Introduction

 The span from 1900 to the 1930s marked a pivotal era in the modern transformation and evolution of traditional Chinese society. This period, characterized by societal development, also witnessed significant shifts in the realm of drama, encompassing industry changes, genre evolution, advancements in performing arts, and literary transformations within theatre. This book delves into the evolution of Bangzi Opera (also known as Clapper Opera or Hebei Bangzi), a form that enjoyed immense popularity in Beijing and Tianjin during this transformative era. Bangzi Opera, emerging as one of the earliest genres in the early 20th century to cultivate professional female actors and troupes, first made its appearance in Tianjin at the close of the 19th century. Subsequently, between 1912 and 1937, it carved a remarkable history on Beijing's theatre stages. This period was marked not only by innovation in artistic form and the establishment of unique female singing and acting techniques, but also by the creation of numerous new plays that mirrored the prevailing social conditions and zeitgeist. Particularly noteworthy were works focusing on women and families, which broke away from traditional narrative content and pioneered new story genres. Notably, works focusing on women and the family not only broke away from traditional storytelling but also pioneered new narrative genres. Moreover, they were committed to the "enlightenment of the people," exploring the potential to uphold the artistic essence of theatre while simultaneously fulfilling its educational function. Despite their disadvantaged status as women, these actresses demonstrated remarkable resilience, performing on stage amidst political repression and abuse from warlords. However, their efforts were nearly obliterated by the Sino-Japanese War, which forced them to scatter and flee the country, and ultimately compelled them to change their profession.

 Subsequently, early researchers compiling the history of Hebei Bangzi in the 1980s equated the prosperity of women's opera with the pursuit of commercial values. They criticized the ideology presented in these plays, generally casting a negative light on them. [[1]](#footnote-1)This perspective has influenced the academic community up to the present day, leading to the neglect of this fascinating historical period. Furthermore, most studies on the history of theatre in the early Republic of China have shown a bias towards Beijing Opera, often hailed as the "National Opera." The sources cited are predominantly magazines and journals that discuss Beijing Opera as the main subject, rarely acknowledging Bangzi Opera, thus rendering its existence virtually invisible.

 Furthermore, when it comes to women's operas, Yue Opera, which began to flourish in Shanghai in the 1930s, has received considerable attention from the academic community. There is a wealth of research available in Chinese, English, and Japanese, with Jiang Jin's work being particularly noteworthy. [[2]](#footnote-2)From a cultural history perspective, she views women's Yueju Opera, a representative of Shanghai's popular culture during the Republican era, as a social phenomenon. Her work not only chronicles the history of Yue Opera, but also explores the rise of women in Shanghai's public spaces and the shifts in gender roles within urban society. This insightful discussion has provided me with a great deal of enlightenment. In contrast, Bangzi Opera, which emerged earlier in the north and influenced the theatre, print media, and public culture of Beijing and Tianjin, remains overshadowed and uncelebrated. Therefore, in Beijing, where political policies and the cultural atmosphere were relatively conservative, it is certainly worthwhile to revisit how these female actors broke through constraints to become protagonists in the early twentieth century. They created and narrated their own stories on the public stage, leading the trend of women's operas.

 Before delving into the chapters of this book, I would like to first provide some background information on the subject matter. This will help readers better understand the significance of female actors and their performances in Bangzi Opera within the context of Chinese theatre history. We will begin by exploring the concepts of performing, gender, and sex.

**Performing, Gender and Sex**

The vitality of Chinese theatre is rooted not only in dramatic literature but also in the performing arts. The primary catalyst propelling these performing arts is performer, particularly in regional operas that emerged post mid-18th century, where performer's performance assumed the pivotal role in the drama. However, the stage is shared by both male and female actors, and their distinct physiological structures inevitably influence the comprehensive development of the operas.

The earliest mature form of Chinese theatre, known as *Nanxi*, emerged in the Wenzhou region in southern China in the early 12th century, during the transition between the Southern Song Dynasty and the Northern Song Dynasty, and was predominantly played by men. [[3]](#footnote-3)Later, during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), the theatre form known as *Zaju* thrived, featuring not only male actors but also female ones. This is evident from a mural painting (Fig. 1), which depicts both male and female actors performing on the same stage. The painting prominently features a female actor named Zhong Douxiu, who stands at the center of the front row, dressed in an official costume to portray a male official in the play. Her attire sends a significant message: casting is not dictated by the actor's biological sex, and a woman can indeed portray a man's role.

Following the establishment of the Ming Dynasty in 1368, *Zaju* and *Nanxi* were the prevalent forms of theatre in the early period. However, *Zaju* gradually waned and eventually disappeared during the Wanli period (1573-1620).[[4]](#footnote-4) Conversely, *Nanxi*, bolstered by the participation of literati in playwriting activities, saw its musical meter become increasingly rigorous, and the literary quality of its scripts enhanced. Consequently, it was gradually rebranded as *Chuanqi* by the middle of the Ming Dynasty.[[5]](#footnote-5) The primary singing tone utilized in performing *Chuanqi* is the Kunshan tone. This was developed by a group of musicians led by Wei Liangfu (1489-1566) during the Jiajing period (1522-1566). They refined the original Kunshan tone, which was merely a simple local singing melody, by incorporating characteristics of other regional tones, thereby transforming it into a new style that is sophisticated, delicate, and grand. Upon the emergence of this new style, it swiftly gained popularity across the country. Liang Chenyu (1521-1594), a notable playwright, effectively employed the Kunshan tone in his acclaimed Chuanqi play, Wansha Ji. The play, set during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-480 BC), narrates the rivalry between the states of Wu and Yue. The success of Wansha Ji led to the widespread adoption of the Kunshan tone in the creation of Chuanqi, setting a new standard for literati in the following years.Additionally, the Kunshan tone came to be known as Kunqu, and the Chuanqi performed in this tone were referred to as Kun Opera.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Kun Opera features performances by both male and female artists, with many women dedicating their lives to the theatre. One of the most notable was Shang Xiaoling from Hangzhou, who specialized in *Mudan Ting,* *The Peony Pavilion*. Her commitment to her craft was so profound that she once passed away on stage, succumbing to the overwhelming grief she felt while deeply immersed in her performance.[[7]](#footnote-7) The late Ming Dynasty theatre critic, Pan Zhiheng (1556-1622), documented numerous instances of exceptional actresses in his writings. One such account involves an actress named Yang Mei. During a performance, Yang Mei was required to kneel on the floor for an extended period. Despite the freezing cold conditions, she remained committed to her role. Pan Zhiheng suggested she could stand to perform due to the cold, but Yang Mei insisted on maintaining the authenticity of her performance by continuing to kneel. By the end of the performance, her skin was so cold that it didn't even produce goosebumps.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The evolution and maturity of Kun Opera, as evidenced by the examples provided, are inextricably linked to the contributions of female performers. Their portrayal of female characters significantly influences the depth and breadth of women's representation in this art form. Following the mid-Ming period, it became common for literati families to establish their own theatre troupes for entertainment. These family troupes played a pivotal role in the development of Kun Opera, significantly influencing the techniques of singing, acting, and playwriting.

During family troupe performances, actors performed on a red carpet with minimal props, fully leveraging the abstract and realistic elements of traditional Chinese opera (Fig. 2). This intimate and refined format directly exposed the performers' strengths and weaknesses, leaving no room for mediocrity. Predominantly composed of women, [[9]](#footnote-9)these family troupes were often led by masters well-versed in music and demanding in their singing skills. This environment nurtured numerous exceptional performers. While most excelled in female roles, a few gained recognitions for their ability to perform male roles, further underscoring the pivotal role of women in the development and refinement of Kun Opera.[[10]](#footnote-10)

 During the Qing Dynasty, Kun Opera maintained its status as the leading theatrical form. However, during the 70th and 80th birthdays of the Qianlong Emperor (1711-1799), regional operas from various provinces were invited to Beijing to celebrate. These operas gained such popularity that they overshadowed Kun Opera, leading to its gradual decline during the Qianlong period. This marked a historical shift in theatre, where "Flower Part, regional Opera" and "Elegant Part, Kun Opera," two distinct theatrical forms, vied for dominance, with regional operas emerging as the new force.[[11]](#footnote-11)This shift led to the emergence of numerous performers, all of whom were male, as female performers were no longer present. This was primarily due to a ban imposed by the government in the early Qing Dynasty, which significantly impacted the gender dynamics within the theatrical landscape.

Following the Manchu invasion of the Central Plains, the government imposed a ban on women's music. In 1659, the court abolished women's music, and from 1671 to 1719, further prohibitions were issued on women's rice-planting songs and theatre performances. The primary rationale for these bans was the court's belief that female performers were a threat to morality and distracted officials from their duties.[[12]](#footnote-12)These successive bans resulted in a significant reduction in the number of female performers. While a few private family troupes still included women, only men were permitted to perform at court, in theatres. [[13]](#footnote-13)This phenomenon was not confined to the capital but extended to local provinces as well.

Susan Mann highlights that the Qing dynasty implemented various measures to reinforce female segregation, maintain social order, and ensure class stability. These measures included banning obscene shrines, censoring plays and books, and awarding prizes to women of honor and martyrdom.[[14]](#footnote-14)The prohibition of female actors can be seen as part of this broader effort. The ruling class perceived their biological sex and occupational status as subversive, leading to their exclusion from the theatre. Following the mid-18th century, the emergence of regional operas genres such as Beijing Opera and Bangzi Opera saw an initial absence of female actors. This resulted in a male-dominated creation process, reflecting a male perspective in both performance art and story content. Consequently, this led to a lack of depth in the portrayal of female characters in these plays. Comparing Kun Opera with Beijing Opera, Taiwanese theater scholar Wang An-chi noted that in the early days of Beijing Opera, the main characters were predominantly middle-aged men. Female characters were limited and often relegated to supporting roles. The lyrics were straightforward and lacked complexity, preventing the female characters from achieving the subtlety and depth characteristic of Kun Opera.[[15]](#footnote-15)

The theatre remained male-dominated until the late 19th century when women began to re-emerge on stage. In 1860, a record number of female actors in Shanghai performed Anhui's local sings. [[16]](#footnote-16)In 1867, a new theatre, Man Ting Fong, was built in the Lend-Lease area, and a women troupe was recruited to perform, which was extremely popular with audiences. The type of drama performed by this female troupe is unknown, some say it is Kun opera, others say Bangzi opera.[[17]](#footnote-17) This form of women opera was known as "Maoer Xi." One of the most notable troupes was led by Li Mao'er, an actor from Tianjin. He recruited several underprivileged girls towards the end of the Tongzhi period(1862-1874) and trained them to perform Beijing Opera excerpts in private homes and small teahouses in Shanghai, pioneering women's performances in Beijing Opera. [[18]](#footnote-18)However, due to frequent bans labeling women operas as obscene and their specialization in a limited repertoire that couldn't be performed continuously, their performing arts were not preserved and thus did not gain significant influence.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Another place where Female performers made their mark was Tianjin, with records indicating their presence in Bangzi Opera as early as 1877. The German Concession opened a theatre named Xiangyun in 1896-1897, which was dedicated to women's Opera, marking it as the first of its kind in Tianjin. [[20]](#footnote-20) Later they traveled by train and steamship to Shanghai, Hankow, Chenyang, Harbin, etc., and performed all over the south and north. [[21]](#footnote-21)Post-1900, the number of female performers surged, setting a trend that gained immense popularity and secured a strong presence in Tianjin theatres. In the autumn of 1912, the prohibition was lifted, allowing female actors to grace the stage in Beijing. This brought a fresh perspective to the audience and directly impacted the popularity of male actors. In an attempt to curb the rising popularity of female actors, the police department in the spring of 1913 strictly forbade men and women from sharing the stage. However, this move proved unsuccessful. Women's theatr continued to flourish, reaching its zenith around 1919.[[22]](#footnote-22) Despite a subsequent decline in popularity, it remained a significant part of the theatrical world until performances were halted in 1937 due to the Sino-Japanese War.

From 1900 onwards, a distinct divergence between female and male performances began to surface. [[23]](#footnote-23)The establishment of all-female troupes post-1913 facilitated the evolution of the performing arts. Female characters, also known as *Dan*, which were initially portrayed by men, underwent a transformation when women entered the performance sphere. These women performers adapted their singing techniques to align with their physical attributes and redefined the traditional repertoire to reflect women's perspectives and consciousness. They performed as women, not as men portraying women, which significantly contributed to the popularity of *Dan*-centric performances and established new aesthetic standards. [[24]](#footnote-24)Their artistic contributions have endured into the contemporary era, with most of the *Dan* plays performed today being their original versions. For instance, Li Guiyun (1910-1988), renowned from the late 1920s to the present, was a disciple of celebrated actresses like Xian Lingzhi and Zhang Xiaoxian, who were pioneers of women's theatre. Over time, she developed her unique style and left a legacy of masterpieces from her extensive stage career.[[25]](#footnote-25) In addition, the portrayal of male characters, also known as *Sheng*, by women, while not causing as significant a surge as the *Dan*, also had its share of exceptional performers. These actresses adjusted their singing style and pitch to match the physiological characteristics of women, thereby expanding the range of the *Sheng* singing style. Their contributions to this aspect of the performance art are noteworthy.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Interestingly, Beijing Opera, which evolved during the same period, remained predominantly male from its inception to its maturity. The inclusion of women did not significantly alter its performance style. This is particularly evident in the portrayal of the *Dan*. When female performers adopted this style, they suppressed their femininity to mimic the depiction of women by men, both in their singing techniques and their appearance. A prime example of this is the “Cai Qiao”, a technique created by men to imitate the gait of a woman with bound feet. [[27]](#footnote-27)However, by the 1910s and 1920s, most female actors had natural feet. Their on-stage portrayal of foot-binding suggested that the women they represented were still a product of a contrived male projection.

In their roles as *Sheng*, female performers downplayed their physical attributes to resemble men. Meng Xiaodong (1908-1977), a legendary performer from the 1920s and 1940s, was a student of Yu Shuyan (1890-1943), the founder of the esteemed Yu school of acting. [[28]](#footnote-28)She gained fame at a very young age and was lauded by critics for her ability to "strip off her femininity" and "not appear as a girl on stage".[[29]](#footnote-29)As her skills further developed, she was regarded as the successor of the Yu School. Audiences watching her perform felt as if they were witnessing a performance by Yu Shuyan himself. [[30]](#footnote-30)However, despite her efforts to emulate her male teacher and her high level of artistic skills, she could not overcome the inherent biological differences. Scholar of literature and history as well as researcher of Beijing Opera Wu Xiaoru(1922-2014) highlighted the inherent limitations of her performance as a female. [[31]](#footnote-31)In essence, Beijing Opera is grounded in the male performance paradigm, placing female performers in a passive position, lacking self-awareness, and unable to achieve the same groundbreaking accomplishments as those in Bangzi Opera.

As discussed above, the evolution of Chinese theater throughout the ages has been a collaborative effort involving both male and female actors, resulting in a vibrant array of theatrical genres and performance systems. However, most of the regional opera genres that emerged after the mid-eighteenth century were male-created. The norm of men portraying both male and female roles was widely accepted by the government, society, and the theatre industry. Indeed, the return of women to the stage at the close of the 19th century marked a significant shift in the dynamics of performance art. The question of how to portray both female and male characters became a novel challenge, leading to a series of experimental performances on stage that questioned and challenged the prevailing male authority. In this transformative period, the female performers of the Bangzi Opera played a pivotal role. They were at the forefront of this historical turning point in theatre, instigating a shift in gender representation in performances. Their successful establishment of a female-centric performance system was groundbreaking and set the stage for the emergence of women's theatre.

**The circulation of Bangzi Opera in Beijing, Hebei and Tianjin between the 18th and early 20th centuries**

As a precursor to this book, we will delve into the origin, nomenclature, and evolution of Bangzi Opera. This form of opera, prevalent in the Hebei region, is a derivative of the Bangzi singing system. Due to its diverse developmental timeline, varying areas of activity, and distinct styles, it has been referred to by a multitude of names, including *Qinqiang*, *Bangqiang*, *Zhiliang Bang*zi, *Weibngzi*, *Jingbangzi*, *Zhili Xinpai*, *Zhili Jiupai*.[[32]](#footnote-32)Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, it was officially christened as Hebei Bangzi during the National Opera Festival in 1952. [[33]](#footnote-33)However, prior to 1952, the Bangzi Opera of Beijing, Tianjin, and other regions had already evolved into a variety of distinct styles. Thus, to label them under a single, newly coined name can be misleading and may lead to overgeneralization. Consequently, the use of this name remains a contentious issue within the theatre community.[[34]](#footnote-34)Given that the temporal context of this book spans from 1912 to 1937, I will use the term “Bangzi Opera” to refer to the pre-1952 opera form in order to avoid conceptual confusion and to accurately depict this era of theatre history. If there are references to specific regional variations, I will provide additional explanations to ensure clarity.

Around the mid-17th century, Bangzi Opera, also known as *Qinqiang*, originated in the Shanxi and Shaanxi regions. By the late 17th century, it had made its way to Beijing and the surrounding areas, particularly Hebei, which became the cradle of Bangzi Opera.[[35]](#footnote-35)In the mid-to-late 18th century, *Qinqiang* actors, most notably Wei Changsheng (1744-1802), congregated in Beijing. He arrived in Beijing around 1774 and captivated both the common folk and the intelligentsia with his exceptional acting skills and innovative repertoire. As a result, the previously popular opera genre, *Jingqiang*, fell into obscurity, leading to the dissolution of the six major *Jingqiang* troupes.[[36]](#footnote-36) However, in 1785, at the height of its popularity, the imperial court issued a decree banning Qinqiang and ordered *Qinqiang* actors to transition to Kun Opera and *Jingqiang*. As a result, Wei Changsheng was compelled to leave Beijing in 1787, and Qinqiang performances were halted. In 1796, when Emperor Jiaqing (1760-1820) ascended the throne, the ban was lifted, allowing *Qinqiang* to resume its activities. In 1801, Wei returned to Beijing to perform and tragically passed away at the end of his show the following year.[[37]](#footnote-37)

During its extensive development in Beijing, *Qinqiang* began to diverge from its original Shanxi and Shaanxi regional cadences. Its language, rhythms, and melodies gradually adapted to local influences. This process of localization also occurred as *Qinqiang* spread throughout the region. Consequently, between 1820 and 1850, a distinct voice, characteristic of the Hebei region, began to emerge. In 1850, a training shool for Bangzi Opera actors, known as the “Keban”, was established on the border of Dingxing and Xushui counties in Hebei Province. Scholars consider the emergence of the “Keban” as a significant milestone, marking the birth of indigenous Bangzi Opera.[[38]](#footnote-38)Performances are predominantly staged in Beijing, Tianjin, and rural areas. Many talented actors from rural areas migrate to Beijing and Tianjin in search of better opportunities. As Bangzi Opera matured, it underwent a significant transformation in these cities. The original raw, simple, and rustic style evolved into a sophisticated urban aesthetic. This transformation not only fostered the emergence of numerous exceptional actors but also attracted a substantial audience. Consequently, Bangzi Opera established itself as one of the mainstream genres of modern opera, illuminating the stage at the turn of the century. This development will be further expounded upon in the subsequent sections.

Beijing

In Beijing, the flourishing of Bangzi Opera coincided with the emergence of Beijing Opera. The two art forms experienced a direct encounter as they both vied for attention and recognition in the cultural landscape of the city. The origin of Beijing Opera can be traced back to 1790 when the four great Anhui troupes entered Beijing. The artists from these troupes stayed in the city and assimilated the strengths of the local operas such as *Jingqiang* and *Qinqiang* (Bangzi Opera), gradually developing their own artistic style. After about 40 to 50 years, this transformation culminated in the birth of Beijing Opera in the mid-19th century. [[39]](#footnote-39)

During the peak of the Anhui troupes, performances of Bangzi Opera were relatively subdued. However, in the late 19th century, the influence of Shanxi merchants in Beijing led to a revival of Bangzi Opera. They invited numerous actors from Shanxi and Shaanxi to perform in the city, resulting in a resurgence of interest in Bangzi Opera. As a result, the art form gained popularity among people from all walks of life and experienced a significant boom.[[40]](#footnote-40) As evidenced by the diary entries of the later Qing Dynasty Literati Li Ciming (1830-1895),Bangzi operas, initially enjoyed solely by merchants and servants, garnered the support of officials and literati around 1873. Consequently, they became a favored genre among the upper classes, rivaling Beijing Opera in terms of influence.[[41]](#footnote-41) Chinese Opera theorist and playwright Qi Rushan (1875-1926) discussed the rise and fall of the influence of different opera types in Beijing during various periods. He noted that around 1890, troupes performing Kun Opera and Jingqing constituted 30% of the total, Beijing Opera accounted for 40%, and Bangzi Opera made up the remaining 30%. However, by 1911, the landscape had shifted, with 40% of troupes performing Beijing Opera and a significant 60% presenting Bangzi Opera.[[42]](#footnote-42)The popularity of Bangzi Opera soared in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, to the extent that it even eclipsed Beijing Opera.

Since the mid-19th century, numerous exceptional actors emerged, epitomized by Hou Junshan (1854-1935). He primarily played *Huadan*, a youthful and vivacious female character, but also took on the role of *Wusheng*, a martial arts male character. In 1862, he arrived in Beijing from Shanxi Province, and by 1884, he was chosen to perform for the royal family. He made multiple appearances in court to present his performances. His vivid and nuanced performances, brimming with infectious energy, had a profound impact on both Bangzi and Beijing Opera.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Additionally, Guo Baochen (1856-1918), who acted the role of *Laosheng*, an older male character, and was also a native of Shanxi Province, performed at the palace on numerous occasions. Guo's voice was powerful, his singing so resonant, and his artistry profound that he was often compared to one of the most renowned Beijing Opera actor, Tan Xinpei (1847-1917). [[44]](#footnote-44)Even in his later years, Guo's skills did not diminish, earning him high praise from Japanese scholars. Hatano Kenichi (1890-1963), who witnessed Guo's performances in Beijing in 1915-16, was in awe of his exceptional performances, which he considered to be the peak of Chinese operatic art.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Tian Jiyun (1864-1925) also deserves mention. A native of Hebei, he played the role of *Huadan* and gained fame in the theatre at the tender age of 15, performing in Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai. In 1884, he established the first troupe in Beijing, named Yucheng Ban, which comprised actors from both Bangzi and Beijing Opera. This marked the inception of the so-called "Liang Xia Guo" style, where Bangzi and Beijing Opera were performed together. [[46]](#footnote-46)This innovative approach had a profound influence on both types of opera, a topic that will be discussed in detail in the next section. Moreover, Tian was a bold innovator who actively participated in the Opera Reform Movement, performing new plays with enlightening themes. In 1906, he staged the play *Huixing Nushi Chuan* (*Biography of Ms. Huixing*), based on the incident of a Manchu woman named Huixing from Hangzhou who committed suicide due to insufficient funds for establishing a women's school in December 1905. In this play, he took on the lead female role of Huixing. This marked a refreshing departure from traditional content and form, creating a sensation among the audience for a time.[[47]](#footnote-47) He was also a passionate social activist and staunch advocate for the rights of actors. He made attempts to petition the Qing court to abolish Siyu, a system that exploited teenage actors in brothels. However, his initial efforts were unsuccessful. Following the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912, he redoubled his efforts, appealing to the Police Department to ban this exploitative practice. Ultimately, his persistent advocacy bore fruit, resulting in the successful abolition of Siyu.[[48]](#footnote-48) In addition, after the ban on actress was lifted, Tian Jiyun took the lead in establishing a women's troupe to promote women's theatrical performances, [[49]](#footnote-49) and he was an important figure in the opera world for many contributions.

Tianjin

 It is believed that Banzgi Opera was introduced to Tianjin no later than the Jiaqing (1796-1820) and Daoguang (1820-1850) periods of the Qing Dynasty. [[50]](#footnote-50)As the premier commercial hub in the north, Tianjin attracted numerous Shanxi merchants who had established financial exchange stores in Beijing during the mid-19th century. These merchants not only opened numerous branches in Tianjin but also actively introduced their native Bangzi Opera to the city. Renowned Shanxi actors and their troupes were frequently invited to perform in Tianjin following their performances in Beijing, typically staging shows for three to five months.[[51]](#footnote-51) Over time, many of these actors chose to remain in Tianjin to further their careers, leading to the localization of Bangzi Opera.

Moreover, the second generation of Shanxi merchants who settled in Tianjin gradually adopted the local accent, which in turn influenced the Bangzi Opera they enjoyed. The Shanxi elements of the opera began to fade, transforming it into an urban opera infused with Tianjin characteristics. This new form of opera was known as Wei Bangzi, named after Tianjin Wei, the city's name during the Ming Dynasty. Thus, the term 'Wei' symbolizes Tianjin in this context.[[52]](#footnote-52)

During the development of Wei Bangzi, several influential actors from Hebei made significant contributions, particularly impacting the performances of female roles. One such actor was He Jingyun (1870-?), trained from “Keban” in the Hebei province, who specialized in the *Laosheng*. He introduced complex variations to the original simple and mournful melodies of the Bangzi Opera, creating a new singing style. Although based in Tianjin, he was active in Beijing and the Northeast, and in 1898, joined Tian Jiyun's troupe in Beijing. Consequently, his innovative singing style also influenced the Bangzi Opera in Beijing.[[53]](#footnote-53)

Later, Wei Liansheng (1881-1922), also from local “Keban”, embarked on a successful performing arts career in Tianjin. He blended the singing styles of *Zhengdan* (main female character) and *Laosheng*, incorporated He Jingyun's singing style, and combined it with the intonation of the Hebei dialect. This fusion resulted in a unique *Laosheng* singing style that was entirely distinct from the influences of Shanxi Bangzi Operas. This innovative singing style harmonized the original high-pitched and vibrant qualities of Bangzi Opera with its smooth and elaborate melodies, transforming it into a sophisticated and urban style. His singing style became emblematic of the *Laosheng* and was known as the Wei School. Many veteran actors, particularly female ones, emulated his style. Some female actors even gained fame by mastering the Wei School style, such as Li Peiyun(1894-1945), and Wang Yixian (1900-1948). In the early years of the Republic of China, female actors from the Wei School performed in Beijing. Their performances were highly appreciated by the educated audience, laying the groundwork for the development of women’s theatre in Beijing.[[54]](#footnote-54)

Concurrently, a reformer named Zi Tongyun emerged in the realm of female roles. His ability to express the psychological states of characters, his exceptional singing, and the stability of his falsetto were highly praised by audiences. Many *Zhengdan* performers sought his tutelage. His singing style was particularly suitable for women capable of hitting high notes. His most favored disciples were women, including Xiao Lianfen and Li Peiyun. Most of the female *Zhengdan* performers active in Beijing during the early years of the Republic of China adopted his singing style.[[55]](#footnote-55)Both Wei Liansheng and Zi Tongyun created new urban singing styles that were suitable for women, capitalizing on the bright, rounded, and clear qualities of a woman's voice. Furthermore, the fact that women were allowed to perform in the Concession led to an increase in female performers. This, in turn, resulted in a series of artistic changes that cultivated distinctive characteristics in women's performances.

With its extensive network of waterways and land routes, Tianjin emerged as a crucial hub for the propagation of Bangzi Opera throughout the country in the late 19th century. After 1900, budding female actors traveled by steamboat and automobile to business cities in the Northeast and Russia, as well as south to the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, facilitating the spread of Bangzi opera. Whenever a renowned female actor performed in a theatre, it invariably resulted in a full house, encouraging theater owners to actively invite them. [[56]](#footnote-56)Following the lifting of the prohibition on female actors in Beijing in 1912, they naturally assumed dominance in most of the major theaters, marking the dawn of a new era.

**Bangzi Opera Performing Role system**

The performance of Chinese opera is underpinned by a distinctive role system known as "Hangdang," which takes into account the gender, personality, age, and status of the characters in the play. This system is emphasized in the makeup, costume, and performance, and results in the characters being categorized into several types of roles. While the specific categories may vary across different forms of Chinese opera, they all share a common origin in the role system of Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) drama.

The Bangzi Opera, in particular, has inherited and adapted this role system, dividing characters into four main categories: *Sheng* (standard male characters), *Dan* (female characters), *Jing* (painted-face male characters), and *Chou* (literally, "ugly" characters, often comic). Initially, only male *Chou* characters existed, but with the advent of actresses, female Chou characters are now portrayed by *Caidan*. These basic role types have several main subdivisions. For *Sheng*, these include *Laosheng* (older *Sheng*), *Wusheng* (martial *Sheng*), and *Xiaosheng* (young *Sheng*). *Dan* roles are divided into *Zhengdan* (also known as *Qingyi,* "blue cloth" *Dan,* main female character), *Huadan* ( “color ”*Dan*, youthful and vivacious female character), *Wudan* (martial *Dan*), *Laodan* (older *Dan*), and *Caidan* ("color" *Dan*). *Jing* is subdivided into *Dahualian* (great painted face), *Erhualian* (secondary *Jing*), and *Wuhualian* (martial *Jing*). Lastly, *Chou* is further categorized into *Wenchou* (civil *Chou*) and *Wuchou* (martial *Chou*). Among all the roles, *Zhengdan*, *Huadan*, and *Laosheng* are the most representative, embodying the essence of the performance art of Bangzi Opera.[[57]](#footnote-57)

Furthermore, each character in a drama is assigned a specific role type, and performers are only able to portray characters within their designated role. For instance, Wang Baochuan, the female protagonist of *Da Deng Dian*, belongs to the *Zhengdan* category. Therefore, the performer portraying this character must be a *Zhengdan* performer. When a performer takes on a role that deviates from their usual type, it is referred to as "Fanchuan," which translates to acting in different role types. [[58]](#footnote-58)This terminology is specific to Chinese Opera and differs from the contemporary stage practice known as cross-casting, where a man portrays a woman's role or a woman assumes a man's role. While it is now common for men to play *Sheng* and women to play *Dan*, the gender of the roles is not directly equivalent to the gender of the performer due to the role system.

**Liang Xia Guo: A Joint performance of Bangzi Opera and Beijing Opera**

In the evolution of Chinese theatre, there are numerous instances where two distinct opera types have been merged into a single troupe for an extended period, performing together and significantly influencing each other's artistic styles. During the mid-19th century, the development of Bangzi Opera and Beijing Opera intersected in Beijing, leading to mutual influence, absorption of each other's strengths, and even the phenomenon of a single play being performed jointly.Most scholars pinpoint the official inception of this ensemble format to 1891, when Tian Jiyun, fresh from a tour of Shanghai, and his Beijing troupe initiated a series of joint performances of Bangzi and Beijing Opera. The ensemble comprised Xia Yueheng (1865-1934), a Shanghai actor, along with renowned local Beijing actors such as Liu Hongsheng (1874-1921) and Yu Zhenting (1879-1939). Their exceptional performances drew large crowds, and business thrived to such an extent that other troupes emulated this model, transitioning to the ensemble format. This trend gained increasing popularity in Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai, and even troupes in smaller towns and villages began to perform jointly.[[59]](#footnote-59)

The joint performance of Bangzi and Beijing Opera is referred to as "Liang Xia Guo" and can take various forms. Actors can incorporate both Bangzi and Beijing Opera within a single play, or alternatively, use Bangzi or Beijing Opera to perform independently in different scenes of the same play. The popularity of this dual format has encouraged both opera genres to assimilate each other's artistic traits and evolve independently. The most significant outcome is the expansion of the repertoire performed by each genre, with a substantial number of plays being exchanged between the two.

Bangzi Opera incorporated the martial arts elements of Beijing Opera, while Beijing Opera directly adopted the male and female character-centric plays of Bangzi Opera. As both operas structure their lyrics using upper and lower sentences as a unit, the lyrics of Bangzi operas can be directly performed by substituting them with the rhythm and melody of Beijing Opera. A significant portion of the modern Beijing Opera repertoire originates from Bangzi Opera. Furthermore, many original works of Bangzi Opera later evolved into masterpieces of Beijing Opera.[[60]](#footnote-60)

In an environment of sustained exchanges and from a performance perspective, Beijing Opera fully absorbed the *Huadan* performances from Bangzi Opera. Around 1911, numerous *Huadan* actors from Bangzi Opera transitioned to Beijing Opera, including Mao Yunke (1885-1941) and Jia Biyun (1890-1941), as well as Xun Huisheng (1900-1968) and Shang Xiaoyun (1900-1976). Xun and Shang gained recognition as exceptional actors, and along with Mei Lanfang and Cheng Yuchu (1904-1958), they were collectively known as the Four Famous Dan. Following their transition, they not only converted a large number of plays into Beijing Opera, but also integrated the essence of Bangzi Opera performance techniques into them, thereby enriching the *Huadan* performing art of Beijing Opera.[[61]](#footnote-61) In summary, the "Liang Xia Guo" approach has enhanced and developed both operas. However, it is generally acknowledged that Beijing Opera has benefited more from this approach than Bangzi Opera.[[62]](#footnote-62)

The primary reason why modern academics tend to overlook the significance of Bangzi Opera is the prevalent bias in theater history towards Beijing Opera. Although Beijing Opera greatly benefited from Bangzi Opera, the latter had already declined before 1937. The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War further forced the cessation of its performances. Despite intermittent performances by a small number of performers in rural areas, Bangzi Opera was unable to maintain its influence in the theater circles of Beijing and Tianjin. Performances only gradually resumed after 1949. Due to the prolonged absence from the stage, most performers had either changed careers, aged significantly, or passed away, and the performing arts and repertoire had not been entirely preserved. From 1953 onwards, local governments established schools and theatres for Bangzi Opera, recruiting students to continue the tradition. However, the challenge was the limited number of teachers proficient in Bangzi Opera, resulting in many instructors being Beijing Opera actors. One prominent example is the Hebei Provincial Hebei Bangzi Theatre, established in 1959 as a dedicated institution for the preservation and promotion of Hebei Bangzi. The first director, Xun Huisheng, was primarily recognized as a Beijing Opera actor, despite having studied Bangzi Opera.[[63]](#footnote-63)Consequently, the teaching was inevitably influenced by Beijing Opera, and the "Hebei Bangzi" that the students learned naturally assimilated into Beijing Opera. Apart from the music and melody, the script, acting, costumes, makeup, and notation method all mirrored those of Beijing Opera, causing it to lose many of its unique characteristics.[[64]](#footnote-64) Over time, Bangzi Opera gradually lost its presence on the stage and in history. Nonetheless, the history of Bangzi Opera and its significant contribution to the development of Beijing Opera in the twentieth century should not be overlooked.

**Chapter Description**

In the hope that readers will be able to grasp the specific composition and direction of this book, the following chapters will be introduced.

Chapter 1 Theatre in the Modernizing Reform Climate: The Birth of Female Actors in Tianjin in the Late Qing Dynasty

This chapter delves into the historical emergence of female actors in Bangzi Opera in Tianjin. Female performers first appeared in the theatre of the German Concession around 1896-97. Following the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, they transitioned into male and female actors performing together, leading to their increasing popularity. Yuan Shikai (1859-1916), who assumed the role of Governor of Zhili (now Hebei Province) in 1901, implemented modernization reforms. This ushered in a new era of societal change, with more open attitudes and a relaxation of the Qing Dynasty's restrictions on actress. Consequently, female actors began to appear in all theatres. While this development faced some criticism, certain Enlightenment intellectuals argued that the presence of female actors in theaters was a reflection of "modernization" and should be acknowledged as such, akin to developments in Western European countries.

The integration of male and female actors in performances presented numerous challenges. Firstly, female actors had a shorter training period compared to their male counterparts, but their ability to portray "real women" gave them an advantage. Consequently, they often neglected the development of their acting skills and focused solely on their stage presence. This led to increasingly exaggerated performances, which were criticized as lewd and indecent. Furthermore, many of the actresses were also involved in prostitution and served as escorts outside of their theatrical roles, further tarnishing their reputation. While the emergence of female actors could be viewed as a symbol of Tianjin's modernization, it was imperative for them to establish professionalism in the performing arts to ensure their longevity in the new era. Following the establishment of the Republic of China, Beijing, as the center of political power and theater, finally opened its doors to female actors, providing them with opportunities for advancement.

Chapter 2 Gender Roles and Challenges on the Beijing Stage: The Debut of the Female Actor, the Popularity of Women's Theater, and *Juxuan*

Following the establishment of the Republic of China, the long-standing ban on female actors was finally lifted, resulting in a wave of female performers from Tianjin making their debut on the stages of Beijing. The absence of women in performances for an extended period caused a significant sensation. In the autumn of 1911, the Beijing government swiftly issued a regulation mandating separate performances for men and women in an effort to restrain the advancement of female performers, citing the preservation of social order as the rationale. However, this unintended consequence led to the rise of all-female troupes, which began to improve the Bangzi Opera. In a bid to compete with male Peking Opera actors, they made bold innovations in singing, acting, repertoire, and stage design, gradually establishing a distinct female style of performance. This eventually garnered the support of audiences and some critics.

Simultaneously, the ascent of female actors influenced the development of the Dan role in Beijing Opera. Prior to 1917, Sheng roles dominated Beijing Opera, but between 1917 and 1937, Dan roles flourished, with the emergence of the four famous Dan in the mid-1920s representing the pinnacle of this trend. Historically, many studies overlooked the influence of Bangzi Opera and attributed the surge in popularity of Dan roles after the Republic of China to the emerging female audience's preference for dramas featuring female characters. However, they failed to acknowledge that these female actors were also instrumental in driving the popularity of Dan roles.

A shift in audience preference is evident in the *Juxuan* (a contest to vote for favorite actors) held by Newspaper *Shuntian Shibao* in Beijing in 1915 and 1917, where female actors garnered more votes than their male counterparts, particularly female dans. In 1915, the total number of votes cast for female actors surpassed that for male actors, with the highest number of votes going to female actors portraying the role of Dan. The trend continued in 1917, with the top female actor being Liu Xikui (1894-1964) and the top male actor being Mei Lanfang, both portraying the role of Dan. This indicates that Dan roles had already gained significant popularity by this time. Despite Liu receiving more votes than Mei, and Mei being crowned the "King of the theatre," Liu was only referred to as the "Number one Actress." This highlights the gender bias prevalent in the theater industry and society, underscoring the challenges faced by the earliest female actors in establishing themselves and thriving in the traditionally male-dominated environments.

Chapter 3: Balancing Popular Entertainment, Opera Reform Movement, and Social Education - The History of the Kuide Society, a Women's Troupe

Despite being recognized for their professionalism by audiences, female actors inevitably faced discrimination due to traditional prejudices against actors and actresses, as well as the low status of women in society. To enhance their social standing and earn public respect, they made deliberate efforts to elevate their status through their work in the theatre. Women's theatre specializes in the production of new scripted plays that are not only entertaining but also incorporate elements of enlightenment and often reflect contemporary societal events. These influential works emerged towards the end of the Qing Dynasty, around the period following the defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). Aspiring intellectuals and performers initiated the Opera Reform movement, seeking to utilize opera as a means to cultivate the minds of the people and foster a more refined societal atmosphere. During this era, performances were predominantly carried out by male actors. However, it is noteworthy that in the Republic of China, male actors relinquished such roles, paving the way for female actors to take their place.

The central focus of this chapter revolves around the Kuide Society, a female theater group with a nearly 20-year history. Since its inception, the Kuide Society has placed a strong emphasis on the performance of newly scripted plays. Its innovative approach to both the content of the plays and the theatre itself has not only garnered popularity among the general public but has also earned recognition from critics and intellectuals. They also collaborated with the Beijing Popular Education Committee to produce plays aimed at promoting popular education, with a specific focus on fostering national identity and empowering women to become more conscious of their country. This approach leveraged the educational potential of theatre. The performances by these actresses on stage carried a dual significance: not only did they serve as educators on stage, but they also served as a source of inspiration for women to become active citizens of the new era and to translate this inspiration into action in their personal lives.

Chapter 4 The Proliferation of New Scripted Plays: Alterations in the Portrayal of Female Characters and the Reimagining of Male Characters

During the era of women's theatre in China, the country was undergoing significant political and social changes, and the new scripted plays performed by these women held great contemporary significance. However, the importance of these works has been overlooked in previous studies, and intentional preservation efforts have been lacking. Despite the serious loss of scripts, the Kui De Society, specializing in the performance of new scripted plays, has produced at least one hundred plays. Due to the troupe's long history, some of the most popular plays have gradually been left behind through repeated performances. Some of these plays are now part of the collection of the local Hebei Opera Troupe, while others are housed in libraries.

The plays encompass both costume and fashion dramas, offering rich and diverse content. Given that the performers are exclusively women, they excel in creating unique works that reflect women's lives around 20th Century. These works depict various aspects of female relationships, including family dynamics, romantic relationships, and the challenges faced by women from lower social classes. The main female characters in the plays come from a range of backgrounds, such as ordinary families, wealthy households with stepmothers, impoverished girls from the lower class, female students studying abroad, and female teachers from private schools. These characters break through the traditional one-dimensional image of women, portraying individuals with complex personalities and independent consciousness across different social classes. This portrayal stands in stark contrast to the depiction of women in Beijing Opera during the same period, highlighting the originality and specificity of the plays.

On the other hand, while the male characters in the new scripted plays may not be as prominent as the female characters, they are still portrayed by female actors. In contrast to traditional Bangzi Opera, where male characters are typically performed by *Laosheng*, in the new scripted plays, the male roles are taken on by *Xiaosheng*. This is a young man role, depicting brand new characters such as college students, wealthy young men, book publishers, musicians, and more. These male characters, performed by female actors, offer a contemporary representation of "masculinity" from a female perspective, and this new portrayal is certainly worth exploring.

Chapter 5 The Revival of Hebei Bangzi Post-1937: The Challenges and Resurgence of Female Actors

The long-standing women's troupe, Kuide Society, was disbanded in 1937, primarily due to the Lugou Bridge Incident and the unstable situation in the Beijing area. This instability led to the closure of most theatres, making it impossible for the troupe to continue operating and resulting in the dispersal of the female performers. In Tianjin, a few actresses, such as the renowned Li Peiyun and Wang Yingxian, managed to continue performing, but the overall environment was extremely challenging. The passing of both actresses between 1944 and 1946 marked a period of decline for women's theatre.

After 1949, with the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Bangzi Opera gradually resumed. In 1952, Bangzi Opera was officially renamed Hebei Bangzi, and the governments of Tianjin and Hebei Province established troupes and drama schools to promote its preservation and revival. However, most performers and teachers did not carry forward the performance styles of women's theatre. During the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, the development of all regional operas came to a standstill, and Hebei Bangzi was no exception, suffering significant setbacks.

The Hebei Bangzi we see on stage today has been significantly influenced by Beijing Opera, although it still retains some of the musical and vocal characteristics of the early women's theatre. Despite these circumstances, female actors continue to strive to establish themselves as the backbone of Hebei Bangzi. Since 1983, the Plum Blossom Prize, the highest award in the Chinese opera industry, has been held, and until 2015, all Hebei Bangzi performers who won the prize were women. Moreover, since 2000, many middle-generation female actors have been attempting to perform in modern works with a female consciousness, which have been well received by the theatre industry. Nearly 100 years since its debut in the early 20th century, female actors are once again infusing new life into Bangzi Opera.

1. Ma Longwen, and Mao Dazhi, *Hebei bangzi jian shi* (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1982), 55-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jiang Jin, *Shi yu zhengzhi: Ershi shiji Shanghai gonggong wenhua zhong de nüzi yueju* (Beijing: Shehui kexue chubanshe, 2015). Jiang Jin, *Women Playing Men: Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth-century Shanghai*. (University of Washington Press, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Liao Ben, and Liuyanjun, *Zhongguo xiqu fazhan shi, Vol.1* (Taiyuan: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), 322-325, 357. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Zaju* in the Yuan and early Ming dynasties were sung to the melody of the North. After its decline, people used the melody of the south to create *Nan Zaju*, which was active until the early 18th century. Liao Ben, and Liuyanjun, *Zhongguo xiqu fazhan shi, Vol.3* (Taiyuan: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), 22-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Chuanqi* originated in the Tang Dynasty, but the so-called *Chuanqi* at that time referred to short stories about bizarre stories, which was different from the Ming Dynasty. There are many differences in academic circles about the time of the establishment of the term *Chuanqi*. This book adopts a broader definition in Zhongguo *xiqu fazhan shi*, that is, the latest in the Wanli period (1573-1620) was called the Nanxi as *Chuanqi*. Liao Ben , and Liuyanjun, *Zhongguo xiqu fazhan shi, Vol.3* (Taiyuan: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), 22-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For an introduction to the development of *Chuanqi*.and kunqu in the Ming dynasty, see Mackerras's work. Colin Mackerras, ed., *Chinese Theater: From Its Origins to the Present Day* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press,1983), 60-77. Reference to Lu'etting's book on the brith of Kun Opera. Lu'eting, *Kun ju yanchu shi gao (revised* *version)* (Taipei: Kuo Chia Publishing Co., 2002), 33-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Jiao Xun (1763-1820), a literati of the Qing Dynasty, mentioned the story of Shang Xiaoling in his book. Jiao Xun, *Ju shuo* (Shanghai: Shangwu yin shuguan, 1939), 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Pan Zhiheng, and Wang Xiaoyi, annotated, *Pan Zhiheng qu hua* (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1988), 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. After the rise of the Kun Opera, the literati family troupes consisted mainly of women, with a few young male actors and actresses and professional actors hired from outside. Hu Ji, *Kun ju fazhan shi* (Beijing: Zhongguo xiqu chubanshe, 1989), 188-224. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Zou Diguang (1549-1625), a literati of the mid-to-late Ming Dynasty, was a proficient performer with a deep understanding of music and rhythm. His troupe was renowned for its rigorous training, leading to exceptional performance standards. Pan Zhiheng's article not only lauds the superb acting abilities of the female actors in Zou's troupe but also commends the flawless portrayal of the male role by He Qinhua. Pan Zhiheng潘之恆, and Wang Xiaoyi, annotated, *Pan Zhiheng qu hua* (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1988), 230-231. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Liao Ben, and Liu Yanjun, *Zhongguo xiqu fazhan shi* (Taiyuan: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), 106-110. Zhang Geng, and Guo Hancheng, *Zhongguo xiqu tongshi xia* (1992), 10-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The process of banning women's rice songs and operas during the Qing Dynasty can be seen in the organization of Wang Anqi's work. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Lu'eting, *Kun ju yanchu shi gao (revised* *version)*, 374. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Susan Mann, *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Chinese History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 35-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Wang An-Chi, “Taiwan xin bian jingju de nüxing yishi — Cong nüxing xingxiang weihe xuyao chong su tan qi”, in *Jingju yu zhongguo wenhua chuantong: Di er jie jingju xue guoji xueshu yantao hui lunwen ji (Vol. 2)* ,ed. Du Zhangsheng (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2007), 478-480. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Min Ai, “Nanbei liyuan lüe shi”, in *Jubu congkan．getai xinshi*, ed. Zhou Jianyun (Taipei: Zhuanji wenxue chubanshe, 1974), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Yoshikazu Kikkawa, *Pekin nio Keru Kindai Dentou Engeki no Syokou : Himozi Bunka ni Tamasii o Moyasita Hitobito* (Tokyo: Sobunsya,2012),282-283. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Gong Hede, “Kun ban xiao shi”, *Zhonghua xiqu* 2 (2006): 329-330. Shushi, “Haishang bai mingling chuan: Li mao'er”, in *Shenbao jingju ziliao xuanbian*, ed. Cai Shicheng (Shanghai: Shanghai jingjuzhi bianjibu 1994), 656. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Yoshikazu Kikkawa, *Pekin nio Keru Kindai Dentou Engeki no Syokou : Himozi Bunka ni Tamasii o Moyasita Hitobito*,295-296. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ti Jian Ying Ke, “Tianjin mingling xiaozhuan”, in *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian Qing dai juan, Vol. 2*, ed. Fu Jin (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2011), 441-442. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Zhen Guangjun, *Hebei bangzi zai tianjin shi shu* (Hohhot: Yuanfang chubanshe, 1999), 59-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The evolution of female actors from being able to perform on stage in Beijing to being able to perform only in women-only trops can be seen in Cyouka's short article. Cyouka, “Bi shang ou ping (10)”, *Shun tian shibao*, November 14, 1913, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The difference between female and male performances can be observed in the descriptions and ratings of female actors' performances in theater reviews. For example, a female actor named Xiao Xiangshui, the review points out that her singing is very special and different from the original Bangzi Opera sung by men. Yin Xia, “Xiao Xiangshui”, *Shun tian shibao*, January 30, 1913, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Theater reviews have highlighted the popularity of dan-centered plays in Beijing theaters from 1913 onward, while noting a gradual decline in the prominence of sheng-centered plays. Anonymous, “Man cheng zheng shuo huadan xi”, *Shun tian shibao*, June 5, 1913, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Wang Dengshan, *Li Guiyun* (Beijing: Renmin yinyue chubanshe, 2000), 60-70, 206-217. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Lu Yifei, and Ji Junchao et al., *Hebei bang zi yinyue gailun* (Beijing: Renmin yinyue chubanshe, 1996), 26, 284, 304. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Wang An-Chi, “Jing kun nüxing suzao bijiao chutan”, in *Mingjia lun kunqu*, ed. Hong Wei-Zhu (Taipei: Kuo Chia Publishing Co., 2010), 442-444. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. The status and characteristics of the Yu school created by Yu Shuyan in the history of Beijing Opera can be seen in Wu Xiaoru's article. Wu Xiaoru, “Shuo Yupai”, in *Yu Shuyan yishu pinglun ji*, ed. Wu Qunli(Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1990), 170-188. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Anonymous, “Zai tan Meng Xiaodong”, *Dagongbao*, June, 29, 1925, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Wang An-Chi, *Xingbie, Zhengzhi yu Jingju Biaoyan Wenhua,*74-75. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Wu Xiaoru, “Shuo Yu pai chuanren”, in *Yu Shuyan Meng Xiaodong ji Yu pai yishu*, ed. Zhang Yacai (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1998), 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Zhongguo Xiqu Juzhong Da Cidian Bianji Weiyuanhui,ed., *Zhongguo Xiqu Juzhong Da Cidian* (Shanghai :Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe,1995),44. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Lu Yifei, and Ji Junchao et al., *Hebei bang zi yinyue gailun*, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Liu Yuling (1947-), a distinguished national actor, proposed renaming it as "Jing Bangzi" due to its extensive historical development in Beijing and its significant contribution to the golden era of women's theater from 1912 to the 1930s. However, the use of the name "Hebei" often led to misconceptions, hindering its potential for expansion and development. Although the proposal sparked discussions among opera professionals and academics, it ultimately did not succeed. For further details, please refer to the following references: Liu Yuling, “Wei Jing wenhua zhong de Jing Bangzi Zhengming”, *Beijing Guancha* 3 (2004):64. Zhao Fenglan, “Liu Yuling Huyu Wei Beijing Hebei Bangzi Zhengming”, *Zhongguo wenhua bao*, December 17, 2008, 1. Zhao Fenglan, “Beijing Hebei Bangzi Gai Bu Gai Zhengming Yinfa Yilun”,*Zhongguo Wenhua Bao*, December 23, 2008, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Chang Jingzhi, *Lun Bangzi Qiang* (Beijing: Renmin Yinyue Chubanshe, 1991), 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Meng Fanshu, *Zhongguo Banshi Bianhua Ti Xiqu Yuanliu Yanjiu* (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2002), 149-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Zhang Cixi, ed., *Qingdai Yandou Liyuan Shiliao Xia* (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1996), 811-812. Lu Yifei, and Ji Junchao et al., *Hebei Bangzi Yinyue Gailun*, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ma Longwen, and Mao Dazhi, *Hebei Bangzi Jian Shi*, 13-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. The four great Anhui troupes are known as Sanqing, Sixi, Hechun and Chuntai respectively. They sing in a predominantly *Erhuang* vocal tune. Ma Shaobo ed., *Zhongguo Jingju Shi Shangce* (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1999), 76-77 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Zhou Chuanjia, and Cheng Bingda, ed., *Beijing xiju tongshi Ming Qing juan* (Beijing: Yan jing chubanshe, 2001), 318-320. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Yoshikazu Kikkawa, *Pekin nio Keru Kindai Dentou Engeki no Syokou : Himozi Bunka ni Tamasii o Moyasita Hitobito*,198. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Qi Rushan, *Qi Rushan wenji, Vol. 5* (Beijing: Kaiming chubanshe, 2010), 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Hou Junshan originally studied Shanxi's Bangzi Opera and changed to Beijing style Bangzi Opera when he came to Beijing. His profile can be found in the book below. Zhou Chuanjia, and Cheng Bingda, ed., *Beijing xiju tongshi Ming Qing juan*, 342-343. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. A number of critics have pointed out that Guo Baochen and Tan Xinpei have the same status in the Beijing theater scene, as seen in the following major reviews. Cyouka, “Ti Guo Baochen mu ying (Shang)”, *Shun tian shibao*, March, 19, 1926.Qing, “Qinqiang ceng sheng yishi, Guo Baochen zhi qinqiang zhi niu'er”, *Yishi bao*, July 22, 1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Hatano Kenichi, *Sina geki to sono meiyuu* (Tokyo: Shnnsakusya, 1925),138. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Zhou Chuanjia, and Cheng Bingda, ed., *Beijing xiju tongshi Ming Qing juan*, 344-345. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. For more information about *Huixing Nushi Chuan* written and performed by Tian Jiyun, please refer to the following article. Xia Xiaohong, “Jiu xitai shang de wenming xi ―Tian Jiyun yu Beijing funü kuang xuehui”, in *Beijing: Dushi xiangxiang yu wenhua jiyi*, ed. Chen Pingyuan and David Der-wei Wang (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2005), 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Yoshikazu Kikkawa, *Pekin nio Keru Kindai Dentou Engeki no Syokou : Himozi Bunka ni Tamasii o Moyasita Hitobito*,190-191. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Anonymous, “Tian Jiyun lue li”, *Shun tian shibao*, April, 18, 1923. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Lu Yifei, and Ji Junchao et al., *Hebei bang zi yinyue gailun*, 333. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Liu Wenfeng, *Shan shan shangren yu bangzi xi* (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1996), 172. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Zhen Guangjun, *Hebei bangzi zai tianjin shi shu*, 91-92. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Yoshikazu Kikkawa, *Pekin nio Keru Kindai Dentou Engeki no Syokou : Himozi Bunka ni Tamasii o Moyasita Hitobito*,229-230. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Lu Yifei, and Ji Junchao et al., *Hebei bang zi yinyue gailun*, 334. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Zhen Guangjun, *Hebei bangzi zai tianjin shi shu*, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Zhen Guangjun, *Hebei bangzi zai tianjin shi shu*, 35,60-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Ma Longwen and Mao Dazhi, *Hebei bangzi jian shi*, 163-164. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Wang Peilun, ed., *Xiqu cidian* (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Ma Longwen, and Mao Dazhi, *Hebei bangzi jian shi*, 109. Ma Shaobo ed., *Zhongguo jingju shi shangce*, 239-240. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. In their respective studies, Ma Longwen, Mao Dazhi, Tian Gensheng, and Yoshikawa have compiled a list of at least 20 to 40 plays that were originally Bangzi Opera and later transitioned into Beijing Opera. Their research highlights the existence of numerous plays that have undergone this transformation. Ma Longwen, and Mao Dazhi, *Hebei bangzi jian shi*, 111. Tian Gensheng, “Jindai jingju jumu zhi laiyuan”, *Zhonghua xiqu* (Feb 2004): 97-109. Yoshikazu Kikkawa, *Pekin nio Keru Kindai Dentou Engeki no Syokou : Himozi Bunka ni Tamasii o Moyasita Hitobito*,226-227. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Zhou Chuanjia, and Cheng Bingda, ed., *Beijing xiju tongshi Ming Qing juan*, 334-335. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ma Longwen, and Mao Dazhi, *Hebei bangzi jian shi*, 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Anonymous, “ Hebei Sheng Hebei Bangzi Juyuan Jianjie, ” ,*xiang yin,* 10 March 2016,32. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Contemporary Beijing Opera playwright and theater critic Hu Shiduo has pointed out the serious assimilation of Hebei Bangzi into Beijing Opera, see his article below. Hu Shiduo, “ Hebei Bangzi Xianzhuang Wenti Duanxiang,” *Da Wu Tai* 4 (2018) :19-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)