

УДК 94(510).06 + 792.02(091)

ПРИЧИНЫ РАЗВИТИЯ КИТАЙСКОЙ ОПЕРЫ В ПЕРИОД ПРАВЛЕНИЯ ИМПЕРАТОРА ВАНЬЛИ ДИНАСТИИ МИН

ЛУ ВЕЙЖАН¹⁾

¹⁾Белорусский государственный университет, пр. Независимости, 4, 220030, г. Минск, Беларусь

Аннотация. С момента интронизации династии Мин (1368–1644) до начала периода правления императора Ваньли (1573–1620) китайское общество претерпело огромные изменения во многих аспектах. В политических кругах отношения приобретали все более жестокий и развращенный характер, усиливались чувство отстраненности и апатии. Общество стало расточительным и верило в духов и жертвоприношения. Таким образом, опера постепенно перестала объединять людей. Однако благодаря изменениям в литературе и искусстве, направленным на отстаивание субъективности человеческого восприятия и истинных эмоций как источника его происхождения, в период правления императора Ваньли династии Мин китайская опера стала самостоятельным социально-культурным направлением и быстро достигла очень высокого уровня развития.

Ключевые слова: династия Мин; период правления императора Ваньли; китайское общество; китайская опера; культурное развитие Китая.

ПРЫЧЫНЫ РАЗВІЦЦЯ КІТАЙСКАЙ ОПЕРЫ Ў ПЕРЫЯД КІРАВАННЯ ІМПЕРАТАРА ВАНЬЛІ ДЫНАСТЫІ МІН

ЛУ ВЕЙЖАН^{1)*}

^{1)*}Беларускі дзяржаўны ўніверсітэт, пр. Незалежнасці, 4, 220030, г. Мінск, Беларусь

Анатэзія. З моманту інтронізацыі дынастыі Мін (1368–1644) да пачатку перыяду праўлення імператара Ваньлі (1573–1620) кітайскае грамадства зведала велізарныя змены ў многіх аспектах. У палітычным асяроддзі адносіны набывалі ўсё больш жорсткія характеристы, узмацняліся пачуццё адасобленасці і апатыя. Грамадства стала марнатраўным і верыла ў ахвярапрынашэнні. Такім чынам, опера паступова перастала аб'ядноўваць людзей. Аднак дзякуючы зменам у літаратуры і мастацтве, у адпаведнасці з якімі адстойваліся суб'ектыўнасць чалавечага ўспрымання і праўдзівія эмоцый як крыніца яго паходжання, у перыяд праўлення Ваньлі дынастыі Мін кітайская опера стала самастойнай сацыяльна-культурнай плынню і хутка дасягнула вельмі высокага ўзроўню развіцця.

Ключавыя слова: дынастыя Мін; перыяд Ваньлі; кітайскае грамадства; кітайская опера; культурнае развіццё Кітая.

Образец цитирования:

Лу Вейжан. Причины развития китайской оперы в период правления императора Ваньли династии Мин. *Журнал Белорусского государственного университета. История.* 2025;1:47–53 (на англ.).

EDN: NIMKCM

For citation:

Lu Weiran. Reasons for development of Chinese opera during the Wanli Emperor period of Ming Dynasty. *Journal of the Belarusian State University. History.* 2025;1:47–53.

EDN: NIMKCM

Автор:

Лу Вейжан – аспирант кафедры истории древнего мира и средних веков исторического факультета. Научный руководитель – кандидат исторических наук, доцент О. В. Перзашкевич.

Author:

Lu Weiran, postgraduate student at the department of ancient and medieval history, faculty of history.
luweiran1221@qq.com



REASONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE OPERA DURING THE WANLI EMPEROR PERIOD OF MING DYNASTY

LU WEIRAN^a

^aBelarusian State University, 4 Nizaliezhnasci Avenue, Minsk 220030, Belarus

Abstract. From the enthronisation of Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) to the beginning of Wanli Emperor period (1573–1620), Chinese society has been undergoing tremendous changes in many aspects. Politically, the atmosphere became cruel and corrupt more and more, officials with no hope of career turn to Chinese opera for solace, and the binding power of Chinese opera policies lost its influence gradually, and thus it created a favourable environment for the development of Chinese opera. Ideologically, the trend of detachment and apathy turned out to be more and more intense. Socially, the trend of extravagance and the belief in ghosts and sacrifices got its arisen. Chinese opera became a way to show off wealth and was often used to entertain sacrificial ceremonies, which promoted the prosperity of Chinese opera performances. Culturally, watching Chinese operas made a trend. Chinese opera was mature, combining art and entertainment, and was loved by literati. Simultaneously, the trend of literary and artistic innovations, advocated an individual's subjectivity and true emotions, composed the source, the object and the function of that literature. Driven with that variety of extensive and profound changes, Chinese opera of the Wanli Emperor period of the Ming Dynasty appeared to be an independent social cultural trend and thus achieved very high level and acquired its rapid development. At the same time, it gave birth to many outstanding Chinese opera writers and works, which improved the quality of Ming Dynasty Chinese operas and made the Ming Dynasty the second golden age in the history of classical Chinese opera.

Keywords: Ming Dynasty; Wanli Emperor period; Chinese society; Chinese opera; Chinese cultural development.

Looking at the development history of Chinese opera in the times of Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), we can see that the Chinese opera of the Wanli Emperor period (1573–1620) reached its undisputed peak, which got its reflection in many aspects (e.g., the script creation). Furthermore, at that period a large number of high-quality writers and works appeared, including Tang Xianzu (湯顯祖)¹, who was known as the greatest writer in the history of Chinese opera with his opera «Linchuan si meng» («臨川四夢»)². In terms of the Chinese opera theory, a large number of professional Chinese opera commentators and works on music theory saw their first publication. Regarding that, one should name Shen Jing (沈璟)³ with his composition «Nanjiugong thirteen tune music scores» («南九宮十三調曲譜»)⁴, Wang Jide (王驥德)⁵ with his composition «Qulu» (曲律)⁶. In terms of Chinese opera vocals, Kunqu Opera (昆曲)⁷ entered its

peak period, and some local tunes began to develop and grow gradually. The most important thing was that all groups in society participated in the Chinese opera: all the strata were involved, from the emperor to quite common people. The reason, why such a phenomenon had occurred, was inseparable from the general background of the Wanli Emperor period. This article mainly explores the reasons for that development of Chinese opera of that period, taking four perspectives: politics, ideology, social sphere and culture.

Let us start with politics of the Wanli Emperor period and some preceded time.

Deterioration of political atmosphere and easing of Chinese opera policies. The Wanli Emperor period made a turning point in the politics of the Ming Dynasty. The famous Chinese historian Meng Sen (孟森)⁸ said in the composition «Lecture notes on the history of the

¹Tang Xianzu (1550–1616) is a famous Chinese opera writer and litterateur in the Ming Dynasty. His Chinese opera creation advocated originality and opposed imitation of ancient models and rigidity in rhythm. His creative achievements and artistic ideas had a great influence on later generations.

²The opera «Linchuan si meng» is collectively known as «Zichai Ji» («紫钗記»), «Mudan Ting» («牡丹亭»), «Nankeji» («南柯記») and «Handanji» («邯鄲記») written by Tang Xianzu, a famous dramatist in the Ming Dynasty.

³Shen Jing is Ming Dynasty dramatist and music critic. Some dramatists were influenced by him in theory and followed his style in creation, forming the «Wujiang pai» headed by him.

⁴The composition «Nanjiugong thirteen tune music score» is the metrical score of Nanqu (南曲) written by Shen Jing. Chuanqi creators after Shen Jing all regard this work as the criterion for authentic Nanqu rhythms and a reference book for retrieval. This book is also an important basis for modern people to study ancient Chinese opera.

⁵Wang Jide (1540–1623) is a drama theorist in the Ming Dynasty.

⁶The composition «Qulu» is written by Wang Jide. The book contains forty chapters, which extensively discuss important issues in Chinese opera creation and theory such as the origin and development of Chinese opera, lyrics and rhythm, creative themes, script structure, etc. It also provides reviews and introductions to writers and works. It is a comprehensive treatise on Chinese opera theory.

⁷Kunqu opera also known as Kunshan opera is a new vocal Chinese opera type that was developed in the Kunshan area in the late Yuan and Ming dynasties, and combined with local music, singing, dancing, and language. For more than one hundred years (from the late Ming Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty), it marked a period, when Kunqu opera had been flourishing. Kunqu opera has become known as the ancestor of all kinds of Chinese operas and the master of all kinds of Chinese operas.

⁸Meng Sen is a famous Chinese historian. In 1908, he served as editor of edition «Oriental Magazine» («東方雜志»). After the revolution of 1911, he served as executive secretary of the Republican Party and member of Congress. Since 1913, he concentrated on academic research and served as a university professor for many years. Before his death, he taught at Peking University.

Ming Dynasty» («明史講義»)⁹: «The decline of the Ming Dynasty began after Zhengde (正德, 1505–1521) and Jiajing (嘉靖, 1521–1566), and became even worse in the Wanli Emperor period (萬曆, 1573–1620). The signs of that demise were determined by the Wanli Emperor period¹⁰ [1, p. 255]. The disaster of party strife (黨爭之禍)¹¹ became the specific feature of that time. An important reason of the fall of Ming Dynasty and of the rise of party struggle in that period one was able to find in Wanli Emperor:

«國朝自萬曆以前，未有黨名». («Before Wanli Emperor of this dynasty, there was no such thing as giving a name to a party after forming a party».) [2, p. 12];

«有明萬曆間黨日起». («During the Wanli Emperor period of the Ming Dynasty, each party began to have its own name».) [3, p. 485].

The consequences of that kind of fighting became extremely bad. All officials only followed the party interests and ignored the truth of justice:

«異已者雖清必驅除，附已者雖穢多容納». («Those who are hostile to me, even if they are honest and upright, will definitely be eliminated. People who agree with me will tolerate it even if they are dishonest and selfish».) [2, p. 16];

«平日相知之人皆爲戈戟，平日號爲君子之人皆不相容». («People who usually call each other close friends will be at war with each other. People who are usually called gentlemen cannot tolerate each other».) [4, p. 5049].

The worst thing was that no one in the court had been able to stay away. Under such circumstances, the living environment of scholar-bureaucrats became increasingly dangerous. Not only were they easily offended, but also even their lives appeared to be in danger. In such a political environment, officials' vanity gradually gained the upper hand. They stopped to harbour their noble sentiments but thought about self-protection only.

On the other hand, with the further development of the commodity economy, the trend of supremacy of monetary interests became increasingly fierce. All social strata and fields lost their immunity to its influence, and the officialdom made no exception:

«嘉、隆以前，士大夫敦尚名節，遊宦來歸，客或詢其囊橐，必斥之。今天下自大吏至於百僚，商較有無，公然形之齒頰。受餒天曹，得贗地則更相慶，得瘠地則更相吊。官成之日，或垂囊而返，則群相媢笑，以爲無能». («Before Jiajing Emperor and

Longqing Emperor periods, officials were chaste. If someone returned home after serving as an official in another place, if someone asked him how much money he earned as an official, he would definitely be reprimanded. Nowadays, no matter whether the officials are high or low, they are blatantly discussing who has more money and who has less money. If you are promoted, as a local official, you will celebrate even more if the place you go to is an economically prosperous place. If the economy of the place you go to is average, you will be comforted by others. After your official term expires, if you come back with an empty purse, you will be ridiculed by everyone, thinking that you are incompetent and have not made any money as an official».) [5, p. 24].

Corruption of that period also spread from its top to bottom, from the very emperor to the low officials. In order to satisfy his personal desires, Emperor Zhu Yijun (朱翊鈞)¹² sent a large number of officials to plunder and amass money across the country. That behaviour of the emperor made corruption and bribery a common occurrence among large and small officials:

«遠臣爲近臣府庫遠近之臣爲內閣府庫，而開門受賂自執政始». («Outlying officials were the purse strings of the court ministers. Whether they are local officials or court ministers, they are all the money bags of cabinet ministers. Open bribery started with the cabinet ministers».) [6, p. 6038].

The deterioration and corruption, having embraced the entire political atmosphere, forced many officials to feel themselves hopeless about their official career, and they had gradually turned their attention to self-satisfaction and enjoyment:

«近日國事紛紜... 時不可爲，豪傑無從著手，真不若在山之樂也». («Nowadays, the country meets many troubles... The timing is not right, and the heroes cannot display their talents. It is better to be free and happy in the mountains».) [7, p. 782];

«名場難入，青山白水，是吾故物». (It is hard for me to fit in Vanity Fair, but I still like green mountains and clear waters».) [8, p. 2360];

«世事不堪評，掩卷 神遊千古上；塵氛應可卻，閉門心在萬山中». («I do not want to comment on the common things in the world. After reading the book, I thought back to the realm in the book, and my spirit was directly connected with the saints throughout the ages. The world should be avoidable. When I close the door, my heart is rippling in the mountains and rivers».) [9, p. 329–330].

⁹The composition «Lecture notes on the history of the Ming Dynasty» is one of the masterpieces of the famous historian Meng Sen. For the first time, the history of the Ming Dynasty obtained its voice in that new genre.

¹⁰Here and further the translation is ours. – L. W.

¹¹Party strife is a factional struggle. It refers to officials forming factions and attacking each other for political gain by any means necessary.

¹²Zhu Yijun is a emperor of Ming Dynasty. The year name is Wanli. He ascended the throne in 1572 and reigned for forty-eight years, making him the longest-reigning emperor in the Ming Dynasty. In his early years, he practiced politics internally and prepared border defense externally. The country was peaceful and the people were safe, and he could be called a wise king. Later, he gradually developed bad habits and ignored government affairs, and his relationship with his ministers became increasingly antagonistic.

As a comprehensive art form, that time Chinese opera possessed both artistic and entertainment functions, so it had naturally received special attention and popularity. A large number of politically frustrated the literati and officials devoted themselves to the field of Chinese opera, writing scripts, constructing theories, forming theater troupes, or directing performances, and made outstanding contributions in all aspects. Among those people, two of the most outstanding dramatists in the entire Ming Dynasty appeared – Tang Xianzu and Shen Jing. At the same time, the binding force of Chinese opera policies during the Wanli Emperor period also gradually eased, having created a good environment for the development of Chinese opera and a prosperous development of Chinese opera.

Variations in the composition «Xin Xue» («心學»)¹³ and the prevalence of detachment and indulgence. Furthermore, the Wanli Emperor period made a transitional period in the history of Chinese thought. In the middle of Ming Dynasty, the composition «Xin Xue», led by Wang Yangming (王陽明)¹⁴, emerged, which had liberated people from the oppression of Chengzhu Neo-Confucianism (程朱理學)¹⁵ and had re-established the subjective value of the person. As soon as the composition «Xin Xue» came out, it got quick support and held of many literati and scholars:

«震霆啓寐, 裂耀破迷, 自孔、孟以來, 未有若此之深切著明者也». («“Xin Xue” like the sound of thunder, it wakes people up from their dreams, and like the rays of the sun, it breaks through the haze. Since Confucius and Mencius, there has been no one so profound».) [10, p. 7].

As a highly interpretive philosophy, the composition «Xin Xue» was not static, but had started a process of its continuous evolution since its rise. By the Wanli Emperor period, with the drastic changes in the external political and economic environment, the composition «Xin Xue» has also experienced unprecedented changes: first, the purpose had shifted from joining the world to transcending the world; second, the content had shifted from restraining human desires to inciting personal desires.

Instigated by those personal desires, watching Chinese operas gradually became an indispensable entertainment activity for the literati and officials during the Wanli Emperor period. Chinese opera obtained both its entertainment and aesthetic value, and the way to make the best carrier to satisfy people's wild dreams. During

that period, it also represented the imagination and pursuit of independent and free detached personality among scholar-bureaucrats. That powerful trend of indulgence further promoted the development of opera:

«百事減盡, 惟不能忘情於聲歌. 留此以娛餘生, 或秀媚精進中所不礙耳». («I put aside all kinds of worldly affairs, but I still cannot forget music. Let music accompany me for the rest of my life. Maybe I can improve myself in the music that I cannot get tired of listening».) [11, p. 1083].

An economic development and the prevalence of extravagance and sacrifice practice. After the stability and rise in the early Ming Dynasty, the middle and late Ming Dynasty brought massive social wealth accumulation, the entrepreneurship sprouted, and economic development brought epoch-making changes. The transformation of the economy led to great changes in social sphere, the most prominent of which became the prevalence of hunting for profit and the eagerness of luxury:

«二、三十年間, 富貴家出金帛, 制服飾、器具, 列笙歌鼓吹, 招至十餘人爲隊, 搬演傳奇. 好事者競爲淫麗之詞, 轉相唱和, 壹郡城之內衣食於此者, 不知幾千人矣. 人情以放蕩爲快, 世風以侈靡相高, 雖踰制犯禁, 不知忌也». («In the past twenty or thirty years, wealthy families spent a lot of money to buy costumes and props for performances, and recruited accompanists for Chinese opera performances. When more than ten people were recruited, they formed a team to perform Chuanqi. Some restless people rushed to write some exaggerated lyrics and music, and then they became popular. Within a city, there are thousands of people, who make their living with this profession. At this time, people took pleasure in debauchery and competed with each other as a custom. Even if it violated etiquette, there was no scruple».) [12, p. 139].

As a form of entertainment, Chinese opera became a high-end hedonic consumer product. Therefore, possessing and decorating Chinese opera performances became one of the best ways to show off own wealth. Under that social atmosphere, during the Wanli Emperor period wealthy families competed to invite actors to act in the ones' Chinese operas to demonstrate their prestige. The large market demands gave rise to a large sponsoring of Chinese operas, and that profitable Chinese opera market further stimulated the proliferation of Chinese opera practitioners.

¹³The composition «Xin Xue» is the subjective idealist philosophy represented by Lu Jiuyuan (陸九淵) and Wang Yangming, which believes that the heart is the origin of the universe.

¹⁴Wang Yangming (1472–1529), or Wang Shouren, is a famous philosopher in the Ming Dynasty. He proposed the theory of conscience and described feudal ethics as the conscience that people are born with, put forward the theory of unity of knowledge and action. The educational method emphasises teaching by words and deeds, step-by-step, etc. His theory had a great influence after the middle of the Ming Dynasty and became popular in Japan.

¹⁵Chengzhu Neo-Confucianism is the orthodox official philosophy formed during the Song Dynasty (960–1279). From the foundation laid by Cheng Hao (程顥) and Cheng Yi (程顥) in the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127) to Zhu Xi (朱熹) in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279), a relatively complete system of objective idealism with category «li» (理) as the core was established. Opposite to the study of mind.

In addition to the direct «consumption» of opera, the Wanli Emperor period extravagant style also found its reflection in various aspects including food, clothing, housing and transportation, such as banquets, tourism, private gardens, etc., all of which became indispensable for the Chinese opera entertainment.

Let us take a banquet as an example. The Chinese opera, singing and dancing accompanied every assembly of any wealthy family:

«端居觀大運，去日常苦多。幸有盈尊酒，賓朋各來過。佳人出後房，被服綺與羅。纖腰鬥妙舞，皓齒揚清歌。» («When I think about my fate in the first half of my life, I feel sad. Fortunately, I still have friends to drink with me. The beautiful woman came out of the room, dressed in fine clothes, dancing and singing beautiful songs.») [13, p. 39].

In addition, with the development of the economy and spread of that extravagance, the trend of believing in ghosts and worshiping ghosts got its intensification in that society. People built a large number of temples to ghosts and gods, frequently held various activities to honour gods, and the content of sacrificial activities become more and more luxurious, also, Chinese opera was to be involved in that practice. For example, God-welcoming festival (迎神賽會)¹⁶ formed one of the most popular and solemn sacrificial activities in that time China. At the God-welcoming festival, people often held colourful sacrificial and entertainment activities to reward the gods on the one hand, and on the other hand to entertain people participated there:

«凡神所棲舍，具威儀、簫鼓、雜戲迎之曰會。優伶伎樂、粉墨綺縞、角觝魚龍之屬，繢紛陸離，靡不畢陳。» («Wherever there are statues of gods, grand ceremonies will be held with drums, flutes, and various performances. Actors and singers, wearing heavy makeup and gorgeous clothes, will come to participate. Fighting, acrobatics, Chinese opera, etc., will all be on stage. It is dazzling and has everything.») [14, p. 1];

«初猶學戲子裝束，且以半年舉之，亦不甚害。至萬曆庚寅，各鎮賃馬二三百匹，演劇者皆穿鮮明蟒衣靴革，而襍頭紗帽滿綴金翠珠花，如扮狀元遊街，用珠鞭三條，價值百金有餘；又增妓女三四十人…華麗尤甚；其他彩亭旗鼓兵器，種種精奇，不能悉述。» («In the early Jiajing period, actors still wore their original performance costumes, and one set of costumes could be worn for at least half a year without causing much harm. By the Gengyin year of Wanli Emperor period (1590), two

to three hundred horses were rented in each place, and the performers wore brightly coloured clothes and leather boots that could only be worn by officials. The headscarves or gauze hats are decorated with gold beads and other ornaments. For example, when an actor plays the role of No. 1 scholar and parades through the streets, he will use three whips inlaid with pearls. These whips are very expensive. Thirty or forty more prostitutes were added... very gorgeous. Others, such as the colourful pavilions made of paper, flags, drums and weapons, are all very exquisite and cannot be completely described with words.») [15, p. 396].

To compare them with the previous times, in the Wanli Emperor period people played those gods-welcoming games in more exquisite, more luxurious and extravagant way. Considering its basis, it illustrated more sufficient material foundation and a strong extravagance trend. In that context, a large number of blessing and sacrificial activities promoted the prosperity of Chinese opera performances and greatly stimulated the development of Chinese opera.

Artistic innovations and object and function of that time drama. As the atmosphere in politics, thought, society and other fields has been changed as shown above, corresponding transformations would have inevitably occurred in culture. During the Wanli Emperor period, those changes in cultural atmosphere reflected themselves as in the rise of Chinese opera auditory, so in changes in literary trends.

During the Wanli Emperor period with its Chinese opera had matured a trend of rapid increase of the Chinese opera auditory among the literati and officials took place. Did not only they watch Chinese opera performances and read Chinese opera texts, but also actively participated in Chinese opera creation activities themselves, thus forming a boom in Chinese opera in the Wanli Emperor period literary world.

As a genre of art, Chinese opera of the Ming Dynasty experienced development and evolution in the early and middle periods, and at the Wanli Emperor period, it reached its maturity. In terms of scripts, the transformation from Song and Yuan dramas to Chuanqi¹⁷ has been completed, the script structure has been finalised, and the language style has become increasingly elegant. In terms of vocal accents, Yuyao (餘姚腔)¹⁸, Haiyan (海鹽腔)¹⁹, Yiyang (弋陽腔)²⁰ and Kunshan (昆山腔)²¹ have emerged, and after had passed through the cruel process

¹⁶God-welcoming festival is an ancient Chinese folk custom and folk religious and cultural activity, and, at the same time, a superstitious custom. That presupposed that participants carried out the statues of gods out of the temple to processions, and those sacrificial meetings thus aimed to pray for disaster relief and blessings.

¹⁷Chuanqi is a type of classical Chinese novels from the Tang and Song dynasties and also the main form of Chinese opera in the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Chuanqi in this article refers to the Chinese opera form.

¹⁸Yuyao accent is the Chinese opera tone and type of Chinese opera. It got its name because it was formed in Yuyao, Zhejiang Province.

¹⁹Haiyan accent is the Chinese opera tone and type of Chinese opera. It was named after its occurrence in Haiyan, Zhejiang Province.

²⁰Yiyang accent is the Chinese opera tone and type of Chinese opera. It is named after its birthplace in Yiyang, Jiangxi Province.

²¹Kunshan accent is the Chinese opera tone and type of Chinese opera. It was formed in the Kunshan area of Jiangsu Province. The other three major tunes have declined and disappeared. Only Kunshan accent still has its sound in the world after more than 600 years of development.

of survival of the fittest²², the dominating status of Yiyang and Kunshan operas as Chinese national opera modes has been established. The maturity of genres and styles has greatly improved the literary, artistic and entertaining aspects of Chinese opera. As a result, Chinese opera became more and more popular, especially for the literati and officials.

More than anything else, the dual nature of Chinese opera art and entertainment allowed scholar-officials not only to enjoy sensory pleasure, but also to appreciate the exquisite beauty of art. The proficiency of some bureaucrats in vocal techniques could really surprise well-known Chinese opera actors, and thus showed that those audiences' interest in Chinese opera had not only stopped at its superficial sensory pleasure, but also had penetrated into the deep artistic level:

«近年士大夫享太平之樂，以其聰明寄之剩技。<...> 吳中縉紳留意聲律，如太倉張工部新、吳江沈吏部璟、無錫吳進士澄時，俱工度曲。每廣坐命技，即老優名倡，俱皇遽失措。» («In recent years, while the scholar-bureaucrats are enjoying the peaceful and prosperous times, they have also spent their excess energy on other impractical things. <...> Officials in Wudi pay great attention to music... Many officials are good at Chinese opera creation. Every time when there are many people, they let the outstanding actors perform their own works. Even well-known actors are afraid of performing in front of experts like them».) [16, p. 627].

In addition, during the Wanli Emperor period, the literary trend of thought completed its transformation from retro-gradation to romanticism. During that period, the composition «Xin Xue», developed by Li Zhi (李贊)²³ and others, made the inner self a true value, disregarding any external authority, and put forward independent and free characteristics of individual spirit. The writers of the time took those characteristics and

converted them into a series of corresponding literary intentions, thus have been stimulating the romantic literary and artistic trend in the field of literature. Correspondingly, that romantic trend of thought gave birth to a large number of outstanding Chinese opera writers and works. During the Wanli Emperor period, that romantic trend of thought in the Chinese opera sphere reflected the prevalence of much wider sentiment trend mainly. The so-called main emotion trend of thought was a trend of literary and artistic innovation that advocated taking the individual's subjective mind and true emotions as the source, object and function of literature:

«聲色之來，發於情性，由乎自然，是可以牽合矯強而致乎？» («People's liking for music and beauty comes from their temperament and is in line with nature. This is not forced».) [17, p. 365];

«人有此聲，家有此道，疫厲不作，天下和平。豈非以人情之大寶，為名教之至樂也哉» («Individuals and families who watch this elegant Chinese opera will avoid committing crimes and the world will be at peace. Education must be connected with human feelings in order for people to receive education happily».) [18, p. 1127].

Driven with that trend of thought, that advocated personal emotions, a large number of Chuanqi masters of writing about love started their activity during the Wanli Emperor period. Not only they only formed the narrative pattern of ten Chuanqi and nine love sicknesses, they also improved the quality of the Ming Dynasty Chuanqi as a whole. That trend created a new peak in Chinese classical drama, and elevated the Ming Chuanqi to a status comparable to the Zaju (雜劇)²⁴. Driven by various social backgrounds, the Ming Dynasty period has eventually become the second golden age in the history of Chinese classical drama [19, p. 1].

References

1. 孟森. 明史講義. 上海: 上海古籍出版社; 2002. 頁 368. = Meng Sen. Lecture notes on Ming history. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House; 2002. 368 p. Chinese.
2. 揚州十日記. 上海: 上海書店; 1982. 頁 269. (夏允彝. 倉存錄. 中國歷史研究社). = China History Research Society. Yangzhou ten diary. Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore; 1982. 269 p. (Xia Yunyi. Surviving records). Chinese.
3. 周駿富. 明代傳記叢刊. 臺北: 明文書局; 1991. 頁 800. (趙吉士. 顧端文公傳). = Zhou Junfu. Ming Dynasty biography series. Taipei: Ming Bookstore; 1991. 800 p. (Zhao Jishi. Gu Duanwen public biography). Chinese.
4. 陳子龍. 明經世文編葉. 北京: 中華書局; 1962. 頁 5923. (向高. 答劉雲嶠). = Chen Zilong. Ming Jing Shiwen compilation. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company; 1962. 5923 p. (Ye Xianggao. Da Liu Yunchiao). Chinese.
5. 陳岩野集. 廣東: 順德縣誌辦公室; 1987. 頁 168. (陳邦彥. 中興政要書. 馬以君主編). = Ma Yijun, editor. Chen Yanye Ji. Guangdong: Shunde County Chronicle Office; 1987. 168 p. (Chen Bangyan. Zhongxing political letters). Chinese.

²²Zhejiang Yuyao accent, Zhejiang Haiyan accent, Jiangxi Yiyang accent, and Jiangsu Kunshan accent together formed China's four major ancient Chinese opera tunes. They have been the earliest ones and obtained far-reaching influence. There the ancient tunes have been absorbed with various new Chinese opera tunes, and thus have become popular all over the country.

²³Li Zhi (1527–1602) is the Ming thinker and writer. He pursued social equality and individual liberation, put forward the view that clothing and eating are human ethics, and advocated paying attention to utilitarianism. Besides, he proposed the theory of childlike innocence and advocated maintaining childlike innocence. In terms of literature, he opposes retro imitation, advocates that creation must express one's own opinions, and attaches great importance to the status of novels and dramas in literature.

²⁴Zaju is a traditional Chinese opera form of the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368). It arose in the north around the time when the Mongols destroyed the Jin Dynasty (1115–1234) in the first half of the 13th century. It gradually spread to the south after the Yuan Dynasty destroyed the Southern Song Dynasty, and gradually declined in the late the Yuan Dynasty. The formation of Yuan Zaju is a symbol of the maturity of Chinese opera art.

6. 張廷玉. 明史. 北京: 中華書局; 1974. 頁 8642. = Zhang Tingyu. Ming history. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company; 1974. 8642 p. Chinese.

7. 錢伯城箋校. 袁宏道集箋校. 上海: 上海古籍出版社; 1981. 頁 908. (袁宏道. 馮卓安). = Qian Bocheng's Notes Collector. Yuan Hongdao's collection of notes and collector. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House; 1981. 908 p. (Yuan Hongdao. Feng Zhuo'an). Chinese.

8. 陶望齡. 歇庵集. 臺北: 偉文圖書出版社; 1976. 頁 2401. Tao Wangling. Xie'anji. Taipei: Weiwen Books Publishing House; 1976. 2401 p. Chinese.

9. 陳繼儒. 小窗幽記. 河南: 中州古籍出版社; 2008. 頁 410. Chen Jiru. Xiaochuangyouji. Henan: Zhongzhou Ancient Books Publishing House; 2008. 410 p. Chinese.

10. 黃宗羲. 明儒學案. 北京: 中華書局; 1985. 頁 1632. Huang Zongxi. The case of Confucianism in the Ming Dynasty. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company; 1985. 1632 p. Chinese.

11. 錢伯城點校. 珂雪齋集. 上海: 海古籍出版社; 1989. 頁 3021. (袁中道. 寄石洋). = Bocheng, editor. Collection of Ke Xuezhai. Shanghai: Hai Ancient Books Publishing House; 1989. 3021 p. (Yuan Zhongdao. Ji Shiyang). Chinese.

12. 張翰(明). 松窗夢語. 北京: 中華書局; 1985. 頁 170. = Zhang Han (Ming dynasty). Dreams in the pine window. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company; 1985. 170 p. Chinese.

13. 紀昀. 文淵閣四庫全書. 臺灣: 臺灣商務印書館; 1985. 頁 891. (胡應麟. 少室山房集). = Ji Yun. Wenyuange Sikuquanshu. Taiwan: Taiwan Commercial Press; 1985. 891 p. (Hu Yinglin. Shaoshi Shanfang collection). Chinese.

14. 王稚登. 吳社編. 北京: 中華書局; 1991. 頁 7. = Wang Zhideng. Wushe Ji. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company; 1991. 7 p. Chinese.

15. 範廉(明). 雲間據目抄. 揚州: 江蘇省廣陵古籍刻制學會; 1995. 頁 125. = Fan Lian (Ming Dynasty). Yunjian jumuchao. Yangzhou: Jiangsu Guangling Ancient Book Engraving Society; 1995. 425 p. Chinese.

16. 沈德符. 萬曆野獲編. 北京: 中華; 1595. 頁 938. = Shen Defu. Collection of Wanli Yehuo. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company; 1595. 938 p. Chinese.

17. 讀律膚說/張建業和張岱注. 李贄全集注. 北京: 社會科學文獻出版社; 2010. 頁 427. = Zhang Jianye, Zhang Dai, commentators. Du lv fu shuo. Beijing: Social Sciences Literature Press; 2010. 427 p. Chinese.

18. 徐朔方箋校. 湯顯祖詩文. 上海: 上海古籍出版社; 1982. 頁 1580. (湯顯祖. 宜黃縣戲神清源師廟記). = Xu Shuofang, editor. Tang Xianzu's poems and essays. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House; 1982. 1580 p. (Tang Xianzu. Yihuang county opera God Qingyuan Shimiaoji). Chinese.

19. 金寧芬. 明代戲曲史. 北京: 社會科學文獻出版社; 2007. 頁 329. = Jin Ningfen. History of opera in the Ming Dynasty. Beijing: Social Sciences Literature Press; 2007. 329 p. Chinese.

Received 19.05.2024 / revised 27.12.2024 / accepted 27.12.2024.