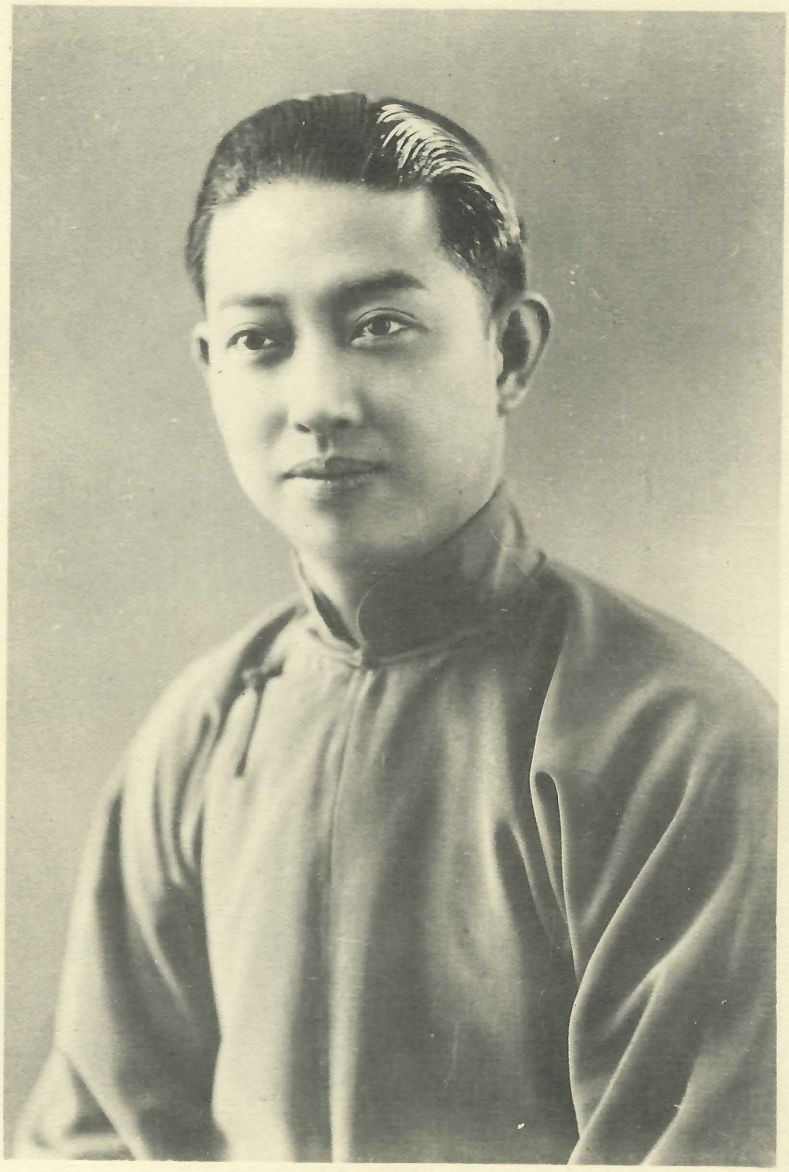
MEI LAN-FANG

梅蘭芳

To Prof. Albert R. Lovejoy
cordially
Mei Lan-fang
梅蘭芳

MEI LAN-FANG

Foremost Actor of China



Mr. Mei Lan-fang

MEI LAN-FANG

Foremost Actor of China

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FOREWORD

It is a rare pleasure to be allowed to write a few words of introduction to this timely little volume. In addition to what it tells of personal interest regarding its celebrated subject, it also imparts just the sort of information that Western readers need to have about the history and technique of histrionic art in China. If to readers unfamiliar with China the praise of Mr. Mei seems to be tinged with oriental extravagance, they can be assured that the author's estimates and encomiums truly represent the popular opinion of all classes among this people regarding their gifted fellow-countryman. Not only so, but foreigners also fall under his spell, although unable to analyze the source of his charm. The merit of this book for us is that it aids towards a more intelligent appreciation of the exquisite grace and consummate art of an actor whose witchery fascinates us even when we miss the subtle meanings and delicate nuances so appealing to his Chinese audiences.

Any comment about Mr. Mei Lan-fang would, however, be incomplete if concerned only with his professional attainments, for in private life he is an attractive young man of gentle culture, unspoiled by all the adulation lavished upon him and with an almost naïvely responsive friendliness. Even in a land where hospitality is an accomplishment, he is the more delightful as a host because he then is never acting. He has a generous readiness to share alike the mastery of his art and its financial profits with those who can benefit thereby.

J. LEIGHTON STUART.

PREFACE

Prefaces, at their best often boring, are sometimes necessary. This is especially true, when, as in this case, the material of the volume has been compiled from many Chinese sources, and one attempts to mould the results, along with his own investigations, into an English book. The preface naturally falls into two divisions: (1) Miscellaneous remarks; and (2) acknowledgments.

1. Perplexing problems were encountered in Chapter VI and elsewhere, for there were no English newspaper cuttings to be had and all available facts had already been translated into Chinese, thus bringing about certain modifications. So, when the Chinese was once more rendered into English, further changes may have been made. This will explain why the interviews, critiques, etc., differ from the originals. Again, all European and Japanese names had been transliterated into Chinese, and were often impossible to identify.

2. It is a pleasure and a privilege to make acknowledgment to those who, gifted in their own right, devote their efforts to furthering the work of their friends. With this foremost in mind, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the following friends, who have made this English version possible:

To Mr. George T. Moule, my literary guide, who has accomplished the difficult task of reading two different versions of the manuscript.

To a family group, the Laws and the Kuans. Mr. Henry K. C. Law, who introduced me to the Peking drama, has given much practical assistance, while Mrs. Law has written much of the Chinese. Her brother, Mr. Heyward Kuan, reviewed with me, during the warm summer days, the original Chinese records.

To Mr. D. J. Kajiwara, who romanized the Japanese names.

To Miss Alice M. Roberts, of the Commercial Press, who is both an expert proof reader and an invaluable adviser in matters relating to the make-up of my books.

GEORGE KIN LEUNG.

PEKING (PEIPING), May, 1929.

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MEI LAN-FANG

NOTE

I wish our readers to bear in mind that the general outline of this book was compiled *in Chinese* by admirers of Mr. Mei Lan-fang. What originally had been intended to be Chapter III, which proved to be a dictionary of theatrical terms, has, in the present brief English volume, been made the Appendix. Of the Chinese of this part of the book, Professor Chi Jushan wrote seven divisions, and Mr. Huang Chiu-yao, two.

Chapters I, III, and V are the results of my own investigation; other chapters contain data from the Chinese records which the friends of the actor, notably Professor Chi Jushan and Mr. Huang Chiu-yo, have been keeping for some years.

GEORGE KIN LEUNG.

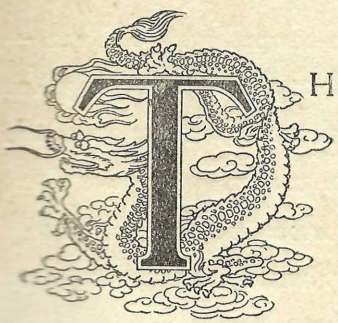
THE THEATRE OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE

Mr. Mei Impersonating a Manchu Princess

MEI LAN-FANG

CHAPTER I

THE THEATRE OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE



HIS humble attempt, it is hoped, will lead more students of world drama to be discontent with only the study of books. While critics and dramatists of the closet variety do admirable work, there is a crying need for men who will interpret the living theatre. Once, after a youthful Chinese professor had read a scholarly paper on the drama, one of the many foreigners present asked him which playhouse in the city was worth visiting. The speaker shamefacedly confessed that he had never been to one.

While the condemnation of the closet method of study is not of first importance, of immediate concern it is to choose some factor about which to group the outstanding characteristics of the Chinese theatre. What well supplies this need is the art of Mr. Mei Lan-fang, the brilliant theatrical idol whose name exerts over the Middle Kingdom a magical influence. About him will be created a picture of the theatre here to-day, though no attempt will be made to exhaust the many phases of this vast field; such an effort would furnish material for years of research.

Let us, then, without further delay proceed to the Kuangho Lou, a theatre in the amusement district of Peking just outside the Ch'ien Mên. An actor assures one that he comes from Peking even if he were born elsewhere, just as, in the not distant past, all hats came from Paris, or at least so the labels said.

A noble example of an old-style theatre, the Kuangho Lou holds its own against the competition of both the modernized Chinese playhouse and the motion picture. There is much that meets the eye of the foreigner on his first visit. What he sees points out that, while in detail the East may differ from the West as Tientsin from Toronto, the fundamental idea of mass enjoyment is the same the world over.

Everything is strangely new and attention-compelling. Children — all boys, for this is a training school for male performers — act not only the rôles of bearded generals but also those of dainty, flower-like maidens. Loudly applauded by the spectators, the miniature monks, demi-mondaines, lovers, and acrobats pace across the platform stage, which, perhaps, is the only living likeness of that of the Shakespearean era. Running at right angles to the front of the stage are long tables, at which, about twenty deep on either side, sits most of the audience. Ears rather than faces are toward the actors, because in an old-fashioned playhouse one goes to hear a drama. It is a curious coincidence that there were in London, about 1600, two training schools for boy-actors, just as to-day in Peking there are two leading institutions with their respective theatres in which boy-performers make their appearances.

A conventional comedian type, or *ch'ou*, now caricaturing a Buddhist monk, recites "gags" which are both laughable and *risqué*. He gathers from the audience one round of laughter and applause after another. The merriment strikes in the foreign visitor a responsive chord, although but a moment ago he had thought he had nothing in common with his surroundings. A seductive siren exercises her every charm to batter down the moral resistance

of a youthful scholar; an actor, in a rôle otherwise serious, pauses long enough to display his acrobatic skill as might be done in certain old French classics; these and other touches which link the present scene to the great mimic world outside gradually cause the onlooker to feel at home in this theatre on the opposite face of the earth.

The Kuangho Lou not only introduces one to a conservative Peking audience but also affords a glimpse of the very cradle of the theatrical profession. From such institutions, hundreds of graduates go forth to earn their daily rice; but since the supply is far greater than the demand, many of the profession live from hand to mouth.

Out of this heart-rending competition, Mr. Mei Lan-fang has risen to a position of overwhelming popularity. The approach to the living theater will, therefore, be made through this actor, whose artistry captivates alike the illiterate and the learned—in short, the teeming millions of the Republic of China.

To know their theatre is to know, in no small degree, the Chinese people.

Birds and Bamboos — a painting by Mr. Mei Lan-fang

MEMOIRS OF MR. MEI LAN-FANG

The Actor's Grandfather, Mr. Mei Chiao-ling, Impersonating an Empress Dowager

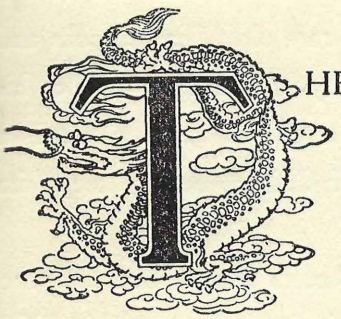
Mr. Mei's Paternal Uncle, Mr. Mei Yu-tien, Foremost Musician of His Day, who Reared the Actor after the Death of the Latter's Father

Mr. Mei Lan-fang and His Grandmother

The Father of China's Theatrical Idol, Mr. Mei Chu-fen

CHAPTER II

MEMOIRS OF MR. MEI LAN-FANG



HE supreme favourite of the Chinese stage, Mr. Mei Lan-fang, tempts one to hold the delightful fancy that certain kinds of earth, hills, and water combine to produce rare examples of talent and beauty. The spectator, after falling under the spell of Mr. Mei's acting, should therefore bear in mind that the artist's success is, in part, due to two distinct factors: his ancestral home, Taichow, Kiangsu, a region famed for its fair inhabitants; and noble Peking, the training place of the nation's best actors. In the latter city, his family has lived for three generations.

Idols of the court and of the people were Mr. Mei's ancestors. His grandfather, Mr. Mei Chiao-ling, remembered for his talent and proverbial kindness, was the head of the Ssŭ-hsi Training School for Actors, the leading institution of the four during the Hsien Fêng period (1851-1861).

October 22, 1894, is the authentic date of Mr. Mei Lan-fang's birth. At the age of eleven, the artist made his professional début as a *tan*, or actor of female rôles. Seven years later, he gained an unprecedented popularity in Shanghai. Afterwards, Peking, that most fastidious judge of dramatic art, by a vote of two hundred and seventy thousand proclaimed the youth the "Great King of Actors."

On Mr. Mei's arrival in Tokyo in 1917, thousands of people, eager for a glimpse of him, thronged the railway station. His second tour of Japan in 1924, when he was honoured by a request to appear in the newly reopened Imperial Theatre, was also a marked success. In the orient, Hongkong, Canton, Tientsin, Hankow, Hangchow, and Shanghai have, in turn, laid tribute at the feet of the public idol.

Gardening, entomology, and modern inventions hold for the artist a strange fascination. The Mei library is filled with rare old Chinese books and treatises on music and the dance, which frequently furnish the bases of his operatic dance dramas. The better motion pictures find in the actor a steady patron. Gymnastics and difficult forms of Chinese boxing keep him physically fit.

Mr. Mei, who is president of the Peking Actors' Association and who was the president of the Actors' Theatrical Association, was summoned in 1923 by the ex-emperor Hsüan T'ung to appear in the Yang Hsin Palace of the Forbidden City. The latter presented the artist with rare imperial porcelains and at the same time made him head of the Ching Chung Monastery. Under Manchu rule, to be head of that institution was the highest honour one in the profession could attain. Mr. Mei Lan-fang was also permitted to retain his title, "Foremost of the Pear Orchard," which designation implies that he was the first actor of the land; for, during the T'ang dynasty, under Ming Huang, the Imperial Troupe called themselves "Disciples of the Pear Orchard," because they performed in a palace surrounded by pear-trees.

A first impression of Mr. Mei Lan-fang may be quoted here from the *North-China Daily News:*

> "The great Mei, who does not prolong our wait as do most well-known, near-great men, enters so noiselessly that he is bowing to the visitor before the latter has time to regain enough composure to return the courtesy. Charmingly reserved is the actor. . . . But in those very silences and sincere evasions of anything that savours of personal praise lies a wealth of subtle power. . . .

The Actor in His Garden—Typical Pool and Rockery

The Actor in His Library of Chinese Books

> "The simplicity of his dress further enhances his fair complexion and harmonizes with his silences; but his eyes light with animation as he listens with a warmth and sympathy that are, in themselves, a fine art. . . . His hands are remarkably graceful, even when not in motion. All the while, his intimate friends continue to give detailed accounts of his glories. . . . The actor seems to withdraw from the circle; there is no physical movement on his part, merely a mental shrinking from praise and publicity."[1]

Modest in life, brilliant on the stage, this most beloved of actors gives to the public his all. Yet people demand so much of his time that Mr. Mei spends days at social affairs when he might well be devoting himself to research or merely enjoying the priceless luxury of privacy. The very public which helps to make an artist does not hesitate, in its well-meant but thoughtless admiration, to snatch away the leisure necessary for full artistic achievement. That Mr. Mei, in spite of merciless social obligations, has accomplished as much as he has, is, indeed, nothing short of miraculous.

[1] *North-China Daily News*, Shanghai, Nov. 13, 1926.

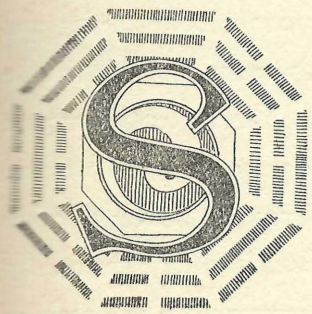
THE FEMALE IMPERSONATOR OF THE CHINESE STAGE

NOTE

The term "female impersonator" as widely accepted by English-speaking peoples does not fully convey the meaning of the Chinese character *tan*. The latter is a designation for actors who specialize in feminine rôles on the Chinese stage. It is not realistic impersonation of the opposite sex that is sought but a highly conventionalized artistry. The spectator sees the idealized charms of a woman and experiences the æsthetic pleasure that comes of an actor's creating a picture that is as far removed as possible from all personal elements. When "female impersonator" is used in this book, it is employed in this special sense.

CHAPTER III

THE FEMALE IMPERSONATOR OF THE CHINESE STAGE



OME time ago the title of the widely read book *The Changing Chinese* became a familiar catch-word. Indeed, the people of this vast republic have been experimenting with new things, and momentous and far-reaching results have been produced. Change, transition, the period of political tutelage — these words and others attempt to picture the ferment which is now taking place in this nation of gigantic surprises. But, in the midst of sweeping change, firmly entrenched and ancient institutions, such as the guilds, may be found.

The institution of the *tan*, or female impersonator, still holds its own. The occident, which may have allowed the memory of Shakespeare's heroines who were portrayed by youths to grow dim, may ask, "Why do men portray feminine rôles?" A brief reply follows:

The emperor Ch'ien Lung in the eighteenth century issued an edict forbidding the appearance of women on the stage. This act not only necessitated the employment of handsome youths to portray feminine rôles, but it also gave the latter a firm foothold in the profession, which they continue to maintain to-day. In this connection, it may be interesting to quote from an article, "The Chinese Actress," in *Asia*, as follows:

> "Although female entertainers continued down through the Sung (960-1126), it was not until the Yüan period (1280-1368) that women attained what we now consider the professional status of an actress. Thereafter, she made rapid progress in the field, until, by imperial edict, she was temporarily suppressed, only to reappear in Tientsin during the reign of Kuang Hsü (1875-1908). It was after the founding of the Republic, however, that theatres for all-female companies were established in Peking, Shanghai, Tientsin, and Canton, and that actresses gained a firm position with the public." [1]

"Gained a firm position" must be read with some qualification, for men are so well entrenched that actresses mimic, in some cases to the last detail, the style of the man who stands at the top of his peculiar school of acting and singing. The strange situation has arisen wherein a woman has imitated the vocal style of a man who himself had originally created a falsetto for the purpose of imitating, in a highly conventionalized manner, the voice of a real woman. At the present writing, there is in Peking a widely advertised actress who has gained her prestige by adopting two-thirds of a famous actor's name, by presenting his popular plays, and by making her voice approximate as closely as possible that of her male model.

In the not distant past men acted every rôle in a drama; but when all-female troupes came into existence, women portrayed not only the heroine but also the bearded general, the youthful scholar, and other male characters. But what of mixed companies, in which each sex acts the rôle natural to him? Although such companies are not unusual in Shanghai to-day, yet only a few years ago there was but one large playhouse in which members of both sexes appeared. While this theatre drew the patronage of some of the public, not a few men, who were modern-minded in every other respect, would refer to the playhouse with severe criticism. When Peking actors of note fill a short contract in Shanghai, the actresses of the theatre are given a vacation. A leading actor in Peking to-day would consider it a fatal blow to his reputation

[1] *Asia*, Dec., 1927.

if he were to appear with artists of the opposite sex. In private and benefit performances, however, actors and actresses may appear in separate plays during an evening.

China does not stand alone in the practice of men impersonating women on the stage. A student of Japanese drama must acquaint himself with the work of the *onnagata*, or the youth who acts feminine rôles. One still hears of former Italian male sopranos who essayed the parts of operatic heroines.

There are to-day in Peking two training schools for boy-actors, just as there were in London in Shakespeare's day. To quote from Volume II of *Shakespeare's England*:

> "In addition to these adult players there were two companies of 'children,' or boy-actors. . . . The formation of these companies was obviously a development of the stage convention by which in Shakespeare's day the parts of women were played by boys."[1]

Before considering the vocal technique of the *tan* and the conventional character types, let us imagine we are now in a Peking theatre attending a performance by Mr. Mei Lan-fang. It is a Saturday night in the Kaiming Theatre, which is crowded to the doors. Short plays of varying interest have been shown since early in the evening. It is well towards 11 p.m. when the lights blaze on the embroidered hangings of the stage, where, to the deafening clapping of hands and the shouting of *hao* (good), the artist, a vision of colour, makes his appearance. In this much-liked playlet, Mr. Mei impersonates Yang Kuei-fei, the favourite of the emperor Ming Huang (A.D. 713-755). The very slender story apparently serves as a framework for the pantomime, the dances, and the dreamy, wine-laden songs, which no one can present with the consummate artistry of Mei.

[1] *Shakespeare's England*, Vol. II, pp. 244-246.

The senses, fully gratified, do not know that the plot is insignificant, but they revel in the colour, action, and incomparable postures. Darkly jealous, and her pride wounded because the emperor was spending the night with her rival, Kuei-fei drains one bumper of strong wine after another until she reels about the stage in a series of gracefully tottering dances. There are also gymnastic feats, which require perfect muscular control, all effort being concealed by a training that has begun in childhood. The inimitable flourish of a sleeve, the quivering of a gold fan, the flash of eyes heavy with wine, half-closed with passion — these are but some of the fine touches an artist may add to a play.

Apart from the rôles for old women and *comédiennes*, female stage characters use a falsetto style, which, admittedly artificial, gains its appeal through intricate and conventionalized standards. Such singing and recitation may sound shrill and unmusical to most foreign ears. The *hsiao-shêng*, or rôle for a youth, is the only male stage character also using the falsetto.

From an article which appeared in the *China Journal* will be quoted passages which illustrate the manner in which Chinese writers differentiate the feminine stage types. While one Chinese investigator at least disagrees with this mode of classification, he has not yet offered an improved system, and when he does it is hoped he will soon publish it. Until this is done, it is only reasonable to use the widely accepted classification, which follows:

There are no less than six types of *tan* on the Chinese stage, and some native writers add to that number by making even more minute sub-divisions. The term *tan* covers, in general, the whole class of impersonators, which is sub-divided into the six following groups:

1. *Chêng-tan*, or *ch'ing-i* (正旦或青衣)
2. *Hua-tan* (花旦)
3. *Kuei-mên-tan* (閨門旦)
4. *Ts'ai-tan* (彩旦)
5. *Lao-tan* (老旦)
6. *Wu-tan* (武旦)

Mr. Mei Lan-fang as Mu Kuei-ying, a Military Type

The distinctions between these six classes are both numerous and detailed; but mention of the types and the manner of acting is a convenient means of entering this intricate subject.

The *chêng-tan*, more popularly known as the *ch'ing-i*, is the type representing the good matron, the faithful wife, or the filial daughter. In this type, singing is greatly stressed, and no fighting and gymnastics are required: indeed, when the characters 青衣 (*ch'ing-i*) appear on a theatre programme over the name of an actor, the audience settle comfortably in their seats and are prepared to enjoy several arias of the highest order, and woe to the reputation of the actor who proves vocally inferior.

The *hua-tan*, usually a younger woman than the *ch'ing-i*, may be a demi-mondaine or maidservant. Generally speaking, the *ch'ing-i* is the type for a good woman, and singing, especially the plaintive kind, is dominant; while the *hua-tan* is often the rôle for a woman of questionable morals, great emphasis being placed on the acting. The *hua-tan*, in order to be true to conventional requirement, should wear tiny, artificial feet.

Of the remaining four types, the *kuei-mên-tan* is an unmarried girl; while the *wu-tan*, of which the "sword and horse" *tan* is a type, is a military maiden. One of the most realistic types is the *lao-tan*, the rôle for an aged woman, often a mother. Another division is the *ts'ai-tan*, who delineates a wicked woman, an evilly inclined female servant, or the ever-present matchmaker.

These types are rigidly bound by certain conventional requirements of demeanour and action. The good woman, or *ch'ing-i*, is retiring, gracious, and refined. The *hua-tan* is bold and full of charm and seduction. The maidenly type, or *kuei-mên-tan*, is elegant, attractive, and graceful. The *ts'ai-tan*, while sometimes beautiful and graceful, is trifling by nature and often mean. The *wu-tan*, or military type, is both good to look upon and heroic; and the type for an old woman, or *lao-tan*, is usually gentle.

Characteristic actions often give a clue to the type. The *ch'ing-i* is most properly behaved: in her action there is not a vestige of seduction. Her footsteps are even and carefully taken; and, while walking, the feet are kept close to the ground. The hands, always in a graceful and dignified position, are often crossed. On entering or withdrawing, the head is inclined slightly forward; on leaving the stage, the right sleeve is often elevated.

With due allowance for her youth, the *kuei-mên-tan*, or maidenly type, is somewhat like the *ch'ing-i* in correct behaviour.

Most seductive and charming are the ways of the demi-mondaine, or *hua-tan* type, as she sways with airy grace to the stage on her false "golden lilies," her left hand on her waist and her right holding a silk handkerchief. Her every movement vibrates with life, from the suggestive and devastating glance of her eyes to the coy turn of her head. Unlike the foregoing types, she may perform gymnastic and military action. In order to charm the spectator to the very last, she, on leaving the stage, turns her head alluringly toward the audience with a smile that begins at the eyes and spreads down over the luscious curves of her cheeks and lips, or she may lift her right foot to reveal a flash of her red satin trousers.

The *ts'ai-tan*, in point of liveliness, is akin to the *hua-tan*. She is comic, lowly, and detestable. Her long strides are full of action; her eyes roll in diabolical mischievousness. And to prove that she is not a lady, she walks with crooked legs! On entering or going off, she makes a strange movement or smiles intriguingly at the audience.

As has already been mentioned, the type for an old woman, or *lao-tan*, is the most realistic. With lowered head and stooped shoulders she totters across the stage. A long staff is her indispensable support. She is gentle and motherly. Her eyes mirror the tired expression of old age.

In spite of the aforementioned conventions and many more which restrict an actor, a great artist may, by his genius, overcome the rigid requirements,

An Operatic Type in the Dress of a Poverty-Stricken Woman

offering not only a true picture of life, but often the very essence of realism, denuded of the commonplace.[1]

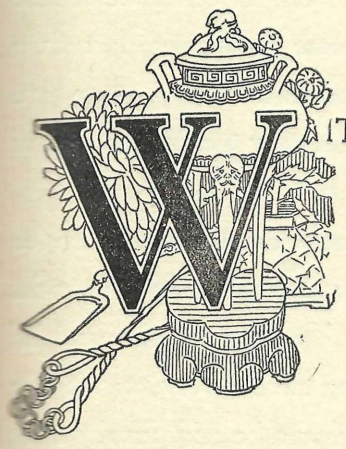
Here it is possible to make only brief reference to the peculiar art and some of the many dramas of the female impersonator. It is hoped that students of oriental and of world drama will make a special study of this most interesting phase of the Chinese theatre.

[1] *China Journal*, Vol. V, No. 4, Oct., 1926, pp. 164-174.

MR. MEI'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHINESE DRAMA

CHAPTER IV

MR. MEI'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHINESE DRAMA



ITH the passing of one generation, a theatrical idol may be forgotten. Such a favourite, delighting a grateful world with his talent and his youth, creates nothing in his own field to keep alive his memory. He may have had no desire to do so; he may have been happier to take what life had to give and go on. Since Mr. Mei Lan-fang is the idol of idols and as such is invested with a certain legendary grandeur, those who are interested in his art rather than in the momentary pleasure of seeing him once or twice, may wish to know what the artist has done for the theatre.

Before considering some of the revivals and innovations made by the actor, it may be well to describe briefly a Chinese audience. A playwright certainly writes for his public, just as an actor acts for it; and any discussion of contributions to a certain period of drama would be incomplete without a study of the audience. Outstanding is the fact that the majority of Chinese spectators are unaccustomed to, and do not demand, a realistic representation of life, because they come to the theatre to escape the dull cares of routine. They come to hear songs, the clangour of earsplitting brass, to delight in a fiercely painted face and its loud, extravagant voice, to see the supernatural mingle freely with

people of flesh and blood, to see the good rewarded and the wicked punished. They find pleasure, above all, in the art and the personality of the actor. Essentially they do not differ from seekers of diversion the world over, although what they enjoy may be centuries removed, say, from a realistic or psychoanalytical drama which may be seen on Broadway.

The audience, which, generally speaking, is unfamiliar with modern stage technique and carefully developed plots, does not expect them. The few students who have been abroad and have studied modern stagecraft are of little consequence to the booking office. The people come armed with facts from history, novel, and legend; they expect to see characters with whom they have been familiar from childhood; they wish to hear much, or the greater part, of the story sung in a highly conventionalized manner.

Except a few large theatres in Peking, where the high admission fee keeps away some of the rabble, the ordinary playhouse is a kind of large social hall, in which one may do as he pleases: chat, exchange courtesies with his neighbour, eat whatever may come to his fancy, bring the maidservants with the children, and so on. The apparent inattention, it should be said, usually takes place during the early part of the afternoon or evening when unimportant actors appear in playlets known to the audience for decades. But when the star comes on and additional lights blaze forth, every one turns expectant eyes on the actor, who, although he may appear in a play which is no better than those just presented by lesser artists, receives both applause and attention. The situation again makes it clear that in China an actor is the important attraction in the theatre.

The conventionalization of Peking drama places an artist in an awkward position. If he acts always in strict accordance with tradition, he may be accused by modernists of being a case of arrested development and incapable of producing anything new. If he attempts that which is off the beaten path of convention, he may be condemned for violating the requirements of

the old school, mainly because his ability is not equal to the demands made by tradition.

With such an audience and such conditions, Mr. Mei Lan-fang has had to cope. The actor has not only helped to revive some of the better plays along with their music, but he has been able to introduce into the old theatre a new type of feminine character which combines accepted traditional elements with details he himself has added as a result of his investigations of the theatrical art of the past.

Mr. Mei has rendered great service by helping to revive the older musical drama, known as the *k'un-ch'ü*, which flourished during the Yüan (1280-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) periods, but which almost disappeared from the professional stage during the late Manchu dynasty. The *k'un-ch'ü* drama, sung to the soft notes of the flute, was displaced by the now all-popular *p'i-huang* drama with its more strident *hu-ch'in*, or so-called Chinese violin, and loud brass instruments.

It is Mr. Mei's popularity that enables him to present, if he pleases, as many as two *k'un-ch'ü* plays on three evenings. Again, he may interpolate a *k'un* song in a work otherwise *p'i-huang*, as in *The Heavenly Maiden Scattering Flowers*, an operatic dance drama, in which he does his first dance singing with the *hu-ch'in* and his second dance to the flute, which leads the soft music of the *k'un-ch'ü* orchestra.

Of the many things associated with the old stage which were in danger of being discarded until Mr. Mei restored them, only two will be cited. Although the important stringed instruments, the *yüeh-ch'in*, or moon guitar, and the southern *yin-tzŭ*, had been left out of orchestras, the actor reinstated them to their rightful positions, with the result that they may be heard in all theatres. Very striking and peculiarly Chinese was the head-dress of blue kingfisher feathers, arranged on a circular frame of silver. Later actors preferred ornaments of glass and imitation pearl. Mr. Mei had only to wear in his

dramas the blue head-dress, and he won such enthusiastic approval that other female impersonators followed suit.

The outstanding contributions Mr. Mei has made to drama are his ancient costume plays, which are imitated by actors throughout the length and the breadth of China, as well as by artists of Japan and dancers in America.

The most important features of these plays, which are collectively known as the Mei School, are the actor's contribution of song linked with the dance and the ancient costume, which are added to two distinctive elements of the old drama, the whole being harmoniously blended by the genius of the actor. To make clear the point: first, it should be said that in former days actors of feminine parts were noted either for the operatic rôles of virtuous women or for the histrionic parts of vivacious women; and each style was kept rigidly separate. Not only did Mr. Mei successfully combine the two existing styles, but he also added the ancient costumes and the dance linked with song. It should be noted that in the distant past, song and dance were combined; but, as time passed, the dancing disappeared, while the song remained. Happily, from the actor's study of old books, the combination of dance and song was restored.

As for dances which grace many of Mr. Mei's dramas and which are the delight of the foreign spectator, only a few will be mentioned: the streamer dance, in *The Heavenly Maiden Scattering Flowers;* the pheasant plume dance, in *The Patriotic Beauty Hsi Shih;* the sleeve dance, in *The Goddess Shang Yüan;* the flag dance, in the third act of the *Yang Kuei-fei* series; and so on. In many of these dances there is much posturing, as when the actor, having sung to the end of a measure, poses in an attitude which is typical of Chinese dramatic art.

As for the magnificent costumes, which have been created as the result of the artist's study of ancient feminine dress on old bronze cauldrons, bells, paintings, etc., it is difficult to say whether the artist lends charm to the gowns or vice versa. The two, at any rate, are inseparable. A Chinese

woman who has followed the work of the actor for years has constantly remarked, " It is only Mr. Mei who can wear these garments so as to show off their greatest possibilities." Needless to say, the artist is careful to give the costumes of the different characters that individual stamp which characterizes his various interpretations.

While the dramas just considered are linked with the actor's name, mention should be made of the various plays from the famous love novel, *Hung Lou Mêng*. Mr. Mei has, from time to time, based dramas on episodes from this literary masterpiece.

The foregoing is but a brief consideration of the revivals and the contributions the actor has made to the Chinese theatre. He will soon establish a school for the study of the best Chinese dramatic art. It is plain that Mr. Mei Lan-fang is interested in the betterment of the theatre, as well as in creating dramas suited to his own personality and peculiar talent, thus further endearing himself to his public.

DRAMAS PRODUCED BY MR. MEI

In the following pages an attempt will be made to consider briefly some of the dramas which were produced by Mr. Mei alone or in collaboration and which display his artistry.

The Love of Têng Hsia-ku
(鄧霞姑)
1913

This is the first drama on a modern theme but patterned on old conventions that Mr. Mei Lan-fang has produced, its moral being a protest against the tyranny of the old family system, especially as it has to do with the marriage problem. The action of the story centres about a young girl who chooses her own lover and arranges her own engagement. After eloping with the youth and

passing through untold hardship, she attains her ideal. The play, which contains many pictures of social conditions, has found much favour with the public.

The Imprisoned Lovers

(牢獄鴛鴦)

This play is also an attempt on the actor's part to present a social-problem drama, the central idea being the true love between man and maid. Love should be regulated by the rules of virtue. Mr. Mei impersonates the young girl, who, for the sake of love, endures all manner of suffering, and after spending much time in prison, at last finds an opportunity to explain to her lover the misunderstanding that had existed between them. The couple are happily reunited. This is an example of drama, sung in the old conventional style but depicting present social conditions.

Ch'ang O's Flight to the Moon

(嫦娥奔月)

1914

This play is an early operatic dance creation, based on an ancient fairy tale, which tells how Ch'ang O, the wife of Hou I, stole the pill of immortality and fled to the moon to become queen.

Tai-yü Burying the Blossoms

(黛玉葬花)

1915

Tai-yü Burying the Blossoms is a dramatized episode from the famous novel, *Hung Lou Mêng*, an account of which may be found in Chapter V.

A Strand of Flax

(一縷麻)

A Strand of Flax, one of Mr. Mei's dramas in the tragic vein, has for its theme a twofold purpose: first, the glorification of the virtue of Chinese

The Maidservant Ching-wên, as Impersonated by Mr. Mei

The Actor in the Male Attire of a Warrior in the Play *Mu-lan in the Army*

womanhood ; second, the portrayal of life in an old conservative family. When the actor impersonates a youthful and virtuous maiden, he invariably moves his audience to tears.

A Beauty's Smile
(千金一笑)
1916

A Beauty's Smile, popularly known among Chinese as *Ching-wên Tearing the Fan*, also comes from the pages of the novel *Hung Lou Mêng* and is concerned with the ravishingly pretty maidservant, Ching-wên, who is enjoying a playful moment with her youthful master, Pao-yü. The scenes, graphically depicting life in the women's apartments of a large family, are unlike those of *Tai-yü Burying the Blossoms*. Mr. Mei Lan-fang's ability lies in his excellent interpretations of women of all stations of life, whether she be the high-born and tearful Tai-yü or the winsome and capricious maidservant Ching-wên.

The Heavenly Maiden Scattering Flowers
(天女散花)
1917

This play, perhaps the actor's most beloved operatic dance drama, is described in Chapter V.

Mu-lan in the Army
(木蘭從軍)
1918

Mu-lan was a maid of old who disguised herself as a youth in order to go to war instead of her aged and ill father. Hence the plot offers unusual situations when Mr. Mei Lan-fang, in the leading rôle, dons the clothes of a warrior.

Ma Ku Offering Birthday Gifts
(麻姑獻壽)
1919

This is an ancient costume play, based on a Chinese fairy tale, in which the actor impersonates the fairy Ma Ku.

A Young Girl Kills a Serpent
(童女斬蛇)

This work is a social-problem play, which has for its object the destruction of certain deep-rooted superstitions. Mr. Mei Lan-fang takes the part of the youthful but courageous heroine.

Hung Hsien's Theft of the Box
(紅線盜盒)

The play *Hung Hsien's Theft of the Box*, which finds its theme in the records of heroic deeds in the T'ang dynasty (618-906), deals with a brave and high-minded maiden, Hung Hsien, who could travel through the air at an incredible speed, leaving no trace of her presence at her stopping places. How she intimidated a wicked feudal lord and brought him to lead a better life, and how she used her sword with almost supernatural dexterity make a breathless tale.

The Goddess Shang Yüan
(上元夫人)
1920

The Goddess Shang Yüan is an operatic dance drama, which is presented annually on the occasion of the Lantern Festival. The tale is concerned with Han Wu-ti, the renowned monarch of the Han dynasty (206 B.C. to A.D. 221), who sought the secret of immortality.

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Mr. Mei Lan-fang as the White Damsel in a Play
Based on the Legend of the White Snake

Hsi Shih, the Patriotic Beauty

Lien Ching-fêng as She Appears in a Marine Battle

The Goddess of the River Lo

The King's Parting with His Favourite

(霸王別姬)

This historical tragedy vividly reveals the last moments of the mighty warrior, Hang Yü (*circa* 200 B.C.). His successive defeats and reluctant parting with his beautiful favourite, the Lady Yü, are unfolded in scenes of dramatic intensity. The sorrowful songs and a sword dance by the heroine are but two of the features which have won for the play one of the greatest ovations in the history of the Chinese theatre.

The Patriotic Beauty Hsi Shih

(西施)

1921

Hsi Shih is the beauty who, by her heroic sacrifice, has won an everlasting place in the hearts and imagination of her fellow-countrymen. The setting in the Spring and Autumn period (722-484 B.C.) is concerned with the struggle between the Wu-Yüeh kingdoms.

Beauty in a Fisherman's Net

(廉錦楓)

1922

Lien Ching-fêng is a filial daughter, who searches the depths of the ocean for sea-cucumbers, an indispensable ingredient for her mother's medicine. There is an interesting marine battle in which the girl slays a gigantic bivalve taking from the creature a huge pearl.

The Goddess of the River Lo

(洛神)

This play, rich in literary quality, is an operatic dance drama. The essay *Lo Shên Fu*, which is the basis of the work, was written by Ts'ao Chih,

the son of the Ts'ao Ts'ao of Three Kingdoms' fame (221-265). Following the original both in letter and in spirit, the drama shows a river goddess, who in reality is the shade of the writer's parted beloved. In a dream, Ts'ao Chih beholds the divine apparition on the banks of the River Lo dancing, beckoning, and revealing her love for him. The play is done in a tragic vein, and is, on the whole, as the Chinese puts it, " light as air, eluding all verbal description." The entire spirit of the delicate essay lives in Mr. Mei's dancing and singing; hence many critics consider the production the best of the literary-operatic type.

Yang Kuei-fei
(太眞外傳)
1925

Yang Kuei-fei, also known as *T'ai Ch'ên Wai Chuan*, is an historical drama in four acts, which brings to life the most artful of China's four great beauties, Yang Kuei-fei, favourite of the licentious monarch, T'ang Ming Huang. It required two years of preparation on the part of Mr. Mei and his associates to complete the series.

Yang Kuei-fei, the Most Artful of China's Four Greatest Beauties, as Portrayed by Mr. Mei

REPRESENTATIVE DRAMAS OF MR. MEI

CHAPTER V

REPRESENTATIVE DRAMAS OF MR. MEI

LIKE the great singers of the Metropolitan Opera House, foremost Chinese actors in Peking appear about three times a week. Mr. Mei Lan-fang usually offers his plays at the week-end, alternating between the Kaiming and Chungho theatres. When filling an engagement in Shanghai, however, which he visits every two years or less, the actor appears on forty successive evenings and on Sunday afternoons.

Because, on each night in a Chinese playhouse, it is the custom to present a new programme, consisting of six to ten short dramas, it is clear that the star, whose play comes at the end of the long evening, must have a large and varied repertoire. Mr. Mei has at his command a few hundred plays. During the period of February 16 to April 7, 1929, in Peking, only two plays were repeated. One was produced three times, for it dealt with the Lantern Festival; the other was shown twice—once on the professional stage and once as a benefit performance. On the other hand, the actor has appeared in two short dramas on the same evening.

Moving from one theatre to another to act for a few days presents many practical problems, because in Peking no two modern-style playhouses are of the same dimensions, and the acoustical quality of the building may, by a noticeable degree, increase or decrease the volume of the voice.

While the Chinese public have at least one preference in common, that is, their love for song, yet, in other matters their divergence of taste makes many demands on the actor who would hold his public for any length of time. Quality and variety must mark his acting. One group of the public insists on the adherence to old classic convention with painstaking care; another insists on modified works, which, while having more action and certain slight changes, do not lose sight of the old conventions; a third ultra-modern group champions spoken drama, after the manner of the plays of America and Europe, and would be glad to have the old operatic drama done away with. From this state of affairs, it is clear that a Chinese actor has much with which to occupy his mind if he is to please most of the audience much of the time!

One of the gifts of Mr. Mei Lan-fang is that he knows his public and the times. Although he began his modest career at the early age of eleven, he enhanced his native ability by intensive study of all the technical and conventional material available in his field. Beginning with the *ch'ing-i*, or conventional type for a sedate and virtuous woman, for which the best of singing is demanded, the actor gradually acquired another style, that of the *hua-tan*, or the type for a vivacious woman or mischievous maidservant, which requires skilful acting rather than singing. Mr. Mei also studied the ways of real women and added to his interpretations an individuality entirely his own.

In the early years of the Republic, when revolution affected not only the political but the artistic and mental life of the nation as well, Mr. Mei introduced the ancient costume drama. Other distinctive types of plays to be found in the actor's repertoire are those containing rôles for military maidens, for heroines who sing to the accompaniment of the flute, and for the immortal beauties from the love novel *Hung Lou Mêng*.

First will be considered a *ch'ing-i*, or operatic rôle, a supreme test of an actor's mettle, because the exacting nature of the requirements precludes all possibility of becoming a star except for those who are truly gifted and who labour assiduously to make the most of their natural talent.

The long drama *Yu Chou Fêng*, which may be retitled in English *The Fateful Sword*, and which has been revived in its length of forty scenes by Mr. Mei, contains the famous " mad scene," which is often sung as a separate playlet. Singing and acting of a most difficult nature characterize the scene in question. Here are stressed the fact that the Chinese woman of old thought it a breach of virtue to wed the second time and the fact that she would struggle to protect what she believed her chastity.

From the long drama, only the episodes dealing with Chao Nü's feigning madness will be chosen to illustrate the art of an impersonator in a *ch'ing-i*, or operatic rôle. Mr. Mei Lan-fang portrays the heroine, Chao Nü, who, after her marriage to K'uang Fu and the decline of the K'uang family, had no choice except to return to her unscrupulous father, Chao Kao. The latter was a favourite of the lascivious Ch'in Êrh Shih, the son of the renowned builder of the Great Wall, Ch'in Shih Huang-ti (221-209 B.C.).

When Êrh Shih visits Chao Kao and espies the latter's pretty daughter, he offers to receive the young woman into his palace. While the father is eager to effect so profitable a match, the daughter, on the other hand, holds firmly to the old-time belief that a woman should remain true to her husband. She is at her wit's end as to how to ward off her insistent parent, when the dumb maidservant motions that she should feign madness.

Having disarranged her clothing and allowed her hair to become dishevelled, Chao Nü sings the full, high notes which are descriptive of her state of mind. When she sinks on the floor, the action is enhanced by the graceful flourish of her sleeves, which are wrapped tightly about her wrists. In Peking drama, beauty of action may be added to plain movement in order to please the eye. Chao Kao is in the end convinced of his daughter's insanity when she pursues him, calling him her son and later making amorous advances.

But the heroine, who is determined to maintain what in her eyes is her chastity, has yet to prove to the emperor that she is insane. Preceded by her

father, she swaggers like a courtier to the Dragon Throne. Gestures and flourishes of the sleeves heighten the dramatic effect as she reviles the emperor. She remains defiant even when her father sings, " Stop, it will cost you your head ! " Leaning on the shoulder of her faithful maidservant, Chao Nü laughs wildly into the faces of the four guards who point their gleaming weapons at her defenceless body. Believing the beauty truly mad, Êrh Shih orders her home.

In this part of the play may be seen the following characteristics of Peking drama : (1) The great stress placed on a woman's protecting her virtue—a theme which occurs in innumerable plays; (2) singing—to express the emotions when they have been raised to a certain pitch; (3) the flourish of sleeves—to enhance an ordinary action or any other graceful movement to afford the eyes additional pleasure.

The acting of Chao Nü may be realistic in suggestion only, because grace must be included in the general action. Singing, too, heightens the effect. Thus it is that Mr. Mei Lan-fang is ideal in the part. He can make one feel keenly the helplessness of a young woman who struggles against what seems to be overwhelming odds. At the same time, the spectator may enjoy the conventional grace of action, coupled with singing—features which are distinctive characteristics of the Peking School.

The *hua-tan*, or type for a vivacious woman, which stresses acting, was exemplified in the playlet of Chapter III by the rôle of Yang Kuei-fei, the beauty who, under the influence of wine, which she had taken to drown her jealousy, did a series of tottering dances. Another well-defined *hua-tan* character which is frequently seen is that restless bit of sprightliness, the mischievous maidservant. She comes on the stage, her face bright with a smile, while her fingers never rest from toying with her sash or her handkerchief. Her tight-fitting costume, usually consisting of a long vest tied at the waist with a sash, short sleeves, and trousers, allows her the freedom of movement denied the

sedate and properly behaved *ch'ing-i*, who wears knee-length coats, from which her full sleeves hang almost to the ground. In an old drama from the Yüan dynasty, Mr. Mei impersonates the naughty maidservant Ch'un Hsiang, who plays pranks on her aged teacher; again, he may impersonate an equally active maidservant who makes possible the union of two youthful lovers.

While Mr. Mei continues to act plays which are strictly operatic or histrionic, he has ingeniously combined the two to create a more versatile type, which he has further enhanced by adding the dance and ancient costume. The result is the dazzling figure known as the ancient costume impersonator, who displays to excellent advantage the incomparable grace that is Mei's. It is this type of drama that appeals to the average foreigner.

Of this school of plays, the drama that is without doubt linked most closely with Mei, both in name and in a pictorial sense, is *T'ien Nü San Hua*, or *The Heavenly Maiden Scattering Flowers*, because the likeness of the actor, attired in the flowing garments of the T'ien Nü in an attitude of prayer, may be seen on silver plaques, porcelain, tapestry, glass, photographs, etc. The story of this drama, Buddhistic in conception, is concerned with Tathagata, the Buddhistic world saviour, who sent the Heavenly Maiden to dance and to scatter flowers when the devout Wei-mo-ch'i discoursed on the laws and the sutras to his disciples. To the sleeves of those who had overcome all carnal desire, the petals did not cling, but to the sleeves of those who still loved the world, the petals adhered tenaciously. On the latter, Wei-mo-ch'i would smile, saying, "You have not yet cut yourselves off from the world." From the foregoing incident is taken the theme and title of the play.

In the opening scene appear a bewildering array of Buddhistic dignitaries, among them being the four "cloud-sprites," the eighteen lo-hans, the Bodhisattva Manjusri, Tathagata, and others. Tathagata sings and declaims passages rich in Buddhistic teaching and then recites as follows: "I am he of the Western Heaven, Sakyamuni. To-day, since Wei-mo-ch'i is ill, I wish

to order my followers to inquire after the good man's condition. . . . Manjusri!" Accordingly, Manjusri and other deities proceed to the earth.

The next scene discloses eight female attendants, two of whom carry tasselled standards, and two, long-handled fans. With this impressive retinue as a background, Mr. Mei Lan-fang makes his triumphal entrance as the Heavenly Maiden. The coat, usually of a brilliant, imperial yellow, the skirt, of a dazzling silver white, and the high picturesque coiffure make a handsome ensemble. The T'ien Nü waves a duster of horse-hair, an emblem of celestial beings, recluses, monks, etc.

After singing, the Heavenly Maiden proceeds, in the fashion peculiar to the Chinese stage, to recite: "I am T'ien Nü. I have received my commission from the Heavenly Father, who has ordered me to care for the flowers in the Kingdom of Fragrance. . . . When the disciples discourse on the sutras and the law, I scatter down flower petals to test their spiritual attainment."

Having received the celestial command to proceed to the abode of Wei-mo-ch'i, the maiden sings as she floats through the clouds. The present scene, called *The Dance in the Clouds*, is set to music, accompanied by the *hu-ch'in*, or so-called Chinese violin. While waving the silken streamers, T'ien Nü moves gracefully from side to side and stoops with that delicate refinement which is typical of Chinese terpsichorean art. As the song increases in tempo, the streamers are waved about until they create a vision of fluttering colour. In the finale the Heavenly Maiden kneels in a posture of prayer that is famous throughout the length and breadth of the country.

A vivid and mundane contrast to the ethereal scene just completed is the lively conversation that takes place between four youthful monks. One of them, who had been presented to the monastery when he was still an infant, argued against the others, who pointed out the merits of the religion.

In the meantime, Manjusri and his companions have arrived and inquired after Wei-mo-ch'i's health.

Mr. Mei Lan-fang as the Heavenly Maiden in an Attitude of Prayer which Is Famous in All China

Chen Miao-ch'ang, the Heroine of *The Jade Hairpin*

The last scene discloses T'ien Nü on a cloud-terrace, where she sings a poem in praise of flowers. The long aria, which is accompanied by a dance, is an example of old *k'un-ch'ü*, a style characterized by the quiet notes of the flute. Mr. Mei has for some years been active in reviving public interest in the *k'un-ch'ü;* and, in order to do so, he often interpolates a *k'un* song in modern plays or presents a drama sung entirely in that manner.

The dance, done with a female attendant, is accompanied by the exquisitely soft notes of the flute and the *shêng*, the latter being a kind of ancient reed-organ. The music is a perfect setting for the Heavenly Maiden as she postures with long silken streamers and scatters flowers. Thus, when Wei-mo-ch'i bids his divine visitors farewell, the play ends in a veritable riot of colour.

The foregoing drama, with its dances, which are done to the accompaniment of song, and which are characterized by the equal stressing of acting and singing, is typical of the school Mr. Mei Lan-fang has created. The striking costumes and coiffures are also distinctive features of this group of plays.

An older style of play known as the *k'un-ch'ü*, and sung to the accompaniment of an orchestra in which the notes of the flute dominate, is *Yü Tsan Chi*, or *The Jade Hairpin*. The pretty nun, Chen Miao-ch'ang, because of the unsettled conditions in the country, lives with her aunt, who is the abbess of a monastery. The elder woman's nephew, Pan Pi-chêng, who is visiting her, has also made the monastery his temporary living quarters.

On a moonlight night the lovers carry on a flirtation by playing the *ch'in* and singing. The heroine proceeds to move her fingers with delicate grace over the strings of the instrument. Meanwhile, the youth purposely brushes against Miao-ch'ang, who, while pretending to be highly indignant, confesses to the audience in an aside, "And think you I have no desire for love?" Although her eyes are full of affection, the girl withdraws, closing the door. The following question asked by the heroine is typical of an old-fashioned maiden.

"With the brilliant moon shining on my lonely bed-curtains, who knows how many tears I shed?"

Pan is afflicted with love on the one hand and with a cold caused by the night air on the other. His mischievous manservant, Chin An, hints broadly at his master's infatuation. When the abbess and the girl come to inquire after Pan, the latter, as soon as he gazes upon the pretty nun, experiences immediate recovery!

On another evening, the youth tiptoes to the girl's room and pilfers from under her arm a poem in which she reveals her love. When Miao-ch'ang awakens and threatens to call her aunt, Pan triumphantly flaunts the poem, which he in turn threatens to show her aunt. He smiles, saying, "You, a nun, ought not to compose a poem to tempt a good youth like me!" To this, the girl cleverly retorts that she has written a Buddhist essay! When Pan playfully questions the truth of her statement, the lovers sing that their love will endure for ever.

The servant, Chin An, enters in the chilly dawn. After attracting the attention of the lovers by meowing like a cat, he demands forfeits of each before he will promise to keep their secret. When they are alone, Pan assures the sceptical servant, not without a touch of savage vehemence, that he has had nothing beyond a cup of tea in the charming young woman's room.

Another conventional type which Mr. Mei acts is the *wu-tan*, or military impersonator, who often is a warrioress or a woman skilled in gymnastics. *Hung-i Kuan*, or *Rainbow Pass*, which holds for the Chinese public a perennial charm, is a drama that has for its heroine a widow who goes forth to battle in order to avenge her husband's death.

The story follows:

Towards the end of the seventh century China was ground under the heels of contending armies of war-lords, from whom gradually arose powerful leaders. These forced most of the country to bow to their yoke; but they

failed to conquer Rainbow Pass, which was guarded by the valiant Hsin Wen-li. When all efforts failed, the expert bowman, Wang Pai-tang, was sent to take the impregnable stronghold. Wang let fly the fatal shaft which ended Hsin's life. The pretty and youthful widow of the deceased mourned for her mate, swearing that she would slice the murderer bit by bit.

The widow, Tung-fang, who was a courageous fighter, adept horsewoman, and expert at wielding weapons, attacked the enemy forces with such spirit that the latter were in danger of being routed.

When the victorious woman met Wang Pai-tang face to face, the armies held their breath, because they well knew that one of the two would lie in the dust before the other left the field.

"Why did you kill my husband?" demanded Tung-fang, her hand firmly gripping her spear. As they came to close quarters and the woman caught a first glimpse of her enemy's handsome face, she became madly infatuated. Here certain well-defined characteristics of Chinese drama are to be seen. The widow, impersonated by Mr. Mei Lan-fang, raises her spear to strike Wang Pai-tang, who usually is portrayed by Mr. Chiang Miao-hsiang. Although it is understood that the two opponents are engaged in deadly combat, the actors, while displaying their gymnastic skill, also add much grace to every movement in order to form rhythmic pictures. The music and the songs serve to heighten the effect; each time the end of a vocal measure is reached, the man and the woman come to a complete pause, to create a tableau which describes Tung-fang's flirtation with her handsome enemy. Wang rejects her advances with a vivid "Peh!" After several songs and much posturing and graceful movements, which are supposed to mark the passing of the fray, the man defeats his fair opponent. She, however, resourceful to the last, has Wang taken prisoner by her men.

The foregoing, which is the first part of the drama, illustrates the action of a *wu-tan*.

Apart from the celestial and royal maidens created by Mr. Mei Lan-fang, the actor has produced another group of plays with which both the Chinese and some foreigners link his name. The dramas in question are those based on the literary masterpiece, of which Dr. Herbert A. Giles says in his book, *A History of Chinese Literature:* "The *Hung Lou Mêng*, conveniently but erroneously known as *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, is the work referred to already as touching the highest point of development reached by the Chinese novel. It was probably composed during the latter half of the seventeenth century. The name of its author is unknown. . . . No fewer than four hundred personages of more or less importance are introduced first and last into the story, the plot of which is worked out with a completeness worthy of Fielding, while the delineation of character—of so many characters—recalls the best efforts of the greatest novelists of the West."[1]

Of the dramas based on the *Hung Lou Mêng*, two will be considered: an early and still popular work in which Mr. Mei impersonates Tai-yü, an aristocratic beauty of strange but exquisite moods; and a recent production in which the actor plays the part of Hsi-jên, a vivacious maidservant.

Tai-yü Burying the Blossoms, produced in 1915, belongs to the ancient costume group. While there is no dancing, yet there are the graceful postures Tai-yü assumes while burying flowers.

The story in brief follows:

Tai-yü, whose parents have died, is sent to live with her wealthy grandmother. Being a creature of moods, she sees in the faded, bruised, and neglected petals a picture of herself, lonely, motherless, and destined to an early death. In a corner of the secluded garden she has had a mound built where she can take her hoe and bury the petals.

[1] Giles, Herbert A., *A History of Chinese Literature*, p. 355.

In this gigantic task Mr. Mei can accomplish much; for, as may be seen in the discussion of the play to follow, the actor can invest his every action with such charm that any changes he may introduce will have a favourable opportunity of being received by his sympathetic audiences. This, however, is a side issue, for the main consideration here is the art of the actor. It has merely been pointed out that the Chinese drama is changing; that there is now in progress a period of transition.

Some lovers of the old may object to the introduction of new elements; but it should be made clear that Mr. Mei can act pure classical drama, that he is a master of the ancient costume type, and that he does exceptionally well in transitional dramas like the one which is about to be considered. It is when an artist indiscriminately mixes the old with the new that the situation is to be regretted. If an actor is master of the old and the transitional, and is able to interpret each school in its own purity, then he is more than justified in producing original plays combining the best elements of both types.

Such a drama is *Charming Hsi-jên*, in which Mr. Mei Lan-fang impersonates a vivacious, quarrelsome, stubborn, but attractive maidservant. The verbal battles of youth, with the patching up of wounded pride; the sudden anger, laughter, and tears of pretty Hsi-jên; the playful resistance of her handsome young master, Pao-yü—these form the basis of the play, many passages of which are quoted verbatim from Chapter XXI of the novel.

Hsi-jên, feeling slighted because Pao-yü has spent too much time with his cousin Tai-yü, wreaks her temper on the youth. The latter, on the other hand, proves to the irate beauty that in matters of temper he is every bit her match.

While singing, Hsi-jên sits embroidering, as is the case in Peking drama, with an imaginary needle and thread. The girl pretends that she is

asleep. When Pao-yü enters and remarks that Hsi-jên is lazy, the latter at once opens her eyes and exclaims angrily, pouting as she tosses her long sleeve toward him, "Lazy! then I'll wait on your grandmother."

When Pao-yü in his turn pretends to sleep, Hsi-jên mischievously addresses an imaginary visitor, with the result that the youth gets up to see who has come. Hsi-jên gives him a triumphant smile.

Spectators find much amusement in these quarrels. Hsi-jên, who knows that she has been in the wrong, will not admit her fault to Pao-yü, although she confides to the audience in an aside that she is not in the right!

Pao-yü then falls asleep, having done his utmost to tease the enraged beauty. Then Hsi-jên, after arranging a coat over him, stretches herself wearily on the same lounge, also eventually falling asleep. The youth, on awaking, shows an equal solicitude by placing the coat on his fair companion, who ungratefully tosses the garment aside. With the passing of the night, Pao-yü, who has forgotten their difference, does his best to mend matters. The pair kneel as they become friends again.

While an attempt has been made to describe representative dramas as acted by Mr. Mei, yet one must see the plays in order to enjoy fully both their content and the art of the actor. Not only has Mr. Mei Lan-fang endeared himself to the hearts of his own countrymen, but he has been a source of unending pleasure to foreigners. It requires a rare artistry to entertain people of alien lands when there are the barriers of language and stage convention, which differ so widely from those found elsewhere. But as is true of art the world over, the incomparable grace and talent of the artist surmount all handicaps.

THE FOREIGN FRIENDS OF MR. MEI LAN-FANG

Miss Ruth St. Denis, Mr. Mei Lan-fang, and Mr. Ted Shawn in an Old Chinese Garden

Miss Ruth St. Denis, Mr. Mei Lan-fang, and Mr. Ted Shawn
as They Appeared in a Joint Programme in Peking

CHAPTER VI

THE FOREIGN FRIENDS OF MR. MEI LAN-FANG

THE brilliant art and the gentle personality of Mr. Mei Lan-fang have won for him admirers and friends from the four corners of the earth. While it is a regrettable fact that few, if any, English newspaper cuttings concerning Mr. Mei have been kept on file, and that many of the names of his distinguished foreign visitors have been changed to Chinese phonetics, which make a correct decipherment an impossibility, yet it has been possible to recover some of the names of well-known visitors.

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore

When the great Tagore arrived in Peking, the first request he made of his host was that he be taken to see a drama by the Chinese actor. Messrs. Hsiung Hsi-ling, the first premier of the Republic, Lin Chang-min, and the late Liang Chi-chao arranged a meeting for the two well-known men.

On the day following, May 19, 1924, the Indian poet attended Mr. Mei's performance of *The Goddess of the River Lo.* At the conclusion of the operatic dance drama, Tagore remarked: "I have, in the past, not been favourably disposed towards the over-abundant use of scenery in the theatre. It has often occurred to me that if there were but a plain purple curtain and

no other stage setting, the theme of the play and the beauty of the actors would so stand out as to render all property-encumbered drama insignificant. This was a fancy I had entertained for some years; but now that I have beheld the drama which has brought my fond fancy into reality, I confess that Mr. Mei Lan-fang has won my deep admiration. . . . As for the actor's stage presence and make-up, one would never doubt for a moment that he was a beautiful woman. . . . Suspense, variety, and other essential qualities were well handled, the finale being both charming and impressive to look upon."

The poet presented the actor with a fan.

Sir Claude Severn

In 1922 Mr. Mei arrived in Hongkong with a letter of introduction from the British Legation in Peking to the Acting Governor of Hongkong, Sir Claude Severn. The latter expressed his desire that the Chinese actor should tour England, adding that there was at the time a group of sixty people who were presenting in London old Chinese dramas.

The Crown Prince and Princess of Sweden

While visiting Japan, the Crown Prince of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, and the Crown Princess, Louise Alexandra, had heard so much of Mr. Mei's art that, on their arrival in Peking, they informed the Legation that they desired to attend a performance by the Chinese actor. Suitable arrangements were at once made for an informal gathering, the actor being requested to display his collection of rare fans, seals, jades, and other antiques.

It was on an evening of October in 1926; the corridors of the Mei gardens were hung with coloured gauze lanterns, and the pathways were banked with brilliant chrysanthemums. At 10 p.m. the two dramas *The Jade Hairpin* and *The King's Parting with His Favourite*, for which the Department of Foreign Affairs had prepared English programmes, were enacted.

The Crown Princess Louise Alexandra Seated Between the Crown Prince of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, and Mr. Mei

Mrs. M

Mrs. Mei Lan-fang, Mme. Galli-Curci, and the Actor in the Mei Gardens

ctor in the Mei Gardens

While Mr. Mei was applying his make-up, his guests remained in the reception room examining the display of antiques. The Crown Prince and Princess were delighted with an old yellow seal, weighing about two ounces. They had been seeking, for some days, just such a seal but had been unsuccessful. When the actor returned and discovered his royal guests' fascination for the tiny treasure, he took the seal in both his hands and with oriental courtesy proffered it to his visitors. The Crown Princess thanked her host, assuring him that on her return to her native land she would carefully treasure and hand down the seal to her sons as an heirloom and a perpetual reminder of the actor's hospitality.

The royal couple presented Mr. Mei with their autographed portraits.

During the interval between the two dramas, Messrs. Wang Shao-ching, Hsu Lan-yuan, Yang Pao-chung, Kao Lien-kuei, and Huo Wen-yuan formed a stringed quintet, playing *Willows Swaying Gold* and *The Mei Blossom Suite*.

Madame Galli-Curci

When the well-known diva visited Peking, she called on Mr. Mei Lan-fang, who had, on the night before, attended the singer's concert in the Hotel de Pekin. The operatic star was charmed by the dresses worn by the Chinese women present and took great delight in being photographed and filmed with the oriental beauties by her husband, Mr. Homer Samuels.

Mr. Rudolph Friml

When the composer of *Rose Marie* and other musical-comedy successes was in Peking with the round-the-world tourists on the *Empress of Australia*, he and some one hundred and twenty fellow-travellers attended the play the Chinese actor presents annually in commemoration of the Lantern Festival. It is said that Mr. Friml was enchanted with the groupings and dances.

Arrangements were made for composer and actor to meet in the latter's home. Mr. Friml, hoping that the artist would go to New York, explained

to the latter something of the American taste and illustrated how the finales of his own musical productions were staged. The Chinese actor took great delight in hearing the New York composer play several of his own compositions, and asked his guest many questions concerning the theatrical situation in the eastern part of the United States. Since Mr. Friml has collaborated with such well-known producers as Mr. Ziegfeld, he was in a position to give much information of a direct and professional nature.

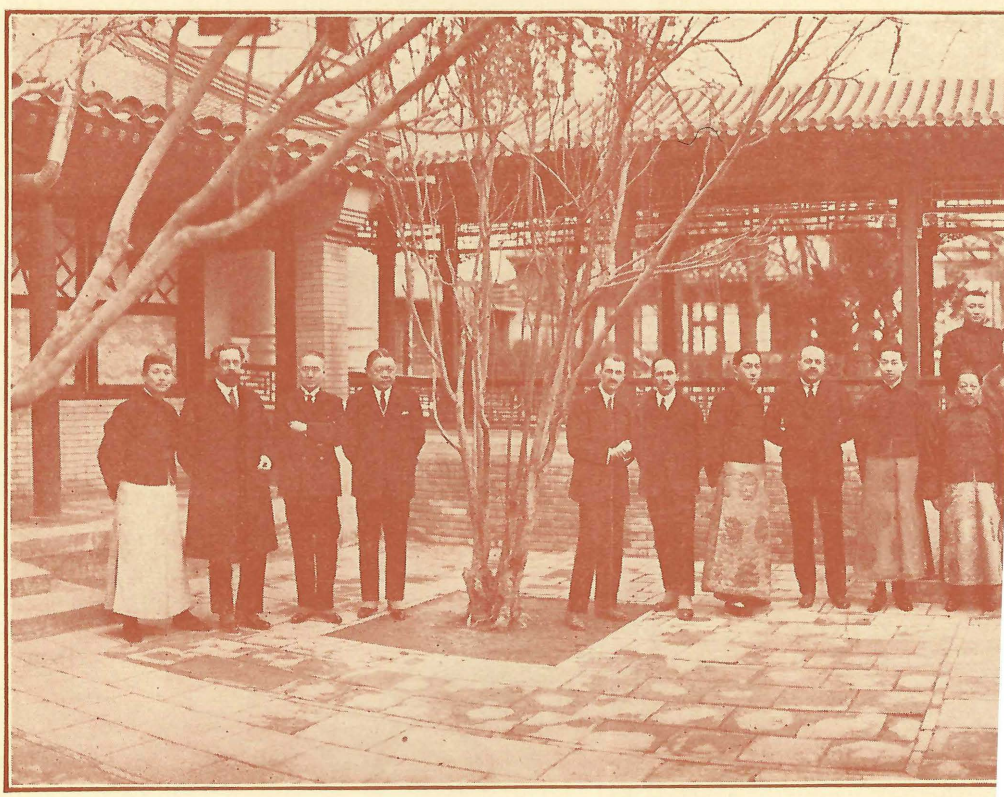
Mr. Frank Hedges

The American journalist and correspondent for the *Japan Advertiser*, Mr. Frank Hedges, passed through Shanghai on his way to India, whence he planned to return to the United States via Europe. As Mr. Mei at the time was filling an engagement in Shanghai, the two men met to discuss oriental drama. Apart from their agreeing that the old Chinese drama should be preserved intact, they discussed a variety of subjects.

Said Mr. Hedges: "Although I have lived in Japan for many years and have been a devotee of the theatre, yet it was when I attended your performances that I immediately understood the admirable qualities of Chinese theatrical art. . . . I should like to know whether you, Mr. Mei, have found helpful suggestions in Japanese drama."

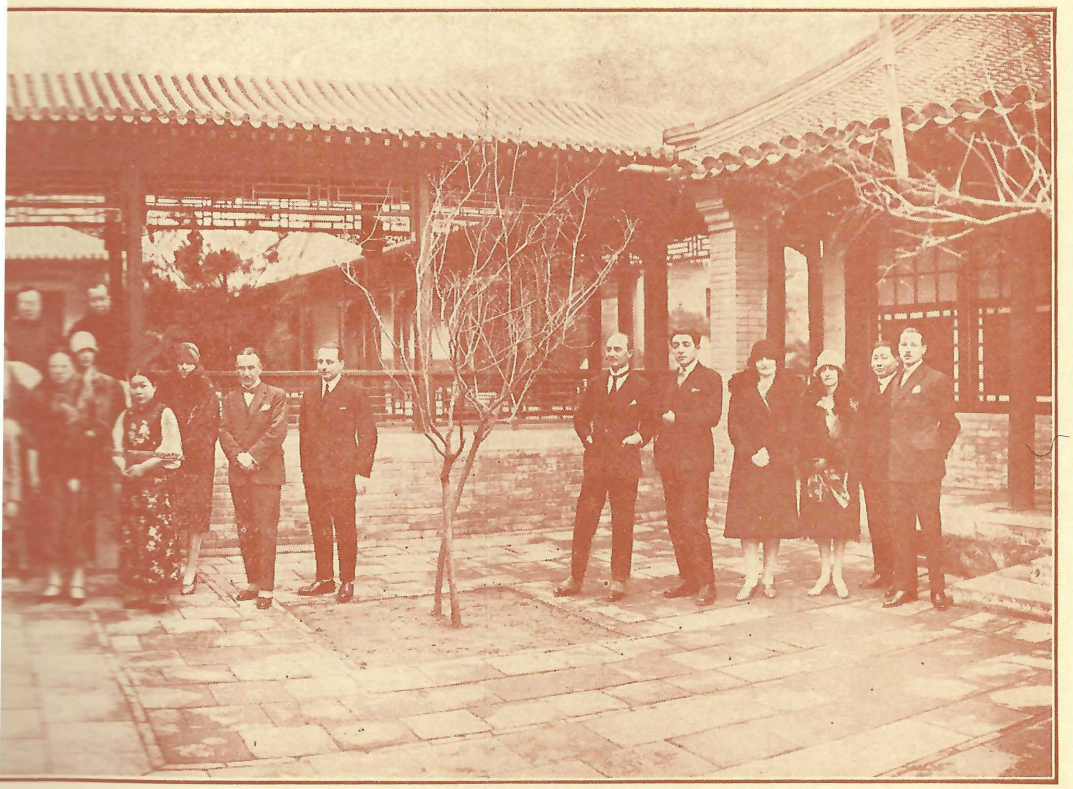
To this Mr. Mei replied in his characteristic manner, giving full credit to a rival art, as follows: "The pantomime of Japanese drama is excellent; and in realistic scenery, Japan is far ahead of China. I may, in the future, make use of these good points on the Chinese stage."

Continued the journalist: "Although the Chinese may not be so far advanced as the Japanese in stage settings, yet, when the scenery is too imposing, audiences may devote their attention to them rather than to the actors. That, then, might easily prove a disadvantage."



Mr. J. Hormon, Mr. Chayet, Mr. Rhein, Count de Martel, Countess de Martel, Mme. Cosme, Mm

齊如山　鐸爾孟　彬敬齋　戴公使　沙業　韓德威　存樾坪　馬公使　梅畹華　胡惟德　李釋戡



t, Mme. Duva, Mr. Cosme, Mr. Duva, Mr. Gimel, Mr. Gandon, Mme. Rhein, Mme. Gimel, Mr. Ostrorog

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盧阿夫人
戴夫人
盧阿
高代公使
康棟
任邁爾上尉
韓德威夫人
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The Actor Between Sir Miles Lampson and Lady Lampson with a Group

ɔson and Lady Lampson with a Group of International Friends in the Mei Gardens

Mr. Mei Lan-fang with Mrs. MacMurray to his left and Mme. Vittorio Cerruti, wife of the I
MacMurray is sixth from the right. From the left, Messrs. Chi Jushan,

, wife of the Former Italian Minister, to his right. The American Minister, Mr. John Van A.
Chi Jushan, Tao I-shing, and Don Justo Garrido y Cineros, Spanish Minister

The actor asked : " Since I have long entertained the wish to tour the chief cities of Europe and America in order to study the occidental stage, would you be so kind as to offer suggestions to that end ? "

Mr. Hedges replied with much enthusiasm : " I will do my utmost to help you both in Washington and in New York City. . . . Your going to the United States, however, exposes you to one great danger." When the amazed actor asked what was the danger, his visitor smiled, saying : " It is simply my fear that when you see the drama of other countries, you will introduce foreign elements into Chinese theatrical art. Your stately dancing and exquisite singing are worthy representatives of the Chinese stage and would lose their purity if you were to allow foreign ideas to enter your field. You must guard against this danger."

Receiving the advice in a sympathetic mood, Mr. Mei said, by way of assurance : " Your words are very good. I will, indeed, keep them in my heart and strive to preserve the purity of my art."

Baron Okura

Mr. Mei Lan-fang's appearance in Japan had such far-reaching results in literary and artistic circles that the millionaire business magnate and director of the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo, Baron Kihachiro Okura, wrote to the Chinese actor that all classes of the Japanese public welcomed his plays, that Nipponese artists had new standards by which to judge their own work, and that the renowned actress Miss Kakuko Murata was about to present his play, *The Heavenly Maiden Scattering Flowers.*

The Foremost Japanese Artists, Miss Murata and Mr. Morita

The foremost dramatic artists of Japan who appear exclusively in the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo are Miss Murata and Mr. Morita. During his two engagements in that country, Mr. Mei appeared in the same theatre and contracted a warm friendship for his Japanese fellow-actors.

The actor Mr. Sadanji Ichikawa, recalling the Chinese actor's two visits to Japan, and remembering that Japanese actors had not yet toured China, organized a company to visit Peking. Unfortunately, civil war broke out, cutting off communication between Peking and Tientsin, with the result that the entire company was obliged to return to Japan.

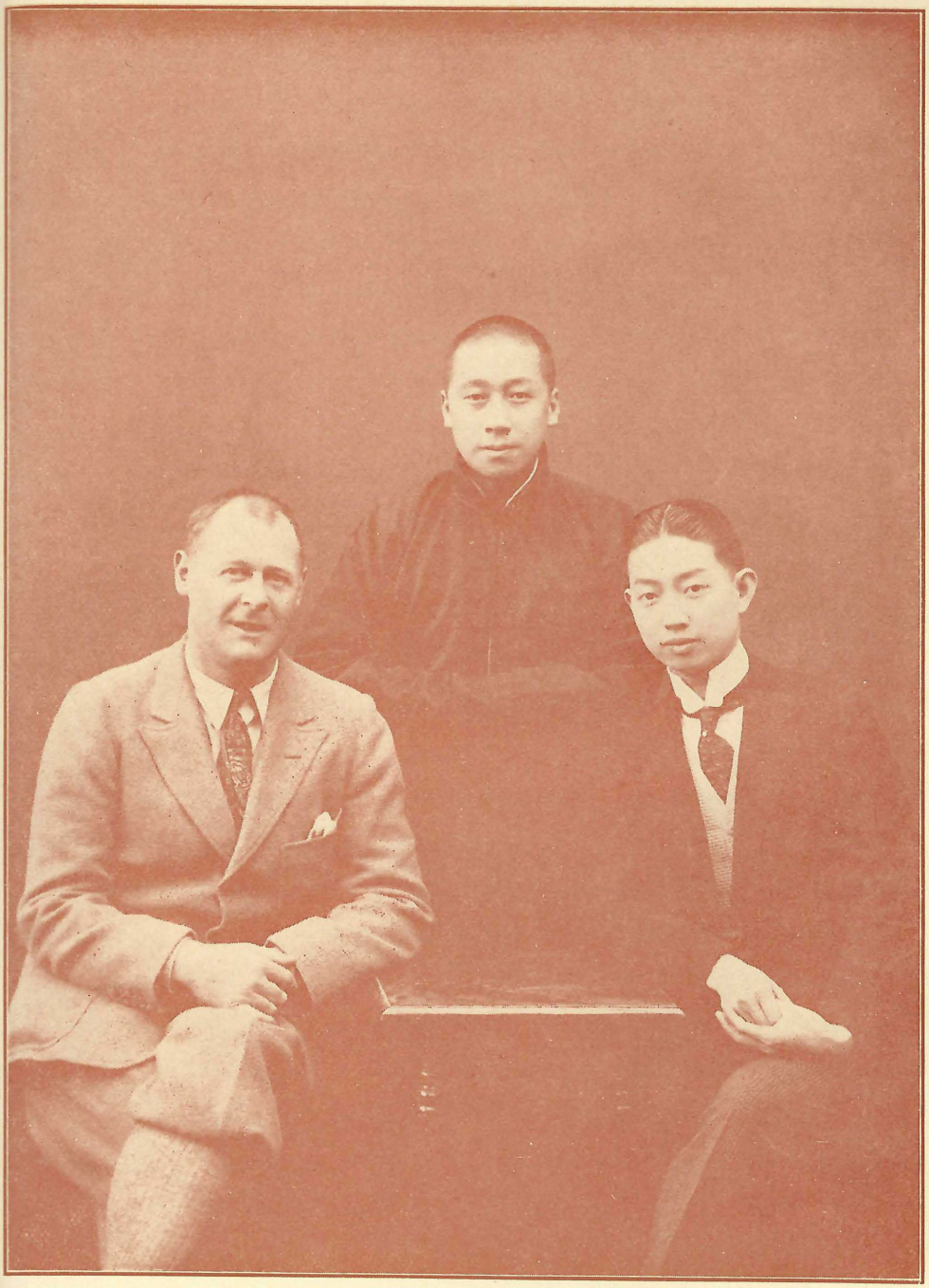
Later, Mr. S. Yamamori, manager of the Tokyo Theatre, assembled a company of actors to tour China, securing the services of Miss Murata and Mr. Morita. The two Japanese celebrities and Mr. Mei Lan-fang offered representative works in the Kaiming Theatre.

At a tea given in honour of the visiting Japanese, Mr. Mei read an address of welcome, emphasizing that Chinese and Japanese art had much in common. He concluded as follows: "Thus, on this visit of our Japanese fellow-artists, we firmly believe that the Chinese public will understand true Japanese dramatic art and will derive from it great inspiration. To this end, we welcome our visiting friends and feel certain that their sojourn will be a glorious success." Applause followed, "loud like thunder."

Replying on behalf of the Japanese actors, Mr. Morita spoke as follows: "It was on Mr. Mei's first visit to our country that we, for the first time, really understood Chinese dramatic art. . . . At that time, the people of Japan were loud in their praise and servile in their imitation of European and American plays, as if, apart from these works, there were no other means to fame. Some of us persisted in the belief that oriental art possessed intrinsic values of its own and that it was altogether unnecessary to imitate the occident. We, therefore, have come to your great country for the express purpose of perpetuating the art of the East and of making the world recognize the true worth of the Chinese and the Japanese drama. A duty of such magnitude must be shouldered by the artistic circles of both countries. You, Mr. Mei, are the foremost actor of China and are recognized the world over as a protagonist of the best in oriental art. Feeling highly honoured to be your guests, we raise our cups to wish you long life."

Mr. Mei Lan-fang ; Dr. William H. Kilpatrick ; Dr. Chang Pe-ling, President

ıam H. Kilpatrick ; Dr. Chang Pe-ling, President of Nankai University ; Professor Chi Jushan



Sir Robert Lorraine, Mr. Shen Kun-san, and Mr. Mei Lan-fang

On the third day, prominent Chinese were hosts at a tiffin given in the Hotel de Pekin. Mr. K. K. Feng, president of the Bank of China, delivered an address. By way of conclusion, Mr. Feng said: "While the international friendship of China and Japan leaves much to be desired, yet to-day this happy gathering, presided over by Messrs. Morita and Mei, is ample proof of a long-wished-for beginning of perfect understanding. Hereafter, the peoples of the two countries, as well as their diplomatic leaders, should use this happy event as a model for the improvement of international relationship."

The next morning, Mr. Mei went in person to the railway station in order to see his guests off. Miss Murata, Mr. Morita, and the entire party wore the Chinese garments that Mr. Mei Lan-fang had presented to them.

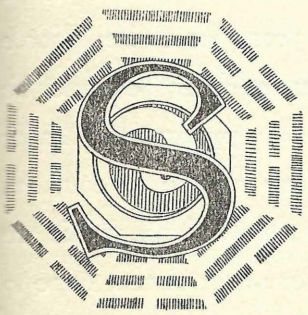
At the present writing, a few more names of well-known guests are available. The late General Leonard Wood and the former Secretary of the U. S. Navy Denby, have enjoyed plays by the actor. Mr. Somerset Maugham may be mentioned among the literary men who have visited Mr. Mei. Professional artists of the occident, such as Miss Ruth St. Denis and Mr. Ted Shawn, of the O'Denishawn Dancers, have passed many happy hours exchanging ideas with the Chinese actor.

By way of conclusion, it will bear repeating how deeply it is regretted that it has been necessary to omit the names of many interesting friends and callers because of the lack of records in English. For the many quotations, it is also hoped that the speakers will forgive any slight errors that may have been made, for the English was first translated into Chinese, and then, here, it has been translated once more into English. In the future, it is hoped that complete reports of such meetings, and especially those appearing in English publications, will be carefully filed.

MR. MEI LAN-FANG IN CHINESE EYES

CHAPTER VII

MR. MEI LAN-FANG IN CHINESE EYES



HOULD the casual foreign visitor attend a drama by Mr. Mei he would describe the acting of the artist as "graceful, exquisite, marvellous," etc.; or if he were a student of dramatics, he would often be startled by the perfection with which music, singing, gesture, and facial expression blend to create a harmonious impression. How much more would the outsider have to muse delightfully over while watching a performance, if he had in mind some of the phrases used by scholarly Chinese critics, such as follow: "His stage walk was graceful. His make-up, a little short of divine, emphasized his natural beauty. His voice, sweet like the oriole, was followed by the accompanist with such perfection that the combination literally exemplified the saying, 'For the full expression of its beauty, the peony relies on the contrast produced by its verdant leaves.'" Again, in regard to an operatic drama: "His voice, from the first note to the last, was clear like fragments of jade without blemish, while his tones of intense grief moved the audience deeply. . . . His enunciation was clear and mellow; his manners, the essence of refinement; thus it is no wonder that applause, endless like a rope of pearls, followed."

The foregoing translated passages are ordinary examples of the enthusiasm, the adoration, which the actor's artistry arouses in a scholarly critic. Although the present style of journalism, with its revolutionary turn towards simplicity, may discourage the poetical quality of the old-fashioned critic, yet one may still read in the newspapers and the magazines, on occasion, critiques full of the pictorial quality of the writing of the former generation.

An encomium, translated from the Chinese, is as follows:

" That Mr. Mei Lan-fang is heaven-sent and a most genial person is not for my humble pen to set forth, because for years the entire Middle Kingdom has never ceased to praise and to sigh over the sheer beauty of his art, the brilliance of his voice, and the exquisiteness of his appearance. In his praise, my friends and I have written endless numbers of poems, couplets, and essays. Apart from the many excellent qualities, of which the public are only too well aware, Mr. Mei possesses one that other actors cannot hope to equal, even in a small degree; namely, that quality on which the artist has built his reputation, the tireless energy he puts into every scene of his dramas.

" The artist devotes his entire mind, strength, and energy to any scene he presents, that his audiences may enjoy to the full his interpretations. Whenever one visits a playhouse, he may notice that the leading actor, completely satisfied with his past laurels, spares his effort and performs in an indifferent manner. Since in singing, declamation, and acting Mr. Mei is altogether unwilling to tolerate laziness in any form, he is, in this respect, head and shoulders above the entire galaxy of Chinese stars. When the artist enacted *The Heavenly Maiden Scattering Flowers* and I was in the audience delighting in his airy movements as he sang and danced, I was altogether ignorant of the prodigious amount of energy the actor was expending. Afterwards, I learned that perspiration had moistened his clothing."

Thousands of critiques and laudatory articles like the foregoing may be found in Chinese newspapers and magazines, and while it is tempting to reproduce them all, yet the nature of our book permits the inclusion of only one more. The detailed catalogue of the merits of Mr. Mei, as written by the aged scholar Mr. Hsiu Mo, treats his subject with a thoroughness that may not be found, perhaps, in similar writings in other parts of the world. A translation follows :

" In the springtime, I went with friends to the Chi Hsiang Theatre. About a week afterwards, I completed a critique on Mr. Mei's marvellous acting and his art. While a complete record of the many merits of Mr. Mei would be a superhuman task, I offer here sixteen points as they come into my mind :

The Face

" Mr. Mei's facial expression and his intelligent use of the same may be compared with the adaptability of running water, which, placed in a square receptacle, is square, but when put in a round one, is round.

The Stage Walk

" The exquisite beauty of the actor's stage walk has been praised elsewhere. In the drama *The Betrothal at the Bright Tower,* Mr. Mei sings as he walks, never increasing or decreasing the length of his footsteps by a fraction of an inch; while in other plays, such as *Picking the Mulberry* and *Washing the Yarn,* his manner of walking is the spirit of animation.

The Waist

" Mr. Tse-ching once said: ' Every one knows of the beauty of Mr. Mei's stage walk, but who knows that much of its grace lies in the use of the waist ? Sheer beauty lies in the waist, which stands strong and erect like a

pavilion on a mountain side. He is like a sail fluttering in the brisk breeze, his feet pacing in dainty animation.' All this would be impossible without a perfectly controlled waist. This particular accomplishment was heaven-given, a boon not to be acquired, which the artist has cultivated and improved by assiduous practice.

Declamation

" There are innumerable kinds of declamation. Not only has Mr. Mei mastered all styles, but the clarity of his enunciation is the joy of critics.

Acting

" I have heard it said that the artist's acting is beautiful beyond words. How can weak words do justice to his superb art ? The words ' unhurried ' and ' willing ' (to give his best) may, after a fashion, be applied to his acting.

The Smile

" There is the coy smile, the sudden smile, a forced laugh, and an unpremeditated laugh, as in *Rainbow Pass*. Some of the new plays show the actor smiling in a charmingly innocent mood.

Weeping

" When the actor weeps with lowered head, the audience are moved to grief, and all fail in their attempt to applaud because of the tears that fall and wet their sleeves.

Emotional Expression

" To express joy is easy, but to mirror deep tragedy is extremely difficult. The anger shown in the first part of *The Wild Goose Barrier*, the fear manifested in the eyes in the second part, and that evinced in the

third part when entering the palace hall make the body quiver. Also there is the joy of a wife meeting her husband after eighteen years of separation.

The Stage Death

" ' In the labyrinth of stage convention,' says Prince Hung Tou, 'the act of dying is the most difficult. Too much or too little realism mar the desired impression. Mr. Mei, however, gives a perfect conventional representation. His four limbs relax or stiffen as he seems to lose all consciousness.'

The Use of the Sleeve

" Fluttering like a frightened swan, swift like a sportive butterfly, the turning or the folding of the sleeve about the wrist of Mr. Mei has been reduced to a fine art. He may drop it speedily like a sail or make it dart like an arrow lightly and animatedly from its bow. Other actors complain of the excessive length of the attached inner sleeves, while Mr. Mei sometimes thinks his too short.

The Dance

" In *Kuei-fei Intoxicated with Wine* there is the biting of the rim of the beaker and the bending of the waist while the giddy beauty drinks strong wine. In *Ch'ang O's Flight to the Moon*, there is the raising of the skirt and the flourishing of the sleeves, all of which the actor does in accordance with the strict conventional requirements of rhythm.

Vocal Art

" The *êrh-huang* style is alluring, while the *hsi-p'i* is grave and majestic. From these two old models, Mr. Mei has remoulded and created new musical scores. The *hsi-p'i* must be handled with utmost care, for the method of vocalization demands both a decided style of melody and a mastery of enunciation. . . .

Music with the Flute

" The intricate *k'un-ch'ü* musical style demands absolute adherence to time, the greater part of the singing being done in a low, well-modulated voice. Mr. Mei has not only spent much time in the study of this art but has had the assistance of the best masters of the style in the country. . . . An old and very conservative critic of the theatre once said to me: ' Have you heard Mei's *k'un-ch'ü* monodrama, *A Nun Seeks Love*? There is genuine merit in the singing and the acting.'

Postures in Sword-Horse Rôles

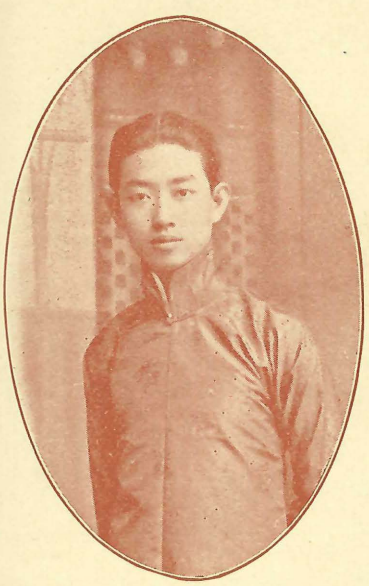
" Since the presentation some time ago of the military plays, *The River Fan Pass*, *Rainbow Pass*, etc., Mr. Mei's gymnastical postures have acquired a remarkable finish, and his handling of weapons has become both masterful and heroic. While executing the foregoing action, he also sings with much subtlety of expression concerning love or any emotion the text of the drama may call for.

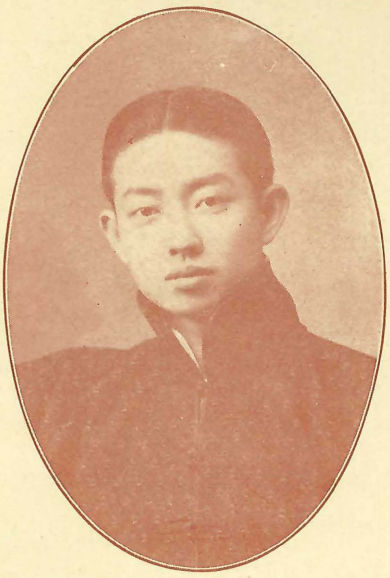
The *Wu*, or Military Plays

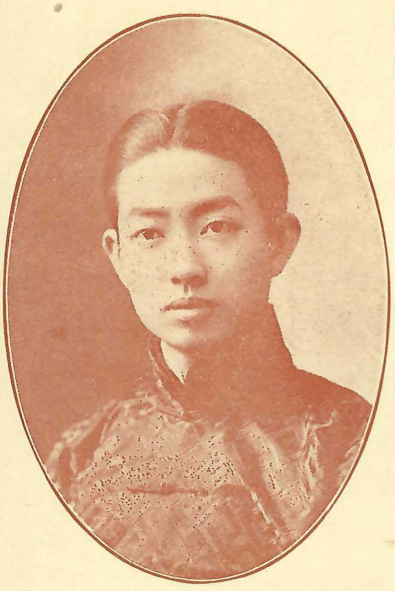
" After the production of *The Red-Robed Empress*, Mr. Mei impersonated the heroines of *Golden Mountain Monastery* and *The Fairy of the Guitar*—rôles offering a direct contrast to the gentle operatic heroines which the actor portrayed early in his career. A hard-working youth, this theatrical idol has enlarged his field of interpretation until he is now the leading exponent of feminine stage types. . . .

Modernized Old Dramas

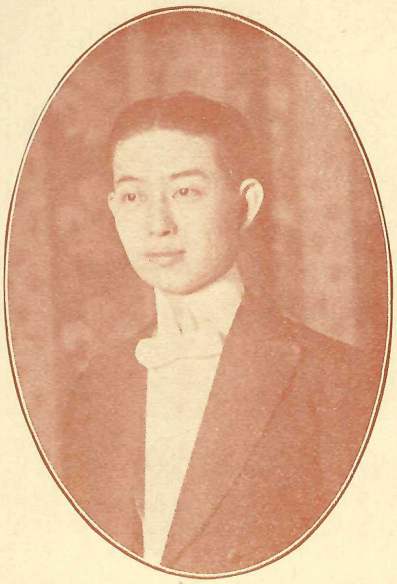
" In the dance drama *Ch'ang O's Flight to the Moon*, the actor offers his public novelties in make-up and costume. The play is done in good taste.

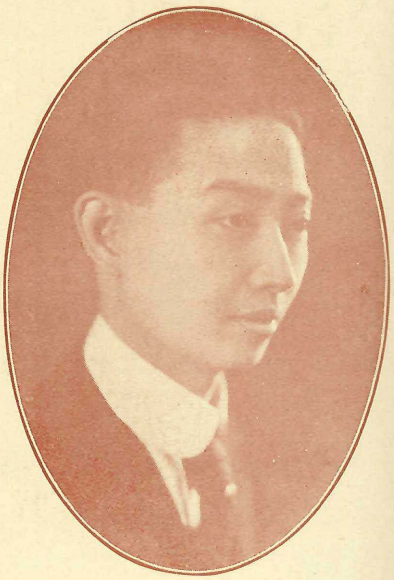


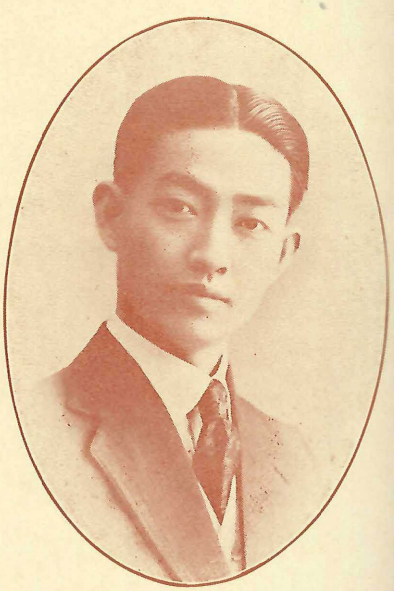




Youthful Portraits of the Actor in Chinese Dress







Mr. Mei Lan-fang in European Attire

It would require thousands of words to give an adequate description of his supreme art. In both singing and declamation, Mr. Mei is never guilty of a slurred syllable, or of poor acting. In short, a moment with Mei is better than years with other actors!"

Our account would be incomplete without mention of the triumphal visits the actor occasionally makes to the leading cities of China.

An early story, undoubtedly from a Chinese newspaper cutting, narrates a typical incident in the celebrity's life, on his visit to that most famous spot of scenic beauty, the renowned West Lake, with its city of Hangchow. The following account was written:

"Once Mr. Mei Lan-fang acted in a playhouse in the city of Hangchow, where the stage door opened on an empty lot that could accommodate thousands of people. On the day in question, when the actor had completed his performance and was about to leave, the entire space was filled with expectant and admiring people crowded 'shoulder to shoulder, and toes to toes.' Every one was eager and thirsting for a glimpse of the artist! The public has never accorded such an ovation to other actors."

But there is nothing in the annals of the Chinese stage to compare with the actor's engagements in Shanghai, of which two only, those of 1926 and 1928, will be mentioned. As is true in the life of public idols the world over, excessive admiration is never an unmixed blessing.

The opening night of the 1926 engagement, Monday, November 15, was described in the *North-China Daily News* as follows:

"On Monday evening last, Mr. Mei Lan-fang opened his engagement at the Ta-hsin Wu-t'ai. As early as 7 p.m., great crowds thronged the streets near the theatre. The audience is said to have numbered over three thousand. Banks of flowers, sent by admirers, filled the entrance; while above hung a gigantic floral plaque with the three characters 梅蘭芳 [Mei Lan-fang] worked in pink satin."

On his departure, the actor was inundated with gifts in the form of flowers, paintings, silver cups, silver services, silver plaques inscribed with the names of the donors, specimens of calligraphy, couplets written on eight-foot lengths of silk, and so on — all of which, according to established theatrical custom, were exhibited at the sides of the stage on the farewell night.

If the foregoing paragraphs give the impression that Mr. Mei's life is an Elysian dream or the proverbial bed of roses, it is only necessary to cite a few of the incidents which marred what might have been an unmixed joy. To be dined and wined all hours of the day and much of the night; to feel unable to refuse many invitations; to grace a banquet table and be gazed at when one's physician has ordered rest in bed, not to take into account that performances last well after midnight, after which the actor is besieged by admirers — all help to prove that most celebrities pay and overpay for their fame. Those who may still enjoy the inestimable boons of privacy and the choice to do as they wish envy the fame of those who would, perhaps, give up everything for the peace in which one is his own master and not the object at which are directed a thousand attentions, well-meant or otherwise.

The 1928 Shanghai engagement, which opened on December 17, repeated the triumphs along with the mixed blessings of 1926. From the two leading Chinese daily newspapers, which kept the eager public informed as to everything the actor did in a special column, one quotation will give an idea of Mr. Mei's routine. For Wednesday, December 19, the *Mei News* in the *Shun Pao* read as follows: "The Nanyang Brothers' Tobacco Company, on Mr. Mei's going to Canton, presented him with a magnificent curtain of imperial yellow satin, decorated with the branch of an ancient plum tree. . . . The company also presented the actor with a silver cup. . . .

"Several callers [named] visited the actor in his hotel.

A Shady, Red-Lacquered Colonnade Leading to the Mei House

" Friends sent Mei a huge silver cup. . . . The actor first attended Mr. Mu's party, thereafter keeping another appointment in Nanyang Road before going to the theatre. . . .

" A request was made of the actor that he write a title to be used on the cover of a publication, which he granted. A representative of a pictorial magazine arrived at the hotel to photograph Mr. Mei. . . .

" Mr. Nieh gave a dinner for Messrs. Mei Lan-fang and Wang Feng-ching."

Thus in China, which to outsiders is already colourful, the public life of Mr. Mei Lan-fang is a constant kaleidoscope of colours. That part of the occident which has never crossed the Pacific or gone beyond Suez will marvel at the unique grace and distinctive flavour that is the art of Mr. Mei. It will see an art that " out-adjectives " all the indefinite effusions used in the past to paint an imaginary sketch of the Flowery Kingdom.

When you visit noble Peking, do not fail to see the actor among his own people. China will welcome you, as will also Mr. Mei Lan-fang.

The Bodhisattva P'u-hsien, painted by Mr. Mei Lan-fang

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

A Brief Consideration of the Outstanding Characteristics of the Chinese Drama

By
Professor Chi Jushan

Parts 1 and 2
By
Mr. Huang Chiu-yao

Translated by
George Kin Leung

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APPENDIX

PART I

THE CHARACTER TYPES OF THE CHINESE DRAMA

The Male Characters, or *Shêng*

(生)

The male rôles in old Chinese drama are collectively known as *shêng*. Aged and bearded characters are designated as "old," or *lao-shêng* (老 生), while youthful male characters are known as "youthful," or *hsiao-shêng* (小 生). All who specialize in diction and singing are termed "civil," or *wên-shêng* (文 生); those skilled in gymnastics and military action are known as "military," or *wu-shêng* (武 生). In the singing of a *wên-shêng*, a most important consideration is that all high and low notes should be sung in the best style, while a thorough mastery of vocal technique is necessary, because, in the drama, the types of singing are exceedingly numerous. A *lao-shêng*, often the rôle of a scholar or a general, must be proficient in conventional stage technique. In his enunciation, he must be fastidiously correct, while, in acting, he must possess grace, dignity, and distinction ; above all, he must not overdo his part. The *wu-shêng* specializes in bodily posture and in conventional stage fighting; the movement of his hands and feet must be clean-cut and his manner of expression good. He is also expected to be an expert tumbler and acrobat. A *wên-shêng* (文 生) should be refined and cultured in a worldly fashion.

The Female Impersonator, or *Tan*

(旦)

The general term in old drama for all feminine rôles is *tan*, meaning female impersonator. There are the "old," or *lao-tan* (老 旦), who may be mothers or other aged women; *ch'ing-i* (青 衣), the rôles for good and dignified women; *hua-tan* (花 旦), the rôles for vivacious maidservants or women of doubtful reputation, as the demi-mondaine and courtesan; *kuei-mên-tan* (閨 門 旦), the type for maidens; and the *tao-ma* (刀 馬), or "sword-horse," *tan*, who is a "military" type.

Of these types there is a fuller account in Chapter III, where some paragraphs have been quoted from the article, "The Female Impersonator of the Chinese Stage," reprinted by courtesy of the *China Journal.*

The Characters with Painted Faces, or *Ching* (淨)

Actors portraying the character type known in the stage vernacular as *ching* must be coarse and heavy in physique and possess voices that are rich and robust, while their movements must be dignified. In the bewildering variety of facial painting, there are both fine-lined and thick-lined designs. If one is a *wu-ching* (武 淨), he must also be a master of boxing, gymnastics, and conventional military action.

While gentle and peace-loving characters appear with natural faces, others, especially adventurers, commonly paint their faces in various styles that range from a single colour to bewildering combinations and figures. The origin of facial painting may be traced to ancient stone sculptures and bronze engravings; but, as time passed, the original art underwent radical changes. Many of the colours have a specific meaning: for instance, a predominance of red indicates that the person is courageous, faithful, and virtuous; much black indicates a brusque nature; while blue denotes cruelty. Green, blue, lavender, and red, when used in elaborate combination, have no deep significance. A person with triangular eyes is branded as crafty, while a person with a small white butterfly painted across his nose may be a comedian, a villain, or an evil supernatural being. Again, the face may be painted in ways that have no special meaning.

During the Northern Chi dynasty (550-565), Prince Lan-ling, or Lan-ling Wang, who was a brave warrior with an exquisitely beautiful face, conceived the idea of painting his face to inspire fear in the hearts of his adversaries. It is possible that conventional facial painting for the stage originated from this source.

The Comedian, or *Ch'ou* (丑)

The general term for comedians is *ch'ou*, a type which is common on both the Chinese and the European stage. Those who are supposed to be *comédiennes* are called *ch'ou-tan* (丑 旦), or "female *ch'ou*"; while comedians of military type are called *wu-ch'ou* (武 丑). To show that they are comedians, this class, with minor exceptions, paint their noses powder-white, along with a few black lines. Although, at times, other lines may be added to the face, the most common design is the butterfly.

Facial Paintings, Ming Period (1368-1644), Representing Well-Known Characters in History and Fiction

Stage Representations of Lesser Deities and Supernatural Beings, Ming Period (1368-1644)

Stage Heroes as Painted in the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1911)
This and the preceding two plates are reproductions of paintings from the Mei Library.

Examples of Facial Painting Now in Vogue on the Peking Stage

Styles of Present-Day Facial Painting

Styles of Present-Day Facial Painting

The comedian's main burden is to win laughs from the audience; thus, his lines must be especially well enunciated, sparkling with wit, and otherwise attractive. If he displays military action, it must be humorous in nature. When a play has in it a first-class comedian, the entire work vibrates with life. The *ch'ou*, then, occupies an important place in the drama. Furthermore, legend informs us that the great ruler, T'ang Ming Huang himself, sometimes played the part of the *ch'ou*, which type as a result has acquired great prestige and is allowed many privileges denied other actors.

PART 2

A MUSICAL DIVISION OF CHINESE DRAMA

The *K'un-ch'ü*

(崑曲)

The beginnings of crude drama arose from the combination of various arts, dating as far back as the Han (206 B.C. to A.D. 221) and Wei (A.D. 221-265) dynasties. It was during the T'ang dynasty (A.D. 618-906) that there were indications of a division into operatic drama and comedy. The Sungs (A.D. 960-1127) prized the comedy above all other forms of drama. The drama itself, however, became a vehicle for depicting old stories, the most important factors being neither acting nor singing. This type of play was predominant during the Yüan dynasty (A.D. 1280-1368), when the barbarian Hu tribes from the north entered and gained mastery of China, bringing their own drama, which became very popular in the North. In the southern provinces, however, such as Kiangsu and Chekiang, the *literati* studied and adapted this music, creating what is called the Southern School of Music. Hence, what is called *k'un-ch'ü* resulted from the combination of northern and southern music.

The current drama in China is of many types, namely, the *p'i-huang*, the *k'un-ch'ü*, and the *chen-ch'iang*, etc. The upper classes favour the *k'un-ch'ü* drama, because there are strict rules for its acting and singing. As for the *p'i-huang* style, an intelligent actor may, within its general rules, make innovations, as, for instance, the lengthening of certain notes and the addition of extemporized passages. Thus it has come about that various schools of singing have been established by well-known vocalists, who make their main appeal to the ear of the general public.

We find that most of the texts and music of *k'un-ch'ü* dramas have been written by the foremost scholars and musicians of the day. The lyrics and songs are strikingly beautiful. When stories are dramatized, they are more exquisite when done in the *k'un-ch'ü* than when done in the *p'i-huang* style. Few, however, can appreciate the intricacies of the more refined *k'un-ch'ü*, and so, within the last few centuries, this musical style has fallen into disfavour. Since the *p'i-huang* was sung in the Peking dialect, which was used by the members of the court during the reign of the Manchus, and since northerners did not understand the southern *k'un-ch'ü*, it naturally followed that the *p'i-huang* gained a firm-rooted popularity.

Mr. Mei, appreciating the merits of the *k'un-ch'ü*, devoted special effort to the study of that style. He quickly reinstated the more typical Chinese drama with the better classes of society. The best plays of this type, presented by Mei, are *The Jade Hairpin* and *Sporting by Dream in a Garden.* Coming from the pens of the *literati*, such dramas are, in point of written text and dramatic expression, flawless. The acting and the singing, done according to inviolable rule, are both refined and subtle in expression, especially when done by an actor of Mr. Mei's intelligence. Largely through his inspiration, an association for the special study of the *k'un-ch'ü* has been established in Peking, while in Shanghai there is also a school devoted to the same purpose. Many of the upper classes spend their leisure studying this musical style.

The *p'i-huang* has, as its main instrument, the *hu-ch'in*, which came to China from the North; while the *k'un-ch'ü*, to put the phrase in the words of the Chinese writer, is "drama that Han [China] itself had." This quieter and truly Chinese music is dominated by the soft notes of the flute. The more strident *hu-ch'in* has no place in *k'un-ch'ü* plays, while the soft slow measures of the Chinese music are in direct contrast to the high-pitched and sustained *p'i-huang* melodies. Since there is no ear-splitting brass in the *k'un-ch'ü*, foreigners who come to China enjoy these plays. Yet, the *k'un-ch'ü*, with its superior music and admirable enunciation, is no match for the *p'i-huang*, which is so firmly established with the masses as to defy all competition!

The Anhwei Musical Style, or *Hui Tiao*
(徽調)

The *êrh-huang* and the *hsi-p'i* came originally from Hupeh; these styles, however, underwent modification at the hands of certain scholars in the following cities of Anhwei, namely, Shihmen, Tungcheng, Hsiuning, etc., and so the style came to be known as the Anhwei style. During the reign of K'ang Hsi (1662-1722), large numbers of officials in the capital were natives of Anhwei, bringing with them their own music, which many of the Pekingese learned. The Peking drama of to-day is a direct combination of the music of Hupeh and Anhwei.

Here we may consider an all-important factor in China, namely, the vast extent of the empire which has encouraged the development of many distinct dialects so that each district has also developed its own drama, sung in its own dialect, those of Hupeh and Anhwei being but two types of many, but they are the most popular. Apart from them, there are the *i-yang* drama of Szechwan; the *kao* of Kaoyang, Chihli; the *ch'en* of Chenchung, Shensi; the *yüeh-tiao* of Kwangtung; while Chekiang, Ningpo, Shaoshing, etc., each has its own school of drama and music. This paper, however, is devoted to a consideration of the Anhwei school only, because it is the parent of the present Peking drama, or what Europeans call Chinese drama. It is not the province of this work to describe the many local schools of drama.

Pure Anhwei drama may be found in that province to-day, and it is entirely different from the Peking *p'i-huang* drama. In the first year of K'ang Hsi, the actor Cheng Chang-keng, a native of Anhwei, enjoyed public favour. There was only the slightest suggestion of Anhwei accent in his singing and declamation. The gap between the singing of female impersonators of the Peking and Anhwei schools is more marked. The simple and clear-cut songs in the *lao-shêng* dramas were not so melodious as those of the present.

The costumes worn in Anhwei and Peking drama are similar; but the former are plain and lack charm because of inadequate preparation. The music played at the opening of an Anhwei drama, while quite unlike that of the Peking drama, is nevertheless very pleasant to the ear. After the preliminary music, one act of *k'un-ch'ü*, in which every member of the company must appear, is offered. This is termed the "first appearance." The regular drama comes afterwards.

In an Anhwei company, there are only twenty to thirty people. When in certain plays there is a shortage of actors, even the super-numeraries, whose humble duty it is to carry the flags, are obliged to take important rôles. This is done by turn and not by the direction of the stage-manager. Of the well-known and popular plays of this school, a striking example is Mr. Mei's beloved *Three Pulls*.

The All-Popular *P'i-huang*

(皮黃)

The *p'i-huang*, which is a combination of the *hsi-p'i* and *êrh-huang* styles, is now the most popular musical drama of the current stage. The *êrh-huang* comes from Hupeh and receives its name from the fact that many actors come from the districts of Huangkang and Huangpi. The former president, Li Yuan-hung, was a native of Huangpi, and the greatest of all *lao-shêng*, Tan Shen-pei, was also a native of Huangpi. He was acknowledged the "Great King of Actors." Since his death, the kingship has passed on to Mr. Mei Lan-fang. The *êrh-huang*, now naturalized in the Peking drama, is popular throughout China.

In the spoken lines of such dramas, a correctly declaimed passage should contain Hupeh accents. The *p'i-huang* was an immediate success with the general public and still is. In this school of drama, there are a few thousand plays, each a vehicle for the display of the talents of various stage types, as the *shêng, tan, ching, ch'ou*, etc. The *p'i-huang* is always the musical basis for plays, even those written for well-known actors of to-day. It is easy to keep time with the music of the *p'i-huang*. Now that the *k'un-ch'ü* has experienced a revival, this style and the *p'i-huang* have their respective followings.

The lyrics of *p'i-huang* music are set mainly to the *hu-ch'in*, the technique of which has been developed largely by master musicians. Tunes have both changed and

increased in variety. Mr. Mei's paternal uncle, Yu-tien, was the greatest *hu-ch'in* player of the last two decades.

The *p'i-huang* came into vogue in the Hsien-Fêng (1851-1861) period, when the Anhwei actor, Cheng Chang-keng, presented his *êrh-huang* Anhwei dramas in the capital, where his innovation met with warm welcome. Thereafter, four large training schools for actors were established. Mr. Mei's grandfather, Mr. Mei Chiao-ling, also a female impersonator of note, was head of the Ssŭ-hsi Training School, which was the largest of the four institutions. Graduates of these schools have gone forth spreading the Peking drama over China and bringing the fame of the Chinese stage to a grand climax. Most of the discussions of music and conventions in this chapter are concerned with the Peking School of Drama.

PART 3

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHINESE DRAMA

Singing and Declamation

The spoken lines and vocal passages of the Chinese drama are, generally speaking, similar to those of other nations. When a Chinese actor, however, comes upon the stage, he must deliver what is termed the prologue, and perhaps poetry also, as well as lines of a couplet. The *tien-chiang-ch'un* tunes (點絳脣), used by those who impersonate officials, are similar in construction to the prologue just mentioned. An actor, on gracefully making his way off the stage, may recite any one or more of the following: poetry, lines of a couplet, or passages of recitative. These distinctive practices on entering and exit are characteristics which set the Chinese drama apart from that of any other nation. The stage speech is invariably marked by cadence and rhythm and so differs, in a marked degree, from that of everyday life. Although, in the drama of every nation there is a decided difference between the speech of the stage and real life, the difference, in Chinese drama, is much greater. In vocal art each country has its own musical scale; and there are inevitable differences in the scales of various nations. In Chinese drama, the actor's movements also are set to musical accompaniment; in European plays there exists no such practice. So far, an attempt has been made to point out the difference, in general, between Chinese and European drama. Details of this will be found under the headings that follow.

The Prologue, or *Yin-tzŭ* (引子)

When an actor makes his entrance, the first words he utters are what is technically known as the prologue, which literally "introduces" or brings forward the idea of the play. There is, during the recitation, a distinct rhythm; but there is no musical accompaniment, even the wooden *pan-tzŭ* not being used to beat time. The prologue found its origin in the extreme dislike of mentioning at once and directly the subject of a literary work. Thus, in drama, introductory lines are added to uphold this tradition, the prologue doing one of the following things: it may narrate vaguely the entire action of the play, tell the history or nature of the character in question, or explain the general action of the act immediately at hand. But whatever is the case, there is delivered merely a general account, from which one may trace little or no clue to the actual story.

Couplets When Entering, or *Shang Ch'ang Tui Chü* (上場對句)

After the prologue, actors invariably recite two couplets, this seeming to be a development of the prologue. At the beginning, the *ch'ou*, or comedian, used couplets more than any other character type, for the simple reason that it was permissible for comedians to speak in the various local dialects of the districts in which they were acting. Thus, he was not obliged to use the Chung-chou intonations on the endings of his monosyllables. The Chung-chou, being the standard combination of intonations, are used in Honan and in the central part of China. Since a comedian found it inconvenient to recite these intonations, he substituted couplets in the native dialect, at the same time doing away with tempo and musical accompaniment. In order to facilitate action, it came about afterward that all types of actors on entering the stage recited the more easily delivered couplets.

Poetry While Sitting, or *Tso Shih* (坐詩)

After the prologue, and sometimes couplets also, have been delivered, the actor, seating himself, recites four lines of poetry, which are technically termed "poetry that opens the play." In idea and construction, this same practice, also called "poetry while sitting," bears a close resemblance to the prologue. Its origin comes from the style of the Chinese novel, or an entertainment known as "recitations with the drum," *ku-tz'ŭ* (鼓詞), in which forms there are always at the opening of the work a few lines which outline the entire theme. The dramas of the Yüan and Sung dynasties were strikingly similar in construction to the novel and "recitations with the drum," and thus plays have introductory lines also. While the *kun-ch'ü* employs lines of uneven length, the *p'i-huang* uses a poetical text exclusively. "Poetry while sitting" differs from the prologue in that the actor must recite without tempo, and without musical accompaniment.

Announcing One's Name, or *T'ung Ming* (通名)

After an actor has recited his four lines of poetry, he never fails to tell the audience his name, and if he does not recite poetry, he may announce his name immediately after the delivery of the prologue.

Lines that Actually Open the Play, or *Ting Ch'ang Pai* (定場白)

The technical term *pai* (白) means to express, to explain, to speak. An actor, having gone on the stage and spoken both his prologue and poetic lines and having

announced his name, then proceeds to deliver what is termed the *ting ch'ang pai*. That the prologue, poetry, etc., must be very general in nature has already been explained; in the *ting ch'ang pai*, however, an actor gives a detailed account of himself, or his family, or the drama, often of the immediate act or episode at hand, making such facts clear in minute detail. If the action of the present moment is too far removed from that of the preceding event, it behoves the actor to explain this state of affairs while delivering the *ting ch'ang pai*.

In French drama, there is often a person not belonging to the cast of the play, who, standing in front of the curtain, delivers lines that are similar to the *ting ch'ang pai*. After a Chinese actor has delivered his *ting ch'ang pai*, the actual play begins to unfold. While the actor recites the prologue, poetry, and the *ting ch'ang pai*, he is mirroring the general feeling of the action or the theme of the play. Although, in subsequent acts, there may be another announcement of the name, yet, according to old practice, this came into being merely because some of the episodes were too far apart and also because the changing of costume might lead to the audience's forgetting the names of the various characters. Thus the actor sometimes once more announces his name. The ancients, however, found for such situations remedies slightly different from those employed at present.

The four foregoing practices are, in the construction of the old Chinese drama, distinctive features, in which it differs signally from European drama. In certain plays in France, in 1907 and 1908, preliminary passages were delivered before the lowered curtain to the audience by a person who was *not* a member of the cast, an announcement sometimes being made previous to each act. In Chinese drama, such lines must be delivered by members of the cast. At one time, there was in Chinese drama a special person who made announcements and was known as the *fu mo chia mên* (副末家門); but he made the briefest remarks only, not at all in the detailed manner of the French stage. Furthermore, he who delivered the prologue in the old drama was obliged to wear a special stage costume, in this respect again differing from foreign practice.

In French drama it was formerly the practice to employ a man in formal dress to make the necessary preliminary explanations; later, because of public demand, the man was replaced by a young girl, beautifully attired. More recently, an improvement has been introduced, wherein the girl sings, before the first curtain, the entire story of the play. This last practice seems to approach more closely the peculiar practices of Chinese drama. In times past, when an actor came on the stage to recite the prologue and announce his name, he was obliged by inviolable custom to conceal his face with his sleeve in order not to reveal the "face of the actor in the play"; but after the announcements have been made, the sleeve is waved aside and, lo! we have before us the actual face or character of the play! The actor has stepped into character. Is there not, in this, a striking similarity to the practices in French drama?

The Aside, or *Pei Kung*[1] (背供)

The "aside" may be described as words uttered to oneself in the presence of two or three others on the stage to reveal one's emotion or secrets. If one is suddenly overwrought with emotion, he naturally expresses himself by facial expression or pantomime; if the emotion is so complex that neither facial expression nor pantomime can make clear the meaning, then the Chinese actor lifts his sleeve, behind which he speaks or sings, or he may quickly step to one side of the stage, such actions making it clear that the others on the stage have not heard what was said. When a solitary actor sings or tells of his own affairs, the practice is also somewhat similar to the aside.

The aside is a distinct feature of Chinese drama. Considering the early date at which this dramatic peculiarity was discovered, it must be conceded to be a special merit of native drama. The aside eliminates great quantities of explanation, at the same time adding much interest to the situation. In European drama also, a person may say a few words to himself. Since people in everyday life are known to speak to themselves, the aside may have found its origin in that human trait. In European opera, it is a common practice for one person to sing long solos; this practice has in it something of the nature of an aside.

The "Call" or Signal for Music, or *Chiao Pan* (叫板)

When all preliminary announcements have been made, the actor, just before breaking into song, must prolong the last word he has spoken. This is done by sustaining the last word, almost to a musical pitch, so that the musicians know by this signal that the song is to come at once and so set their musical instruments for accompaniment. Again, when the actor is about to conclude his singing, he also prolongs the last word or two in his song so that the musicians will know that the song is completed and will prepare to lay aside their instruments. Such vocal prolongations are absolutely necessary, because, in the *p'i-huang* music, there being no arbitrary musical score, it is possible for a singer to prolong or abbreviate his song as he deems fit; thus there must be a distinct signal given by the singer as to when the song will begin or end.

Singing, or *Ko Ch'ang* (歌唱)

It is a common practice in Chinese drama when, during spoken lines, the emotions become raised to a high pitch, for the character to give vent to his feeling in song, as in

[1] The writer of the original Chinese includes the soliloquy under the aside. Furthermore, he does not seem to gather that, in European drama of to-day, the aside is considered a distinct weakness in play construction unless it occurs naturally, as in real life.—G. K. L.

moments of sudden fear, anger, grief, or ecstasy. Again, there are occasions when long dramatic passages must be repeated by the actors, this also serving as a reason for a long aria. If one character asks another about a matter of which the latter is ignorant, but of which the audience has been already informed, there is a possibility of the patience of the audience being tried by tedious repetition. The reply, therefore, is set to music so that the actor may have the opportunity to explain the situation, and to embellish his text with such musical beauty as to save the audience monotonous repetition.

In singing, there is a wide variety of style for the character types. For instance, the *hua-lien* (花 臉), or "flowery-faced one," so called in reference to the elaborate facial painting, sings in broad, rich, robust tones to delineate a brusque character; the *sheng* sings in an almost natural voice, which labels him as an educated and refined person; while the *tan* sings in a falsetto voice in order to suggest the voice of a woman. As there is a vast amount of detail of this nature, one may, while witnessing an actual performance, use his own imagination and fathom the meanings for himself. Therefore, we will not go into further details.

Couplets Recited Before Going Off the Stage, or *Hsia Ch'ang Tui Lien* (下場對聯)

After an actor has played his part and is about to move off the stage, it is customary for him to recite four lines, namely, two couplets; or if two or more people go off together, they may recite four lines of poetry. These recitations are supposed to conclude the act or scene in question. Such peculiar practices trace their origin to the literary form of the old Chinese novel.

PART 4

PANTOMIME AND ACTING

Every movement made by an actor in an old Chinese drama is done in accordance with time-honoured convention, and so it is somewhat different from the actions of everyday life. Although in European and American plays the actions are also different from those of ordinary life, still the difference in Chinese drama is much greater. An attempt will now be made to explain some of the Chinese stage conventions and to point out where they differ from Western theatrical practice.

Entrance and Exit

In European drama, the various actors, before the curtain goes up, have usually placed themselves in appropriate positions on the stage; and they proceed, as soon as the curtain has been raised, with the immediate action or conversation of the play. The Chinese drama opens with an empty stage, on which the various characters make their appearance. Before their entrance, there is an orchestral selection, and most of the movements of the actors are made to definite musical setting. All action, even the simple act of walking, must be done gracefully and to a well-defined tempo, which may or may not be set to musical accompaniment. The tempo is determined by the musicians. When an actor makes his first appearance, it is highly important that his every movement be pleasing to the eye, while every action is dictated by inviolable rule. It is required that an actor, on making his exit with either declamation or singing, leave one word unsaid, until with body slightly turned to the audience, he declaims or sings it just before he turns to walk off the stage. The exit must also be done to musical accompaniment.

Walking and Running

In the drama of every nation, actors, while on the stage, walk differently from people in everyday life; in Chinese drama, the difference is even more striking. Yet the highly conventional gait of the various character types has a logical origin. The brusque types walk with long strides, and so the *hua-lien* takes steps that are technically termed "wide." Both scholars and officials invariably move about with marked grace and leisure; thus, the gait of the *shêng* is described as "round," "square," or "dexterous"; while female characters, or *tan*, walk with short, swaying, mincing steps, described as "slow," "graceful," etc. But it matters not which character type is on the stage, he must take his steps in accordance with strictly determined tempo; in situations demanding quick movement, there is the "swift tempo," while for slow gait, there is the "slow tempo," and never for a moment does an actor of any merit dare to depart from that tempo.

Passing Through a Door

Whenever it is necessary for an actor to enter through a doorway, he merely indicates that he has done so by lifting one foot as if stepping over the door-sill; while female characters raise the hand to show that they are leaning against the wall for support, this being a means of revealing the delicate grace that is associated with the weaker sex. It matters not whether one enters or exits by the front door, the room door, or the garden door, the pantomimic action is the same. The actor merely indicates that he has opened or closed a door; with both hands, he pushes the imaginary panels of the door, sliding them apart or drawing them together. In cases of knocking, bolting, or locking a door, these actions are indicated by pantomimic gesture also.

Movement in General

Chinese actors must give undivided attention to every movement. Action must not only be good to look upon but also done according to strict tempo. The manner in which the head is moved, the body is controlled, the hands and feet are placed, the posture of the arms and thighs—all such action must be done according to established convention. The movement of a finger, the glance of an eye, the lifting of a foot, all entail a vast amount of study, but always these movements must be pleasant to the eye and done to strict tempo.

To make clear this point, one of many examples may be taken, namely, one of the positions of the *tan's* fingers. The index finger is bent back with great strength; the thumb and middle finger form a circle; the ring finger, in Chinese the "no name" finger (無名指), is bent so that the tip rests against the middle joint of the middle finger; while the little finger must be so curved that its tip rests against the middle of the ring finger. This, then, is but one example from the endless number of conventional practices in the old drama. It is highly desirable for one interested in the theatre to attend plays and observe for himself the various peculiarities and develop an ability to make his own fascinating discoveries.

Tea Drinking

The act of tea drinking takes place frequently in Chinese drama. The tea-cup is never put down. The person who pours the tea places the cup in the hand of the recipient. An actor, while drinking, holds his sleeve before his face, because the *shêng*, the male characters, often with beards, would make drinking unpleasant to the eye. Since men drink in this manner, female characters do likewise. Having drunk the tea, the cup is handed back to the servant. There are occasions when a *hua-tan* does not use her sleeve or hand to conceal the act of drinking. This, however, is an act of playfulness, and not at all according to orthodox conventions.

Taking Wine and Rice

In the old drama, actors are never shown eating rice or taking a meal, because the sight of eating is considered unpleasing to the eye. A song or a few notes of the flute suffice to indicate that a meal has been taken. If eating must be done, then the drinking of wine may represent the act. Wine is taken in the same manner as tea; but while only one cup of tea may be taken, as many as three cups of wine may be taken consecutively.

Sleeping

In the past, it was not permissible to give a realistic representation of sleep, because the act itself was considered unbeautiful to look upon! When slumber was to be shown, the actor did so by leaning on a table. Maidens, however, may at times be seen sleeping full length, merely because a beauty in slumber is considered a pleasing sight; and so such scenes are created for the especial enjoyment of the spectator. Even this departure from tradition has been made only in recent times. When a *ch'ou*, or comedian, sometimes sleeps, sprawled on a chair, his head thrown back, and his mouth agape, it is understood that this is done merely to win laughs from the audience.

The Art of Dancing

In European drama, it is common to see dancing, unaccompanied by singing, or vice versa; in Chinese drama, however, dancing is accompanied by singing, as well as acting. Again, European musical drama has an especial regard for tempo; Chinese drama requires not only strict adherence to tempo, but also that movements of the dance must harmonize with the idea of the written text; that is, the rhythm and the action must express the musical score as well. It was after Mr. Mei Lan-fang had created his own plays that his school of dancing became popular throughout the entire Chinese Republic. His method of dancing is patterned after the ancient canons of terpsichorean art, said to be over one thousand years old; he has set the movements to the music of to-day, making a real contribution to the stage. This, then, is one of Mr. Mei's greatest services to the drama.

Conventional Stage Fighting

Almost everything on the Chinese stage is symbolical or unrealistic in nature. Conventional stage fighting was introduced during the last century, and consequently is somewhat more realistic. It is worthy of close study. The art of stage fighting lies in *not* touching one's opponent. At first sight, there seems to be no order, merely a confusion of twirlings, brandishings of weapons, and rushings to and fro; but diligent observation shows that every movement is done to strict rule, often taking the form of remarkable synchronizations, which enable an actor's weapon to miss his opponent's head by a hair's-

breadth. When hands or weapons are crossed, the battle has actually begun; when actors pass each other close at hand, the action represents the opposing horses of antagonists dashing back and forth; when actors come to a sudden stand, the fighters are taking a rest and awaiting an advantageous moment to move again. It is needless to enumerate all the intricate details; suffice it to say that every little movement, such as crossing the hands, posturing, etc., must be done in accordance with strict tempo.

Miscellaneous Actions

It may be reiterated, in conclusion, that every movement on the Chinese stage is done in accordance with strict, time-honoured convention. For example, when a male character laughs, he does so directly; but a female character must conceal her mouth with her sleeve. In weeping, both men and women wipe away their tears with their sleeves; to express worry, the character moves his hand about and contracts the forehead; in meditation, the breast is stroked with a circular motion of the hand, the finger being pointed to the temples; while to show bashfulness, the sleeve is raised before the face. Women cover their faces even more completely than male characters in order to emphasize the innate modesty of their sex. In anger, the foot is stamped, the breast pounded. When one wishes to motion a person away, the hand is waved aside or the sleeve is flourished outward, while to signal a person to come, the hand is waved up and down. To show fear, the body is turned aside and one hides. While the foregoing examples are in accordance with theatrical convention, still they are not so very far removed from the practices of everyday life. In this respect, then, Chinese drama is not unlike European drama.

PART 5

COSTUMES OF THE CHINESE STAGE

In the vernacular of the Chinese stage, wearing apparel is generally termed *hsing-t'ou* (行頭), and is designed according to strict convention. The outstanding modes of the T'ang, Sung, Yüan, and Ming dynasties supply the patterns for conventional stage clothing. No matter what character type is concerned, the clothing is designed according to a standard that grows from a combination of the modes of these various dynasties, no special attention being paid to any one dynasty or locality. A brief description of the more important garments follows:

The Robe, or *Mang*
(蟒)

The *mang* has a soft, kerchief-like collar, its large, overlapping front being buttoned from the collar, down under the arm and down the side; it also has inner (literally, "water," *shui*, 水) sleeves, which are long, flimsy, trailing silken inner sleeves, attached to the ordinary sleeves and hanging a few feet below the waist-line, almost touching the ground. The body of the robe is satin, usually embroidered with dragons; while the lower border is decorated with representations of sea-waves. This is the most important garment for official attire, and is worn in audience with the Son of Heaven, at official gatherings, at formal ceremonies, banquets, etc., or on any occasion of first importance. The colours indicate the rank of the wearer, as imperial yellow for the emperor and the crown prince, incense-brown or white for old officials, red or blue for upright persons, and black for brusque-mannered or treacherous natures. On important festive occasions, even warriors wear the *mang*. The *mang* worn by women, while in general like that worn by men, is somewhat shorter.

The Official Robe, or *Kuan I*
(官衣)

The *kuan i*, or official robe, is in general like the *mang*, just described. Previous to the Ming dynasty, officials of the highest rank only could wear the *mang*; so officials of the middle and the lower rank were obliged to wear the *kuan i*. Embroidered squares

are attached to the front and back of the garment. Robes may be red, blue, or black, the rank of the official being graded in the order of the colours here mentioned. The robes of the officials of lowest rank are strikingly similar to the *mang*, except there is no embroidery, and at the opening at the sides of the *kuan i*, there is a pair of small wing-shaped decorations projecting to the rear.

The *P'ei*

(帔)

The robe known as the *p'ei* has a large collar and buttons down the front, with long, inner sleeves, reaching almost to the knees. The material is of satin, with various decorations, the flowers being sewn on entire or in scattered blossoms or broken branches. There are also *p'ei* without embroidery. Being an important garment, it is worn in ordinary banquet scenes or at official trials. The colour and the manner of wearing this robe are similar to the *mang*. People of advanced age wear only blue or incense-brown, while those of middle age wear blue, and youth dons red. The *p'ei* worn by female characters is about the same as that worn by male characters, although young unmarried women wear a garment made of soft material, known as the *kuei mên p'ei* (閨門帔), or "maiden's gown," which is of red or pale-blue silk that may or may not be embroidered.

The Lined Coat, or *Tieh-tzŭ*

(褶子)

The lined coat, known as the *tieh-tzŭ*, buttons under the arm, and reaches to the feet. It has a large collar and inner sleeves. A woman's *tieh-tzŭ* is somewhat shorter than a man's. The garment may be soft or stiff, the former being made of soft silk, while the latter is made of stiff satin, which may or may not be embroidered. This is one of the most common garments of the stage, the plain *tieh-tzŭ* being more widely used than the embroidered one. In colouring and manner of wearing, it is, in general, like the *p'ei*. A plain blue *tieh-tzŭ* is usually associated with a young scholar, while a plain black one is worn by a poverty-stricken person. When a plain black *tieh-tzŭ* is decorated with pieces of silk of various colours to represent torn places and mending in the garment, it is worn by the poorest person and called the *fu kuei i* (富貴衣), or "garment of wealth and distinction," because the character who wears it, although very poor in the beginning, is, however, a person of lasting ambition and will surely attain high position and good fortune. There is a *tieh-tzŭ* of pure white to be worn by aged villagers, male or female, or by gods of the earth, etc., and is called a *lao tou i* (老頭衣), or "an old person's garment." The *tieh-tzŭ* may be worn by military or civil characters.

The Eunuch's Coat, or *T'ai Chien I* (太監衣)

The *ta'i chien i* is worn exclusively by eunuchs, the garment having a large soft collar and buttoning down the side. The material may be red or brown silk, the whole having wide borders of black or blue. The waist may or may not be decorated or embroidered. The coat, reaching to the feet, has inner sleeves.

The Jade Belt, or *Yü Tai* (玉帶)

The jade belt is considered a very important article in an actor's wardrobe. When wearing the *mang* or the *kuan i*, the jade belt is worn about the waist, this being the vogue previous to the Ming dynasty. The actual belt is made of stiff material, which is studded with pieces of jade. That worn on the stage is almost an exact replica of the real one.

The Skirt, or *Ch'ün* (裙)

The skirt is worn exclusively by female characters. An official skirt is plaited and embroidered, but a common skirt is without decoration of any kind. Skirts of present-day style have only four panels. When a skirt is fastened well above the waist, it is an indication that the wearer is a poor woman in travelling garb, which is supposed to be disarranged.

The Jacket and Trousers, or *K'u Ao* (褲襖)

Old stage traditions, at least, did not permit women to show their trousers; but now, for a century, the vivacious character type, known as the *hua-tan*, has always worn jacket and trousers, doing away with the skirt. The jacket has plain sleeves, without the inner sleeves, and a small collar. It is about half the length of the body, and is buttoned down the side with cord-fasteners. These characteristics, however, are entirely after the modes of the day and not according to orthodox stage tradition. Women wear such costumes on ordinary occasions only; on formal and festive occasions, they don the *p'ei*.

The Vest, or *K'an Chien* (坎肩)

The vest is worn by maidservants only and is made of silk that may or may not be embroidered, and may or may not be bordered with other material. There are two

kinds : those of knee-length follow the old convention ; while the short ones, which come barely to the waist, follow, like the jacket and trousers, the modes of the day.

Costumes for Palace Women, or *Kung I*
(宮衣)

The *kung i*, or palace garment, is worn by princesses, daughters of aristocratic families, or celestial beings, never by women of humble birth. Thus, the garment is called the palace robe. It is made of embroidered silk, having silken sashes as well as inner sleeves ; and is about knee-length.

The Tasseled Cape, or *Yün Chien*
(雲肩)

The " cloud " cape, or *yün chien*, is a most important article in a *tan*'s wardrobe, and may be worn over a *mang*, a *p'ei*, or a *kung i*. Empresses, princesses, and palace women may wear this garment, which is a circular cape, embellished with tassels and embroidery. It is worn on the shoulders.

The Storm Cloak, or *Tou Fêng*
(斗篷)

The *tou fêng*, or storm cloak, which had its origin among the Mongols of the Yüan period, was first worn, while travelling, as protection against, wind, snow, storms, etc. At home, when getting up on a cold night, it may be thrown about the shoulders ; when worn on the stage it indicates that the wearer is not fully dressed. The garment has a small collar and no sleeves. Both men and women wear these cloaks ankle-length, but while men wear scarlet silk without embroidery, women may wear any colour, and use any variety of embroidery, the lower edge of the garment having, in some cases, a fringe of tassels.

A Modern *Tieh-tzŭ*, or *Shih Shih Tieh-tzŭ*
(時式褶子)

The modern *tieh-tzŭ*, or lined coat, is worn by youthful women only and is made of soft silk, which may or may not be embroidered. Although it may be of any colour, a plain black one is worn by the poorest of women. This garment, which has a small collar, buttons down the front, and has inner sleeves that reach to the knees. This robe came into vogue during the first part of the Ch'ing dynasty. Recently the modern *tieh-tzŭ* has been more popular among female impersonators.

1, 2. *P'ei* (see p. 98). 3, 4. Lined Coat, or *Tieh-tzŭ* (see p. 98). 5, 6. Robe, or *Mang* (see p. 97). 7, 8. Official Robes, or *Kuan I* (see p. 97)

1. Modern, or *Shih Shih Tieh-tzŭ* (see p. 100). 2. Jacket and Trousers, or *K'u Ao* (see p. 99). 3. Vest, or *K'an Chien* (see p. 99). 4. Storm Cloak, or *Tou Fêng* (see p. 100). 5. Palace Costume, or *Kung I* (see p. 100). 6, 7. Skirts, or *Ch'ün* (see p. 99). 8. Ancient Costume, or *Ku Chuang* (see p. 103)

1, 7, 8. Warrior's Regalia, or *K'ai K'ao* (see p. 101). 2. Regalia for Warrioress, or *Pien K'ao* (see p. 103). 3. Ordinary Official Robe, or *K'ai Ch'ang* (see p. 101). 4. Fighting Costume, or *Ta I* (see p. 102). 5. Manchu Coat, or *Ch'i I* (see p. 101). 6. Tasselled Cape, or *Yün Chien* (see p. 100); Jade Belt, or *Yü Tai* (see p. 99). 7, 8. Military Flags, or *Kao Ch'i* (see p. 101)

1. Vest for Ordinary Wear and Vest for a Monk or Priest. 2. Eight-Figured Diagram Robe, or *Pa Kua I* (see p. 103). 3. Eunuch's Coat, or *T'ai Chien I* (see p. 99). 4. Dragon Robe, or *Lung T'ao I* (see p. 103). 5. Jacket for a Military or Heroic Type. 6. Sash and Embroidered Piece Representing Armour. 7. Arrow Costume, or *Chien I* (see p. 102). 8. The Short Jacket, or *Ma Kua* (see p. 102)

The Manchu Coat, or *Ch'i I*
(旗衣)

The *ch'i i*, worn during the Ch'ing dynasty, is used by female impersonators when playing the rôles of Manchu or Mongolian women. The coat, made of embroidered silk, consists of a large collar, buttons of silk cord down the side, and wide sleeves without inner sleeves. It comes down to the feet. Sometimes, a short jacket, known as a *ma kua*, or a vest, is worn over the upper part of the gown. The *ma kua* and the vest, while similar to those of the stage, differ slightly in measurement.

Warrior's Regalia, or *K'ai K'ao*
(鎧靠)

The *k'ai k'ao* is the most important garment in a stage warrior's wardrobe, and is worn while in public service or when going to battle; but when in audience with the emperor, reviewing soldiers, or on festive occasions, a *mang* must be worn over the whole. Its colour scheme and manner of wearing are similar to those of the *mang*. An old general of distinction wears a brown *k'ai k'ao*, while a youthful warrior wears a white or a pink one. The garment, made of silk, is embroidered back and front, and has narrow sleeves. Panels, designed like armour, are added to the sides, while at the breast is the so-called "heart-protecting glass." Embroidered representations of tiger heads are attached at the waist and near the shoulders, all these details being patterned closely after ancient war regalia. The stage costume differs most largely in its more elaborate decoration and embroidery. With the exception of the many hanging streamers, or sashes, the female warrior's costume is like that of the warrior's. But only men wear the *k'ai k'ao*.

The Ordinary Official Robe, or *K'ai Ch'ang*
(開氅)

The *k'ai ch'ang* is a robe also worn by military officials, but since it is not so important as the *k'ai k'ao*, it may be worn on informal occasions, as well as at the meetings of higher officers. Its colour scheme and the manner of wearing it are similar to the *k'ai k'ao*. The *k'ai ch'ang* has a large collar, buttons down the side, and has inner sleeves. The entire robe is embroidered, while from the openings under the arms protrude a pair of wing-shaped objects. The garment, reaching to the feet, is worn by warriors only.

Military Flags, or *K'ao Ch'i*
(靠旗)

The *k'ao ch'i* are simply the flags worn on a warrior's back when he enters the fray. The origin of these flags grew from their actual use by a general, who, when issuing orders in the thick of battle, gave one of his subordinates a flag to serve as a warrant. On one side of the flag were marks of identity. Every general took with him

one or two flags to be used in cases of emergency. Thus the flags now included in the stage regalias of generals still retain the old idea of field orders; but the fact that there are four flags is due to the desire for a beautiful effect. The flags, triangular in form, are made of silk and embroidered with flowers or dragons. Their colour should be the same as that of the warrior's robe—as, white flags for a white robe, black for a black one, etc.

The Fighting Costume, or *Ta I*
(打衣)

The *ta i* is worn for unofficial struggles, private fights, expeditions to capture robbers, or mêlées between supernatural beings. When there is a hot contest between common soldiers, drawn up face to face, this costume is often used; it is understood that the battle is not official and not fought for the nation. If, however, the empire has a female general, she may wear such garments, which consist of a short jacket with a large or small collar, with buttons down the side or down the front. The large collar, however, was used in the old drama, while the small collar was introduced later. The lower hem of the jacket reaches to the waist-line or a trifle below. The sleeves are tight, and the garment may or may not be embroidered. The trousers, like those worn in real life, may or may not be embroidered.

The Arrow Costume, or *Chien I*
(箭衣)

The *chien i*, or arrow costume, which is worn by generals in the thick of battle, did not, however, have a place in the old drama; it was introduced during the Ch'ing dynasty. The garment has a small collar, silk cord buttons that fasten down the side, and narrow sleeves, which open in the shape of a horseshoe. The garment reaches to the feet. The robe, decorated with dragons, is embroidered at its lower border with representations of sea waves; hence these are called "dragon-arrow robes," while the unembroidered garments are called "plain-arrow robes." The *chien i*, always worn with a phœnix belt or with hanging sashes, was, during the Ch'ing period, the regulation costume for archers; hence its name.

The Short Jacket, or *Ma Kua*
(馬褂)

The *ma kua* is a garment still worn in everyday life, and is indispensable on formal occasions. Invariably of black silk, a *ma kua* buttons down the front and reaches a bit below the waist-line. On the stage, the garment may be the semi-official garb of emperor or general, travelling on the road. The emperor alone is privileged to wear a *ma kua* of

deep yellow, while all others wear black. Embroidered dragons are a common decoration. The stage *ma k̦ua*, having a small collar and buttoning down the front, was also introduced during the late Ch'ing dynasty.

The Glass Abdomen, or *Pien K'ao*
(玻璃肚子; 便靠)

The *pien k̦'ao* is the exclusive robe for female warriors, and is devoid of all cloth streamers or sashes. While in general its measurements correspond to those of a male warrior's costume, the female warrior, when wearing this garment, never has flags attached to the shoulders.

The Eight-Figured Diagram Robe, or *Pa Kua I*
(八卦衣)

The *pa k̦ua i* is, in reality, a *p'ei*, which, instead of the customary embroidery, has for decoration the Taoist eight-figured diagram. This wide-bordered garment is worn exclusively by Taoists, blue, purple, etc., being popular colours on the stage. Advisers to generals always study Taoism in order to become masters of astronomy, geography, etc. All magic centers about the *pa k̦ua*.

The Dragon Robe, or *Lung T'ao I*
(龍套衣)

It was the custom, in ancient Chinese warfare, when the spears and swords of opposing sides had been crossed for battle, for the greater and lesser generals to do battle while the common soldiery merely stood in position, prepared to ward off a possible charge on the part of the enemy. Hence they did not battle at the time, but waited for their leaders to win, thereafter charging and finally doing battle among themselves. This, then, is the actual method of procedure in ancient warfare. The soldiers, who, in the drama, make such a battle formation, wear long robes and carry banners, while standing to either side of the stage, never fighting. In a play, four or eight such super-numeraries may represent scores, hundreds, and even thousands of common soldiery. The dragon robe has a round collar, buttons down the front, and has embroidered dragons, with representations of sea-waves. The colours are many, the colour of the flag being the same as that of the robe. The garment, having long inner sleeves, reaches almost to the wearer's feet.

The Ancient Costume, or *Ku Chuang*
(古裝)

What is known as the *k̦u chuang*, or ancient costume, was the habit of the women of two thousand years ago. In the strict sense of the word, Chinese drama, in times past, had no historically correct costume of this type; furthermore, the details of the costume

had well-nigh been lost, and what examples were extant could be seen on old paintings only. Within a decade, Mr. Mei Lan-fang, having spent much time in reclaiming the details of this dress, was finally able to assemble an ancient costume for use in theatres. Now, "like the wind," it is current throughout the length and breadth of China. The styles, created and reclaimed by Mei, are too numerous to describe here.

Animal Costumes, or *Shou I*
(獸衣)

When a cow, a horse, a tiger, or a wolf are to be represented, the actor wears a cloth costume, fashioned in form after the animal to be imitated so that the spectator may, at one glance, see which animal is meant.

Weeds of Mourning, or *Shang Fu I*
(喪服衣)

As in real life, the mourning clothes of the stage are white; thus, in drama, the actor may wear white silk or cloth. A plain hat or one with a white band tied to the side, as a mark of recent bereavement, may be worn, while, at times, the hair is purposely dishevelled in order to indicate frenzied grief. Garments of coarse flax may also be worn, on occasion, to show deep mourning, as is also done in real life.

PART 6

HEADGEAR AND FOOTWEAR

The hat, the helmet, and the shoes worn in Chinese drama have been designed from a combination of the styles that prevailed during the T'ang, Sung, Yüan, and Ming dynasties, and bear a very close resemblance to the originals, although those used on the stage are somewhat more elaborate. The more important kinds of headgear and footwear will be considered as follows:

The Helmet or Hat, or *K'uei*

(盔)

The *k'uei*, or *kuan*, is the most important hat of officialdom, the emperor and high military officials only being allowed to wear it. The hat of the emperor differs from all others in that it is studded with pearls which take the form of a phœnix, the emblem of royalty. Tassels hang from the sides. While the hat worn by military officials is somewhat like that of the emperor's, yet the form varies according to the rank of the person in question. For instance, a robber chief may wear a hat that is shaped only a trifle differently from that of the emperor.

The Gauze Hat, or *Sha Mao*

(紗帽)

The *sha mao*, or gauze hat, also for officials, is worn exclusively by civil dignitaries when waiting on the emperor, attending public trials, or at important festivities and banquets. Its form is very much like that used in real life: low in front, high at the back, and black in colour. Horizontally from the sides extend a pair of wing-shaped decorations. Officials of highest rank may wear a long, narrow decoration that is slightly curved in the middle; the next in rank may wear oval-shaped ones; a rank lower may wear round ones; while the official of lowest rank wears round decorations that are pointed on the outer sides.

The Soft Hat, or *Chin*
(巾)

The *chin*, a hat for ordinary wear, is different from the *k'uei* (helmet) and the *mao* (hat); for the latter are made of stiff material, while the former is made of soft cloth or felt. There is, however, such a bewildering variety of *chin*, or soft hats, as to defy description; it is sufficient to point out that the soft hats worn in Chinese drama are technically known as *chin*.

The Military Hat, or *Lo Mao*
(羅帽)

The *lo mao* is also worn by military persons and it finds its origin in the pages of history, although the stage hat has undergone marked changes. In form, it is large at the top and small near the head, while its six sides are richly embroidered and decorated with pearls and jade, its top being adorned with fluffy silken balls of various colours. This lavish display has for its sole purpose the pleasing of the eye.

The Phœnix Hat, or *Fêng Kuan*
(鳳冠)

Although the *fêng kuan*, or phœnix hat, is worn exclusively by women on formal occasions, yet only empresses, princesses, and women of high official families are privileged to wear such headgear. They consist of a framework, thickly studded with pearls and jade, from the sides of which depend tassels, while other tassels cover the forehead.

The Wind Hat, or *Fêng Mao*
(風帽)

The *fêng mao*, or wind hat, is used as protection against wind- and snow-storms and may be worn while travelling, or when one first gets up at night. It is similar in use to the *tou fêng*. The wind hat is made of red satin, and may or may not be embroidered. Placed on the head, it hangs a few feet below the head.

Pheasant Plumes, or *Chih Wei*
(雉尾)

The *chih wei* are the two long pheasant plumes that are attached to the actor's headgear, the longest specimens being as much as six or seven feet in length. Such feathers indicate that the wearer is a barbarian; hence, those impersonating robber chiefs, or military leaders of Mongolia or other barbarian regions, use such plumes. As time

HEADGEAR

1. Styles in Soft Hats, or *Chin* (see p. 106)
2. Styles in Stiff Hats, or *K'uei* (see p. 105)
3. Phœnix Hat, or *Fêng Kuan* (see p. 106)
4. Hats, or *Mao* (see p. 106)
5. Imperial Hat
6. Wig for a Child

passed, stage characters in the rôles of Chinese generals, because of their beauty also wore the *chih wei*; but this is a violation of orthodox theatrical convention. Generally speaking, the plumes are worn by officials or warriors who are not fighting for China. While youthful Chinese stage generals are fond of wearing the pheasant plumes, because of their pleasing appearance, there is no justification for such a practice.

Fox-Tails, or *Hu Wei*
(狐尾)

The *hu wei*, or fox-tails, are the two long, white, fluffy fur strands that hang from the head-dress of a barbarian general; they are worn by military officers, and usually, when not in battle, hang over the breast; but as soon as the warrior enters the fray, the fox-tails are thrown back over the shoulders. Similar in use to the pheasant plumes, the fox-tails denote that the wearer is a barbarian.

Shoes and Boots, or *Hsüeh Hsieh*
(靴鞋)

Every one in ancient China, from the emperor to the scholar and merchant, wore shoes; actors wear the same, the only exception being those playing the parts of laborers and farmers. While stage footwear is generally like that worn in everyday life, the soles of the former are a trifle thicker in order to give the actor additional height. Women wear shoes that are usually embroidered, while warriors' boots are embroidered and thin-soled. The embroidery is merely to please the eye.

PART 7

BEARDS AND MOUSTACHES, OR *HU HSÜ*
(鬍鬚)

Since the ancients of China prized a long beard most of all, it came about that actors wore long, artificial beards. Although at first beards were not so long as those at present, yet afterwards the stage beard gradually increased in length. Varying through shades of white and black, the beard may indicate the age of the wearer. Red or blue beards are worn by people of questionable character, masters of black magic, or supernatural beings, and are made of horse-hair.

The Full Beard, or *Man Jan*
(滿髯)

A full beard, which covers the mouth, indicates that the owner is both wealthy and heroic.

The Tripart Beard, or *San Jan*
(三髯)

A beard divided into three parts shows that the wearer is a person of culture and refinement.

The Short Moustache, or *Tuan Jan*
(短髯)

The short moustache, only an inch in length, indicates a rude and unrefined person.

Miscellaneous Remarks

The types of beards are too numerous to consider in detail. Briefly, it may be said that a moustache which points upward reveals a crafty nature, one that droops downward indicates a dirty or uncouth person, while some beards are worn merely to win laughs from the spectators, etc., ad infinitum.

Note. In the original Chinese manuscript, a very short article on the art of facial painting appeared at this point. Mr. Chao Suh-yong, who in most matters represents Mr. Mei Lan-fang in Shanghai, requested that this part be transposed to Part I of the Appendix. On page 82 these three short paragraphs appear under the heading "The Characters with Painted Faces, or *Ching*." The Chinese of the first paragraph is written by Mr. Chao.

PART 8

STAGE PROPERTIES AND SYMBOLISM

Since in the old drama every situation, every object, must be abstract in nature and often symbolical, pure realism is invariably shunned and realistic stage properties are not favoured. In the gags and bickerings of the comedians, however, realism may be found ; but the ohter important members of the cast are not permitted liberties of speech and action. Every object on the stage is fashioned according to strict convention. Sometimes a common object may be symbolized, as, for instance, an oar may represent a boat. The following examples make this clear :

The Horse-Whip, or *Ma Pien*
(馬 鞭)

Symbolism on the Chinese stage allows the holding of a whip by an actor to indicate that he is on a horse. Both the mounting and the dismounting of a horse are represented by strict conventional pantomimic movements. If one has already dismounted from the unseen horse, he may still hold the whip; but in such a case, the whip must be allowed to hang at the rider's side. When one is about to fasten a horse to a post or a tree, he need only place the whip on the ground or hand the same to another person who is supposed to lead the animal away. A brown whip represents a brown horse; black, white, or reddish whips stand for horses of corresponding colour. But when a whip is decorated with a bewildering variety of colours, it must be confessed that there is no such horse; it is merely a desire to please the eye!

Wagon Flags, or *Ch'ê Ch'i*
(車 旗)

A wagon or a wheelbarrow is represented by two flags, on each of which is painted a wheel. On the stage, with the exception of Chu-ko Liang and one or two other male characters, the occupants of this flimsy representation of a wagon are women exclusively. The novel of the "Three Kingdoms" makes it clear that the great strategist, Chu-ko Liang, rode in a wagon, as do civil officials and other non-military officers, because

they were believed to be poor horsemen. The flags are manipulated as follows: a servant holds the handles of the two flags, between which the occupant stands or walks. Definite pantomime shows that one has entered or stepped out of the wagon. Strict convention demands that the wagon come on the stage as soon as it is needed and that it go off the stage as soon as the rider has stepped out, because the flags must never be set down on the stage.

The Sedan, or *Chiao-tzŭ*

(轎子)

The most unsubstantial and most highly conventionalized object on the Chinese stage is a sedan chair. While in horse riding there is a whip to hold and in wagon riding there are two flags to be seen, the sedan is represented by nothing except thin air! One who wishes to indicate that he has entered a sedan, merely bends the body, moving backwards, while two attendants move their hands as if letting down the curtains. On leaving the sedan, one lifts the imaginary curtains and departs.

The Duster, or *Ying Ch'ên*

(蠅塵)

The symbol of greatest refinement and the most highly treasured object throughout the long centuries of Chinese history is the duster of horse-hair. The *literati*, while conversing, delight in fingering it; thus, in Chinese drama, only the most exalted persons may hold a duster, such as gods, demigods, bodhisattvas, Buddhist monks, Taoist priests, wanderers, recluses, celestial beings, and spirits of many orders. Sometimes, however, a maidservant may use a duster to clean the furniture. In general, then, a duster is very common in the Chinese drama and may represent any number of things.

The Cloth City Wall, or *Pu Ch'êng*

(布城)

The stage city wall consists of blue cloth, on which are painted white lines to represent bricks in order to give a resemblance to an old wall. Whenever the text of the play calls for a wall, two attendants, lifting a cloth representation of the structure, take their place on the stage. Since the arch is often too low, the attendants, who have nothing to do with the play, elevate the cloth gate in order to facilitate the passage of those who enter or leave the city. Although this is a very simple piece of stage property, it is practically the sole genuine bit of scenery in Chinese drama.

Wind Flags, or *Fêng Ch'i*
(風 旗)

When the text requires a great wind, four black flags, called wind flags, are carried and waved about by four attendants, who rush by to show that spirits are "riding on the wind."

Water Flags, or *Shui Ch'i*
(水 旗)

Four flags, with sea billows painted on a white surface to represent ocean waves, are used to represent water, as when a character leaps into a river and is rescued. Such flags are carried across the stage by four attendants.

The Great Curtain, or *Ta Chang-tzŭ*
(大 帳 子)

The *ta chang-tzŭ* is a large, embroidered curtain, which may be used for many settings, most of them being associated with women, some of which are as follows: a bed, a canopy, or a bright tower. When a generalissimo assumes his post or an official of high rank sits in state, the great curtain is also used; in no case may it be hung when minor officials are in session. On the other hand, the emperor seldom makes use of this hanging, while the empress dowager invariably does. In the last use, the curtain represents the imperial curtain, from behind which the empress dowager gave audience.

Mountain Rocks, or *Shan Shih P'ien*
(山 石 片)

Cloth nailed to oblong wooden frames on which are painted representations of mountain rocks are used in Chinese drama to show that the characters have arrived in a hilly region. When one is to ascend a mountain, these blocks of "mountain" are placed in front of the actors in order to represent a mountain range. For this purpose two or four blocks are sufficient; if one is to go through a mountain pass, one or two blocks may be placed on either side of the path before the travellers to represent the rocky formations that tower to either side. This, then, is also a genuine example of scenery in the older drama.

The Table, or *Cho-tzŭ*
(棹 子)

The *cho-tzŭ*, or table, represents, perhaps, more things than any other single object, some of them being as follows: a teapoy, a dining table, a judge's desk, an incense

table, etc.; while the acts of going from lower to higher levels, as the ascent of a mountain or the scaling of a wall, may also be effected by using a table. When in actual use, the table may be placed in an ordinary position, on its side, etc., or in any manner which is appropriate to the scene. There is no fixed rule for such placing.

The Chair, or *I-tzŭ* (椅子)

Although the chair is the most common object used for sitting, yet the manner in which a chair is placed on the stage makes a decided difference. If one is sitting in a palace, at an official gathering, or while reading or writing, the *i-tzŭ*, or chair, is placed behind the table and then it is called a *nei chang i-tzŭ* (內場椅子), or a "chair inside." If one is making preparations to receive guests, relatives, etc., for a quiet chat, then the chair is placed in front of the table and is called a *wai chang i-tzŭ* (外場椅子), or a "chair outside." There are, however, certain important occasions when a chair is placed behind the table. Hair-splitting distinctions as to the manner of placing a *wai chang i-tzŭ* exist. For example, the parents are seated in the centre, the place of honour, while the children take seats to the sides. Host and guest of equal rank sit to either side of the table in the centre of the stage, those of lower rank seating themselves farther away from the centre. On some occasions, women sit to the right side and men to the left, the latter being the side of honour. If a father and a mother are seated, the daughter unfailingly takes the seat to the right, while the son takes the seat to the left. The manner of seating just described is that followed in daily life. If, however, an actor is supposed to be sitting on the ground, on rocks, or in any other unconventional position, the chair is placed on its side to describe such a position, this being called a *tao-i* (倒椅), or a "chair on its side." If a female character must climb to a high place, she uses a chair to represent the eminence. Although a male character may, at times, use a chair for the same purpose, he prefers a table for such a situation. Again, two or three chairs placed together may represent a bed, while a cloak or large covering is placed over the whole to complete the representation.

The Mandate Arrow, or *Ling Chien* (令箭)

Whenever the generals of old issued military orders, these were accompanied by an arrow, which served as proof of the order's authenticity; there was also the idea that the order must proceed as swiftly as an arrow. Thus it has come about in the drama that both military and civil officers use the *ling chien*, or mandate arrow, to send off orders, the only difference being that the stage arrow is larger than that used in actual life. The stage arrow is also more elaborate and is not too faithful a reproduction of the former, because actors fear to displease officialdom by imitating too faithfully anything the latter uses.

The Standard, or *Fu Chieh*
(符節)

The *fu chieh* is a kind of decorative standard, having at one end the representation of a dragon's head, or some other figure; while from the long, crooked shaft depends a cord, which supports four or five rows of tassels. Emperors, empresses, princesses, the queen of the fairies, etc., on coming upon the stage, are preceded by attendants carrying a pair of these standards, which indicate that the person has important official business or is coming with important property or letters. These *fu chieh* accompany him both as credentials and as a protection, at the same time emphasizing the full extent of that personage's rank. Thus the emperor and empress, whenever going abroad, carried before them the *fu chieh*. Those of the stage, because of a desire for the spectacular, are slightly more decorative than the actual standards.

The Long-Handled Fan, or *Chang Shan*
(掌扇)

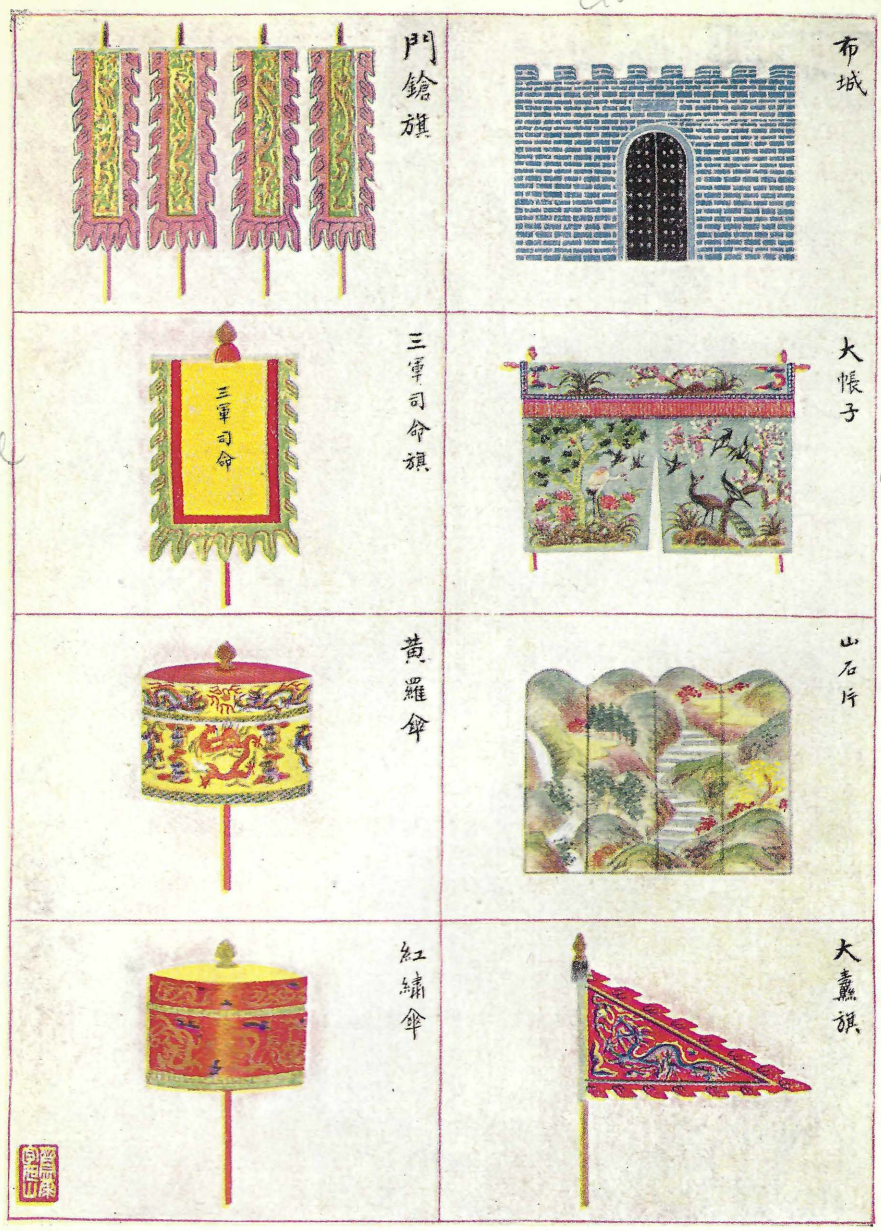
The *chang shan*, or long-handled fan, used for shelter from the heat of the sun or for fanning, may be found in the palaces of almost every oriental nation, because of the intense heat. When an emperor, an empress, or a princess goes out in the open, two attendants unfailingly carry behind such personages a pair of long-handled fans. The queen of the fairies may also use these fans, which merely indicate the importance of the person in question. The fan, or *shan*, may be made of feathers or of embroidered silk, but the prerequisite is the long handle. The stage fan is not unlike that used in actual life.

The Umbrella, or *San*
(傘)

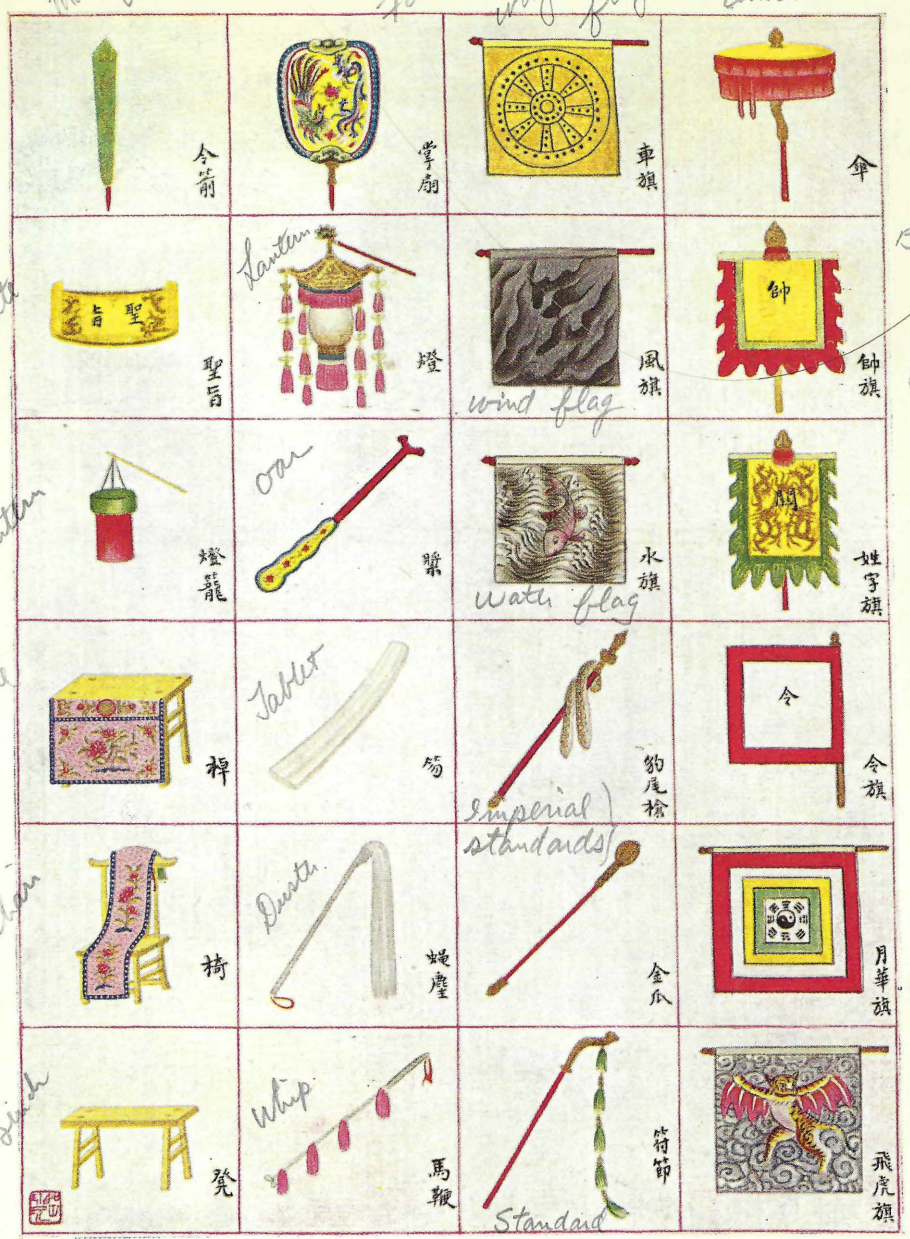
The *san*, or umbrella, employed for protection from sun and rain, is commonly used in the orient. A *san* is held from behind, over the head of the emperor and empress whenever they go abroad. When officials conduct their business in the open, they also use the umbrella, while the fairies include pretty umbrellas in their train in order to appeal to the audience's sense of beauty. *San* are made of silk, plain or embroidered, and the handles may be straight or curved, but are always long. The curved handles give the character more prestige than the straight ones.

The *Lantern*, or *Têng*
(燈)

The emperor, the empress, the female relatives of the emperor, and other members of the royal palace, when going about at night, were accustomed to carry before



1. Flag, or *Mên Ch'iang Ch'i* (see p. 115). 2. Banner of a Generalissimo. 3, 4. Umbrellas, or *San* (see p. 114). 5. Cloth City Wall, or *Pu Ch'êng* (see p. 111). 6. Great Curtain, or *Ta Chang-tzŭ* (see p. 112). 7. Mountain Rocks, or *Shan Shih P'ien* (see p. 112). 8. Flag of a General



1. Mandate Arrow, or *Ling Chien* (see p. 113). 2. Imperial Mandate. 3. Lantern, or *Têng* (see p. 114). 4. Table, or *Cho-tzŭ* (see p. 112). 5. Chair, or *I-tzŭ* (see p. 113). 6. Bench. 7. Long-Handled Fan, or *Chang Shan* (see p. 114). 8. Lantern, or *Têng* (see p. 114). 9. Oar. 10. Tablet, or *Hu* (see p. 115). 11. Duster, or *Ying Ch'ên* (see p. 111). 12. Whip, or *Ma Pien* (see p. 110). 13. Wagon Flag, or *Ch'ê Ch'i* (see p. 110). 14. Wind Flag, or *Fêng Ch'i* (see p. 112). 15. Water Flag, or *Shui Ch'i* (see p. 112). 16, 17. Imperial Standards. 18. Standard, or *Fu Chieh* (see p. 114). 19. Umbrella, or *San* (see p. 114). 20, 21, 22, 23, 24. Banners and Flags.

them several pairs of lanterns; thus, for similar scenes in the drama, lanterns are also used. They may be made of glass, decorated with fringes, or of gauze, edged with tassels, and are held by wooden handles. Officials going about at night also have lanterns of ordinary size carried before them.

The Ivory Tablet, or *Hu* (牙笏)

The ivory *hu* was used by officials, civil and military, previous to the Ming dynasty, as a mark of respect to the reigning house, and also as a means of making memoranda which later might be reported to the emperor. In the drama, when an official has audience with the emperor, he must hold a *hu*, which is usually made of ivory and is a foot or more long and two inches wide, being narrow at the top and wide at the bottom.

Miscellaneous Objects

Pens, ink slabs, cups, teapots, lamps, books, writing paraphernalia, legal documents, boxes, and cans, as well as all manner of small objects, are made entirely of wood.

Stage Clouds, or *Yün P'ien* (雲片)

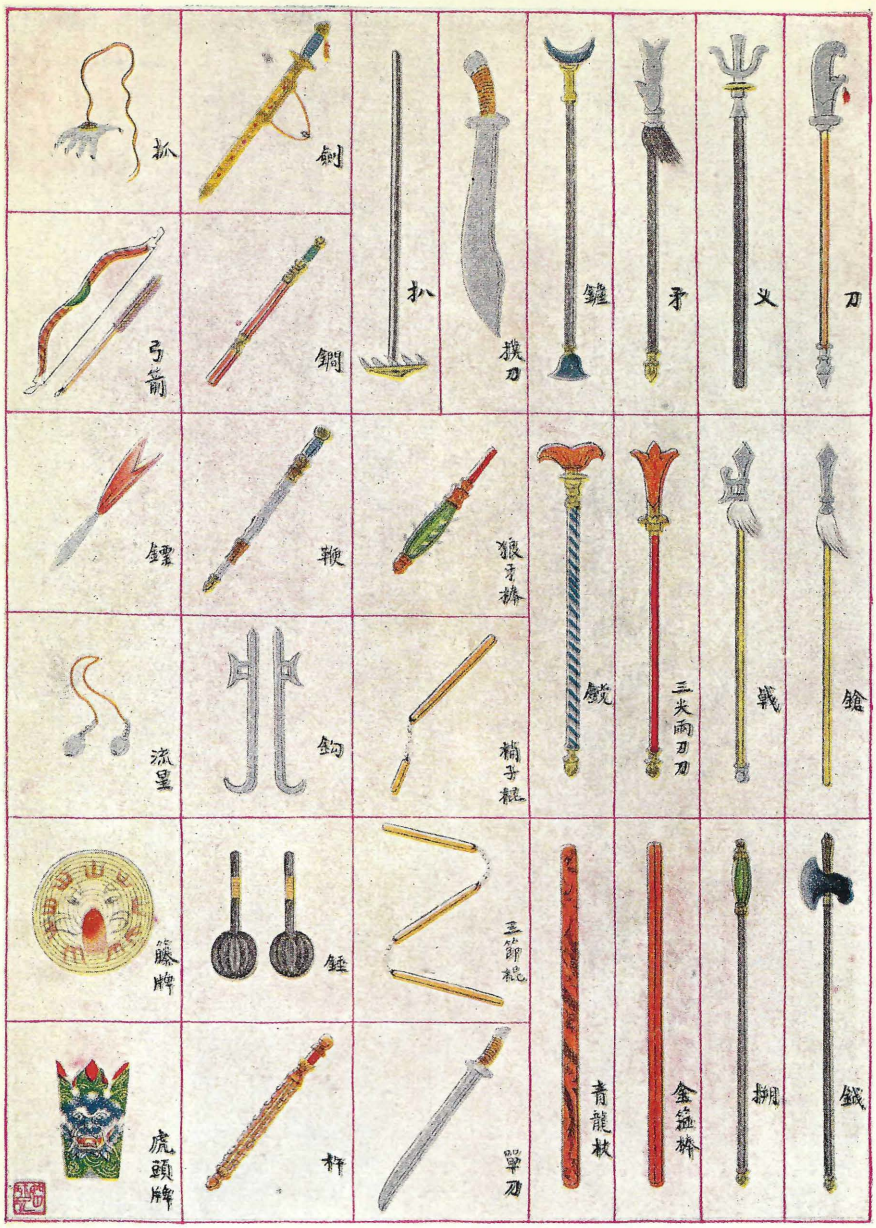
Because celestial beings, when they move about, are sure to disturb the elements as they pass through the atmosphere, four "cloud children," or attendants, each holding a painted representation of a cloud, walk across the stage to represent such a situation. These "clouds" may be made of heavy cardboard or of cloth cut to resemble real clouds, while paint is applied to make the likeness even more close. At other times, for the sake of the spectacular, clouds may be made in the form of a lantern; but in such a case, there is no additional significance.

The Flag on Top of a Soldier's Spear, or *Mên Ch'iang Ch'i* (門槍旗)

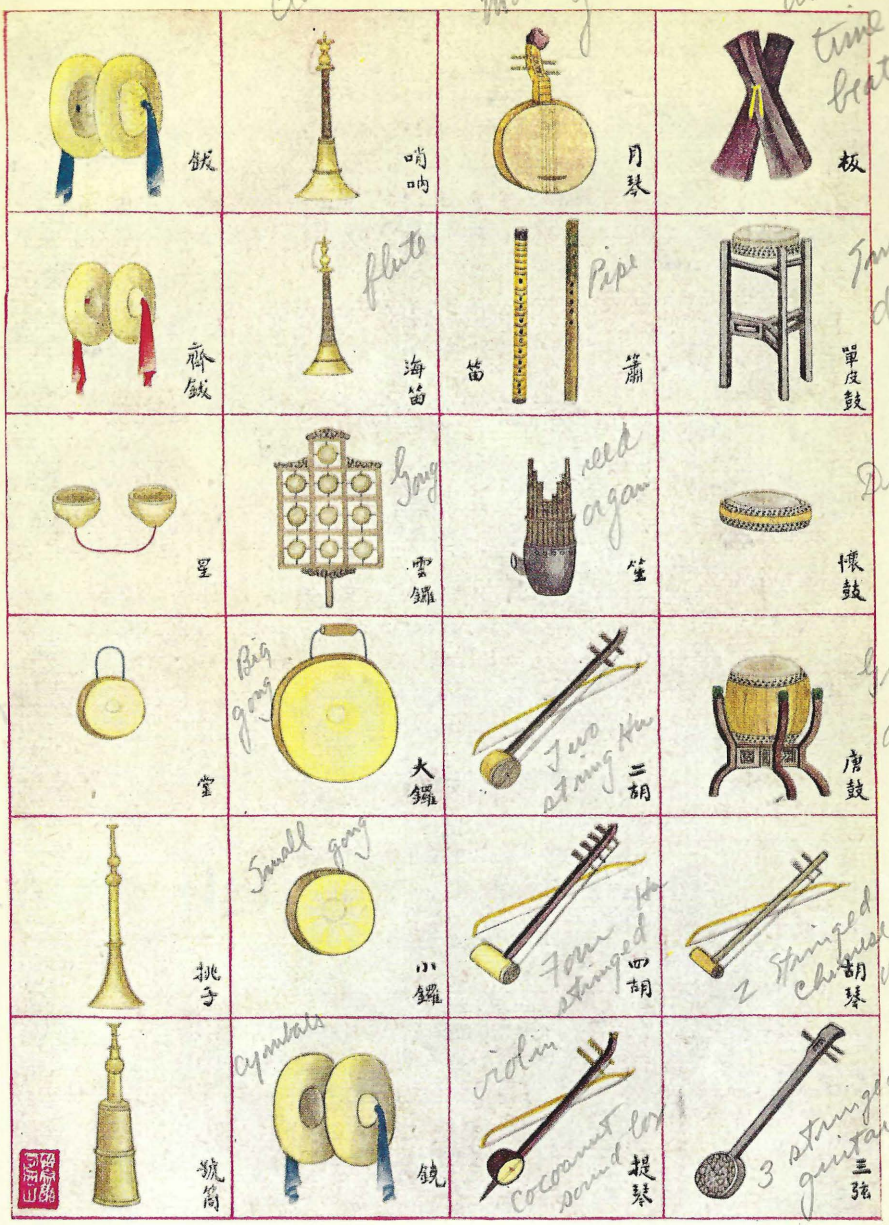
The *mên ch'iang ch'i* is the flag at the top of an ordinary soldier's spear, ostensibly to ward off enemy arrows. The flags are of different colours, so that the various divisions may be the more easily discerned in battle. Red, yellow, black, white, and blue are most popular. The colours should match the robes of the generals for whom they are carried, as white *mên ch'iang ch'i* for a white robed general, etc. The flags may be of silk, embroidered with dragons and edged with red or blue borders, their length being about five feet and their width a foot or more.

Military Weapons, or *Ping Ch'i*
(兵器)

All military weapons used on the stage, such as lances, swords, guns, poles, etc., are made of wood, and are close likenesses of the real articles, although they may differ in measurements. Since the stage traditions do not permit the use of real weapons, wooden ones are used in the plays.



Stage Weapons (see p. 116)



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

1, 2, 12. Cymbals, or *Nao* (see p. 120). 3. Bells, or *P'êng Chung* (see p. 120). 4. Gong, or *Lo* (see p. 120). 5. *T'iao-tzŭ*, Used to Represent Neighing of Horses. 6. *Hao T'ung*, Used on Entry of a General. 7. Clarinet, or *So Na* (see p. 119). 8. "Ocean" Flute, or *Hai Ti*. 9. Nine-Toned Gongs, or *Chiu Yin Lo* (see p. 121). 10. Big Gong, or *Ta Lo* (see p. 120). 11. Small Gong, or *Hsiao Lo* (see p. 120). 13. Moon Guitar, or *Yüeh-ch'in* (see p. 118). 14. *Hsiao*, Blown Vertically; Flute, or *Ti-tzŭ* (see p. 117). 15. Reed Organ, or *Shêng* (see p. 119). 16. Two-Stringed Hu, or *Êrh-hu* (see p. 119). 17. Four-Stringed Hu, or *Ssŭ-hu* (see p. 119). 18. Violin with a Cocoanut Sounding-Box, or *Ti-ch'in*. 19. Wooden Time Beater, or *Pan* (see p. 117). 20. Small Drum, or *Hsiao Ku* (see p. 117). 21. Drum Used in a *K'un-ch'ü* Orchestra. 22. Great Drum, or *Ta Ku* (see p. 118). 23. Two-Stringed Chinese Violin, or *Hu-ch'in* (see p. 118). 24. Three-Stringed Guitar, or *Hsien-tzŭ* (see p. 61).

PART 9

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

In musical drama the world over, it is customary for instruments to accompany the voice; in Chinese drama, apart from vocal accompaniment, orchestral instruments play interpolated passages, technically known as *kuo mên* (過門), or "passing the door" as, for instance, when an actor has completed the singing of a phrase and the instruments play a few additional measures. When half a passage has been sung, instruments may also play a passage, giving the singer an opportunity to rest. In a Chinese orchestra, there are modulations of tone, pauses, and the rudiments of harmony. Although in European drama there is no *kuo mên*, certain musical passages are similar to this Chinese musical practice.

A general description of instruments follows :

The Wooden Time Beater, or *Pan* (板)

The *pan*, or "board," is the main instrument in an orchestra for beating time. While the music of every nation pays due regard to tempo, European musicians "watch time," and Chinese instrumentalists "listen to time"; for the European conductor uses a baton to direct his musicians, while the Chinese player listens to the sound of the *pan* in order to have the instruments play in unison. The *pan* is made of three pieces of wood of the hardest variety, two of them being fastened together side by side; while the other piece is tied at one end with a cord to the others, and, when keeping time, is manipulated by one hand in such a way as to hit against the other two with a loud, resonant sound.

The Small Drum, or *Hsiao Ku* (小鼓)

It is necessary in Chinese music to listen to the *pan*, which maintains the tempo, but at times the sound of the other music is so loud that the *pan* cannot be heard. To avoid possible confusion, the *hsiao ku*, or small drum, is used, for its sound is much louder than that of the *pan*. The *hsiao ku* gives additional indications of tempo, because sometimes the beat of the *pan* is so rare that the tempo may be lost. So, between the

beats of the *pan*, drum beats, known in the stage vernacular as "auxiliary beats," are interpolated when cymbals and similar instruments are used, the small drum not only helping to beat the time, but also creating such flourishes as delight the ear. The *hsiao ku* is made of heavy circles of wood, over which is stretched thick pigskin.

The Great Drum, or *Ta Ku*
(大鼓)

The great drum is used exclusively to assist in creating the effects produced by other instruments. Except in one or two dramas only, it has no place as a solo instrument. It is made of a wooden frame, over which cow-hide is drawn. It is about the size of a European drum, but it has a much deeper resonance.

The Chinese Violin, or *Hu-ch'in*
(胡琴)

In the current *p'i-huang* drama, the *hu-ch'in*, often called the Chinese violin, is the leading instrument of vocal accompaniment. Its sound box is made of bamboo, the ends of which are covered which snake-skin, while two strings, about a foot in length, are played with a bow. The *hu-ch'in* was not originally a Chinese instrument, but came from the northern barbarian tribes, known as the *Hu*, from which it derived its name. In the course of time, however, the Chinese kept modifying the instrument, until it acquired its present form. While the *hu-ch'in* was introduced by the Ch'ings, it had been in use among the northern Hus for some time.

The Moon Guitar, or *Yüeh-ch'in*
(月琴)

The *yüeh-ch'in*, often called the Chinese guitar, is also an important instrument for vocal accompaniment, and is used to support the *hu-ch'in*. The instrument consists of a piece of round wood, with four strings, which are shorter than those of the *hu-ch'in*, being about five or six inches in length.

The Three-Stringed Guitar, or *Hsien-tzŭ*
(絃子)

The *hsien-tzŭ* is another stringed instrument that is commonly used in vocal accompaniment to assist the *hu-ch'in*. It is constructed of circular pieces of hard wood, over which snake-skin is stretched. It has three strings, about three feet in length, and possesses a slight overtone.

The Flute, or *Ti-tzŭ*
(笛 子)

The Chinese *ti-tzŭ*, also an instrument for vocal accompaniment, is considered most pleasant to the ear. It is made of a bamboo tube that is pierced with eight holes and at its second hole there is a thin layer of rush tissue. It is somewhat similar to the European flute, but is held parallel to the mouth when played. It is the leading instrument for vocal accompaniment in *k̨un-ch'ü* drama, and it held the most important position in the orchestra until the *hu-ch'in*, along with the *p'i-huang* drama, was introduced from the North.

The Reed Organ, or *Shêng*
(笙)

The *shêng*, also an instrument for vocal accompaniment, may be classified in the same family as the *ti-tzŭ*, or flute. While all other instruments in China are single-toned, the *shêng* alone has harmony. It is constructed of over ten pieces of bamboo, each of which contains a hole, the entire number being fastened to a frame. The sound produced by blowing, while weak, is delightful to the ear.

The Two-Stringed *Hu*, or *Êrh-Hu*
(二 胡)

The *êrh-hu*, also a stringed instrument for vocal accompaniment, possesses tones that are somewhat lower than those of the *hu-ch'in*. Like the latter instrument, it is constructed of a wooden frame, over the ends of which snake-skin is stretched, its two strings being about one foot and five inches in length. The *êrh-hu* is a modification of the *hu-ch'in*.

The Four-Stringed *Hu*, or *Ssŭ-Hu*
(四 胡)

The *ssŭ-hu* is similar in construction to the *êrh-hu*, the only difference being that it has four strings instead of two. It is an offspring of the parent *hu-ch'in*, and is also an instrument for vocal accompaniment.

The Clarinet, or *So Na*
(喇 吶)

The *so na*, while customarily used as a solo instrument, may sometimes be played for vocal accompaniment. A female impersonator never uses this instrument for singing. The *so na*, said to have been introduced from the savage tribes of the west, is

made of a piece of wood, pierced with eight holes. At the upper end is a piece of rush tissue attached to the mouthpiece, producing a loud sound when blown. At the lower end is a brass sound-magnifier. The Chinese *so na* is like that of India.

The Gong, or *Lo*

(鑼)

The *lo* is an auxiliary instrument entirely, and is beaten when a musical passage is to begin or just about to close; or at times it may be sounded once or twice in the course of a musical selection, ostensibly to delight the ear. When an actor first comes upon the stage, or is about to depart, or is executing pantomimic gesture, the gong is commonly used. This instrument is made of a piece of brass, the edges of which are bent into a circle; it is struck with a wooden stick.

Cymbals, or *Nao*

(鐃)

The *nao*, or cymbals, are used after the fashion of the gong; they are also constructed of brass, the two pieces having between them a place for the hands. During the last decade, the military bands of many countries have added the *nao* to their collection of instruments.

The Small Gong, or *Hsiao Lo*

(小鑼)

The *hsiao lo*, or small gong, is similar to the large gong, and is beaten alternately with the larger instrument. It is used most when a *tan*, or female impersonator, steps upon the stage for the first time. While similar to the large gong in construction, the small gong is but six or seven inches in diameter; it is convex.

The Bell, or *P'êng Chung*

(碰鐘)

The *p'êng chung* is used exclusively to aid in keeping time, while additional tappings are made on the same to delight the ear. It is made of brass into a cup-shaped instrument, while at the upper end a hole is bored, through which a string is passed for hanging. When in use, the bells are beaten together.

The Nine-Toned Gong, or *Chiu Yin Lo*
(九音鑼)

The *chiu yin lo* is played to restricted tempo, and while used with other instruments is never sounded when an actor sings; for it is believed that the tones of this instrument confuse the tones of the human voice. The *chiu yin lo* consists of ten gong-shaped pieces of brass, each of about two inches in diameter, which are hung in a wooden frame, there being actually nine tones only, because one bell is an octave higher than the first. They are hit with a small wooden stick in strict time with the directions given in the musical score.

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