shu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 84:2800-03. For a study in English about Cai Yan’s life and her poems, see Hans H. Frankel, “Cai Yan and the poems attributed to her,” Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews 5.1-2 (July 1983): 133-56.

The last line of the cited quatrain comes from a poem presented by Liu Yuxi to He Kan, a famous singer in the Tang Dynasty. According to Liu Yuxi, he came back to the capital Chang’an (today’s Xi’an) and was moved by the songs popular twenty years before when he was dismissed. He Kan, the only performer Liu met in Chang’an after the Zhu Ci Rebellion, sang the Song of Weicheng at Liu’s request. See Liu Yuxi, “Yu gezhe He Kan 与歌者何戡” (Present to the singer He Kan), in Liu Yuxi ji, p. 334. The story also can be found in Li Fang et al., Taiping guangji (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), p. 1551.

20 Fang Wen, “Zeng Xu sheng 赠徐生” (Present to Master Xu), in Fang, Xu Hang you cao (included in Tushan ji, vol. 5), 26a. The note to this poem says, “Master [Xu] excels in music and rhythm 生妙于音律.” The bamboo piccolo is the most important instrument to accompany in the Kun style performance.

Here “Willow Branch” means “Zhe yang liu 折杨柳” (the Song of breaking the willow branches), and “Plum Blossoms” means “Meihua luo 梅花落” (the Song of falling plum blossoms), both of which were created in the Liang period (502-57) and popular in the Chen period (557-89) of the Southern Dynasties. See Wang Jide, Qu lü, in Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1982), p. 57. “Willow Branch” and “Plum Blossoms” are tunes used in Kun Opera.

Mahā and Tūla, of Buddhist origin, entered China from Turkestan in the Western Han Dynasty. They were first introduced by Zhang Qian 张骞 (d. 114 BC) and revised by Li Yannian 李延年 (d. ca. 90 BC), and
5.1.2. Costumes: the Ming style and the Manchu Style

Not only the music of the Kun style, but also its costumes awakened nostalgia for the fallen dynasty.

In 1370, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (re. 1368-99), the founder of the Ming Dynasty, decreed that the civil and military official costumes follow the Tang style since his dynasty, after the Barbarian Yuan Dynasty, would restore the orthodox Chinese systems invented and developed in the Zhou, Han, Tang, Song Dynasties. The Ming style costumes were and are viewed as representative of Han-Chinese culture.

Chinese traditional culture defines costume symbolism very consciously and clearly. Not only social classes and political structures but also ethnic origins were identified and differentiated with costumes. Changes in costumes always meant indicated deviations of psychological, philosophical, ethnic, and cultural identities. That is the reason why the Han-Chinese males resisted so seriously the orders of shaving their heads in the Manchu style and adopting Manchu dress in the Early Qing. As Susan Mann claims, “Self-conscious awareness of ethnic differences, grounded in dress and custom, continued to separate Manchus from

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21 Zhang Tingyu et al., Ming shi, 67:1633-34.

22 John E. Vollmer, “Costume as symbol in traditional China,” Arts of Asia 8.5 (September-October 1978): 42. Hua Mei provides reveals much about the relations of Chinese costumes to traditional Chinese philosophy and political notions. See Hua Mei, Fushi yu Zhongguo wenhua (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2001), pp. 31-146.
Han Chinese” throughout the early Qing period.23

According to Lu Eting, the design of the theatrical costumes in the Ming period basically followed the patterns of contemporary dress and adornments.24 (See Figure 2) Thus, it is easy to understand why some Ming loyalists connected costumes onstage with the fallen Ming. Fang Wen and Li Yuankuan did so. In 1652, for example, Fang composed two poems after watching a performance in a government office, one of which reads:

I have not seen robes and tablets for a long time,
The actors still emulate the Han officials.25

久不见袍笏，
优伶尚汉官。

The ceremonial tablets (hu 笏) were used at court audiences in the Ming Dynasty, but abolished in the Qing.26 “Han officials” allude to *Han guan yi* 汉官仪 (Protocols of the Han officials) of Ying Shao 应劭 (fl. 189-94), a work concerning forms and etiquette in affairs of state and the regulation of official costumes in the Han Dynasty; here it refers to Ming etiquette. The second line of Fang’s poem means that performers who play the roles of officials in Ming-style regalia retain the Ming (i.e., Chinese) protocols.

In a poem about performances by Li Mingrui’s private troupe, Li Yuankuan echoed


25 Fang Wen, “Qingming Ri yin Dou jibu shu zhong guan ju yougan 淸明日饮窦计部署中观剧有感” (In the Festival of Pure Brightness, I drank in the office of Censor Dou, and had some feelings after watching the performance), in Fang, *Tushan ji*, 5:14b.

26 For the regulations and usages of the tablets as official and ceremonial dresses in the Ming Dynasty, see Zhang Tingyu et al., *Ming shi*, 53:1347, 1349-50; 54:1368, 1376-77, 1379; 66:1617, 1630; 67:1634-36, 1641, 1645, 1648, 1654. No regulation or usage of the tablet was found in the historiographies about the Qing Dynasty.
Fang’s sentiments when he wrote that “the gauze hat onstage defies us.”

The meaning of “gauze hat” in this context is a loaded one; since this form of casual headwear was worn by Ming officials either in retirement or just after they had passed the metropolitan examination and were awaiting an appointment. For Li Yuankuan the actors wearing Ming-style dress shamed the spectators, who had been forced to shave their heads and adopt a Manchu style of dress.

The political and cultural meaning of the gauze hat to Ming loyalists is illustrated even more clearly in a poem Fang Wen wrote just before he died:

In my lifetime, I lived with poems and wine,
I will die a natural death without remembering my home.
Once I enter the Yellow Springs, there is nothing to see,
But underworld officials still wearing the old gauze hats.

To the Ming loyalists, watching a theatrical performance inevitably recalled the fallen Ming. A line from Sun Zhiwei, “Rivers and mountains can be felt only in the theatrical world 江山只合对梨园,” captures this sentiment well.

5.1.3. Played without taboos and watched with intentions

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27 Qiu Junhong, *Xijiang shihua*, p. 817; see also Mao Xiaotong, *Ziliao huibian*, p. 1178.


29 The two poems are included in Fang Wen, *Tushan xuji* (included in *Tushan ji*, vol. 5), “Hou ba 后跋” (Postscript).

30 Sun Zhiwei, “Qiu ye tong Tianye, Qizhan zhu zi yin Cidou zhai guan ju 秋夜同天业、屺瞻诸子饮次斗宅观剧” (Drank and watched plays in Cidou’s house together with Tianye, Qizhan, and other scholars in an autumn night), in Sun, *Gaitang ji*, 7.21b.
Nostalgia aroused by Kun-style music and costumes would be strengthened if the play performed was set in the Ming period, and some Ming loyalists found these feelings hard to bear and responded intensely. Two poems by Fang Wen exemplify this kind of response. One is about a performance at West Lake in 1658 of *Tieguan tu* (Painting of an Iron Cap), a *chuanqi* drama that depicts the last days of Emperor Chongzhen in 1643-44. In his poem, Fang Wen wrote:

Who without taboo wrote this new play?
That actors have circulated to West Lake?
It is Commissioner Zhang who is most alarmed,
He dares not watch a second time *Painting of an Iron Cap*.

“Commissioner Zhang” refers to Zhang Jinyan (*jinshi* 1631), who was the Provincial Administration Commissioner of Zhejiang from 1654 to 1658. In 1643, Zhang was appointed minister of war but was so incompetent that he was forced to resign. He surrendered to the Manchus in 1644, but accepted a commission from Emperor Hongguang in 1645 only finally to take a post under the Manchu regime several months later. Fang Wen here heaps scorn on what Zhang had done, using the drama *Tieguan tu* to illustrate his abandonment of the Ming cause.

In 1663, Fang Wen was invited to a feast, at which the *chuanqi* drama *Wannian huan*...
万年欢 (A Happiness for Ten Thousand Years) was requested to be performed. Fang Wen objected strenuously and was about to leave when the host tried to insist on performing it. Another guest praised Fang for his loyalty to the fallen Ming, at which point a different extract was performed. Wannian huan, also known as Yu saotou, is a love story between Ming Emperor Zhengde (re. 1506-22) and a courtesan named Liu Qian, written by Li Yu 李渔 (1610-80) in 1655. Emperor Zhengde’s adoration for and marriage with a courtesan surnamed Liu has been generally believed true and records about their love story can be found in some contemporary works. According to Du Jun—the commentator of Wannian huan—Zhengde’s whoring had been commonly known during the late Ming period and plays about that story had been performed without any censorship and condemnation before Li Yu wrote Wannian huan. It cannot be determined when the first play about the emperor’s affair came into being, but Du Jun implies that the play’s telling of the story had appeared in the late Ming. In his poem about this performance, Fang Wen wrote:

Although plays are not about real life,
Actor Meng, capped and robed, also can move us.
I am shocked by such performances in the preceding dynasty,
That no one at the feasts upbraided him right on the spot.

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34 For an abstract of Wannian huan, also known as Yu saotou (The Jade Hairpin), see Dong Kang et al., Qu hai zongmu tiyao (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1959), pp.1020-23; Guo Yingde, Ming Qing chuanqi zonglu, pp. 589-92. Guo Yinde mentions the primary Ming records about the love story between Emperor Zhengde and Lady Liu of Taiyuan.

35 For Du Jun’s mentions of performances of plays about Zhengde’s whoring, see Li Yu, Yu saotou, in Li Yu quanji, comp. Helmut Martin (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe youxian gongsi, 1970), vol. 10, pp. 4574-75.

36 Fang Wen, “Guangling yi guijia yanke…广陵一贵家燕客…” (A noble man in Yangzhou was host at a feast…), in Fang Wen, Tushan xiji (included in Tushan ji, vols. 7, 8), 5:5a. Meng was an actor in the court of Chu Zhuangwang 楚庄王 (King Zhuang of Chu, re. 613-591 BC) and excelled in remonstrating by euphemism. After the death of Sunshu Ao 孙叔敖 (ca. 630-593 BC), a minister who had rendered outstanding service to King Zhuang in Chu’s conquests, Actor Meng wore Ao’s cap and robe to celebrate King Zhuang’s birthday. Meng’s performance was so true to life that King Zhuang was moved and conferred a title and fief upon Ao’s son, who had been so poor after Ao’s death. See Sima Qian, Shi ji, 126:3201-02.
The third line clearly echoes what Du Jun tells us in his comments. Fang thought that this play could not be performed, because, once performed, it would be immoral to watch the roles of respected ancestors or emperors that were played outside the principle hall at which the spectators were drinking. It is well known that roles of emperors and empresses, except tyrants, debauched and overthrown monarchs, had been prohibited onstage in the Ming and Qing, since such improper performances were viewed as offensive to sages. That is why the emperor described as a sage does not appear onstage but can be heard in Mupidan ting, while the role of xiaosheng (debauched Emperor Hongguang) is designed by Kong Shangren to present onstage in Taohua shan. Emperor Zhengde is described as romantic and wise in Wannian huan; his presence onstage during the performance, for a Ming loyalist such as Fang Wen, was intolerable.

Such poems suggest that watching the performances of any play in this transitional period would have been regarded by some Ming loyalists as a way to express nostalgia for the fallen Ming. However, to substantiate Chen Hongxu’s association of Mudan ting with nostalgic memory, more attention should be paid to the text and performances of Mudan ting. In what follows, I will demonstrate that extracts other than “Jing meng 惊梦” and “Xun meng 寻梦” (the most popular ones) were performed during the period covered in this thesis.

The background of the love story in Mudan ting is warfare between the Southern

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Roles of emperors, empresses, loyal officials, and sages had been prohibited since Hongwu 30 (1397) when the Great Ming Laws came into being. Such prohibition was valid during the Qing period. For some primary materials about the prohibitions in the Ming and Qing, see Wang Liqi, Yuan Ming Qingsan dai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), pp. 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 34, 35, and 259.
Song and Li Quan 李全, a rebel supported by the Jurchens, who were ancestors of the Manchus. This setting, and language in Tang's original text that describes the Jurchens, could be interpreted by the readers and spectators to express their hatred of the Manchus and nostalgia for the fallen Ming. For this reason, the Qing government in the Qianlong period (1736-96) censored all such works, banning or destroying numerous books, and pruning away any language that could be construed as offensive to the Manchus. 38 Nevertheless, censorship of playwrights abated somewhat during the Shunzhi period (1644-62). As indicated in Fang Wen's poem cited above, a play such as *Tieguan tu* was written by a Ming loyalist and circulated by actors without any concern about censorship. In those years of turmoil, nostalgia for the fallen Ming or reflections about its collapse found expression in plays by popular playwrights such as Li Yu 李玉 (1591-1671) and by scholar-officials such as Wu Weiye. 39 Although literary inquisitions intensified in the Kangxi period (1662-1722), *Chuanqi huikao* 传奇汇考, a bibliography of *chuanqi* drama was completed by some Ming loyalists during these years. 40 An original uncensored text of *Mudan ting* appeared in the Yongzheng period (1723-35), when an edition with a commentary by Wu Zhensheng 吴震生 (1695-1769) and Cheng Qiong 程琼 was published with the title of *Caizi Mudan ting* 才子牡丹

38 The peak of censorship in the Qianlong period coincided with the project of the *Siku quanshu*. For the political implications, see R. Kent Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries: Scholars and the State in the Late Ch'ien-lung Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).


40 According to Deng Changfeng, the project of *Chuanqi huikao* was initiated between 1673 and 1679 by Lai Jizhi 李集之 (1604-83), a Ming loyalist, and was finally finished between 1715 and 1722 by other Ming loyalists. The compilers focused their efforts on recording *chuanqi* dramas created in the late Ming and early Qing and exploring their source materials. See Deng Changfeng, "*Chuanqi huikao* tanwei," *Chinese Studies* (Taipei), 17.1 (June 1999): 229-57.
Tang’s text was not sanitized politically until 1781, when a revised edition was presented for the Emperor’s perusal. This edition was known as the submitted edition (jincheng ben 进呈本), an official model subsequently replicated in most Qing editions. In Li Mingrui’s time, the spectators mentioned above thus had access to the unrevised text of Mudan ting, and performances by Li’s actresses followed the original text.

Language in Mudan ting could easily evoke sorrow for the conquered dynasty. One example can illustrate this kind of sadness. Even in 1906, a writer whose pseudonym was Yuxuesheng 滑血生 claimed that his heart could not help pounding violently when he read language about the subjugated nation, and cited an aria from Mudan ting as an example:

What purpose has Heaven in this
when no light of sun moon or stars suffices
to distinguish Chinese from Tartar
but rank stench of sheep and goat
blows throughout mortal world
and central lands are turned
to a desert of yellow sand?


42 The submitted edition was followed in the ice-silk edition 冰丝本. See “Cong ke Qinghuige pidian Mudan Ting fanli 重刻清晖阁批评牡丹亭凡例” (Notes on the re-carved Peony Pavilion with commentaries by Qinghui ge), in Mao Xiaotong, Ziliao huibian, p. 933; Zhou Yude, Tang Xianzu lun gao, pp. 250-52. Some evidence of revision can be found in the commentaries attached to the Nuanhongshi 暖红室 edition published by Liu Shiheng. In the submitted edition, scene 15, “Ru die 虞 Де” (A Spy for the Tartars) was cut, and any word that might offend Manchu rulers was changed or deleted in scenes 19, “Pin zai 匹仔” (The Brigandess); 38, “Huai jing 惠警” (The Scourge of the Huai); 43, “Yu Huai 徐淮” (The Siege of Huaian); and 47, “Wei shi 戚事” (Raising the Siege). For details, see Tang Xianzu, Chong tu huijiao Mudan Ting Huan Hun Ji, in Linchuan si meng included in Nuanhongshi huike chuanqi, comp. Liu Shiheng (Yangzhou: Jiangsu guangling guji kanyin she, 1990), pp. 135, 143, 184, 193, 199, 200, 201, 202, and 203.

43 Yuxuesheng and Jietuozhe 解脱者, “Xiaoshuo cong hua 小说丛话” (Talks on Fictions), in Mao Xiaotong, Ziliao huibian, p. 958.

44 Tang Xianzu, Mudan ting, eds. Xu Shuofang and Yang Xiaomei (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1998), Scene 46, “Zhe kou 折寇” (The rebel countered), p. 247. The English translation of this aria
Yuxuesheng doubtless was an anti-Manchu revolutionary inspired by Ming loyalism. If Yuxuesheng could draw the sadness about a conquered nation from the words of Tang’s libretto, how much more would a Ming loyalist, who had witnessed cruelty by the Manchu firsthand?

Since Li Mingrui was Tang Xianzu’s protégé, we can safely assume that his private troupe performed *Mudan ting* following Tang’s original text rather than a revised one. In the oft-cited letter to an actor named Luo Zhang’er, Tang Xianzu asked him to perform *Mudan ting* according to his “original version,” not “the one revised,” because that adaptation “greatly differs from my original idea.” Knowing Tang’s hostility to any adaptation of his play, Li surely would have had his private troupe perform *Mudan ting* according to his mentor’s original version.

Some scholars believe that the whole play has never been performed since Tang Xianzu completed it and that only extracts, some of which were revised by performers, have


45 During the 1911 Revolution, Ming loyalists were praised highly and the study of them was promoted by the revolutionists against the Manchu regime. For detailed information, see Struve, *The Ming-Qing Conflict, 1619-1683: A Historiography and Source Guide* (Ann Arbor: The Associate for Asian Studies, 1998), pp. 88-95. For a brief but clear discussion of the relationship between the Revolution and the study of Ming loyalists, see Nan Bingwen, *Huihuang, quzheyu qishi: ershi shiji Zhongguo Ming shi yanjiu huigu* (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 2001), p. 4-8.


47 Jiang Jurong claims that Li Mingrui’s private troupe performed the revised version, but he does not provide any evidence to support his inference. See Jiang, “Mudan ting yanchu xiao shi,” *Shanghai xiju* 6 (June 1998): 1-15.
been popular onstage. But according to Jiang Jurong, *Mudan ting* was performed in its entirety several times during the Ming and Qing periods. Lu Eting also thinks it possible that the whole play was performed in the early Qing and at least rehearsed at court during the Qianlong period. Scene 41, “Dan shi 耽试” (Delayed Examination), a scene that depicts Liu Mengmei’s attendance in the metropolitan examination, was once performed as an extract entitled “Mengmei yingshi 梦梅应试” (Liu Mengmei Attends the Examination) at Qianlong’s court.

Scene 19, “Pin zei 牠贼” (The brigandess), an extracted scene about warfare between Li Quan and the Southern Song, was also performed in this period. In *Pinhua baojian*, a novel describing liaisons between scholars and boy-actors of Kun Opera in Beijing during the Qianlong period, on one occasion when the scholars and boy-actors gather to drink, they compose couplets using scene titles. Su Huifang 苏惠芳, one of the actors, caps a couplet with the line, “Nü dao you ming Pin zei 女盗有名牝贼” (‘The Female Bandit’ is also titled ‘the Brigandess’).

Such a detail illustrates that, (1) “the Brigandess” was also known as “the Female Bandit,” an alternative title common enough to be understood by common spectators; (2) the boy-actors, who were instructed orally by their masters, likely had learned such an extracted scene. In other words, the novel furnishes evidence that “the Brigandess” was

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52. For oral instruction mentioned in this novel, see Chen Sen, *Pinhua baojian*, p. 725.
performed in the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods (1736-95 and 1796-1820 respectively). Thus, with respect to performances of Mudan ting, it is safe to say that scenes other than the popular ones included in most miscellanies would have been performed or at least rehearsed.

Such likelihood can be supported further by the fact of an owner’s control over his private troupe. As mentioned above, an owner could ask his actors/actresses to perform whatever he wanted to watch, especially when the environment was relatively more relaxed for playwrights and performers as during the Shunzhi period. A good example of this is a story concerning Wang Deren. To vent his grievance against the Manchus, Wang Deren asked his private troupe to perform plays about Guo Ziyi 郭子仪 (697-781) and Han Shizhong 韩世忠 (1089-1151), the former famous for putting down the An Lushan Rebellion (755-63) and the latter well-known for his resistance to the Jurchen army that attacked the Song Dynasty. Secret performances by Wang’s private troupe were highly suspect, and when a high official asked for his troupe to perform for him, Wang was afraid of the consequences of divulging his nostalgia for the Ming by watching such performances and wearing Ming-style dress deep within his courtyard. Performances of plays in the villas of the gentry could be more relaxed than those in official mansions, and those in attendance were more likely to request plays about Han Shizhong and extracts such as “Pin zei,” whose content could be deemed politically offensive.

In short, for Ming loyalists, their enjoyment of a performance could go beyond the sensual pleasure and theatrical aesthetics per se. The stories, costumes, texts, and individual

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53 Lindy Li Mark listed the titles of the plays mentioned in Pinhua baojian, with Pin zei included in, but she failed to point out that Pin zei is a scene in Mudan ting. See Lindy Li Mark, “Kunju and theatre in the transvestite novel Pinhua Baojian,” Chinoperl Papers 14 (1986): 56.

54 See Xu Shipu, Jian bian ji lue, 1:5b, 8b.
lines could remind them of the fallen Ming; even a romantic play such as Mudan ting could occasion sadness for the transitoriness and turbulence of life.

5.2. The Non-Loyalist Li Yuanding and His Wife Zhu Zhongmei

In Part One of this chapter, I revealed what the spectators as Ming loyalists received politically and culturally from the performances of plays. As mentioned in Chapter Four, both the Ming loyalists and the officials who served the Ming and then the Qing watched performances by Li Mingrui’s private troupe, sometimes at the same occasion, writing and responding to each other’s poems. A question naturally arises: what did the non-loyalist spectators draw from such performance elements as music, costumes, and plots? Did those performance elements mean same thing to them as to the loyalists? If so, to what extent are the meanings similar? If not, what are the differences? In what follows, I will explore these questions, using the experiences of Li Yuanding and Zhu Zhongmei as case studies.

5.2.1. Perplexing Lives

Although Li Yuanding’s official biography is available, we know few details about his life either as a Ming official or after his dismissal from office in the Qing period (in 1647 and 1653). According to available sources, especially his collected works and those of his wife Zhu Zhongmei, he comes across as a weak and incompetent official, though successful as a poet.  

Li Yuanding passed the metropolitan examination in 1622, the same year as Li Mingrui did. In Chongzhen 5 (renshen, 1632), he was dismissed and left Beijing for the South. When passing by Tangyin 汤阴, Henan Province, he paid homage, in spite of the rain,

55 Deng Zhicheng also thinks so. See Deng Zhicheng, Qing shi jishi chu bian, p. 861-62.
at the Temple of Yue Fei 岳飞 (1103-42), a Song general famous for defending the dynasty against the Jurchen invasion. Li composed a poem about this pilgrimage, in which he expressed his concern about the warfare between the Manchu forces and Ming army on the northern frontier and regretted that the Ming government had no general as capable as Yue Fei. He wrote:

Just now, at frontier fortress beacon fires still burn,
As sounds of armored cavalry fade, one lonely moon left remains.  

只今塞上仍烽火，
铁骑声销夜月孤。

In 1639, Li Yuanding married Zhu Zhongmei, a daughter of the Ming imperial clan. In the winter of 1640 and accompanied by his bride, he went north to Beijing at Emperor Chongzhen’s summons; thereafter the couple lived in Beijing and Tianjin for ten years until they left for the Jiangnan region in the late spring of Shunzhi 6 (jichou, 1649). It was during their stay in Beijing that their lives changed irrevocably when they surrendered to Li Zicheng and then to the Manchu conquerors in 1644. Li Yuanding regretted very much that he had accepted the 1640 summons, knowing full well that he would be ridiculed for his conduct during that ten-year period.

According to a memorial he submitted in 1646 to apply for leave, Li Yuanding was

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56 Li Yuanding, “Yu jing Tangyin ye Yue Miao (I paid homage to the Temple of Yue Fei when I passed by Tangyin in the rain), in Shiyan quanji, p. 18.

57 Li Yuanding, “Gengchen dong chu feng Guanglu ming ru chao zhouchi manxing si shou 庚辰冬初奉光禄命入朝舟次漫兴四首” (Four poems composed randomly in the winter of the year gengchen while aboard a boat en route to interview with the Emperor bearing the first order from the Court of Imperial Entertainments), in Shiyan quanji, p. 32.

58 Li Yuanding, “Jichou yuanri shi bi 乙丑元日试笔” (A poem written as a test on the first day of the year jichou), “Zhou fa Jinmen,” and Zhu Zhongmei’s reply, in Shiyan quanji, pp. 74-75.

59 Li Yuanding, Preface to “Chushan sheng yu 出山赠语” (Collected Extant Poems Composed after I Came Out from Retirement), in Shiyan quanji, p. 32.
the only person from his hometown of Jishui who was serving the Manchu regime at that time; thus his family was looked upon with hostility and as a result his brother was driven to suicide and his mother was frightened to the point of illness.\(^6^0\) Perhaps this is why Li had not returned to Jishui, but remained mainly in Baoying County of Yangzhou Prefecture until Shunzhi 13 (\(\text{bingshen}, 1656\)), when he observed the spring festival in Jishui.\(^6^1\) In the same year Li borrowed Li Mingrui’s house in Chucha to live in,\(^6^2\) and since 1657 he and his wife mainly traveled about in Nanchang, Nanjing, Yangzhou, and Hangzhou, only rarely living in Jishui. Li’s wanderings suggest confusion about his identity—as a son-in-law of the Ming imperial clan he had served both the Ming Dynasty and then Manchu regime and endured the political and moral censure of his associates. After his dismissal in the summer of 1647, he had moved to Tianjin and lived in his brother’s mansion till the late spring of 1649. One day, he met there a guest who discussed the fallen Ming with him, and he was so moved that he marked the event with a poem:

A guest came and we talked of things past,
With solicitude he asked about my former years.
Feelings flew way beyond the blue sea,
Tears fell beside the nighttime lamp.
Parrots were heard in the deserted fortresses,
Cuckoos wept in the empty mountains.
With one goblet we became a little drunk,
Completely in the dark about our lives.\(^6^3\)

有客谈遗事，
殷勤问往年。

\(^6^0\) *Qing shi liezhuan*, in *Qingdai zhuanji congkan*, vol. 105, pp. 765-66.

\(^6^1\) Li Yuanding, Preface to *Hong xue cao*, in *Shiyuan quanji*, p. 48.

\(^6^2\) Zhu Zhongmei, “Yu Canglang Ting you huai zongbo niansao jiang ding jie ju chucha zhi yue 高沧浪亭有怀宗伯年嫂兼定借居谈梭之约” (I miss the wife of the ex-minister of rites when we are living in the Canglang Pavilion, and she agreed to lend us their house in Chucha to live in), and Li Yuanding’s reply, in *Shiyuan quanji*, p. 79.

\(^6^3\) Li Yuanding, “You ke 有客” (A guest visited us), in *Shiyuan quanji*, p. 72.
Ostensibly, Li Yuanding was hesitant to accept either Chongzhen’s summons in 1640 or Shunzhi’s in 1651, but his reasons for hesitating differed in the two instances. His former hesitation was due to a lack of confidence in his ability to serve, as indicated in the following lines from one of the four poems he wrote while en route to accept the appointment:

I desire to serve my country with a heart still loyal,
I bear in mind the current situation but temples become grey.  

Despite these misgivings, he went north since he realized that it was his responsibility to accept the Emperor’s summons when the country was in turmoil. But in 1651, his hesitation

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64 Li Yuanding, “Gengchen dong chu feng Guanglu ming ru chao zhouci manxing si shou,” poem 1, in Shiyuan quanji, p. 32. In his preface to Chushan shengyu, he also emphasized his lack of self-confidence in 1640. See Shiyuan quanji, p. 32.

65 Li Yuanding, “Gengchen dong chu feng Guanglu ming ru chao zhouci manxing si shou,” in Shiyuan quanji, p. 32. In the fourth poem, he wrote:

In a sacred time, it is intolerable to dodge the edict,
Countless [tears of] grief at parting wet the soldiers’ robes.
["
Swords and halberds fill one’s gaze all over the Central Plains,
What tether my feelings to home are pines and firs there.
"

And in the third poem, he wrote:

情悬报国心仍赤，
念到忧时鬓已斑。

情飞沧海外，
泪落夜灯前。
荒塞闻鹈鹕，
空山泣杜鹃。
一尊聊取醉，
身世总茫然。

圣世难容避诏严，
离愁无数浣征衫。

满目中原仍剑戟，
系情故国是松杉。

......

......
was due to his bitter experiences from 1644 to 1647, as he wrote:

In the night quiet due to the knocker, I understood the peace,
Having experienced the dangers of the river’s current, I fear its swift rush.66

宵因柝静知安阜，
险历河流怖激奔。

5.2.2. Barbarian music and Chinese Dress

We know that Li Yuanding accepted Shunzhi’s summons to Beijing and served as the right vice-minister of war until his dismissal in 1653. Despite his surrender and service to the Manchus, however, he and his wife still distinguished their culture from that of the Manchus and even expressed nostalgia for the fallen Ming, feelings that are reflected more frequently and obviously in Zhu Zhongmei’s poems than in Li Yuanding’s. I think that Zhu Zhongmei’s idea about the Ming-Qing transition can be taken as also representing Li Yuanding’s, since she was both his wife and bosom friend.67 As an official in the Qing period, Li Yuanding appreciated her nostalgia for the fallen Ming, and in his preface to Suicao ji 随草集, a collection of Zhu Zhongmei’s poems, he characterized their contents as follows:

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Being drunk with wine and talking heartily illustrates the friendships,
Eating in the wind and sleeping in the dew means the royal favors.

醉酒谈心存友谊，
餐风宿露亦君恩。

66 Li Yuanding, “Xinmao ji xia fu zhoao bei shang zhout ci Qingyuan neizi chi shan suo shu 辛卯季夏赴召北上舟次清源内子持扇索书” (In the late summer of the year xinmao [1651], I was summoned to go north. When we arrived at Qingyuan by boat, my wife proffered a fan and asked me to write [a poem] on it), in Shiyuan quanji, p. 75.

67 In two poems presented to his wife, Li Yuanding called Zhu Zhongmei as his “xiao you 小友” (young friend) and “yi you 益友” (helpful friend). See Li, “Zeng nei 赠内” (A poem presented to my wife); “Zeng nei,” in Shiyuan quanji, p. 32; “Zeng nei,” in Shiyuan quanji, p. 79. According to Li, only Zhu Zhongmei could understand his hesitation to accept the summons in 1651. See Li Yuanding. “Xinmao ji xia fu zhoao bei shang zhout ci Qingyuan neizi chi shan suo shu,” in Shiyuan quanji, p. 75.
Most [of her poems] were sung on occasions that moved her or were blurted out without thinking hard. [In her poems, she describes] white clouds and red trees, famous mountains and great rivers; she sorrows about the millet with drooping heads [in the ruined palaces of the fallen dynasty], misses the scented flowers from the emperors’ descendants, feels deeply about the shifting of the seasons, or is moved by the drifting loneliness of our travels. [...] On breezy mornings or moonlit evenings, she often sat facing me, drinking tea or wine, sighing and lingering, one writing a poem and the other replying. [...]  

大都景而吟，冲口而出，白云红树，名山大川，或伤故国之黍离，或怀王孙之芳草，或叹时序之变迁，或感行旅之飘零。……风晨月夕，与余茗椀清尊相对，歔欷流连，此唱彼和。……

Among the indicators of their nostalgia for the fallen Ming were the connections that they suggested in their poems, as their associates did, between the music and costume on the one hand and Chinese culture and the fallen Ming on the other hand.

In Zhu Zhongmei’s poems, the role of “barbarian music” is usually negative, reminding her of the turmoil of the transition and the former prosperity symbolized by Chinese music. She compared herself, her husband, and other Chinese to Cai Yan and Su Wu (d. 60 BC), the latter of whom was a Han ambassador detained by the Huns for

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68 See Li Yuanding, Shiyuan quanji, pp. 80-81. The allusion to “the millet with drooping heads” comes from the poem entitled “Shu li 狂离” in Shijing, in which an ex-Zhou official expressed his loyalty to his fallen Zhou Dynasty when he passed by the ruined Zhou palaces. For the poem, see James Legge, trans., The Book of Poetry, in The Chinese Classics, with a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes (London: Henry Frowde, 1865), vol. 4, part 1, p. 110. The allusion to the “scented flowers” comes from “Lisao 离骚” (On Encountering Trouble) by Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340-ca. 278 BC), two lines of which read:

Why have all the fragrant flowers of days gone by,  
Now all transformed themselves into worthless mugwort?

何昔日之芳草兮，
今直为此萧艾乎?

According to the commentator Wang Yi 王逸, those two lines refer to wise men who pretended to be ignorant and unconventional due to a tumultuous political transition. The English translation of Qu Yuan’s lines is cited from David Hawkes, trans., The Songs of the South: an Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 76. For Wang Yi’s commentary to the lines, see You Guo’en, ed., Lisao zuanyi (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), p. 418.
nineteen years but refusing to surrender to them. In the spring of 1645, Zhu Zhongmei wrote:

I sob every time I hear the Qiang flute,
With tears wetting my clothes, I miss my former home.
Willows in the garden are in bud with eyebrows knitted,
Camellias without jointing find it difficult to stretch their leaves.
In the spring breeze weeds grow tall from anxiety,
On moonlit nights swan-born letters are few.
Recalling Su Wu's words of former years,
I pity myself—when can I prepare a returning cart?

In another poem the Qiang flute reminds her of music played with the Chinese reed, which she enjoyed as a girl in the palace of the Ming imperial clan. However, Zhu cannot ignore the reality that the Manchu conquerors had taken over Beijing and tried to transform Chinese customs, as indicated in the following lines she wrote in 1647:

Mountains and rivers remain the same but caps and skirts are changed,
Sounds of reed pipes arise at dusk to the north and south of the wall.\(^72\)

山川如旧冠裳改，
城北城南起暮笳。

The sound of reed pipes sometimes refers to the plundering that the Manchu forces visited on the Han-Chinese, a sound hated by their victims. These associations are explicit in a poem written for a woman enslaved by the Manchus during the Nanchang Rebellion. In 1652, Xiong Wenju happened to meet a Lady Tu 涕, then a servant of a Manchu official, whose father had been a friend of both Li Mingrui and Xiong. Xiong redeemed Lady Tu by selling his horse and cart, and she then lived with Zhu Zhongmei for several months before leaving Beijing for Nanchang to reunite with her husband. At her departure, Zhu presented six poems to her, one of which reads:

In her mind, the current murmured in the Zhang River,
Her pretty face was very nearly buried in the clear rapids.
Her floating fragrance almost disappeared but she finally survived,
She hates the sound of reed pipes when the hunters come back at night. \(^73\)

忆昔章江南水潦，
几将清潋葬红颜。
香飘欲散人犹在，
厌听笳声夜猎还。

Lady Tu likely was caught and enslaved by the Manchu forces when they put down the rebellion in Nanchang in 1648 and then was forced to go north to Beijing. When she was caught, she tried but failed to drown herself and she hated the sound of reed pipes, which here refers to the Manchu horns.

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\(^72\) Zhu Zhongmei, “Dinghai yuan ri shi bi 丁亥元日试笔” (One poem composed as a test on the new year’s day, the year dinghai), in Shiyuan quanji, p. 86.

\(^73\) Zhu Zhongmei, “Zeng Tu nianzinü nan gui bing xu 增涂年姪女南归并序” (A series of poems, with a preface, presented to the daughter of Master Tu, who passed the metropolitan examination in the same year as my husband did), poem 2, in Shiyuan quanji, p. 91.
Just as barbarian music meant the Manchu's conquest of the Ming, changed “caps and skirts” were linked to Chinese cultural identity in the minds of Li and Zhu. To them, Ming-style dress, if it could be kept, still meant something culturally even after the Ming Dynasty had fallen irretrievably. At the beginning of 1645, Li Yuanding and Zhu Zhongmei mentioned the wearing of Ming-style dress under the Manchu regime after it was established in Beijing:

Different scenery unnecessarily reminds of the shift of seasons,
Still following the grand etiquette Han officials form ranks.  

未须节物惊时代，
仍有威仪列汉官。

The parrot under the eaves conveys the coming of the new guest,  
The grand etiquette in the Palace moves the former officials.

“The new guests” refers to the Manchu conquerors. Both Li Yuanding and his wife allude to a Han style of dress used for civil officials in the Western Han era (207 BC-AD 25), which was changed by Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BC-AD 23) but restored in AD 23 by Liu Xiu 刘秀 (6 BC-AD 57), founder of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220). The allusions to this Han style of court dress in the lines cited above are accurate, since the Manchu rulers permitted surrendering officials to wear the Ming style of dress after Beijing had been taken over in 1644; it was in 1645 that they began to force all Chinese to shave their heads and adopt the

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74 Li Yuanding, “Yiyou yuandan shi bi 乙酉元旦试笔” (Composed a poem as a test on the first day of the year yiyou), in Shiyuan quanji, p. 70.


76 For the allusion, see Fan Ye, Hou Han shu, 1:10.
Manchu style of dress. This brief continuation of a Ming style of dress under the Manchu regime brought Li Yuanding and Zhu Zhongmei some comfort, but this equilibrium was destroyed soon after they composed their poems in 1645. At the beginning of 1655, when they were living in Baoying, Zhu Zhongmei composed a poem in which she expressed shame for the change of dress from the Ming style to the Manchu style:

Pines and chrysanthemums already surround the Xinjing River, Gowns and caps still feel shame in the old Lingyan Pavilion. 

The first line alludes to Tao Qian (365-427), a famous recluse who uses pines and chrysanthemums to symbolize his faith and steadfastness. "Gowns and caps," originally referring to scholar-officials and gentry, alludes to the scholar-officials who fled to the Jiangnan region at the end of the Western Jin (265-316) and the Northern Song (960-1127) due to the invasions of the barbarian nomadic peoples. Clearly, with this allusion, Zhu Zhongmei refers to the scholar-officials who fled to the South and were forced to adopt Manchu style dress after the fall of the Ming in 1644. Lingyan ge 凌烟阁 (Lingyan Pavilion) was originally constructed in 643 according to the edict of Emperor Taizong of Tang and in it

77 Zhou Xibao, Zhongguo gu dai fushi shi, pp. 449-50.

78 Zhu Zhongmei’s reply to Li Yuanding who wrote the poem “Yiwei yuanri shi bi 乙未元日试笔” (Composed a poem as a test on the New Year’s day of the year yiwei), in Shiyuan quanji, p. 78. The Xinjing River in Qingpu refers to the Jiangnan region.


80 With this allusion, Liu Zhiji (661-721), a Tang historian, refers to the scholar-officials who fled to the Jiangnan region after the collapse of the Western Jin in 316, while Lu You (1125-1210), a Song poet, refers to those who fled to Jiangnan after the end of the Northern Song in 1127. See, Liu Zhiji, Shi tong tong shi, noted by Pu Qilong (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), vol. 1, p. 144; Lu You, “Lun xuanyou xi bei shidafu zhazi 论选用西北士大夫礼策” (A memorial on selecting and appointing the scholar-officials of Western and Northern China), in Lu You ji (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), vol. 5, p. 1994.
the portraits of twenty-four officials who had rendered outstanding services at the founding of the dynasty were on display. In the context of these two lines, references to chrysanthemum and pine (symbols of stoic resistance) and to loyal service to the dynasty generate ironic contrasts to the behavior of Chinese officials who chose to wear Manchu dress and serve their conquerors.

Thus it is reasonable to conclude that when he watched the performance of *Moling chun* in Li Mingrui's Canglang Pavilion in the winter of 1659, Li Yuanding also connected the music and costume onstage with the nostalgia for the fallen Ming, as his loyalist associates did:

Talking about rise and fall, everything makes us sad,
The colors of Loujiang’s brush gleam like ripples on water.
Strings and pipes can do nothing in the rear hall,
But recollect in vain the feathered flags of the preceding dynasty.\(^{81}\)

话到兴亡事事悲，
娄江笔彩绚沦漪。
后堂丝竹浑无奈，
空忆先朝旧羽仪。

As mentioned in Part Four of Chapter Three, this poem refers to scene 41, “Xian ci,” of *Moling chun*, in which Cao Shancai, playing the *pipa*-lute, tells the stories of his emperor and the concubine in the real world and heaven. In Wu Weiye’s play, Cao Shancai, a court musician, expresses his nostalgia for the fallen dynasty with music and costume—traditionally the two indispensable elements of the court etiquette symbolized by feathered flags. Emphasizing these two elements, Li Yuanding feels same in the way Wu does in *Moling chun*.

\(^{81}\) Li Yuanding, “Dong ye tong ji Canglangting guan nü ji yan *Moling Chun*, ci Xiong Shaozai yun shishou,” poem 8, in *Shiyuan quanji*, p. 58. Wu Weiye, the playwright of *Moling chun*, was a native of Taicang whose alternative name is Loujiang.
In this chapter, I have focused on the meanings of performances by Li Mingrui’s troupe to the Ming loyalists and officials who had served the Ming and then the Qing. To the Ming loyalists, performances of plays in the transitional period were culturally and politically charged occasions that reminded them of the fallen dynasty and the cultural divide between themselves and their conquerors, and in some of the poems they wrote about these performances, they expressed their feelings. To men such as Li Yuanding who had divided their loyalties, the performances were also politically and culturally charged. Their feelings of nostalgia were more obscure than those of the loyalists, but like these loyalists they distinguished things Chinese and Manchu and marked the political transition when they wrote in their poems about such performance elements as music and costume.

Although I have emphasized political and cultural meanings, other meanings might also be drawn by the spectators. Among those who had served the Ming and then the Qing, Zhu Hui saw enjoying performances and Daoist self-cultivation as compatible pursuits in the wake of the Ming collapse:

Clouds block Mount Tiantai, the stork’s road is long,
The spring information blocks the flower tide in Wuxi.
In Zhongling there stands the Temple of Flying Curtains,
Close by the city wall the jade flute is played.  

According to this poem, it was unnecessary to retreat to Mount Tiantai, which was far from

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82 See Qiu Junhong, Xijiang shihua, p. 816. Wuxi is a town in the outskirts of Nanchang. “The spring information” refers to the plum blossom because the plum is believed to blossom earlier than other plants in the spring. The Temple of Flying Curtains, now known as Xishan wanshougong 西山万寿宫 (The Longevity Palace in the Western Mountain), was established in Xinjian County in 376 to commemorate the famous Daoist Xu Xun 许逊 (239-374).
Nanchang, and far more preferable to study Daoism in a temple nearby, so that Zhu Hui could watch performances by Li’s troupe just outside the city at the same time. To most spectators, enjoying performances was an integral part of their social lives and as such was devoid of political expressions. For Shi Runzhang, watching a performance by Li Mingrui’s actresses deepened his feelings of friendship and admiration for their owner. In late October 1661, he presented Li with a poem before leaving for Qingjiang, in which he wrote:

Tired in travel dress daily covered with dust,
Suddenly hearing “Rainbow Skirt,” with one song I was renewed.
Singing and dancing for one hundred years one forgets the arrival of old age,
As clash of arms fills the land, our friendship is redoubled.  

劳劳旅服日生尘，
忽听霓裳一曲新。
歌舞百年忘老至，
干戈满地倍情亲。

Poems such as these support the common understandings mentioned in Chapter One, about the functions of private troupes’ performances, as providing amusements and a currency of social exchange for those whose lives they touched. But these aspects are beyond the focus of this study.

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83 Shi Runzhang, “Nanpu bie Li Taixu zongbo zhi qingjiang 南浦别李太虚宗伯之清江” (Parting from the ex-minister of rites Li Taixu in the Nanpu Pavilion and going to Qingjiang), in Shi Yushan ji, vol. 3, p. 246.
CHAPTER VI
PLAY SPECTATORSHIP DURING A PERIOD OF TRANSITION

In Chapter Five, I discussed the political and cultural meanings drawn from the troupe’s performances by some Ming loyalists, as well as by some officials who served both the Ming and Qing. In carefully examining poems and prose by the spectators of these performances, it has become evident how their interpretations reflected the changes underway during this transitional period. Thus, one more question arises: to what extent were these meanings shared by other contemporary scholars outside of the aforementioned spectator groups? In this chapter I will explore the experiences of Qian Qianyi and Gong Dingzi, two leading scholars of the period, who were not among the spectators of Li Mingrui’s troupe, but who were definitely theater-goers and music-lovers. Their ideas and feelings about the elements of performance will help to tease out the shared meanings and interpretations derived from performances of plays.

6.1. The Experience of Qian Qianyi as a Theater-goer

I have found no evidence that Qian Qianyi watched performances by Li Mingrui’s troupe, but in 1661 he composed a series of poems reviewing Yuzhang xianyinpu, a collection of poems by Li and his associates about such performances. Citing Buddhist teachings, Qian questioned the usefulness of enjoying performances that put on display the lifestyle of Li and his friends; he also questioned the meanings of the performances per se, and even the significance of Mudan ting.

Qian Qianyi empathized with the nostalgia for the fallen Ming expressed in the
poems in *Yuzhang xianyinpu*, but he cautions readers against simply remembering, since over-indulgence in plays had been one cause of the collapse of Hongguang’s regime, which Qian himself had witnessed as a high official in Nanjing. The fifth poem of his series registers his dismay at this state of affairs:

Enticing dances and sweet songs were brilliant without end,  
Henceforth were the Southern Dynasties really “without sorrow”?  
Laughable were those forlorn guests at New Pavilion,  
Who covered their faces and moaned, becoming captives of Chu.¹

舞艳歌娇烂不收,  
南朝从此果无愁?  
笑他寂寞新亭客,  
掩面悲啼作楚囚。

In the second line, Qian alludes to the last emperor of the Northern Qi, who excelled at music and composed one piece entitled “*Wuchou qu* 无愁曲” (*Song without sorrow*) just before the collapse of his dynasty.² Qian’s allusion clearly refers to Emperor Hongguang, who indulged in watching performances to the point that he ignored government affairs. The last two lines refer to scholars of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420), who often drank at the New Pavilion in Jiankang, lamenting the lost territory of the Western Jin Dynasty (265-316). They were denounced for hesitating to unite and expel the barbarians from central China.³ Due to massacres and vandalism committed by the Manchus, the Jiangnan region, once the most thriving region in the late Ming, became so desolate that Qian lamented in other poems how

¹ Qian Qianyi, “Du *Yuzhang xianyinpu* man ti ba jueju...,” poem 5, in *Muzhaiyouxue ji*, p. 523.
² Wei Zheng et al., *Sui shu* (Beijing; Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 14:331.
“Two thirds of the bright moon has been gobbled up 明月二分都捲去,”\(^4\) and “A lingering dream that deceives men has appeared in Yangzhou 误人残梦到扬州.”\(^5\) Such lines imply that survivors of the bloodbath had begun to indulge again in the sensual pleasures that had led to the collapse of the Ming. According to Qian, scholars who were busy enjoying the performances failed to cultivate themselves by resisting the temptation of sensual pleasures.

Citing a Buddhist allusion he wrote:

\[
\text{A river wind has blown down the Register of Immortal Sounds,} \\
\text{As if brushing the strings of Asura’s zither.}\(^6\)
\]

江风吹落仙音谱，
似拂修罗琴上弦。

The second line originates from the Druma-kinnara-rāja-paripricchā 大树紧那罗王所问经, which tells a story about the king of the mahādruma Kinnaras. According to the story, the King played his vaidūrya zither before Buddha during one sermon. Excepting the Buddha, the music so confused those in attendance that they could not control their minds and began to dance and indulge their passions, as children do. The Buddha continued to meditate,

\(^4\) This line is adopted from one in a poem about the prosperity of Yangzhou by Xu Ning 徐凝, a poet in the Tang Dynasty:

\[
\text{If the moonlit night in the world were divided in three,} \\
\text{Two parts for no good reason would be in Yangzhou.}
\]

天下三分明月夜，
二分无赖是扬州。


\(^5\) Qian Qianyi, “Du Yuzhang xianyinpu man ti ba jueju...,” poem 1, in Muzhai youxue ji, p. 522.

\(^6\) Qian Qianyi, “Du Yuzhang xianyinpu man ti ba jueju...,” poem 2, in Muzhai youxue ji, p. 522. Here Xianyinpu refers to the collected poems written by Li Mingrui and his associates about performances by his troupe, as I mentioned in Chapter One.
passing straight to nirvāṇa. This tale prompted Qian to send Li and his associates a copy of the \textit{Prajñāpāramitā-ārya-sūtra} so that they might understand, through Buddhist teachings, the meaning of the illusion:

\begin{quote}
I send you a copy of the \textit{Prajñāpāramitā sutra},
May you understand that “form is emptiness; emptiness form.”
\end{quote}

寄与多心经一部，
色空空色任君参。

Clearly, what Qian Qianyi expresses retrospectively in this series of poems differed from what he had felt when watching performances in the Chongzhen period. In the winter of 1631, he watched a performance in the house of one of his friends and composed a long poem that describes the excellent drinking, singing, dances, and acrobatics enjoyed there. In mid-summer of 1632, he joined in a luxurious gathering that lasted for one month and composed a series of poems to record it. One of the poems reads:

\begin{quote}
The wind from paulownia is soft and swallows’ nests are new,  
For one month our gatherings continued for several weeks. 
[...]  
Keeping company at a joyous feast keeps old age at bay,  
Pursuing the beautiful atmosphere, do not worry about getting poor.
\end{quote}

桐花风软燕泥新，  
一月歌场叠几旬。  
......  
追陪欢宴应赊老，  
驱使风光莫较贫。

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8 Qian Qianyi, “Du \textit{Yuzhang xianyinpu} man ti jueju...,” poem 8, in \textit{Muzhai youxue ji}, p. 524.

9 Qian Qianyi, “Dong ye guan ju ge wei Xu Er Ercong zuo 冬夜观剧歌为徐二尔从作” (Composed for Xu Ercong after appreciating plays and songs on a winter night), in \textit{Muzhai chuxue ji}, pp. 291-92.

10 Qian Qianyi, “Zhongxia guan ju huan yan jia yue 中夏观剧欢宴浃月...” (In mid-summer, I watched plays and attended joyous banquets for one month...), poem 2, in \textit{Muzhai chuxue ji}, pp. 308-10.
Qian also changed his mind about performances of *Mudan ting*. In 1640, after watching a performance of “Xun meng” (Pursuing the Dream), a famous extract from *Mudan ting*, he composed a series of poems, describing the beauty of the actress’s languor, singing, and dancing:

Drowsily she wakens from her dream, stirred by spring’s cold,  
Fine tresses piled together, last night’s powder lingers.  
On stage she struggles to convey the fine points of “Pursuing the Dream,”  
Holds fast just now to her fading dream for the gentlemen to see. (Poem 2)

歌词轻身下舞筵，  
歌声如月舞如烟。  
依今也解寻他梦，  
三日歌声在耳边。

Although Qian connected the beauty of the actress with the value of the extract—i.e., he found more value in the performance’s erotic meaning than in the text itself—he still suggests that the extract was excellent and worth performing. But in 1661, he claimed that *Mudan ting* was inferior to Wu Weiye’s *Moling chun*:

When sadly singing *Peony Pavilion* feelings abound,  
But how can it compare to these new strains of water music?  
Who can plumb the depths of Meicun’s sorrow?  
*Spring in Moling* is a song “from across the River.”

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11 Qian Qianyi, “Chun ye ting ge zeng xiuji shishou” (Ten poems presented to the beauty after appreciating her songs in a spring night), in *Muzhai chuxue ji*, pp. 575-78, esp. 576, 578.

It is well-known that Wu Weiye used the love story in his drama to express his nostalgia for Emperor Chongzhen and the fallen Ming.\textsuperscript{13} In the poems cited above, Qian insists that Wu’s play is more relevant to the transitional period than Tang’s \textit{Mudan ting}.

Although Qian denied that performances similar to those by Li’s troupe had moved him, citing Buddhist teachings which had decisive influences in his later life, he had once felt—as his contemporaries had—that the flourishing theater of the Jiangnan region symbolized a prosperous past worth remembering. The famous actors, actresses, and courtesans who had survived the turmoil were regarded as reminders of the fallen Ming. Whether Ming loyalists or officials under the Manchus, scholars would often compare these famous performers—people such as Ding Jizhi 丁继之, Su Kunsheng 苏昆生 (d. 1679), and Zhang Yanzhu 张燕筑—to Li Guinian 李龟年 (fl. the 8\textsuperscript{th} century), a famous musician who drifted about during the An Lushan Rebellion in the Tang Dynasty. They also compared the

\begin{verbatim}
牡丹亭春情多，
其奈人声水调何？
谁解梅村愁绝处？
秣陵春是隔江歌。
\end{verbatim}

\textit{chuanqi zonglu}, p. 557. Therefore Qian refers to it “new strains of water music.” As mentioned above, “water music” in the Ming and Qing periods referred to the Kun style. The allusion to “\textit{Ge jiang ge} 隔江歌” (the song from across the River) comes from a poem by Du Mu 杜牧 (803-52) in the Tang Dynasty, the last lines of which read:

\begin{verbatim}
The Shang maiden does not know the vanquished country’s sorrow,  
From across the River she still sings “Flowers in the Back court.”
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
商女不知亡国恨，
隔江犹唱后庭花。
\end{verbatim}


\textsuperscript{13} For the whole text of \textit{Moling chun}, see Wu Weiye, \textit{Wu Meicun quanji}, pp. 1235-361. For the theme of this drama, see Guo Yingde, \textit{Ming Qing chuanqi zong lu}, pp. 576-78; \textit{Ming Qing chuanqi shi}, pp. 423-27.
Chongzhen period to the Kaiyuan and Tianbao periods of Xuanzong’s reign (re. 712-56). It was said that when wandering from place to place, Li Guinian sang songs that had been popular during Xuanzong’s reign, and that scholars who heard him sing were moved by nostalgia for that prosperous time and touched with sadness for the devastation caused by An Lushan’s rebellion. Allusions to this Tang musician appeared frequently in poems composed both by Ming loyalists and by scholars who served the Manchus.

6.2. Wang Jia and Gong Dingzi

Some scholars’ attitudes towards Wang Jia (zi Zijia 紫稼, Zihe 子合, 1622/24-1654), a much younger actor than Su Kunsheng, Ding Jizhi, and Zhang Yanzhu, can also help us to understand the shared political and cultural meanings derived from elements of performance in this period of transition. In 1651, Wang Jia left for Beijing to attach himself

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14 For the story in which Li Guinian reminds scholars of Xuanzong’s reign, see Zheng Chuhui, Minghuang za lu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), p. 27; Li Fang et al., Taiping guangji, 1961, vol. 5, p. 1549.

15 For poems about Ding Jizhi, see Qian Qianyi, “Ti Jinling Ding lao huaxiang si jueju 题金陵丁老画像四绝句” (Four quatrains composed for the portrait of old gentleman Ding), in Muzhai youxue ji, pp. 129-30; Du Jun, “Ding sou heting yong Qian Yushan yun 丁叟河亭用钱虞山韵” (A poem composed for Old Ding’s riverside pavilion, with the rhyme that Qian Yushan used), in Du Chaxun yigao; Gong Dingzi, “和牧斋先生韵为丁继之题秦淮水阁” (A poem composed for Ding Jizhi’s pavilion along the Qinhuai River, as a reply to Master Muzhai with his rhyme), and “和牧斋金陵中秋待月诗题继之小册” (A poem composed for the album of Jizhi’s paintings, as a reply to Muweng’s poem “Waiting for the moon in mid-autumn”), in Dingshantang ji (Beijing: Renyi shuwu, 1883), 20:6b-7a. For poems about Zhang Yanzhu, see Qian Qianyi, “次韵赠张燕筑” (A poem presented to Zhang Yanzhu, to someone else’s rhyme), in Muzhai youxue ji, pp. 231-32; Gong Dingzi, “Shou Zhang Yanzhu 寿张燕筑” (A poem to celebrate Zhang Yanzhu’s birthday), in Dingshantang ji, 18:11a-b. For poems about Su Kunsheng, see Wu Weiye, “Kouzhan zeng Su Kunsheng 口占赠苏昆生” (Improvising a poem to present to Su Kunsheng), in Wu Micun quanji, pp. 513-14; You Tong, “Zeng Su Kunsheng 赠苏昆生” (Poem presented to Su Kunsheng), cited from Hu Ji and Liu Zhizhong, Kunju fazhan shi, p. 264; Shi Runzhang, “Qinhua shuiting ji Guo Fenyou, Yang Shangxian, Wu Yeren, Wang Zhouchi ting Su sheng duqu 秦淮水亭集郭汾又、杨商贤、吴野人、汪舟次听苏生度曲” (I joined in a gathering at a house along the Qinhuai River, listening to Master Su sing some Kun arias, together with Guo Fenyou, Yang Shangxian, Wu Yeren, and Wang Zhouchi), in Shi Yushan ji, vol. 2, p. 386.

to Gong Dingzi, and Qian Qianyi composed a series of poems to bid him farewell. Although some poems remark on the homosexual relationship between Wang and Gong, in others Qian conveys remorse for the lost prosperity of the Ming:

Are you drifting around as Li Guinian did in Huxiang?  
His *Song of Red Beans* caused tears to wet handkerchiefs.  
Do not sing the sorrowful Tianbao songs,  
to attendees at the feasts in Chang'an.  

又是湖湘流落人？  
一声红豆也沾巾。  
休将天宝凄凉曲，  
唱与长安筵上人。

Again, Qian alludes in this poem to Li Guinian, who drifted about present-day Hunan Province and sang “Hongdou ci 红豆词” (*Song of Red Beans*), which made all in his audience lament the fate of Emperor Xuanzong when forced to escape west due to the An Lushan Rebellion. During Wang Jia’s stay in Beijing with Gong Dingzi from 1651 to 1654, both Wu Weiye and Xiong Wenju watched him perform and composed poems about the performances, which were filled with nostalgia for past prosperity and with sadness about the turmoil of the transition. In 1654, Gong Dingzi presented Wang Jia with fourteen poems

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17 Qian Qianyi, “Xinmao chun jin, gezhe Wang lang bei you gaobie...” (At the end of the spring of the year *xinmao*, the young singer Master Wang bade farewell to me, with a plan to travel north [...] ), in *Muzhai youxue ji*, p. 124. 

18 Fan Shu, *Yunxi youyi*, in *Sibu congkan xubian* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1934), 2:22a-23a. 

19 In his famous poem, Wu Weiye wrote: 

At the age of thirty, Master Wang lives in Chang’an,  
Old elders are saddened by his old dramatic songs.  

王郎三十长安城，  
老大伤心故国曲。

See Wu Weiye, “Wang lang qu 王郎曲” (Ballad of Master Wang), in *Wu Meicun quanji*, pp. 283-84. Xiong Wenju presented twelve poems to Wang Jia, in one of which he wrote:
before Wang went back to Suzhou. In one of them, Gong wrote:

As Yuyang drums sound, bells and rain echo each other,
Glowworms stream in Changle Palace as the bright moon sinks.
I did not believe that after bronze camels were covered by thorns,
A single jade plant would flourish within the forest. 20

渔阳鼓动雨铃喑，
长乐萤流皓月沉。
不信铜驼荆棘后，
一枝瑶草秀中林。

"Yuyang" is the ancient name of Miyun in the municipality of present-day Beijing, the cite where An Lushan's rebellion began in 755. Line three alludes to Suo Jing 索靖 (239-303), an official in the Western Jin Dynasty who had a premonition of impending upheaval and told the bronze camels in front of the palace gate in Luoyang that “You will soon be covered with thorns.” 21 Clearly, Gong Dingzi regarded Wang Jia as a precious legacy of the Ming and worried whether he could survive in the new regime. Gong regarded Wang as his fellow sufferer since both of them, lost in a search for themselves, were depressed about their loss of political and cultural identity:

It was an everlasting sorrow to drift into Luoyang,
We looked at each other distressed, and hid behind muslin kerchiefs.
As “Flowers in the Back Court” fall hearts will break,
We too are men of Chen to Sui who have lost our way. 22

The sorrowful event has become history,
but I recollect my old friends to Li Guinian.

凄凉此事成千古，
犹向龟年忆旧游。

See Qiu Junhong, Xijiang shihua, pp. 809-10.

20 Gong Dingzi, “Zeng gezhe Wang lang nan gui... 赠歌者王郎南归…” (Presented to the young singer Master Wang who is about to return south [...]), poem 4, in Dingshantang ji, 37:3a.

21 Fang Xuanling et al., Jin shu, 60:1648.

Gong felt the sadness of separation, since he had to stay in Beijing while Wang left for his hometown. In another poem from the same series he declared his nostalgia for the Ming, alluding to two famous patriots:

Yu Xin lamented for Jiangnan in hazy moonlight,
Affectionate Shen Jiong cried on the deserted terrace.
Flying orioles are lingering along the road with tall catalpas,
They will not let the horse with jade bridle go in the spring wind.  

Gong here compares himself to Yu Xin (zi Zishan 子山, 513-81) and Shen Jiong. Yu Xin, after being forced to serve under the Western Wei (535-56), composed “Ai Jiangnan fu 哀江南赋” (Lament for the South), in which he described with nostalgia his Liang Dynasty (502-57) and its eventual collapse. Shen Jiong was an official of the Southern Liang Dynasty who also was detained in the North by the Tabgach Wei rulers. It was said that he once visited the ruins of Tongtiantai 通天台 (Terrace to the Heavens), constructed during the

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For the biography of Yu Xin, see Li Yanshou, Bei shi (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 83:2793-94; Linghu Defen et al., Zhou shu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1971), 41:733-42. For the text of “Ai Jiangnan fu,” see Yu Xin, Yu Zishan ji zhu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 94-176. For an informative English study and translation of that rhapsody, see William T. Graham, Jr., The Lament for the South: Yu Hsin’s “Ai Chiang-Nan Fu” (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
reign of Emperor Wu of Han (156-87 BC; re. 140-87 BC), where he cried sorrowfully. Afterwards, Shen had a dream in which he refused to serve Emperor Wu of Han and was allowed to return south. Wu Weiye incorporated Shen Jiong’s experiences into his zaju entitled Tongtiantai, expressing thereby his hope to resign his post under the Manchus and also his nostalgia for the Ming. By alluding to Shen Jiong in his poem, Gong Dingzi likely was expressing sentiments similar to those of Wu Weiye.

After Wang Jia returned to Suzhou, he was convicted of some indecency and flogged to death. Gong composed twelve poems to mourn his death, one of which includes the following allusions:

[Kou] Baimen died of illness, Master Wang was killed,
Of the Tianbao era’s urbanity only a little is left.\(^{27}\)

白门病死王郎杀，
天宝风流已不多。

Kou Baimen was a famous courtesan in Nanjing in the late Ming and early Qing. Fang Wen regarded her as one symbol of past prosperity and mention of her in his poems is associated with nostalgia for the Ming. Fang visited Kou in 1655 and composed three poems to describe the gathering, the first of which reads:

It is twelve frosts since I departed from Qinhuai,
The gilded powder of Six Dynasties had lost its fragrance.
Among former acquaintances, only Baimen still lives here,
When we met beneath the lamps, our hearts nearly broke.\(^{28}\)

\(^{25}\) For the biography of Shen Jiong, see Yao Silian, Chen shu, 19:253-56; Li Yanshou, Bei shi, 45:1677-79.

\(^{26}\) For the whole text of Tongtian tai, see Wu Weiye, Wu Meicun quanj, pp. 1388-402.

\(^{27}\) Gong Dingzi, “Wang lang wan’ge 王郎挽歌” (Elegies to Master Wang), poem 1, in Dingshan tang ji, 39:20a-b.
To Gong Dingzi, the death of Wang Jia and Kou Baimen symbolized an end to the influences and traditions handed down from the Chongzhen period.

6.3. The Dilemma of Identity in *Moling Chun*

Compared with Qian Qianyi and Gong Dingzi, scholars' interpretations of performances discussed in Chapter Five seem to have been more politically charged and sensitive to the circumstances of the early Qing. In fact, both staunch Ming loyalists and scholars who served under the Manchus viewed the performers and their performances as symbols of the tradition and prosperity of the Jiangnan region in the late Ming period. In the sources available to me, e.g., Fang Wen, a firm Ming loyalist, seems to interpret most performances both politically and culturally. On the other hand, Shi Runzhang, who passed the metropolitan examination and took office under the Manchus, interpreted the performances as simply a cultural activity handed down from the Ming period. As my earlier discussions suggested, unlike the Ming loyalists, Shi did not seem intent on interpreting these performances politically, to judge by the poems and prose about Li Mingrui’s troupe examined in this essay. Qian Qianyi and Gong Dingzi, who both succeeded in the metropolitan examinations in the Ming period and held office in both dynasties, cannot be viewed as firm Ming loyalists in the political and moral sense, but they nonetheless

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See Fang Wen, “Xie Zhang Shuicang, Li Qizhan yin Kou Baimen zhaitou you zeng (I drank in Kou Baimen’s house together with Zhang Shuicang and Li Qizhan, and composed the poems as presents), in *Tushanji*, 12:17b.
maintained nostalgia for the fallen Ming. This tension between political and cultural
identities, as will become apparent in what follows, is evident in their works and was also
shared by their contemporaries. It was a cultural consensus about the traditions of the fallen
Ming that brought scholars together in the early Qing, and it was the performance elements
discussed above that helped make them aware of these cultural bonds, despite their different
political decisions. Be they firm Ming loyalists or officials who served the Manchus, often
these scholars would attend the same gatherings, watching the same performances, and
reciprocating by writing poetry.

The dilemma of identity is illustrated clearly in Moling chun. In writing this chuanqi
drama, Wu Weiye incorporated his own experiences of the Ming and Qing periods into the
story of the male protagonist Xu Shi, who is described as living during the transition from the
Southern Tang (937-75) to the Northern Song (960-1127). In the first part of this drama, Xu
Shi, son of an official in the Southern Tang, promises to remain loyal to his fallen dynasty
and dead last emperor. With help from the souls of the last emperor and his favorite
concubine, who both become immortals in Heaven, Xu Shi succeeds in marrying Huang
Zhanniang, the niece of the concubine. In the second part, Xu Shi is framed and arrested in
Bianliang the capital of the Northern Song. The Song emperor appreciates Xu’s talent
and learning and honors him as the Principal Graduate. Xu is moved by the emperor’s
magnanimity and agrees to serve under the Song:

I appreciate the magnanimity of His Majesty,
He has gently subdued an arrogant scholar. 29

谢当今圣上宽洪量，
把一个不伏气的书生款款降。

29 Wu Weiye, Moling chun, scene 31, “Ci yuan,” in Wu Meiun quanji, p. 1328.
Yet, Xu still struggles with his conflicting loyalties to the Song and the Southern Tang:

It seems that the House of Zhao is pressing me urgently,
Who will cover up for me before my former Lord Li? 30

似你赵官家催得慌，
谁替我李皇前圆个谎？

However, Xu’s final decision to serve the Emperor does not prevent him and his wife from having a sacrificial ceremony for the last emperor of the Southern Tang. 31 In this way, he reconciles his loyalties to the past through cultural acts, while making a sensible decision about his career.

We know that, during the Spring Festival of 1660, Li Mingrui asked his troupe to perform the complete *Moling chun*, and Li Yuanding and his wife Zhu Zhongmei made a record of the performance in their poems, some of which were cited in Chapters Three and Five. 32 Li Mingrui, who had been exclusively consulted by Chongzhen while he plotted the counterattack against the rebellion, would have been undoubtedly moved by the story. In two poems about the performance, Li Yuanding wrote:

Modern and ancient times are too blurred to be distinguished,
Can one bear to meet one’s lord again under a new regime?
Most sorrowful is the *Song of Separated Swans*,
Intolerable it is to burn the presented lute. (Poem 6)

今古茫茫总未分，
可堪异代更逢君？
伤心最是离鸿曲，
解赠琵琶不忍焚。

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30 Wu Weiye, *Moling chun*, scene 31, “Ci yuan,” in *Wu Meicun quanji*, p. 1326. The Song emperors' surname is Zhao, and the Southern Tang emperors' surname is Li.


32 Li Yuanding, “Dong ye tong ji Canglang Ting guan nüji yan *Moling Chun*, ci Xiong shaozai yun shishou,” in Li, *Shiyuan quanji*, p. 58; Zhu Zhongmei, “Zongbo nian sao xiangqi Canglang Ting guan nüji yan *Moling chun*, man cheng shi jue,” in *Shiyuan quanji*, p. 108. For discussion of some of these other poems, see pp. 66, 80-81, 127.
Bell and water clock sound low, patterned lutes surround us,
Flowers in the mirror and shadows in the cup both are vague.
In Moling spring grass is green year after year,
Who is watching the Zhaoyang Palace where swallows fly? (Poem 10)\textsuperscript{33}

\begin{verbatim}
钟漏沉沉锦瑟围，
镜花杯影共依稀。
秣陵春草年年绿，
谁向昭阳看燕飞？
\end{verbatim}

According to Li Yuanding, even in the Manchu regime, he and his contemporaries would remember Chongzhen’s favors to them, but as memories of the fallen dynasty began to fade, few other than himself and other officials who had served the Ming would remain nostalgic for their fallen dynasty.

Undoubtedly, the dilemma that Xu Shi faces in \textit{Moling chun} reflects one that Wu Weiye and his contemporaries—including most spectators of Li Mingrui’s troupe—encountered in the early Qing. Xu’s final decision to serve the Song and his memory of his last emperor illustrate a split between political strategies and mental or spiritual preferences similar to that of Li Mingrui and other scholars who succeeded in the metropolitan examinations in the Ming Dynasty and took office in both the Ming and Qing. For the latter group, watching performances was an effective way to alleviate their distress, especially when the play they were watching reflected the same painful choices that they had been forced to make.

For the intellectuals studied in this thesis, this psychological split between political necessity and cultural allegiance was endured by many Han-Chinese scholars during the transition from Ming to Qing. Li Kai, a spectator named in Chapter Four, claimed that:

\begin{verbatim}
33 Li Yuanding, “Dong ye tong ji Canglang Ting guan nüji yan Moling Chun, ci Xiong shaozai yun shishou,” in Shiyuan quanji, p. 58. In the poems cited, “lute,” “mirror,” and “cup” are important material symbols in \textit{Moling chun}. The Zhaoyang Palace was constructed as a harem during the reign of Emperor Wu of Han.
\end{verbatim}
Had the Song Dynasty survived, China would have continued; the Song Dynasty collapsed and so China perished. 34

宋存而中国存, 宋亡而中国亡。

Qian Qianyi agreed with Li Kai. Both men cared more about whether orthodox Chinese culture continued or perished than about whether a dynasty survived or collapsed. When the Jurchens conquered the Northern Song and the Mongols overcame the Southern Song, Chinese culture had been crushed by a barbarian invader, and now the Manchu conquest portended the same. That a dynasty's collapse could ignite such anxieties reveals how closely intertwined political and cultural identities are in transitional periods. It is understandable, then, that performances by Li's troupe would be interpreted politically and culturally by intellectuals struggling with these questions.

34 Qian Qianyi, “Fu Li Shuze shu 复李叔则书” (Reply to Li Shuze), in Muzhai youxue ji, p. 1343; “Shu Guang Song yimin lu hou 书广宋遗民录后” (The postscript to the Enlarged List of the Song Loyalists), in Muzhai youxue ji, p. 1607.
CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have explored Li Mingrui’s private troupe and responses by spectators of its performances. Since Li Mingrui’s works are inaccessible to me, I have for the most part drawn on materials written by those spectators when writing this thesis.

As a protégé, Li Mingrui accepted Tang Xianzu’s ideas of innate sensibility; and as the examination mentor of Wu Weiye, he encountered the same dilemma of political identity that Wu did under the Manchu regime. His close relationship to these two playwrights explains why performances of Mudan ting and Moling chun by his troupe predominated. His troupe, although composed of eight actresses, had the ability to perform some chuanqi dramas whole, including Mudan ting and Moling chun, with the participation of amateurs and other household servants who knew how to perform.

During the Ming period, Li Mingrui was independent from the partisan strife between the Donglin and eunuch factions. In 1644 under the Manchus, he was forced to take the position of right vice-minister of rites for several months. His political independence in the Ming and service under the Manchus appear to have had no lasting negative impact on his social status and relations with other scholars in the early Qing.

The spectators, including Ming loyalists and officials who served both the Ming and Qing, often attended the same gatherings and composed poems about plays performed on those occasions. This makes it possible for me to compare and contrast the responses of these two groups to the plays. Nearly all the spectators viewed the performance elements—Chinese music and Ming style costumes—as nostalgic reminders of the fallen Ming and, more
important, of Han-Chinese culture. As revealed in the above chapters, the cultural activity surrounding performances—particularly during this period—itself served as a stage upon which these groups could experiment with social roles that were congruent with their shared cultural beliefs, despite their different political choices. These social roles and shared cultural beliefs will provide a cultural rather than political perspective from which to re-evaluate the mentality of the literati world during this transitional period.

**Performance Elements after the Military and Political Conquests**

In interpreting the performance elements of Li’s troupe, an overwhelming number of spectators distinguished Chinese culture—symbolized by the Ming—from the barbarian one—symbolized by the Qing—expressing nostalgia for the fallen Ming and anxiety about the demise of Chinese culture to a greater or lesser degree. Performances—and their respective interpretations—were tolerated by the Manchu conquerors at this time, though after 1645 they had begun to force their new subjects to adopt Manchu style dress. This tolerance, together with the Qing adoption of Ming music and the widespread appreciation of Chinese-style performances, meant that the performance elements of music and costume survived the Manchu takeover and subsequent political rule.

After enthroning himself as the founder of the new dynasty in 1616, Nurhaci (1559-1626) began to make use of Chinese music in Manchu traditional memorial ceremonies. After 1644, the whole Ming music system had been essentially adopted and pursued by the Qing Court of Imperial Sacrifices (Taichangsi 太常寺), although some traditional Manchu songs and dances were maintained and performed exclusively by young Manchu nobles in
commemoration of their Manchurian past.¹ By condoning Ming music, the Manchu conquerors implicitly permitted the continued use of Chinese popular and folk music—central elements in the performance of plays—without any intention of changing them to their Manchu style. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the Manchu conquerors tried to force their new subjects to play and appreciate Manchu-style music.

To appease the resistance of the Han-Chinese to the shaving of heads and adopting of Manchu-style dresses, the Manchu conquerors approved Jin Zhijun's proposals, one of which was that “courtesans follow the Manchu-style costumes but actors and actresses not do so.” Since actors and actresses were permitted to use Ming-style dress, the roles they played on stage in Ming-style dress were also tolerated. Jin Zhijun’s proposals were not recorded in official documents, but they were widely believed to have been implemented, since they were consistent with what was observed during the Qing period. Although in 1653 Emperor Shunzhi denied the existence of a rule that permitted actors and actresses to save their hair and dress in the Ming style—meaning that actors should shave heads and adopt Manchu-style dress, Ming-style costumes had in fact been legally permitted on stage.² In fact, they were acceptable even within the

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¹ Zhao Erxun et al., Qing shi gao, 94:2732. For the biography of Nurhaci, see Hummel, Eminent Chinese, pp. 594-99.

² Zhou Xibao, Zhongguo gudai fushi shi, p. 450. Jin Zhijun’s proposals were known as “shi cong shi bu cong” (ten-conformities and ten-unconformities to the Manchu style costumes), that is, “men should while women should not; the living should while the dead should not; the present world should while the underworld should not; officials should while clerks should not; adults should while children should not; scholars should while Buddhists and Taoists should not; courtesans should while actors/actresses should not; inaugurations should while weddings should not; the dynastic title should while official titles should not; taxes and corvée should while the language and script should not.” Clearly the last two-conformities and two-unconformities are not related to costumes. Jin Zhijun surrendered to the Manchus in Beijing in 1644. For his life, see Hummel, Eminent Chinese, pp. 160-61. Cen Dali thinks that “shi cong shi bu cong” was just imagined and circulated by some Han-Chinese scholars nostalgic for Ming style costumes and that what they imagined was inconsistent in some aspects with the realities during the Qing period. See Cen Dali, Zhongguo fushi xisu (Kunming: Yunnan jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), pp. 109-10. Hua Mei thinks that “shi cong shi bu cong” was implemented as an unwritten regulation. See Hua Mei, Fushi yu Zhongguo wenhua, p. 305.
Manchu imperial court. During the celebration of Emperor Kangxi’s sixtieth birthday in 1713 there were lots of performances of plays in Beijing, in all of which displayed actors and actresses wore Ming-style costumes, as is evident in woodblocks that illustrate the celebrations. (See Figure 3)

Based on this Manchu tolerance of certain Chinese cultural activities and the scholars’ interpretations of these performance elements, it is safe to say that use of Ming-style costumes onstage was permitted during the whole Qing era. Even in 1781, a time when Emperor Qianlong’s censorship intensified, a memorial submitted by the Governor of Jiangxi suggested that a play titled Hongmensi 红门寺 (Red Gate Temple) be banned because the performers wore Manchu style costumes. This suggests performers rarely wore Manchu-style costumes, and even though performances of plays were often censored because of their political and ethical content or even their regional identity, Chinese music and Ming-style costumes maintained a strong stage presence throughout the Qing period.

From Political Loyalists to Cultural Loyalists

As argued in Chapter Two, Li Mingrui remained independent from the strife between the Donglin faction and eunuch partisans during the Ming period, although he sympathized with the former. Though his political independence may have interfered with his official

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3 For an introduction about performances of Kun opera in the Manchu imperial court in the early Qing, see Dolby, *A History of Chinese Drama*, pp. 130-34.

4 “Qianlong sishiliu nian Jiangxi xunfu Hao Shuo fuzou zunzhi chaban xiju we’ai zijù 乾隆四十六年江西巡抚郝锁奏遵旨查办戏曲违碍字句” (In Qianlong 46 [1781], following the edict, the Governor of Jiangxi censored the taboo words and expressions in plays), in Wang Liqi, ed., *Yuan Ming Qing san daijin hui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), p. 116.

5 For the national and local laws and regulations about the censorship and prohibition of plays from 1644-1795, see Wang Liqi, ed., *Xiaoshuo xiqu jinhui shiliao*, pp. 18-53, 95-118.
career in the Ming, it had no negative impact on his social status and his relations with other scholars in the early Qing. Li was forced to take a post as the right vice-minister of rites under the Manchu regime for several months, directing the ritual ceremony for Emperor Chongzhen and his Empress. Despite this service, he was not viewed as a Ming loyalist by other scholars, but maintained good relations with some firm Ming loyalists and considerable fame among his contemporaries.

The original burden of the term “Ming loyalist” was political. In the late nineteenth century, Han-Chinese revolutionaries infused the term with radically racist meanings and used it to express their struggle in the years leading to the 1911 Revolution. Interestingly, spectatorship as discussed in this study reveals how relations between Ming loyalists and scholars who served both the Ming and Qing during this transitional period were grounded in shared cultural interests, and endured despite their different political choices. In a case study of Huang Zongxi (1610-95) and Lü Liuliang (1629-83), Tom Fisher argues that with the triumph of the Manchu forces and the fall of the Southern Ming, many Ming loyalists behaved differently as a result of the political choices they made, and their relations between other scholars suffered from this. For example, Huang Zongxi kept close friendships with powerful officials and “allowed his historical materials and son to contribute to the compilation of the official Ming History” although he refused to cooperate overtly with the new regime. Lü Liuliang, on the other hand, became a fundamentalist ethnic loyalist and rejected any relation with Qing officialdom or with anyone tainted by such associations, including his close friend Huang. However, scholars from both groups—fundamentalist

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loyalists and those cooperating with the new regime—contributed much to Chinese literature, history, and philosophy, in their response to the Ming collapse.⁸ Preserving Chinese culture was more important than restoring the fallen regime.

This is expressed clearly by a famous Ming loyalist Gu Yenwu 顾炎武 (1613-82), who submitted himself “tacitly” to the new regime, maintained friendships with those loyal to the Ming, and had friends and relatives who served the Manchus.⁹ Gu differentiated between the destruction of guo 国 (nation) and tianxia 天下 (world):

There is destruction of the guo and destruction of the tianxia. Between destruction of the guo and destruction of the tianxia what distinction should be made? “Change the surname, alter the style”—that is a description of the destruction of guo. The widespread dominion of benevolence and righteousness decayed into the rule of beast-eating-man, and men and leaders eating each-other—this is a description of the destruction of tianxia.¹⁰

有亡国，有亡天下。亡国与亡天下奚辨？曰，易姓改号，谓之亡国；仁义充塞，而至于率兽食人，人将相食，谓之亡天下。

Thus, tianxia refers to a cultural body, a “traditionally accepted ideal of civilization”.¹¹ It is not the nation, but the culture and civilization, that is believed to have a moral claim on man’s loyalties, since “as for defending the tianxia, the average common man shares [this]
responsibility 保天下者，匹夫之贱，与有责焉耳矣。”\(^\text{12}\) Gu Yanwu’s views of culture and nation are similar to those of Li Kai and Qian Qianyi cited at the end of Chapter Six. Furthermore, this was echoed by the common preference of these spectator groups—whether directly stated or implicitly—for Chinese cultural activities, which were symbolized for them by the Ming Dynasty.

That said, I prefer to use the term “cultural loyalists,” rather than “Ming loyalists,” to describe the spectators covered in this thesis, including those loyal to the Ming and those who served under the Manchus. The cultural loyalists remained devoted to Chinese ideas, promoting the culture in which they had been raised and defending its superiority to Manchu culture. Through their praise of Chinese music and Ming-style stage costumes, the spectators of Li Mingrui’s private troupe sustained the popularity of these performance elements into the society of the High Qing.

Yu Yingshi uses the term “wenhua yimin 文化遗民” (cultural refugee) to describe Chen Yinke’s 陈寅恪 (1890-1969) attitude towards the Communist authorities in China, who were widely viewed as having destroyed traditional Chinese culture.\(^\text{13}\) I use the term “cultural loyalist” to refer to the Han-Chinese literati who felt cultural nostalgia for the Ming despite their different political standing in the early Qing. Yu Yingshi uses the term “wenhua yimin” to refer to Chinese cultural conservationists who encountered Marxism and other Western ideologies, while my term refers to Ming (i.e., Han-Chinese) cultural conservationists during the Ming-Qing transition when the Han-Chinese and Manchu cultures were intermingling.


\(^\text{13}\) See Yu Yingshi, *Chen Yinke wannian shi wen shi zheng* (Taibei: Shibao wenhua, 1984), pp. 9-20, esp. 15.
The Mongols established Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) to dominate entire China after the fall of the Southern Song, and the Manchus founded the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) as the second regime of non-Han people over the Middle Kingdom after the Ming collapse. The Han-Chinese scholars during the Ming-Qing transition encountered the political and cultural dilemmas similar to ones that faced their ancestors during the Song-Yuan transition. That similarity partly explains why Chen Hongxu edited and Qian Qianyi planned to edit lists of Song loyalists, with intentions to illustrate their refusals to cooperate with and cultural attitudes towards the new regime.14 Like the spectators studied in this thesis, Han-Chinese scholars also made different political choices after the collapse of the Southern Song—to remain loyal to the fallen dynasty or to serve the new regime.15 But in the context of the reunification under the Mongolian regime, Han-Chinese scholars still contributed much to the continuity of traditions and innovations in Han-Chinese civilization, arts, and culture.16 That continuous thriving of Chinese culture, according to John D. Langlois, provided the seventeenth-century Han-Chinese scholars interested in the Yuan history with “a kind of psychological solace or compensation” for the culture’s military weakness and more important, with a belief in its universality and continuity—which Langlois calls “Chinese culturalism.”17 The culturalistic values “could easily generate contradictory behavior


16 Some scholars of the Yuan history argue the unbroken traditions and innovations in Chinese culture under the Mongols. See Langlois, China under Mongol Rule.

17 Langlois, “Chinese Culturalism and the Yuan Analogy: Seventeenth-Century Perspectives,”
depending on how one applied or interpreted [them],”¹⁸ and explain why some Han-Chinese literati denied the legitimacy of a non-Han regime while others accepted and supported it. Undoubtedly, Li Mingrui and his associates shared the culturalistic values—the belief in Han-Chinese culture despite their different political choice. “Chinese culturalism” can be viewed as the notion shared by the “cultural loyalists.”

Scholars and Performers/Courtesans during the Transitional Period

In Chinese history, during a transition from prosperity to decline, or from one dynasty to another one, performers and courtesans who survived the transition could be nostalgic reminders of prosperity of the fallen dynasty. During the An Lushan Rebellion, Li Guinian’s songs reminded scholars of Xuanzong’s reign; after the collapse of the Northern Song, the famous courtesan Li Shishi 李师师 (fl. 13th century) was said to have wandered about the Jiangnan region with “a pair of hardwood clappers,” singing songs for the scholars living there so that they would remember the conquered territory of the Northern Song.¹⁹ Such a function of performance elements re-appeared during the transition from Ming to Qing, as I have shown in this thesis.

According to Frederic Wakeman, for Ming loyalists, performers and courtesans themselves in the early Qing often served as beautiful but sad reminders of lost prosperity, and their relations with Ming loyalists would produce more poetic appreciation and aesthetic sensibilities in poetry and plays about the loss of a kingdom (usually symbolizing the


¹⁹ For Li Shishi’s wanderings in Jiangnan, see Zhang Bangji, Mozhuang manlu, in Congshu jicheng chu bian (Changsha: Shangwu yishuguan, 1939), vol. 3, p. 90.
Ming). In her study of how and why the heroic woman images were created in the early Qing poems and plays, Wai-yee Li argues that literary representations of heroic women, including courtesans, “encompass the authors’ apology, nostalgia, regrets, self-definition, and historical judgment, inseparable from their memory of and reflections on the traumatic dynastic transition.” Actually, as Kang-I Sun Chang argues in her study of Chen Zilong: “after the fall of the Ming, the courtesan became a metaphor for the loyalist poets’ vision of themselves,” since “both the loyalist and the courtesan [experienced] similar dramatic reversals after the dynastic fell and had to make similar decisions regarding their public and private roles.” In Ming loyalists’ descriptions, talented and beautiful courtesans symbolized freedom, self-creation, the possibility of heroic action, and also embodied elite cultural ideals.

This may have been true for the authors and readers of poetry of this period, but for the spectators of plays studied in this thesis, performances in Ming-style costumes and accompanied by Chinese music were potent political and cultural symbols, which stirred their nostalgia for the fallen Ming and strengthened their belief in Chinese culture.

20 Frederic Wakeman, Jr., The Great Enterprise, p. 1078.


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