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Misinterpretation and Misplacement in Intercultural Theatrical Communications between China and Japan: Ichikawa Sadanji's and Morita Kanya's Kabuki Tours in 1920s China

In the 1920s, Ichikawa Sadanji and Morita Kanya conducted two rounds of kabuki tours in China, which clearly revealed the mechanism of misinterpretation and misplacement in the (re)construction of the cultural identities of Chinese and Japanese theatre. Both had been modelled upon each other in the context of intercultural communications in the early twentieth century. Some Chinese theatre critics indicated that Chinese *xiqu* should absorb the values of modernity identified by them in the Morita troupe's kabuki performances. In contrast, Ichikawa Sadanji's tours in Northeast China and his subsequent visit to Beijing inspired kabuki to imbibe a new spirit of the times from Chinese *xiqu*, an impure 'Eastern Spirit' paradoxically manifested in a 'purified' theatrical Chinese-ness. The positive aspect of 'misplaced misinterpretations' by kabuki and *xiqu* of each other's cultural images and values lies in the fact that it afforded the two theatre traditions a huge momentum for assimilating each other's 'Otherness' to break their own tradition's exclusiveness.

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THE 1920S MARKED the peak period for theatre communications between China and Japan. The two rounds of Japanese tours conducted by Mei Lanfang (1894–1961) in 1919 and 1924 ushered in the dissemination and reception of traditional Chinese performing arts in East Asia, represented by *jingju* (Peking opera). This not only prompted the further output of *jingju* stage performances in Japan in the mid- and late 1920s but also provided a solid foundation for Mei Lanfang's American and Soviet tours in 1930 and 1935.¹ On the other hand, kabuki, arguably the most representative of traditional Japanese performing arts, also gained historical opportunities touring China in the 1920s. The hallmark events were the Chinese tours conducted by two renowned kabuki

performers: Ichikawa Sadanji II (1880–1940, hereafter 'Ichikawa Sadanji') in 1924, and Morita Kanya XIII (1885–1932, hereafter 'Morita Kanya') in 1926.

While Mei Lanfang's two tours in Japan were tremendous sensations in both Chinese and Japanese art circles, as well as in public opinion, Ichikawa Sadanji's and Morita Kanya's kabuki tours in China, owing to their limited geographical scope and the impact of Sino-Japanese relations of the day, did not evoke enthusiastic responses in either China or Japan. Furthermore, their historical significance has not been sufficiently examined in scholarship.² Nevertheless, these two kabuki tours should be regarded as an integral part of theatrical communication between China and Japan in the early twentieth century.

They not only deepened the Chinese people's understanding of traditional Japanese performing arts, but also, more importantly, they clearly revealed the distinctive qualities of the mechanisms for reciprocal remodelling of the different participants in such intercultural events.

Intercultural communication can be likened to a mirror between cultural subjects and objects. For each cultural subject, the mirror's surface comprises cultural objects that have a communicative relationship with it. By projecting itself onto a mirror surface, the image of a cultural subject is (re)discovered and (re)confirmed in a reconstituted manner. This phenomenon, known as '(Re) Construction of the Self by Others', has consistently occurred in interactions between different theatre traditions throughout history.³ It is noteworthy that, due to a lack of knowledge and of biased interpretations of history and reality, a cultural subject's perception and appropriation of a cultural object are often accompanied by distortion and falsification. In other words, intercultural understanding is perforce a type of misunderstanding.⁴

The dissemination and reception of kabuki performances in 1920s China inevitably encountered *xiqu* (traditional Chinese theatre, literally 'drama and song'), represented by *jingju*. The tensions between these two theatre traditions were reflected in how they perceived their differences and similarities, despite both belonging to the same East Asian theatrical genealogy. Chinese and Japanese theatre appeared to show a greater sensitivity to each other's distinctive characteristics. It was these differences between them that encouraged self-reflection and provide thought-provoking inspiration for self-reshaping. The differences 'discovered' by us from cultural Others and the characterization of their spiritual significance may sometimes amount to 'misinterpretations' of the cultural authenticity of those 'Others'. This, in turn, can lead to a 'misplaced' understanding of the value positions and historical missions of oneself and others in specific circumstances. Thus, the discourses and actions of those in China and Japan who

were involved in the two rounds of kabuki tours in 1920s China vividly illustrate the 'misinterpretations' and 'misplacement' in the (re)construction of cultural identity of Chinese and Japanese theatre.

Kabuki's Imposed Modernity

Based on a purely linear time course, it is appropriate to first focus on the 1924 kabuki tours of the Ichikawa Sadanji troupe. However, it should be noted that, although this round of kabuki tours took place on Chinese soil, it was primarily aimed at Japanese colonial forces – the South Manchuria Railway Company, for example – which were engaged in political and economic activities in Northeast China.⁵ Since the Meiji period, the colonial control and development of Northeast China and Mongolia had long been an essential *kokusaku* (national policy) for the Japanese government. Established in 1906, the South Manchuria Railway Company (Mantetsu) played a significant role in modern Japan's pursuit of its colonial policies on the Chinese continent.

Although Mantetsu ostensibly appeared to be a private limited company with railway operations as its core business, in essence it functioned as an extremely political '*kokusaku* corporation', maintaining close contacts with a broad range of individuals from political, military, and business circles. Mantetsu's activities extended beyond economic developments to participate in Japan's cultural colonization efforts in Northeast China, including the creation of its film studio and symphony orchestra.⁶ Considering that Ichikawa Sadanji later recounted in his memoirs that he was invited by Mantetsu to conduct the tours in the name of 'consoling the company employees', the tours took on the peculiar characteristic of being situated in China but detached from its native context.⁷

Yet it was the Chinese tours in 1926 of the Morita Kanya troupe that, in a true sense of intercultural communication, initiated the dissemination and reception of kabuki performances in the native cultural landscape of China.⁸ This was because, while the Morita

Kanya troupe, like the Ichikawa Sadanji troupe, chose Northeast China as the initial destination of their Chinese tours, it was the joint performances of the troupe and certain prominent *jingju* actors like Mei Lanfang that greatly interested the Chinese audience at the Enlightenment Theatre in Beijing from 21 to 23 August (Figure 1).⁹ This was the only event

of its kind in the history of theatre communications between China and Japan during the early twentieth century. It provided a rare platform on which *jingju* and kabuki could perform side by side, offering a valuable historical opportunity for the Chinese people to conduct a comparative assessment of traditional Chinese and Japanese performing arts.



Figure 1. Morita Kanya and actress Murata Kakuko in traditional Chinese dress in Beijing. *Teigeki* [The Imperial Theatre], November 1926.

Although the Morita troupe's three-day tours in Beijing turned out to be grand occasions with 'sell-outs on consecutive nights and a sea of people crowding the theatre without leaving a tiny bit of land', it appears that the performances did not receive sufficient attention from the Chinese press (Figure 2).¹⁰ This may be partly attributed to the prevailing anti-Japanese nationalism in China.¹¹ Based on existing primary sources, it seems that only the *Shuntian Times* (*Shuntian Shibao*), a Beijing-based Chinese-language daily newspaper published by Japanese agencies involved in Chinese affairs, provided comprehensive and detailed coverage of the entire course of the Morita troupe's tours in Beijing.¹² It is noteworthy that there were also some reports on the troupe's tours in China by certain Japanese entertainment magazines and *Teigeki*, the official journal of the Imperial Theatre to which the troupe's members were affiliated.¹³ However, these reports fell short of providing

specific details about the troupe's performances and mostly offered background information. In contrast, the reports from the *Shuntian Times* provided comprehensive and detailed descriptions of the troupe's stage presentations and how they were received by the local Chinese people and Japanese expatriates.

According to a report from the Japanese Legation in Beijing, the *Shuntian Times* was well received among middle and senior officials, intellectuals, and business people.¹⁴ Given the strong connections between the theatre community in Beijing and these Chinese political, cultural, and commercial elites, it is plausible that the pro-Japanese views promoted by the *Shuntian Times* could have exerted a certain influence on the local arts press. The newspaper frequently invited Chinese theatre critics diligently to observe the performance ecosystem of *xiqu* communities in Beijing and elsewhere around the



Figure 2. The Morita troupe, concluding their tours in China, arrive at Tokyo Station at the end of their tours in China, 15 September 1926. *Teigeki* [The Imperial Theatre], November 1926.

country, under the guidance of Tsuji Chōka (1868–1931), a Japanese *xiqu* expert working as a journalist for the newspaper.¹⁵ It was these Chinese critics, who possessed good knowledge of the history and reality of *xiqu*, who subjected the various characteristics of kabuki performances to meticulous scrutiny, driven by their strong curiosity and interest in comparing them with the *xiqu* stage.

While the affinity of formal and aesthetic features between traditional Chinese and Japanese theatre had already been recognized by figures from the Chinese *xiqu* community who had engaged in intercultural communications before the Morita troupe's Chinese tours,¹⁶ it was nonetheless the troupe's entry into Beijing, the cultural and artistic centre of China, and their subsequent tours, where they performed alongside prominent *jingju* figures, that made the *xiqu* audience in native China 'aware for the first time of the similarities between Chinese and Japanese theatre'.¹⁷ In various aspects of stage presentation, ranging from the performers' appearance, gait, action/speaking style, and expression to instrumentals and music performance, Chinese and Japanese theatre 'are much the same with only minor differences'.¹⁸ However, these minor differences offered Chinese critics acute insights into some salient features of kabuki stage practice not possessed by Chinese *xiqu*.

According to Wang Yinxia (dates unknown), a renowned Beijing-based theatre critic, one of kabuki's distinctive features that distinguished it from *xiqu* was the emphasis on historical accuracy, reflected in stage scenery, performers' costumes, and facial make-up. It is well known that *xiqu* performances draw on abstract and neutral scenery, not aiming for a realistic appearance but conveying the environment's atmosphere in a symbolic and stylized way. Wang argued that kabuki's 'use of scenery ([including] backdrop paintings) appears much more realistic than in Chinese theatre'.¹⁹ Compared to *xiqu*'s stage settings, which are 'completely unrealistic', kabuki's scenery, characterized by Wang Yinxia as 'according to the realistic appearance of objects', was considered more historically accurate.²⁰ In reality, in early twentieth-century China, some emerging

theatrical genres, such as *wenmingxi* ('civilized drama'), had already embraced realistic scenery, while *xiqu* still adhered to unrealistic conventions on stage scenery – which, Wang acknowledged, was 'viewed as a demerit by us involved in theatre studies'.²¹

In terms of performers' costumes, the style in kabuki performances was deemed more effective than *xiqu* in conveying the authenticity of the times in which the characters lived. This perception was already highlighted by a handful of Chinese people who had had the opportunity to witness the Ichikawa troupe's performances during their 1924 tour of Northeast China. For instance, Mu Rugai (1884/5–1961), a writer and editor-in-chief of the Shenyang-based newspaper the *Shengjing Times* (*Shengjing Shibao*) around the time of the Ichikawa troupe's Chinese tours, commented that 'the costumes used by Japanese theatre seem not to have deviated from the institutions and traditions of Japan in erstwhile days, being in line with the times. In this regard, Japanese theatre seems more distinct than Chinese theatre'.²² Regarding performers' facial make-up, both *xiqu* and kabuki employ facial painting for stock characters. (Facial paintings used in *xiqu* performances are called *lianpu*, while their equivalents in kabuki performances are known as *kumadori*.) When compared to the exaggerated and distorted depiction of characters' dispositions by *lianpu*, *kumadori* was seen as a more appropriate approach for manifesting characters' true temperaments faithfully. Thus a critic using the pseudonym 'Laozhe' (literally 'old man') argued that, while both *xiqu* and kabuki use facial paintings to express loyalty or betrayal and the virtues or evils of characters, the colours adopted by kabuki's *kumadori* 'make more sense than Chinese theatre's *lianpu* in that the big painted faces [*dahualian*] in *xiqu* performances are quite ridiculous, being far away from reality, and unskilful at conveying the truth'.²³

In addition to historical accuracy, the Morita troupe was praised for revealing that kabuki was more natural in terms of gender than *xiqu* in the composition and selection of

performers. Similar to *xiqu* performances, kabuki had a tradition of female roles performed by female impersonators (*onnagata*) throughout its development. However, this practice changed drastically during the innovation period of kabuki in modern times. Since the 1920s, a constellation of professional actresses had pursued active careers on the kabuki stage, including such female members of the Moriya troupe as Murata Kakuko (1893–1969), who graduated from the acting school affiliated with the Imperial Theatre.

By contrast, although a few actresses performed in the *xiqu* community around the same time in China (where they were known as *kunjue*), they occupied a marginal position in the power hierarchy of *xiqu* performers. The most attractive and fascinating female roles for the *xiqu* audience were overwhelmingly played by such prominent *nandan* (female impersonators) as Mei Lanfang (1894–1961) and Cheng Yanqiu (1904–1958). As the critic known by his alias Shuangdie (literally ‘double butterflies’), who extolled the Morita troupe’s actresses as ‘excellent both in terms of charm and prowess’,²⁴ commented: ‘*nandan*, after all, are generally less able to play female roles in a natural manner than actresses, except a few actors such as Wanhua [Mei Lanfang], [Cheng] Yanqiu, Xiaoyun,²⁵ and Biyun,²⁶ whose talents and studiousness made them stand out from the crowd.’²⁷

In twentieth-century China, the practice of men and women co-starring on stage, with actresses playing female roles, had been a common occurrence in the modern theatre community. In the orthodox system of *xiqu* performance, however, the privilege reserved for male performers to interpret female roles had largely remained intact. Faced with kabuki’s respect for natural gender in the configuration of performers on stage, it was no wonder that Shuangdie asserted that ‘some features of the old theatre [*jiuxi*, that is, *xiqu*] in our nation should be improved despite the fact that it has many merits’, and that, particularly in terms of the use of actresses, ‘Japanese theatre could serve as a role model’.²⁸

Furthermore, the value comparison between *xiqu* and kabuki also involved the issue of etiquette, concluding that the latter was more civilized than the former. On the one hand, this was illustrated by the physical and mental status of the non-performing staff on stage. For instance, Laozhe observed that the orchestra members in kabuki performances behaved quite differently from their Chinese counterparts (known as *wenchang*) in *xiqu* performances:

When we look at *wenchang* in the performances of Japanese theatre . . . they are dressed neatly and in good order, which makes them undeniably much more superior to their ill-dressed counterparts in Chinese theatre, some of whom sit while others stand [during the performances]. There definitely exists a distinction between the primitive and the civilized.²⁹

Wang Yinxia, for his part, seemed quite critical of the ill-mannered behaviour of the Chinese audience at *xiqu* performances, arguing that ‘the spectators’ bad habits, such as clamouring and talking [during the performances], are too numerous to record’, while in foreign theatres like the ones in Japan for kabuki performances, ‘not only conversations but also smoking and spitting are strictly prohibited’.³⁰ To prevent the ‘primitive’ theatregoing customs of the Chinese audience from being exposed to the Morita troupe’s kabuki performers, Wang emphasized the points to which attendees had to pay attention:

Given that this time the Japanese performers will perform at the Enlightenment Theatre, the audience should be mindful of the national dignity . . . and had better not talk loud during the performances . . . so it will be great that our Chinese people will be considered honourable rather than being despised by [the Japanese performers].³¹

From the aforementioned Chinese critics’ comparative discourses on kabuki and *xiqu*, based on their impressions of the Morita troupe’s performances in Beijing, we can recognize the subtext underlying their remarks: if Chinese *xiqu* wanted to rid itself of some ‘backward’ features, it should adopt kabuki as a model by drawing on some of the latter’s ‘progressive’ qualities, both on and off the

stage. The problem lay in the fact that these features (identified by Chinese critics from kabuki's stage practice) – an objective representation of historical authenticity, a naturalness in gender representation, and a civilized etiquette reflected by well-mannered staff and audience members – were the values generally viewed as belonging to the category of 'modernity' in the early twentieth century.

Modernity was originally a European-derived value system that spread to non-European regions, accompanying the expansion of western colonialism.³² From the Meiji period onwards, Japan 'viewed the modernity stemming from Europe as a universal standard of values and tried to measure up to it in a one-sided manner'.³³ Given that the *Shuntian Times's* political stance – 'China should follow the path of Japan toward modernization' – was consistent, Chinese theatre critics with noticeable cultural and political pro-Japanese leanings who were writing for the paper seemed to indicate, consciously or unconsciously, that the reason kabuki performances took on these features was a result of the injection of modernity into its stage presentation.³⁴ This, precisely, laid bare these critics' ignorance and misunderstanding of the characteristics of Japanese modernity and kabuki's historical traditions.

The term 'modernity' has been overused and abused to a very complex and problematic extent. As pointed out by Rebecca Suter, 'the more the term is used, the less clear its meaning becomes'.³⁵ As discussed above, in the global context of modern times, modernity is viewed as predominantly western-centric. However, the term underwent significant transformation during the historical development of East Asia, and Japan played a considerable role in China's reception of modernity. In a sense, what modern China received was a Japan-mediated modernity, which 'convey[ed] to the Chinese a non-western alternative path to reaching modernity' based on 'a more accessible Asian cultural paradigm'.³⁶ That is to say, Japan remodelled modernity, a western-derived notion, into a 'Pan-Asianist' one that could

be more easily accepted and absorbed by other Asian countries.³⁷

While 'the Japanese experience of modernization is full of anomalies and contradictions',³⁸ the positive productivity of this 'Japanization of Modernity' lies in its challenge to a consensual and homogenous western-centred definition of the notion.³⁹ Unlike the western version of modernity, which was a temporal modernity based on a linear historical sense of progression, the Japanese version of the notion highlighted the 'geographical and political nature of the concept of modernity'.⁴⁰ In the historical context of East Asia during modern times, the geopolitical and political dimensions of Japanese modernity specifically reflected Confucian political and cultural traditions – a shared cultural heritage with China that had inevitably influenced the way Chinese people received and interpreted Japanese modernity.

This may explain why Chinese theatre critics mistakenly perceived some of kabuki's intrinsic historical traditions as manifestations of Japanese theatrical modernity. By contrast with Noh, a classical Japanese theatrical genre with highly stylized stage conventions aimed mainly at serving court nobles, kabuki was a popular entertainment predominantly targeting the common people. As such, kabuki retained a certain amount of realism derived from everyday life in its scenery, costumes, make-up, and performers' acting style, all of which had been preserved over the course of its historical development.

Throughout history, successive feudal rulers had imposed harsh prohibitions on women performing on stage in the interest of social stability and purifying customs, compelling kabuki to rely on male performers to portray females. However, it should not be forgotten that Izumo no Okuni (1578–1613), a Japanese shrine maiden, is believed to be the inventor of kabuki. The potential for gender naturalness and equality has always existed in kabuki's historical origins. When appropriate changes occur in social and political circumstances, gender-free

stage practices can be swiftly reinvigorated.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the ‘naturalness’ of gender portrayed by actresses in kabuki performances has always been influenced by kabuki’s male-dominated artistic traditions, specifically the various techniques and conventions used by *onnagata* to depict women. Chinese theatre critics, when praising the gender modernity displayed by the performances of the Morita troupe’s actresses, had overlooked the lack of thoroughness in achieving gender-neutral performance in kabuki.

As for theatregoing etiquette, when measured by the civilized standards prevalent in European theatres in the early twentieth century, theatregoing customs practised by the Japanese audience in domestic kabuki theatres ought similarly be viewed as ‘primitive’.⁴² Chinese theatre critics affiliated with the *Shuntian Times* seemed to have attributed to features of kabuki a surface modernity that had long been cultivated in kabuki’s internal performance tradition, or had never belonged to this tradition at all.

Xiqu’s ‘Purified’ Nationality

While the Morita troupe’s Chinese tours in 1926 led some Chinese people to ‘misinterpret’ several features of kabuki’s stage practice as values of modernity to be drawn upon and absorbed by Chinese *xiqu*, Ichikawa Sadanji, in his encounter with *jingju*, when heading his troupe touring China in 1924, seemed to discern spiritual qualities peculiar to *xiqu* that he thought were beneficial to kabuki.

As noted above, the Ichikawa troupe’s Chinese tours in 1924 mainly targeted expatriate Japanese in Manchuria and did not establish deep contact with native Chinese audiences.⁴³ However, this does not mean that the tours were completely isolated from China’s current theatrical landscape. In reality, Ichikawa Sadanji’s strong interests and close attention to traditional Chinese theatre was an underlying factor in his trip to China, and was clearly reflected in his engagement with figures from the Beijing *xiqu* community during his investigation of *jingju* between 24 and 28 September (Figure 3).⁴⁴

九廿六日北平東京四樓胡氏同歌氏光邸於此左圍次席會の上名士
 波野乾一 山森三郎 沈亮超 鳴幼偉 北花 左圍次夫人 左圍次 李輝 梅蘭芳 富知山 男伯の士



市川左圍次夫妻並に松竹山森氏の北京入

Figure 3. Reception in honour of Ichikawa Sadanji (fifth from left), held by Mei Lanfang (third from left) in Beijing, 26 September 1924. *Engei Gahou* [Performing Arts Pictorial], November 1924.

Ichikawa Sadanji made a significant contribution to the development of kabuki in modern times by his immense efforts to chart new horizons for the art form. Enormous existential anxiety that kabuki might be overshadowed by the emerging theatrical form in the Meiji era *shinpa* ('the new school') in the race for modernization drove Ichikawa Sadanji to study western theatre overseas further in order to reform Japanese theatre. Influenced by Japanese theatre practitioners with radical reform orientations in his circle, including theatre director Osanai Kaoru (1881–1928), Ichikawa Sadanji was convinced that, while Japanese theatre, comprised of various old and new genres like kabuki and *shinpa*, had made some progress in modernization, it was not a theatrical form of universal significance. Another important reason for Ichikawa Sadanji's commitment to reforming kabuki was deeply personal. He was not blessed with great talent as an orthodox kabuki actor. While his father, Ichikawa Sadanji I (1842–1904) was renowned for his excellent acting artistry, Ichikawa Sadanji was often criticized for technical defects in his acting.⁴⁵ It was this lack of 'the exemplariness of acting norms' recognized by the orthodox kabuki community that, to a certain extent, motivated Ichikawa Sadanji to try to maintain and expand his career by injecting new possibilities into kabuki.⁴⁶

Still, the most fundamental reason for Ichikawa Sadanji's enormous devotion to reforming kabuki may have been his perception that the art form had ceased to be 'a present-time theatre' due to the bondage of traditions – that is, kabuki had deviated from the spirit of the times.⁴⁷ In other words, much of Ichikawa Sadanji's dissatisfaction with kabuki centred on its adherence to classicism. He hoped kabuki would align with the latest developments in the history of world theatre, thus becoming an integral part of 'theatrical cosmopolitanism'. Injecting external stimuli was the means to the goal. The question for Ichikawa Sadanji was what type of theatrical form best represented the universal spirit of the time. An eight-month European research trip,

beginning in December 1906, led him to believe that theatre based on modernity was the most typical representation of the zeitgeist.

However, after returning home, his attempts to integrate the components of European theatre modernity into the kabuki performance system suffered severe setbacks. In January 1908, as a summary of his European research trip, Ichikawa Sadanji and his colleagues organized a series of performances under the title *Daiikkai Kichō Kōen* ('The First Round of Performances after Returning Home', hereafter '*Kōen*'). During the *Kōen* event, he wholeheartedly applied the experiences and inspirations acquired from all aspects of western theatre stage practice to make innovations in kabuki performances. Although swarms of curious people flocked to the theatre to witness the *Kōen* performances, the various innovations that Ichikawa Sadanji and his colleagues had introduced to kabuki – psychological realism embodied in the performers' acting style, and in the lighting and scenery – were not well received by most of the Japanese audience. For instance, there were complaints that the excessive visual spectacle of lighting and scenery in some performances overshadowed the performers' acting. Several Japanese critics dismissed the works as 'light drama' or 'living pictures'.⁴⁸ When Ichikawa Sadanji embarked on his tour of China, he seemed to believe this was another historical opportunity for kabuki to be integrated into the new spirit of the era. This time, the bearer of the new spirit was not western theatre, but Chinese *xiqu*, with its 'Eastern Spirit'.

While touring in Northeast China, the local Japanese diaspora enthusiastically welcomed the Ichikawa troupe. However, they also emphasized that Ichikawa Sadanji should not be satisfied merely with promoting orthodox kabuki.⁴⁹ They encouraged him to commit to 'creating an art form that blends Japanese and Chinese thoughts and emotions by studying the nationality and arts of China during their tour of Manchuria'.⁵⁰ Ichikawa Sadanji's aspiration to move beyond the classicism of kabuki by exploring the Chinese arts significantly drove his

decision to go on to Beijing, despite the cancellation of planned tours due to the turbulent political situation. Nevertheless, the five-day trip to Beijing, albeit brief and hasty, provided Ichikawa Sadanji with a clear direction for establishing a harmonized relationship between ‘a purified Chinese theatre with Japanese theatre’.⁵¹ This statement tellingly revealed a prerequisite for kabuki to appropriate Chinese theatre – to ‘purify’ the formal skills and aesthetic qualities of theatrical ‘Chineseness’.

While Ichikawa Sadanji had the opportunity to watch various *jingju* performances during his stay in Beijing, these hastily arranged and brief theatregoing experiences appeared to have had a limited impact on deepening his understanding of Chinese *xiqu*.⁵² It was Tsuji Chōka and Mei Lanfang who significantly influenced Ichikawa Sadanji’s perspective on *xiqu* through their close association with him during his trip

(Figure 4). Indeed, it could be said that it was none other than Tsuji Chōka and Mei Lanfang who elevated, theoretically and practically, the ‘Eastern Spirit’ of a ‘purified’ theatrical Chineseness into a new spirit of the times in the history of world theatre.

Tsuji Chōka had long been committed, with dedication and affection, to preserving and promoting the cultural status of Chinese *xiqu*. Strongly opposed to the prevailing notion among various Japanese intellectuals that Chinese *xiqu* was a ‘primitive theatre’, Tsuji Chōka went to great lengths to defend the dignity of *xiqu*’s values. He not only argued that *xiqu* could ‘establish a solid footing in the world as a dance-and-song theatre’,⁵³ but also that *xiqu*’s scripts ‘undoubtedly possess the merit of being a soft and beautiful literature’.⁵⁴ In other words, in both performance and literary terms, Chinese *xiqu* was ‘sufficient to shine brilliantly in the global theatre



Figure 4. Ichikawa Sadanji (second from left), with Mei Lanfang (right), looking at paintings of Peking Opera’s *lianpu* (1924). Photograph owned by Japanese scholar Maya Hatano. Reproduction courtesy of Mrs Hatano.

community'.⁵⁵ *Xiqu*, representing 'Eastern' arts as a whole, could be on an equal footing with western theatre in the world theatre landscape.⁵⁶ However, the universal 'Eastern Spirit' of *xiqu*, as identified by Tsuji Chōka, was actually built upon a few modifications based on a subtle incorporation of western modernity.

On the surface, Tsuji Chōka appeared to have taken a cautious stance towards proposals to reshape *xiqu* in the image of western theatre. He opposed mechanical incorporation of western components into *xiqu*'s stage practices.⁵⁷ As far as Tsuji Chōka was concerned, as long as the core technical foundations and aesthetic essence of *xiqu*'s stage practices remained intact, certain 'irrational and inaeesthetic points' of *xiqu* practice,⁵⁸ irreconcilable with the fundamentals of modern civilization, had to be removed.⁵⁹ Only then could the 'Eastern Spirit' of *xiqu* be expressed in a purer form.

In a sense, it was the experimental *jingju* productions envisioned by Mei Lanfang with the collaboration of literati like Qi Rushan (1877–1962) that faithfully followed Tsuji Chōka's approach to 'purifying' theatrical Chineseness under the guidance of western modernity. The modification of *jingju*'s performance system in *guzhuang xinxi* (ancient-costume new drama) comprised 'refinement' and 'restoration'. 'Refinement' involved reducing components considered to be contradictory to modern ethical and aesthetic norms. This included eliminating scripts perceived as vulgar, thus prohibiting 'corrupt habits' like *yingchang*,⁶⁰ and the practice of throwing cushions.⁶¹ 'Restoration' was primarily aimed to reduce over-reliance on singing in orthodox *jingju* and a (re)turn to more dance – achieved by incorporating dance elements from *kunqu* (Kun opera).⁶²

It can be said that Mei Lanfang's *guzhuang xinxi* practice was highly successful in eliminating certain 'primitive' elements from *jingju*, when measured against the standards of modern civilization. However, this manipulation did not undermine but rather highlighted the 'Eastern Spirit' of 'purified' theatrical Chineseness, making its aesthetic qualities appear

more universal than western theatre in the eyes of some foreigners. For instance, the majority of Mei Lanfang's repertoires during his two Japanese tours consisted of *guzhuang xinxi* productions.⁶³ To Japanese audiences, they offered elegant aesthetic pleasures not typical of orthodox *xiqu* performances.⁶⁴ Together, they created *xiqu* whose 'distinctive formal and symbolic beauties were much more advanced and essential than those of realist theatre'.⁶⁵

It is worth noting that, while Tsuji Chōka and Mei Lanfang primarily approached the purification of *xiqu* from an aesthetic perspective, it cannot be denied that the 'purified' theatre Chineseness shaped by their views and stage practices unintentionally fostered a sense of cultural superiority regarding Chinese theatre in Japan and the West. According to playwright Nakauchi Chōji (1875–1937), the success of Mei Lanfang's *guzhuang xinxi* in Japan was attributed to 'the infusion of Japanese and western dance characteristics into the classicism of Chinese theatre'.⁶⁶ In other words, the 'purification' of Chinese *xiqu* was believed to have benefited from the inclusion of artistic elements from the Japanese and western performing arts, which were considered more modern.

When Mei Lanfang gave his Japanese tour premieres at the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo on 1 May 1919, Ichikawa Sadanji was among spectators from Japanese art and literary circles. His graceful hand gestures and beautiful voice profoundly impressed upon Ichikawa Sadanji the belief that Chinese *xiqu* possessed 'a wonderful taste peculiar to the East', which was not 'a quality possessed by western arts and does not need to be remarked [upon] and taught by westerners'.⁶⁷ Mei Lanfang's performances inspired awareness that there might be an 'Eastern Spirit' in *xiqu* superior to the aesthetic spirit of 'western theatre', and this influenced Ichikawa Sadanji's decision to conduct his tours in Northeast China. Similarly, his subsequent trip to Beijing prior to Mei's second Japanese tour in 1924 was taken with the hope that he could 'stage classical plays

while uncovering something new from them', much as Mei Lanfang had done.⁶⁸

Even so, it is worth noting that the new spirit of the times attributed to *xiqu*, and shaped by Tsuji Chōka and Mei Lanfang, was not, in essence, a *pure* 'Eastern Spirit'. The reason why this 'Eastern Spirit' of *xiqu* seemed superior to western theatre lies in the fact that it resulted from purging theatre Chineseness of 'something primitive and backward' based on the value system of European civilization.⁶⁹ The image of *xiqu* that Tsuji Chōka and Mei Lanfang had offered to Ichikawa Sadanji as representing an authentic theatrical Chineseness was quite problematic;⁷⁰ this rendering of *xiqu* with polished and refined formal characteristics and aesthetic tastes, idealized by intellectual and *xiqu* elites, was decontextualized from the actual performance ecosystem of *xiqu* in the real society of contemporary China. But it did not become the mainstream in the subsequent course of *xiqu*'s evolution. In this sense, Ichikawa Sadanji, albeit in an unconscious state, 'misinterpreted' the actuality of Chinese *xiqu* and its future direction.

Epilogue: From Dichotomy to Co-Configuration

The historical significance of the kabuki tours in China during the 1920s lies not only in the overseas promotion and dissemination of Japanese performing arts, but also in the various direct and indirect interactive and influential relations with Chinese *xiqu* in a broader and more complex intercultural context. The phenomenon of '(Re)Construction of the Self by Others' inherent in intercultural communications injected fresh possibilities and flexibilities into the (re)construction of the cultural identity of Chinese and Japanese theatre. During this process, the 'misinterpretation' of the spiritual implications of cultural Others, attributable to various factors such as the trends of the times, political relationships, and personal circumstances, offered a 'misplaced' prospect for the respective historical development of Chinese and Japanese theatre.

When some Chinese theatre critics 'discovered' certain qualities in the Morita troupe's kabuki performances that they deemed progressive and civilized, it was natural for these politically and culturally pro-Japanese Chinese critics to suggest that, if *xiqu* wanted to gain a foothold in the western-dominant cultural landscape, it – similarly to kabuki – had to incorporate various values and ideas of modernity into its stage practice. However, the qualities identified as modern were either deeply rooted in kabuki's historical traditions or else – some of them, such as the theatregoing etiquette in kabuki performances perceived as civilized by Chinese critics – attached to kabuki in a far-fetched way. As for the Ichikawa troupe's China tours in 1924, his failure to modernize kabuki, modelled after western theatre, together with Mei Lanfang's tours in Japan, diverted Ichikawa Sadanji's attention to a potential universal spirit of the times in *xiqu*: the 'Eastern Spirit' of a 'purified' theatre Chineseness revealed by Tsuji Chōka and Mei Lanfang. Paradoxically, this seemingly 'purer' national manifestation of *xiqu* embodied the aesthetic ideas of certain intellectuals and *xiqu* elites, and was essentially impure.

The historic encounter between kabuki and *xiqu* facilitated by Ichikawa Sadanji's and Morita Kanya's Chinese tours made both of them 'misinterpret' each other's cultural image and values. Nevertheless, this misinterpretation is a reminder that neither Eastern theatre tradition nor western theatre modernity is pure. They are both flexible and infused with impurities and flexibility, and neither could singly represent the ultimate trend of world theatre. It is necessary to deconstruct the false dichotomy of western and Eastern cosmopolitanism, each claiming ultimate universality exclusive to itself while disparaging the other as an outdated, local particularity. Universality and locality are two sides of the same coin, and both tend to consider themselves monocultural, monolithic, and unitary entities.⁷¹ However, there is no static unity in the historical development of any cultural phenomenon. More specifically for theatre, all 'theatres are hybrid and there is no pure theatre'.⁷²

In actuality, traditional and modern elements in theatre have never existed in a binary opposition. They have consistently been part of a 'cycle of hybrid productions', where tradition and modernity maintain a *co-configurative* relationship being inter-invented by, and interdependent on, each other.⁷³ This shows that theatre cosmopolitanism should never be seen in the singular but in the plural, taking the form of *discrepant cosmopolitanisms* – an open and inclusive system with healthy tensions between various theatre traditions that intermingle.⁷⁴ Only by actively engaging in this co-configurative system can any theatre form develop and evolve. Otherwise, it risks decline and atavism.

In contemporary *jingju* performances, as a result of a series of government-led reforms since the late 1960s, actresses 'are now seen as inseparable components, and the tradition of the male *dan* [male impersonators] has practically disappeared'.⁷⁵ On the other hand, after the Second World War, driven by the myth of 'classical traditional performing arts' and the pursuit of commercial interests by kabuki show business (represented by the Shōchiku Company),⁷⁶ a perpetuated image of kabuki as 'an unchanging, frozen, and timeless theatre form' has led to an increasingly conservative attitude towards female performers in the kabuki community.⁷⁷ This conservative stance has progressed to the extent that actresses are now absent from grand kabuki performances, except for a very few all-female troupes such as the Ichikawa Girls' Kabuki Troupe (Ichikawa Shōjō Kabuki Gekidan) and the Nagoya Daughters' Kabuki Company (Nagoya Musume Kabuki), which occasionally perform in provincial minor kabuki theatres. This situation represents a historical irony concerning the dynamics between *xiqu* and kabuki in the early twentieth century, as revealed by the Ichikawa troupe's and Morita troupe's kabuki tours in China.

As long as we do not force ourselves to make an ultimate value judgement on the West/East dichotomy and take part in the global process of co-figurative communications with an open and inclusive mind,

Chinese and Japanese theatre, while maintaining a healthy tension with other theatre traditions, could gain a firm foothold and a more assertive cultural identity in the forest of world theatre.

Notes and References

I am greatly indebted to Maria Shevtsova's kind and thorough editing.

1. In this regard, the most representative cases are the Japanese tours in 1925 conducted by the prominent Shanghai-style Peking opera female impersonator Huang Yulin (1907–1968), known as 'Green Peony', and the Japanese tours in 1926 conducted respectively by the *kunling shisandan* (thirteen female performers from Peking opera) and Yang Yuelou Jr. (1900–1947), a distinguished female impersonator from the Southern School of Peking opera. For a detailed study, see Liwei Li, '1920 Niandai Mei Lanfang Fangri Gongyan hou Jingju yu Riben Xiju de Jiaoliu [The Communications between Peking Opera and Japanese Theatre in the 1920s after Mei Lanfang's Japanese Tours]', *Journal of National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts*, XXXVI, No. 3 (2015), p. 77–83.

2. As far as I know, there are currently only three specialized articles in Chinese- and Japanese-speaking academia on the Chinese tours of the two kabuki performers: Tiesi Jiang, 'Zhongri Chuantong Xiju Jiaoliu de Guanjian Yihuan: 20 Shiji 20 Niandai Gewuji Yanyuan Fanghua Huodong de Duochong Yiyi [Critical Part of the Communications between Traditional Chinese and Japanese Theatre: The Multiple Implications of Kabuki Performers' Touring Activities in 1920s China]', *Arts Study*, XXI (2019), p. 198–207; Hong Yao, 'Ichikawa Sadanji no 1924nen Chūgoku Kōen [Ichikawa Sadanji's Chinese Tours in 1924]', *Studies in Language and Literature*, XXI (2021), p. 1–13; and Hong Yao, '1926nen 13daimei Morita Kanya no Chūgoku Kōen ni tsuite [On Morita Kanya XIII's Chinese Tours in 1926]', in *Ibunka to Pafō-mansu: Border Crossers [Interculture and Performance: Border Crossers]*, ed. Yoshiko Matsuda, Keisuke Sasayama, and Hong Yao (Tokyo: Shunpōsha, 2016), p. 9–40.

3. As noted by Brian Singleton, 'the appropriation of another "distant" culture has been a recurring trend in the evolution of performance' (Singleton, 'Introduction: The Pursuit of Otherness for the Investigation of Self', *Theatre Research International*, XXII, No. 2 (1997), p. 93–7).

4. Takashi Marumoto, 'Doitsu no Nihon Engeki Juyō ni miru Ibunka "Gokai" no Dainamizumu [The Dynamism of Intercultural "Misunderstanding" in the Reception of Japanese Theatre in Germany]', in *Engeki Intarakuthivu: Nihon × Doitsu [Theatre Interactive: Japan × Germany]*, ed. Michiko Tanigawa and Hirokazu Akiba (Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 2010), p. 91.

5. The Ichikawa Sadanji troupe departed from Tokyo on 5 August 1924, sailed from Kobe on 6 August, and arrived on 11 August in Dalian, where it formally started its Chinese tours. The tours included Dalian (11–19 August), Fengtian [Shenyang] (21–23 August), Changchun (25–26 August), Harbin (27–28 August), Fushun (30–31 August), and An'dong [Dandong] (2–3 September).

6. For detailed studies of the history of Mantetsu and its cultural activities, see Kiyofumi Katō, *Mantetsu Zenshi: 'Kokusaku Gaisha' no Zenbō* [A Complete History of Mantetsu:

The Full Picture of A 'Kokusaku Corporation' (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2019); and Hideo Kobayashi, *Mantetsu: Chi no Shūdan no Tanjō to Shi* [*Mantetsu: The Birth and Death of 'An Intellectual Group'*] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1996).

7. In fact, the Ichikawa Sadanji troupe's tours were not confined to Northeast China but also extended to some areas in the Korean Peninsula, such as Busan. Overall, the majority of those who saw the troupe's performances were Japanese emigrants involved in various colonial political-economic activities in these regions. See Sadanji Ichikawa, *Sadanji Geidan* [*Sadanji's Treatises on Arts*] (Tokyo: Nokokusha, 1936), p. 159–61.

8. The troupe comprised about fifty members, including Morita Kanya, his son Bandō Shūka, and a number of actresses, including Azuma Hideko, Murata Kakuko, and Haruhi Akiko, all of whom were exclusive performers for the Imperial Theatre.

9. The Morita Kanya troupe departed from Tokyo on 28 June 1926, initially touring Daegu, Keijō [Seoul], and Pyongyang in the Korean Peninsula. They then began their tours in Northeast China from 21 July. The specific locations and dates of the troupes' Northeast China tours included An'dong [Dandong] (21–22 July), Dalian (23–30 July), Fengtian (1–3 August), Changchun (4–6 August), Harbin (7–8 August), Tieling (10 August), Fushun (11–13 August), Liaoyang (14 August), and Dalian (15–17 August).

10. Chōka Tsuji, 'Riling Lijing zhi Ganyan [A Reflection Speech before the Japanese Performers' Departure from Beijing]', *Shuntian Times*, 25 August 1926, p. 5.

11. To ensure the smooth progress of the Morita troupe's tours in Beijing, the authorities of the Republic of China deployed military police to guard the theatre building, ensuring the safety of the Japanese performers throughout their performance period. See 'De Weicengyou zhi Zhongri Mingling Dahuiyan [An Unprecedented Joint Performance by Prominent Chinese and Japanese Performers]', *Shuntian Times*, 23 August 1926, p. 7.

12. The first issue of the *Shuntian Times* was published on 30 December 1901 by Nakajima Masao (1859–1943), the former chief director of the Fuzhou branch of Toa-dobunkai, a Japanese cultural institution dealing with China. In 1905, the Japanese Foreign Ministry acquired ownership of the *Shuntian Times* from Nakajima, transforming the newspaper into a mouthpiece for the ministry's propaganda campaign in China. The *Shuntian Times* had published a total of 9,285 issues before it shut down on 27 March 1930. For a detailed history of the newspaper, see Shun Chen, 'Zaihua Rimei dui Riben Xingxiang de Xuanchuan yu Weihe – Yi Shuntian Shibao wei Zhongxin [The Promotion and Guarantee of the Image of Japan by the China-based Japanese Media: Centred on the *Shuntian Times*]' (Master's dissertation, Nanchang University, 2021), p. 9–24.

13. For the *Teigeki* reports on the Morita troupe's tours in China, see Murata Kakuko, 'Pekin no Nikki [Diaries in Beijing]', *Teigeki* [*The Imperial Theatre*], XLVIII (1926), p. 26–30; 'Pekin no Jōhō [Information on Beijing]', *Teigeki* [*The Imperial Theatre*], XLVII (1926), p. 60–2; and 'Jun'en Kakuchi Shinbun Denpō [The Newspaper Telegrams at the Stops of the Touring Journey]', *Teigeki* [*The Imperial Theatre*], XLVII (1926), p. 63–4.

14. The Japanese Legation in the Qing Empire, 'Pekin in okeru Shinbunshi [The Beijing-based Newspapers]', in *Zai Shinkoku Kōshikan* [*The Legation in the Qing Empire*],

ed. Japanese Foreign Ministry (Tokyo: Japanese Foreign Ministry, 1908–11), Japan Centre for Asian History Records (JACAR), Ref. B03040830600.

15. The real name of Tsuji Chōka was Tsuji Takeo, born in the Kumamoto Prefecture on Kyushu Island. He adopted the pseudonym 'Chōka' (literally 'listening to the blossoms') when writing as a *jingju* critic. Since his first encounter with *jingju* performances in Beijing and Tianjin during his visit to China in September 1898, Chōka developed a fierce obsession with Chinese *xiqu*. In 1912, he joined the *Shuntian Times* as a journalist and editor. Over the next seventeen years (1913–30), he oversaw the newspaper's arts and literature section, writing approximately six thousand theatre reviews. His book, *Zhongguoju* [*Chinese Theatre*], written in Chinese, initiated a sociological and anthropological approach to the study of traditional Chinese theatre based on modern western academic paradigms. For a detailed discussion on Tsuji Chōka's *xiqu* studies, see Liwei Li, 'Shitinghua dui Jingju de Yanjiu yu Chuanbo [The Study and Dissemination of *Jingju* by Tsuji Chōka]', *Journal of National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts*, XXXV, No. 3 (2014), p. 64–72.

16. For instance, in a letter to the Japanese industrialist Ōkura Kihachirō (1837–1928) discussing the Morita troupe's forthcoming Chinese tours in 1926, Mei Lanfang, who had experienced two rounds of Japanese tours in 1919 and 1924, argued that 'Chinese and Japanese theatre share the same origin': Lanfang Mei, 'Mei Lanfang yori ko Ōkura ou he (Nisshi Geijūtsu no Teikei) [A Letter from Mei Lanfang to the Late Old Ōkura (Cooperation between the Arts in Japan and China)]', in *Tegami wo tsūjite* [*Through the Letters*], ed. Political Department of Jiji Shinpōsha (Tokyo: Hōbunkan, 1929), p. 72.

17. Chōka Tsuji, 'Riling Laidu zhi Jieguo (Shang) [The Consequences of the Japanese Performers' Visit to Beijing: Part I]', *Shuntian Times*, 31 August 1926, p. 5.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Yinxia Wang, 'Yinxia Jutan: Guan Riben Xiju Xuzhi (Xu) [Theatrical Notes by Yinxia: Instructions on Appreciating Japanese Theatre: Part II]', *Shuntian Times* 12 August 1926, p. 5.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. Quoted in Chōka Tsuji, 'MuChengong zhi Shichuan Zuotuanzi Juping [Mu Chengong's Theatre Review of Ichikawa Sadanji]', *Shuntian Times*, 5 September 1924, p. 5.

23. Laozhe, 'Woguan Ribenju zhi Weiyuan (Xia) [My Humble Views on Japanese Theatre: Part III]', *Shuntian Times*, 31 August 1926, p. 5.

24. Shuangdie, 'Zhongyuanjie guan Rijū Ji [A Note on Attending the Performance of Japanese Theatre on the Ghost Festival Day]', *Shuntian Times*, 28 August 1926, p. 5.

25. Xiaoyun refers to Shang Xiaoyun (1900–1976), a renowned *jingju* actor enshrined in the so-called *sidamingdan* ['The Four Famous Dan'].

26. Biyun refers to Xu Biyun (1903–1967), a renowned *jingju* *nandan*.

27. Shuangdie, 'Huanying Riling Cuntian Jun [Welcome Japanese Performer Ms. Murata]', *Shuntian Times*, 23 August 1926, p. 5.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Laozhe, 'Woguan Ribenju zhi Weiyuan (Xia)', p. 5.

30. Yinxia Wang, 'Yinxia Jutan [Theatrical Notes by Yinxia]', *Shuntian Times*, 16 August 1926, p. 5.

31. *Ibid.*

32. The Japanese scholar Naoki Sakai calls this process 'the emanation model of modernity': Sakai, "'You Asians': On the Historical Role of the West and Asian Binary', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, XCIX, No. 4 (2000), p. 789–817 (p. 797).

33. Zhaoguang Ge, *Sixiangshi Yanjiu Ketang Jianglu Xubian* [A Sequel to a Collection of Lecture Notes on Intellectual History Studies] (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2019), p. 136.

34. Aijun Liu, '20 Shiji Zaihua Riben Baoren yu Zhongri Guanxi – Yi Shuntian Shibao wei Zhongxin [Japanese Journalists in Twentieth-Century China and the Relationship between China and Japan: Centred on the *Shuntian Times*]', *Journal of Guizhou University for Ethnic Minorities: Philosophy and Social Science*, II (2006), p. 36–9 (p. 37).

35. Rebecca Suter, *The Japanization of Modernity: Murakami Haruki between Japan and the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Centre, 2008), p. 15–16.

36. Rustin Gates, 'The *Dōjinkai* and the Promotion of Japanese Modernity in China, 1902–1937', *Studies on China*, V, No. 1 (2016), p. 72–95 (p. 73).

37. As pointed out by Harumi Befu, 'Japan indigenized (creolized) the West, and . . . made it easier for other Asian countries to digest this already "Asianized" western culture': Befu, 'Globalization Theory from the Bottom Up: Japan's Contribution', *Japanese Studies*, XXIII, No. 1 (2003), p. 3–22 (p. 10).

38. Suter, *The Japanization of Modernity*, p. 2.

39. As stated by Susan Stanford Friedman, Japanese modernity 'highlight[s] the production of meaning [of such terms as "modern", "modernity", and "modernism"] by calling attention to what will not be tamed, by what refuses consistency and homogenization': Friedman, 'Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism', *Modernism/Modernity*, VIII, No. 3 (2001), p. 493–513 (p. 497).

40. Suter, *The Japanization of Modernity*, p. 18.

41. Since the late Tokugawa period, a group of women called *okyōgen-shi* ('honourable theatre masters') had already participated in kabuki performances. Their performances were confined to private theatres and residential estates exclusively for feudal lords and senior members of the warrior class. After the Meiji Restoration, some *okyōgen-shi* transformed into *onna yakusha* ('female performers'), who worked in minor kabuki theatres. Both *okyōgen-shi* and *onna yakusha*, in their rendering of female roles on the stage, largely imitated how *onnagata* (female impersonators) depicted women in orthodox kabuki performances. In other words, what *okyōgen-shi* and *onna yakusha* impersonated were not so much female roles as *onnagata*. For detailed discussions on *okyōgen-shi* and *onna yakusha*, see Atsushi Koyano, *Kabuki ni Joyū ga ita Jidai* [The Time when there were Actresses in Kabuki] (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronshinsha, 2020).

42. Recalling many years later the impressions of performances he saw in Germany during a European trip in 1907, Ichikawa Sadanji said that the most unimaginable thing for him was that the German audience 'came and saw [the performances] quietly, and then left quietly'. This led him to lament the theatregoing manners of Japanese spectators who 'attend [kabuki] performances while tucking into cakes, bento and sushi, toasting each other, flipping tobacco ashes from cushions, and kicking seat baffles with getas' (Ichikawa, *Sadanji Geidan*, p. 92).

43. All performance sites for the Ichikawa troupe's Manchuria tours were public theatres, constructed with the funding of local Japanese business people. For

instance, the Dalian Theatre was modelled after the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo, and built by the Dalian Chamber of Commerce. Hence, it was natural that performances at these Japanese-invested theatres were predominantly attended by local Japanese expatriates. There were exceptions; on some occasions, a handful of Chinese political and cultural elites, with close connections to the Japanese colonial forces, also attended performances held there.

44. The Ichikawa troupe's Chinese tours in 1924 initially planned on including a stop in Beijing where they could 'co-perform with Mei Lanfang'. However, when the troupe was setting out from Busan to Beijing, the Second War between the Zhili Clique and the Fengtian Clique (Di'erci Zhifeng Zhanzheng), a civil war in North China between two warlord factions, erupted. Forced to cancel the plan to tour Beijing, Ichikawa Sadanji disbanded the troupe in Busan and travelled to Beijing with only his wife and a handful of staff. See Chōka Tsuji, 'Ribben Mingling Laijing Zhixi [Welcome the Famous Japanese Performer's Arrival in Beijing]', *Shuntian Times*, 24 August 1924, p. 5; and Ichikawa, *Sadanji Geidan*, p. 160.

45. Even expatriate Japanese living in China, who had long been separated from the traditional kabuki performance environment in Japan, could readily recognize his 'incompetence' as a kabuki actor. For instance, during the Ichikawa troupe's tour of Dalian in mid-August 1924, a Japanese theatre critic who attended the troupe's performance bluntly dismissed Ichikawa Sadanji, stating that he 'had zero stage skills as a kabuki actor': Aiseishō, 'Ichikawa Sadanji ni Atau [A Recommendation for Ichikawa Sadanji]', *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun*, 11 August 1924, p. 2.

46. Akira Kamiyama, 'Sadanji toiu Kindai [A Modern Named Sadanji]', *Kabuki: Studies and Critiques*, XXIX (2002), p. 44–53 (p. 48).

47. Ichikawa, *Sadanji Geidan*, p. 127.

48. 'Amachua Shibai [Amateur Theatre]', *Jiji Shinpō Bungei Shūhō*, 29 January 1908; Hattori Hiroaki, 'Matsui Shōyō no Enngeki Kaikaku – Kesa to Moritō wo megutte [Matsui Shōyō's Theatre Reform: Centred on Kesa and Moritō]', *Chūkyō Daigaku Bungakukai Ronsō*, IV (2018), p. 155–80 (p. 175).

49. During the troupe's tours in Dalian, some local Japanese wrote to the press expressing discontent with Ichikawa Sadanji's acting style in *Keian Taiheiki* [Chronicle of Great Peace in Keian Era], a classical kabuki play. They believed he acted in a way that was too faithful to the source piece: Dairen Aigekishō, 'Ichikawa Sadanji ni Tadasu [Questions for Ichikawa Sadanji]', *Dairen Shibun*, 17 August 1924, p. 2.

50. Aiseishō, 'Ichikawa Sadanji ni Atau', p. 2.

51. 'Kikoku shita Sadanji Shina Geki ni tsuite Iroiro Kansō [Sadanji Returning back Home: Reflections on Chinese Theatre]', *Asahi Shinbun*, 11 October 1924, p. 7.

52. The productions Ichikawa Sadanji saw in several performance venues in Beijing – such as Guanghelou [Guanghe Theatre], Zhongheyuan [Zhonghe Garden], Sanqingyuan [Sanqing Garden], and Chengnan Youlechang [the Pleasure Ground in the South] – included *E'hucun* [Village of Tigers], *Yingxiangyi* [Heroic Manners], *Zhanchangsha* [The Battle of Changsha], *Yuanmen zhanzi* [The Hall of White Tigers], and *Baimenlou* [The Building with a White Door].

53. Takeo [Chōka] Tsuji, 'Shina Geki oyobi Kyakuhon [Chinese Theatre and Its Scripts]', *Kabuki*, CXXIII (1910), p. 51–60 (p. 52).

54. Chōka Tsuji, *Jupu Fan Xindiao – Bainianqian Riben-ren Yanzhong de Zhongguo Xiqu* [A New Tune in the Chrysanthemum Score: Traditional Chinese Theatre to the Eyes of the Japanese a Century Ago] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Ancient Books Publishing House, 2011), p. 2.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

56. Tsuji Chōka apparently always persisted in perceiving the cultural status of *xiqu* in the world from an overall Eastern standpoint. For instance, in a conversation with the Japanese journalist Takeda Nanyō (dates unknown), Tsuji Chōka stated: 'With regard to Chinese theatre, it may seem quite boring to you. For me, however, it could be said that I have devoted all my heart to it, not so much as a Japanese, but as an Easterner': quoted in Nanyō Takeda, 'Rō Chōka [The Older Chōka]', *Manchuria*, CXXXVIII (1931), p. 80–3 (p. 82).

57. Regarding the selection of performance venues, Tsuji Chōka insisted that while modern theatre genres like *huaju* (spoken drama) were suitable for western-style stages, 'old theatre [*xiqu*] had better be played on old-fashioned stages' (Takeda, 'Rō Chōka', p. 82).

58. Zuoren Zhou, *Yishu yu Shenghuo* [Arts and Life] (Beijing: Beijing Overseer Press, 2011), p. 52.

59. The points Tsuji Chōka deemed unreasonable in *xiqu*'s stage practice involved many aspects, ranging from the creation of scripts to the arrangement of *jiangchang* (auxiliary personnel in *xiqu* performances who oversee such onstage chores as moving props, helping performers change costumes, serving tea to performers, and the organization of the orchestra).

60. *Yinchang* is the performer practice of drinking water or tea to moisten their throats on the stage during *xiqu* performance.

61. The purpose of throwing cushions on to the stage in *xiqu* performances is to avoid dirtying the performers' costumes when they do such actions as worshipping on bended knees.

62. For a detailed discussion of Mei Lanfang's *guzhuang xinxin* experiment, see Yang Gao, "'Purification" and "Hybridization": (Re)Construction and Reception of Theatrical Nationality in Western Tours of the Mei Lanfang and Tsutsui Troupes in 1930', *Theatre Research International*, XLVII, No. 3 (2022), p. 238–51.

63. The *guzhuang xinxin* pieces included in the repertoire for Mei's first round of Japanese tours in 1919 were *Tiannü sanhua* [Heavenly Maidens Scatter Flowers], *Daiyu zanghua* [Daiyu Buries Flowers], *Guifei zuijiu* [Favourite Concubine Becomes Intoxicated], and *Chang'e benyue* [Chang'e Escapes to the Moon]. Those included in the repertoire for Mei's tours in Japan in 1924 were *Tiannü sanhua*, *Magu xianshou* [Magu Offers Birthday Congratulations], *Guife zuijiu*, *Luoshen* [The Goddess of the Luo River], *Daiyu zanghua*, *Hongxiannü* [Madam Hongxian], and *Lian jinfeng* [The Country of Gentlemen]. See Yingming Yuan, *Dongying Pinmei – Minguo Shiqi Mei Lanfang Fangri Gongyan Xulun* [Tasting the Plum Blossom in Japan: An Account of Mei Lanfang's Japanese Tours in Republic Period] (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2013), p. 119–68.

64. For example, concerning the accompanying music played by the orchestra, it was noted that the stage

productions for Mei's Japanese tours lacked the 'screeching accompaniment by gong and drum' that 'could not resonate in people's hearts', and that many Japanese audience members 'appreciated the volume of percussion that was no longer noisy' in Mei's performances. Some Japanese observers noted that Mei's performances in Japan 'gave people a feeling that they were not watching Chinese *xiqu*, due to the neatness on stage and gorgeous costumes. Likewise, the orchestra members were very polite and well behaved, which was in contrast to the chaotic situation [of *xiqu* performances] in China': see Yuan, *Dongying Pinmei*, p. 143; Kōka Yamamura, 'Kaizō shita Teigeki [The Renovated Imperial Theatre]', *Shin Engei* [New Performing Arts], IX, No. 11 (1924), p. 14–15 (p. 15).

65. Kyūryūban, 'Mei Lanfang Kenbutsu (Shita) [Watch the Performances of Mei Lanfang: Part II]', *Osaka Asahi Shinbun*, 28 May 1919, p. 3.

66. Chōji Nakauchi, 'Mei Lanfang wo miru [Watch Mei Lanfang]', *Yorozu Chōhō*, 2 May 1919, p. 3.

67. Kiichirō Kanda, 'Mei Lanfang wo Mite [Watch Mei Lanfang]', in *Hinmeiki* [Records of Appreciating Mei Lanfang], ed. Ibundō (Tokyo: Ibundō Shoten, 1919), p. 97.

68. Sadanji Ichikawa, 'Shina Geki to Mei Lanfang [Chinese Theatre and Mei Lanfang]', *Asahi Shinbun*, 23 October 1924, p. 5.

69. Kanda, 'Mei Lanfang wo Mite', p. 93.

70. During Mei's tours in Japan, some Japanese people had already raised questions about the representativeness of his performances. For instance, Sakamoto Secchō (1879–1938), a Noh critic, argued that the productions provided by Mei Lanfang's troupe were disqualified to represent Chinese *xiqu*. He expressed the hope that 'next time, we would invite some capable troupes that could genuinely represent China and [whose performances] can only be seen in China': Secchō Sakamoto, 'Teigeki he kita Mei Lanfang [Mei Lanfang Coming to the Imperial Theatre]', *Shin Engei* [New Performing Arts], IV, No. 6 (1919), p. 40–1 (p. 41).

71. As Bruce Robbins points out, 'all universals are merely particulars in disguise': Robbins, 'Comparative Cosmopolitanisms', in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 246–64 (p. 251).

72. Siyuan Liu, *Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 7.

73. Brian Stross, 'The Hybrid Metaphor: From Biology to Culture', *The Journal of American Folklore*, CXII, No. 445 (1999), p. 254–67, (p. 265).

74. James Clifford, 'Travelling Cultures', in *Cultural Studies: Now and in the Future*, ed. Larry Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 96–116 (p. 108).

75. Loren Edelson, *Danjūrō's Girls: Women on the Kabuki Stage* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 188.

76. Akira Kamiyama, *Kindai Engeki no Raireiki: Kabuki no Isshin Nisei* [The Origin of Modern Theatre: Kabuki's One Body and Two Lives] (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2006), p. 224.

77. Edelson, *Danjūrō's Girls*, p. 190.