

Chapter 2

The Crisis of *Xiqu* in Taiwan and Its Local Cultural Response

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Abstract The mainstream *xiqu* styles in Taiwan are *jingju* and *gezaixi*. The authorities in Taiwan attached great importance to *jingju*, and once named *jinju* the national drama (*guoju*) due to its past glories in the early twentieth century and its traditional performing characteristics. After the TV stations started broadcasting, the situation of *xiqu* turned from bad to worse. *Jingju*, the once popular entertainment, was forced to become a classical art. *Gezaixi* dealt with the new media much better than *jingju* did. During the 1980s, The new practice of *jingju* sourced from the sense of crisis of the young actors. By virtue of their hard-working, the image of *jingju* had changed. The year 1992 was a very important year in the history of *xiqu* in Taiwan. *Xiqu* troupes from China were allowed to visit Taiwan. In the 1990s, the major motivation for Taiwan's *jingju* to develop was the *xiqu* experiences from China. Meanwhile, the high tide of “Taiwanese Identity” let people started to use their own voices to tell their own stories, and naturally *gezaixi* dug out a treasure of Taiwanese stories that were never seen on stage before. In the twenty-first century, the GuoGuang Opera Company successfully united the power of the playwrights and the directors. It's representative work is *The Golden Cangue* (2006). The production caused a lively discussion in the *xiqu* circles in both China and Taiwan. The “Taiwan Experience” of *jingju* provided a possible response to the *xiqu* crisis.

Keywords *Xiqu* in Taiwan • *Jingju* • *Gezaixi* • Interculture • Localization

The source of *xiqu* in Taiwan can be traced from the time of *Han* people's immigration to Taiwan. During the Qing Dynasty, a great amount of Fujian local *xiqu* like *beiguan* and *nanguan* were already introduced to Taiwan. The styles of professional troupes differed in rural and urban areas. In rural villages, the performances proceeded with basic modes of ritual spheres: the troupes toured around the temples and performed on the stage in front of the temples during birthdays of the gods and were paid by the temples' staff. Usually, the audience did not pay the

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troupes directly. Instead, they supported *xiqu* performances by offering money to the temples. In the city, *xiqu* performances enjoyed more opportunities than just temple festivals. The troupes could act for sing-song girls, guilds, and feudal officials. Besides professional troupes, there were also amateur *xiqu* activities. In traditional *Han* society, performance culture was not just a vocation, but also a hobby and entertainment for the whole society. In both rural and urban areas, there were numerous amateur actors working for different forms of traditional entertainment. Country boys and teenagers from the cities could join local amateur music clubs to hone their skills and talents for performances. They provided charity performances on various occasions, and were considered graceful entertainers. However, in the process of modernization, such traditional cultures of *Han* society gradually collapsed with the rise of commercial theaters, and temple performances were gradually marginalized.

The mainstream *xiqu* styles in Taiwan are *jingju* and *gezaixi*. The earliest record of *jingju* performances in Taiwan dates back to the late nineteenth century, while in the early twentieth century, the native *gezaixi* gradually evolved from *xiaoxi* (a miniature form of *xiqu*) to its modern form. Currently, *xiqu* in Taiwan has to face two historical challenges. First, generally speaking, all traditional performance arts are affected by the rise of new media and popular culture. Also, in 1949 political events caused Taiwan's secession from the Chinese mainland. These two conditions set up the basis for the follow-up developments of *xiqu* in Taiwan. This article will analyze the impact of the modernization efforts in Taiwan on the *xiqu* environment, and how the art of *xiqu* responded to those changes, specifically through *jingju* and *gezaixi*.

2.1 The Environment of *Xiqu* in Taiwan Before 1949

Jingju was the most popular genre of *xiqu* in China during the early twentieth century. The new media reflected the popularity. As soon as the Western recording techniques were introduced to China, numerous *jingju* vinyl records had emerged. The first silent film in China was also a *jingju* production. Moreover, with the help of radio broadcasting, the influence of *jingju* broadened among the common folks. However, after World War II, the activities of *xiqu* troupes were greatly impacted by the emergency of the low-budget popular songs, which rather quickly replaced the status of *jingju* in vinyl records and radio broadcasting.

The earliest record of *jingju* performance in Taiwan was in 1891 when a Shanghai *jingju* troupe came to Taiwan for private parties held by the administrative commissioner's office. It was followed by many visits later. Even during the Japanese Colonization Period (1895–1945), and from 1908 to the Kominka Movement in 1936, about fifty Shanghai *jingju* troupes had toured in Taiwan, and on average the touring period lasted for more than a half year.¹ The reason why

¹See Wang (2004a).

Taiwan society still could accept *jingju*, despite the fact that the language used in *jingju* was very much different from Taiwanese native language, was that *beiguan xiqu* (a similar tune of *jingju*) was already popularized around Taiwan. After 1949, the territory of the Republic of China was limited to the Taiwan area, and created a historical and cultural environment for the gathering of *jingju* and *gezaixi*. Very importantly, *Xiqu* in Taiwan escaped the *Xiqu* Reform Movement and the series of dramatic changes brought about by Cultural Revolution in China. However, this does not mean that *xiqu* performing arts in Taiwan remained completely traditional and became a “living fossil” for performance anthropology. On the contrary, in the followed eras, *xiqu* in Taiwan had to face the shrinking market of traditional popular culture, and wrestle for audience against modern popular cultural forms, including films, television shows, and pop music. Finally, it also had to gain and keep a comfortable place in the nation’s public policy of culture.

Commercial theaters in Taiwan started under the Japanese rule, and *gezaixi* began its commercial productions in the 1920s. *Gezaixi* was so popular at the time that it took over the *beiguan*’s market of temple performances. Furthermore, it was introduced to other areas such as Xiamen and Southeast Asia. The newly emerged *gezaixi* was continually under the attack of intellectuals, police authorities, and the newspapers. It was accused of “lewd” in style and of damaging the merits and virtues of the society.² Obviously, *gezaixi* did not rise up to the traditional expectations of *xiqu*’s responsibility to educate people. In 1936, the Japanese government started to promote the Kominka Movement to suppress local culture, and *gezaixi* was “reformed” or changed into Taiwanese opera. *Gezaixi* troupes were turned into *xinju* (new drama) or kominka troupes, while *jingju* troupes had no place to go but leave Taiwan. After World War II, *xiqu* in Taiwan slowly recovered and *Jingju* and *gezaixi* prospered again. Many civilian-run troupes toured around towns in Taiwan along the railway. All forms of *xiqu* came back to Taiwan from China again. The *jingju* troupe led by Ku Cheng-chiu, for example, performed in Yung-le Theater for 5 years. In the meantime, there were also more than two *yueju* troupes arrived from Shanghai, a *pinju* troupe from Hebei, and several *yuju* troupes from Henan—one of which became the forefather of the only *yuju* troupe in Taiwan today.

2.2 The Double-Track Development of *Jingju* and *Gezaixi*

In the 1950s, *jingju* troupes in Taiwan included both professional ones and “military” ones. The military *jingju* troupes provided the army with cultural entertainment regularly. When films and radio programs overpowered *xiqu* to become the most fashionable popular culture, theaters were refurbished into cinemas and the professional *jingju* troupes, facing existential crisis, were assimilated into the military troupes. To keep the lifeblood of *jingju*, the military *jingju* troupes set up actor

²See Chiu (1994).

training classes to cultivate new *xiqu* talents. Besides the army's actor training system, the Ministry of Education also established the Fu-Hsin Experimental School of *Xiqu* Arts. These two systems became the predecessors of the two major *jingju* troupes in contemporary Taiwan.

Politically, authorities in Taiwan attached great importance to *jingju*, and once named *jinju* the national drama (*guoju*) due to its past glories in the early twentieth century and its traditional performing characteristics. Popular cultural changes in post-war years forced military *jingju* troupes to depend heavily on government's resources, and, therefore, *jingju*'s pro-government political tendency got stronger and stronger. In the meantime, *jingju* became the target of the "pilot reform" for *Xiqu* Reform Movement in the People's Republic of China, and its effect was felt among PRC's establishments in arts and culture. In 1961, the new historical drama "Hai Rui's Dismissal from Office" performed by Peking Opera Theater Company of Beijing (now named *Jingju* Theater Company of Beijing) even became the catalyst for the beginning of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Rivalries between the two governments across the Taiwan Strait decided the political policy toward *jingju*'s development for the next decades. *Jingju* became part of the army's cultural works in Taiwan, and as long as the PRC continued its *jingju* promotion and establishments, the ROC must also continue to advocate *Jingju* as the one and only national drama. In the 1960s, the Ministry of National Defense sponsored the Army's Contest of Arts to encourage the military *jingju* troupes to revive old works. In mainland China, during the Cultural Revolution, *yanbanxi* (model operas) were produced. In response, ROC then launched the Chinese Culture Renaissance Movement, founded a Culture Bureau and National Opera Promotion Committee under the Ministry of Education, in order to emphasize that the government in Taiwan was the true heir and protector of Chinese cultures. Since *jingju* followed strict traditional performing methods, it was considered a safeguard of traditional morals. Both governments treated *jingju* as the best instrument for propaganda, and as a result, pushed the transformation of *jingju* in divergent ways. In the 1900s, *jingju* was a folk art that was market driven, but in the 1960s, due to political dynamics, *jingju* became a national art with government financial support. Ironically, the ROC government chose *jingju* for propaganda because it was the most welcomed form of arts by the populace, but the policy actually distanced *jingju* from the audience, and *jingju*, therefore, became excluded from popular culture. People might grow up hearing *jingju*, but there was no longer a great interest in listening to and enjoying it. After TV stations started broadcasting, the situation of *xiqu* turned from bad to worse. *Jingju*, the once most popular entertainment, was forced to become a classical art.

In response to the Cold War and the secession from China, the ROC government promoted "Militant Drama," and founded Taiwan *Gezaixi* Improvement Committee to reform *gezaixi*. Later, the committee was upgraded to Taiwan Provincial Local Drama Association, which hosted the Contest of Local Drama. However, folk commercial theaters had enjoyed great influence over *gezaixi* than the government did. Gong-Le Troupe, the *gezaixi* company that occupied a key status in the history of *gezaixi*, for example, began to hire professional writers to write plays, opened

cram schools for *gezaixi* students, produced *gezaixi* films, and organized new sub-troupes and song and dance ensembles. Gong-Le Troupe gradually developed a particular style of play and created the fashion of “melodramatic martial romance” for *gezaixi*’s outdoor stage era later.³ *Gezaixi* dealt with new popular media much better than *jingju* did; in fact, *gezaixi* even made use of new media forms to achieve its second renaissance. In the 1950s, radio *gezaixi* started to trend, and the first *gezaixi* film was made. The success of radio *gezaixi* made it possible for *gezaixi* to join TV and film industries with enough fund and ability. We can see that capable *gezaixi* troupes in this period left the stage, became radio *gezaixi* troupes, and later changed again into TV *gezaixi* troupes. Nevertheless, at the end of the 1960s, troupes lost their competitive advantages and had to retreat from radio and TV stations, and even from indoor theaters, to return to the outdoor stages in front of the temples, but the good relationship between new media and *gezaixi* remained until the 1980s in the form of *gezaixi* series.⁴

2.3 The “Taiwan Experience” of *Jingju*

1970s in Taiwan was an era of political unrest and flying economic development; meanwhile, the society also sensed a “*xiqu* crisis.” *Jingju* was especially in danger because it strictly followed classical methods. In response, enthusiasts began to think about ways to promote *xiqu*. In 1975, for example, a new rule for the Army’s Contest of Arts was announced: all works that joined the competition must be new plays or new adaptations. This rule helped a new generation of *jingju* writers, directors, and actors; however, the serious mission of “respecting the traditions” was still a long shot. The new practice of *jingju* came from a sense of crisis by the young actors. They left the military *jingju* troupes and founded independent ones. For example, Ya-Yin Ensemble (1979–1994) and Contemporary Legend Theatre (1986–) experimented *jingju* with modern theater and modern dance. They also invited classical *guoyue* (national music) musicians and modern theater workers to take part in the new attempt.⁵ Every new production generated passionate discussions. By virtue of their hard work, the image of *jingju* had changed. For people who cared about art and culture, what *jingju* represented changed from traditional “morals” to traditional “aesthetics.”

The year of 1992 was a very important moment in the history of *xiqu* in Taiwan. *Xiqu* troupes from China were allowed to visit Taiwan for the first time since 1949. As a result, Taiwan was officially and fully exposed to various new styles of traditional *xiqu*—particularly, the changes in performing methods, music, and stage designs ever made since the *Xiqu* Reform Movement in the 1950s. This new form

³See Tsai (2005a).

⁴See Tsai (2005b).

⁵See Wang (2004b).

of theater, new methods of narratives, and new ways of directing *xiqu* gave rise to a new tide of “mainland (China) fever.”⁶ In fact, new *xiqu* in China had influenced *jingju* in Taiwan as early as the 1950s via records and radio broadcasting. But performance on site had opened up new horizons. The military *jingju* troupes rewrote that new *xiqu* plays with the help of sound or video records.⁷ Ya-Yin Ensemble, established in 1979, consulted China’s new *jingju*, *yueju*, and *puxianxi* plays before they wrote their own. In the decade of 1990s, the major motivation for Taiwan’s *jingju* was to learn *xiqu* experiences from China. Plays from China were introduced and adapted. Teachers from China were employed as faculty in *xiqu* schools. The Affiliated Jingju Troupe of Fu-Hsin Experimental School of *Xiqu* Arts performed *The Story of Xu Jiujiang’s Promotion* (1992) and received extremely enthusiastic feedbacks, which encouraged the troupe to further cooperate with playwrights and directors from the mainland. Their follow-up works, *The True Story of Ah Q* (1996) and *Rashōmon* (1998), both received positive reviews from the critics. Bao-chun Li, who founded Taipei Li-yuan Chinese Opera Theater in 1997, came from a *xiqu* family and graduated from Beijing City *Xiqu* School, transplanted many plays and experiences to Taiwan, and insisted on the practice of actor-centered performances.

In the twenty-first century, the crisis of *xiqu* in Taiwan has extended from the audience to the actors. It is common for *jingju* that the *xiqu* schools cannot enroll enough students and those who have potential in acting would rather choose other performing arts than *jingju*. As a result, the lineup of the troupes is often not strong, containing only one or two stars. In response, the *xiqu* circle has been trying to strengthen playwriting and directing to make up for the acting. While the Fu-Hsin troupe was in trouble of personnel conflicts and Contemporary Legend Theatre stayed off stage, the GuoGuang Opera Company (merged among the Army’s LuGuang, the Air Force’s DaPeng, and the Navy’s HaiGuang opera troupes) had successfully aligned the powers of the playwrights and the directors. The plays emphasized contemporary people’s spiritual pursuit with classical materials, and the techniques of lighting, stage design, costume, and music were all fully employed by the director. As a whole, GuoGuang leaned toward modern theater. *Journey through Hell* (2002) and *Wang Shi-fong* (2003) relied on Chinese playwrights, but demonstrated the director’s ability to control the stage. What is more, since *Three Persons and Two Lamps* (2005) until now, GuoGuang’s productions have no longer depended on playwrights and directors from China. In 10 years, GuoGuang has become the leader of *xiqu* in Taiwan. GuoGuang’s most representative work is *The Golden Cangue* (2006). In 2009, GuoGuang brought *The Golden Cangue* to Beijing, and over the next few years, to Xiamen, Fuzhou, Shanghai, Hong Kong,

⁶See Wang (2002).

⁷See Wang (2006). During the Cold War, the ROC government forbade all kinds of literary and art works to enter and spread in Taiwan. The *xiqu* works were called *feixi* (the enemies’ drama), performing *feixi* was considered a crime. It was after the lift of the Martial Law in 1987 that these works were legalized. Of course, the situation began to loosen up earlier, and in the 1970s it was not difficult for the folk to gain information of *xiqu* from China.

Tianjin, and Singapore. The production generated so much excitement and caused a lively and controversial discussion in the *xiqu* circles in both China and Taiwan. Sun Hongxia, the Research Fellow at the Opera Institute of the Chinese National Academy of Arts, stated that, “In the sea of positive reviews of *The Golden Cangue*, the precious tradition is lost hopelessly.”⁸ Chen Shixiong, a professor in the Department of Chinese Literature at Xiamen University argued that “The current situation of Taiwan *xiqu* is that *jingju* has renounced its family name. Wang An-chi’s adaptation play of *jingju*, *The Golden Cangue*, is an example. Wei Hai-min supposed that ‘*Jingju* does not necessarily have a family name of *jing*’, and Wang An-chi said ‘*Jingju* is not a past tense, or a past perfect tense; it is a present tense’. What they said were not out of disrespect of *jingju*, but a postmodern way of thinking, with a postmodern logic of culture. The negative review from specialist Sun Hongxia of the Opera Institute of the Chinese National Academy of Arts, on the other hand, represents the traditional way of thinking....”⁹ Interestingly, in 2010, China’s Chongqing City *Jingju* Company produced a work with the same name, and the director Li Liuyi said that the goal of this production was to surpass the success of *The Golden Cangue* of Taiwan. Obviously, the reactions showed the impact of Taiwan’s *jingju*. *The Golden Cangue* is not just a performance; it highlighted the passion felt by generations of people in Taiwan and the sense of engagement and dialogues with modern theater and assessment of the position of *jingju* since the 1970s when Taiwan’s *jingju* faced the crisis brought by modernization. To look back upon the past, in the 1920s, Taiwan was on the margin of *jingju*; in the 1970s, Taiwan became the guardian of traditional *jingju*; and, in the 2010s, the “Taiwan Experience” of *jingju* provided a legitimate and powerful response to the *xiqu* crisis.

2.4 *Gezaixi*’s “Returning to Indoor Theaters”

The Taiwanese government practiced different policies on *jingju* and *gezaixi*. *Gezaixi* was treated in the tradition of the Qing Dynasty, which was laissez-faire and limitation at the same time. The government let *gezaixi* find its own living way in the society independently without any help or financial subsidy, which was the normal state in *xiqu*’s history of survival. The limitation, on the other hand, refers to the moral ideology of the authority, which includes the nationalist suppression of local dialects, the common attacks on newly risen *xiqu*’s “propagating of sex and violence,” or the Kominka Movement that forced radio to use only Japanese language and delayed the popularity of radio *gezaixi*. Since *gezaixi* had some highly entertaining folk characteristics, the actors had less a sense of crisis than those of

⁸See Sun (2010).

⁹See Chen (2011), Wang An-chi is one of the playwrights of the *jingju* *The Golden Cangue*, and Wei Hai-min played the lead character.

jingju. The TV series were so well received that the government limited it with the dialect policy that forbid Taiwanese dialect to be broadcast more than one hour each day, and that one hour had to be divided into the noon session and the night session. The new media helped *gezaixi* soar to new heights, but with passage of Cable Radio and Television Act, the sudden growth of channels changed the television environment, and overshadowed and gradually replaced the new *gezaixi* series on TV.¹⁰ Of course, the decline of *gezaixi* also resulted from the lack of new actors.

There was a peculiar phenomenon of *gezaixi* performance between the late 1960s and the 1980s: *gezaixi* was performed only on TV or outdoor stages in front of the temples. For 20 years, *gezaixi* was never performed on indoor stages. In 1990, Holo Taiwanese Opera Troupe, with its members mainly from TV *gezaixi* series, was established. Holo focused its performances on indoor stages, and other *gezaixi* companies began to follow. Since at that time all *gezaixi* was performed on “*waitai*,” the outdoor stages, in front of the temples, Holo’s entering “*netai*” (the indoor theaters) is a significant comeback, so “returning to *netai*” has become a special term that marks the event. In the 1990s, the China *xiqu* fever that influenced *jingju* in Taiwan had also influenced *gezaixi*. Holo Taiwanese Opera Troupe used China’s *minju*, *puxianxi*, *melinxi*, and *kunju* plays to improve the playwriting skills of *gezaixi* writers. Their productions were called literary *gezaixi*, and later they also created local and original plays. One of the actresses of Holo, Tang Mei-yun, left Holo and organized Tang Mei-yun *Gezaixi* Troupe, which became a representative *gezaixi* company of originality and literary quality. In 2010, Xiaobaihua Yueju Opera Company of Shengzhou City, China, produced a “new original play,” called *A Song of Farewell from the Desert*, which had a lot in similarity with *The Blush of the Desert* produced by Tang Mei-yun’s *Gezaixi* Troupe in 2003. With so many similarities in plot, characters, and structure, it proved that contemporary *xiqu* in Taiwan no longer has to rely on playwrights and directors from China, and on the contrary, Taiwan’s *xiqu* started to enrich China’s *xiqu* with its own originality and achievements.

In recent years, there has been a new development that is worthy of mention: the connection of *xiqu* troupes and religious organizations. Starting from this century, the Christian Church has been working with *gezaixi* companies. Small-scale “gospel *gezaixi*,” adapting the Bible, is introduced. Then, the Buddhist groups also provided supplies to several *gezaixi* troupes to perform large-scale buddhist stories on stage. The earliest buddhist *gezaixi* was *The Emperor Liang’s Repentance* by Holo Taiwanese Opera Troupe, which could be viewed as Taiwanese buddhist groups’ constant learning from the Christian missionaries (like opening hospitals, schools, and entering the media industry). As for the effect of performances, both gospel *gezaixi* and buddhist *gezaixi* attract mainly the believers of the religions, and second, fans of troupes, but *xiqu* lovers, are the least part of the audience. Religious *xiqu*, unlike literary *xiqu*, does not think about how to attract new audience with its content and more time is devoted to observe its artistic value, but it is hard to ignore the fact that resources offered by religious groups are very helpful to save those

¹⁰See Tsai (2005c).

traditional performances. In the future, maybe this way of cooperation will become a best practice to develop traditional *xiqu*.

One cannot ignore the top *gezaixi* company, Ming Hwa Yuan, when discussing *gezaixi*. However, I find it impossible to weave it into the context of this article, because Ming Hwa Yuan is a special case that has almost never faced the various crises mentioned above. It is a family troupe so the supply of actors is sufficient (the major reason); it never limits the themes; it is very creative in performance style. In conclusion, it puts the original characteristics of *gezaixi* in full play, maintains its flexibility in absorbing the shock of modernization, and is still very active on both indoor and outdoor stages. Ultimately, it has never been short of audience, so there is no evidence of a modernization crisis in its case.

2.5 “Interculture” and “Localization”

The foregoing discussion tells the development of two mainstream *xiqu*'s in Taiwan, which both had a tendency toward “literariness.” However, besides literariness, there are two other aspects of Taiwan's *xiqu* that are worth our attention: the themes of intercultural communications and localization.

As for the intercultural dimension, Contemporary Legend Theatre founded in 1986 went on a quite special road that no other troupes ever tried even until now. Contemporary Legend Theatre can claim to be the most world-famous *xiqu* troupe of Taiwan. Their plays are mainly adapted foreign classics. The first production, *The Kingdom of Desire*, was adapted from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. *War and Eternity* (1990) was adapted from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Lou Lan Nu* (1993) from Euripides' *Medea*, *Oresteia* (1995) from Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, *King Lear* (2001) from Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Tempest* (2004) from Shakespeare's *Tempest*, *Waiting for Godot* (2005) from Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, and, most recently, *Metamorphosis* (2013) from Franz Kafka's seminal novella. Contemporary Legend Theatre has disregarded the tradition of role types, sects, vocal productions, and principles of movement. Instead, they use the body of the *jingju* actor as the basic element to interpret western classics. Jumping out from the limitations of the traditional formula, Contemporary Legend Theatre has initiated an organic dialogue between modern drama critics and *xiqu* critics, and, as a result, making *jingju*'s bond with modern drama circle much stronger. Audiences of Contemporary Legend Theatre and GuoGuang Opera Company do not completely overlap, and they have successfully brought out a group of audience that appreciates both modern drama and traditional *xiqu*. After Contemporary Legend Theatre, the most important intercultural *xiqu* event was Orlando (2009), a cooperative effort between Robert Wilson and the best *jingju* actress Wei Hai-min.

Regarding localization, since 1895 the local culture of Taiwan had been suppressed by authorities, whether by the foreign Japanese regime or by the *Han Chinese*. Only in the late 1980s after the lift of the Martial Law, government's restrictions on local culture have loosened, and folk cultural energies have been

gradually recovered. As a result, Taiwanese national identity gets stronger and stronger, and still shows no signs of decline until today. This revitalization of local culture was fully demonstrated in *jingju* and *gezaixi*. In its founding manifesto in 1995, for example, the GuoGuang Opera Company announced in 1995 that one of its focuses is the localization of *jingju*. Good cases in point are GuoGuang's "Taiwan Trilogy" of *Matsu* (1998), *Koxinga and Taiwan* (1999) and *Liao Tianding* (1999). GuGuang demonstrated its idea of localization by the choice of their plays' subject matters. Their sentimental tide of "Taiwanese Identity" let *xiqu* lovers see the value of *gezaixi* with a brand new view: all *xiqu* in Taiwan came from mainland China, except for *gezaixi*. People started to use their voices to tell their own stories, and naturally *gezaixi* dug out a treasure of Taiwanese stories that were never seen on stage before. Such performances include Holo Taiwanese Opera Troupe's *Taiwan, My Mother* (2000), *The Kingdom of Tungning* (2004), Lin Zhanmei of *Zhuqian* (2005), *Like a Rising Wind: Koxinga* (2008), Ming Hwa Yuan's *The Duck King* (2002), and *The Seals of 1895* (2008) by Tang Mei-yun's Gezaixi Troupe. These localized productions represent the rebound power from the suppression and were very popular from the beginning of this century. However, the irony is that the almost always positive attitude toward the local has somehow restrained artists' imagination.

Besides the mainstream *jingju* and *gezaixi*, *xiqu* in Taiwan also include *kunju*, Hakka opera, *yueju*, etc. These other genres of *xiqu* have faced similar crisis of modernization and have tried to adjust themselves and attract audiences to come into the theaters. Due to the limited space of this article, I cannot discuss them in detail, but these other troupes' ways of dealing with challenges are basically similar to those of *jingju* and *gezaixi*: they pursue literariness, intercultural, and localization. Moreover, with the growing intimacy between *xiqu* troupes and modern theater companies, more and more *xiqu* traditions were abandoned. "Music" is the most essential trait of *xiqu*, and now in *xiqu* performances the element of music could be removed or "interculturalized," like GuoGuang Opera Company's "symphony-jingju," *Sunny after Snow* (2007), and Shiu-Kim Taiwanese Opera Troupe's "Taiwanese musical," *Romance in Anping* (2011).¹¹ Perhaps, it marks the beginning of some further new possibilities for traditional *xiqu* in the twenty-first century.

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