

***Contemporary Chinese Theatre and Rebellion against Tradition: Influence of
Culture Changes in Little Theaters***

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Introduction

In 2010, during the events of Cairo International Experimental Theatre festival, the researcher attended a Chinese drama show titled "Lady Macbeth"¹ "Sichuan Opera". In spite of the status of shock resulting from the root difference from the theatre show; it is entirely in contradiction with the western theatre traditions we used to see. However, in the meantime, there is a status of curiosity and surprise of existence of heritage theatre so far, in light of a world globalization and simulation to western theatre², the traditional Chinese theatre is characterized with cultural privacy that distinguishes performance, clothes, makeup and other elements.

But from the beginning of 20th century we can detect a lot of radical changes by which the Chinese society either on the cultural and economic level which led to the appearance of new theatre trend parallel to the traditional theatre. The important of which is 'The little theatre' which was based on refusing heritage theatre, as the evolution of the little theatre is considering a type of rejection of theatre writers to the idea of preserving the authority and giving forms to artistic concepts and expressional forms.

The study aims to detect the important forms of cultural rebel which was represented in translation motions which made apparition of the magazine of "New Youth" in 1915 and which have had an impact in the boot of a new culture and the movement of the 4th of May 1919 and the apparition of the little theatre as well as inevitable reality in the apparition of the Chinese society in general and on the theatre in particular.

Cultural changes were not the only owner of the sole influence on the Chinese theater, but the economic changes also impact on it, then the economy had changed from economic market to a free economy and that also had an impact on the Chinese society in general and on the theatre in particular, and to play a role also had impacting on the apparition of the little theatre

The researcher is discussing causes of the rebellion on the traditional theatre as representing the traditional art authority, and direction to a different stream and dispense with identity in theatre arts how this was reflected in theatrical and through analysis of a scene from the play "Suo Linnang2014" of Beijing Opera which represent the national legacy theatre and a scene from a play "Rhinoceros In Love"2013 as a model of the experimental stream on the little theatre by using the methodology of culture anthropology, trying to reveal the extent of the change that has occurred in the Chinese theatre, and whether succeeded the culture and economic changes to breaking the heritage theatre or the little theatre kept with some of the features of the traditional theatre.

¹ The play presented in 2010, the Republic Theater, Cairo, Egypt.

² Once the show ended, the researcher carried out a questionnaire with the show attendants regarding their opinion in the show that around 80% of respondents have confirmed that in spite of language barrier against understanding the dialogue; they were impressed and surprised with the show . They also assured that director's selection of "Macbeth" as a global medium has assisted significantly in understanding the theatre show. This led the researcher to complete her study in the Chinese traditional theatre and the changes it has witnessed.

The forms of cultural rebellion

By the beginning of 20th century it is began to be implemented to the Chinese theatre some cultural changes and western influences, which affected the theatrical movement and led to the apparition of current theatrical different and parallel to the traditional theatre stream, and the beginning of the multiple movements of literary translation into Chinese language were one of the most important culture movements that appeared in the early 20th century, and translated many works of romantic writers whom the French novelist "Victor Hugo1802-1885", Russian novelist "Leo Tolstoy1828-1910", poet , writer and artist Indian "Tagore1861-1941" and other, one of the most famous and influential writers in Chinese society, the British playwright and poet "William Shakespeare" famous and the Norwegian playwright and poet "Henrik Ibsen".

Since 1902, it was the beginning of showing Shakespeare's plays in China, and with the proliferation of translations of his plays and making research on it; Shakespeare has become famous and well-known among the Chinese people, furthermore that his plays become the models that guided the development of Chinese modern theatre the criterion for assessing the level of theatre(Qing Gong:2007), and was for Ibsen the largest and the most important influence in society, in July 1918, the magazine of "New Youth"³ issued a special edition of Henrik Ibsen. In the same year, "Hu Chia" translated the play of "Doll's House", then the Chinese began to know Ibsen widely featured beyond (prompt Ibsen), it published numerous works and writing article about him and his work, and have writing several plays under the influence of person 'Nora' hero, especially play ' Hou Che' " the big issue"⁴ and play Ngeou Yang Yu Kien "licentious"⁵ so 'Nora' become a symbol of women's liberation and individual freedom, and it affected on many of Chinese women have begun to resist the moral order and the autocratic feudal families.

The impact of the magazine "New Youth" did not only stopped on Ibsen, it has played a big role in the showing of the new culture by writing some article in vernacular against the old classics and the values of Confucian society, they saw that the development would not only come follow Western standards.

In the following years began the most important cultural and political movement at the level of china's modern history and is the movement of 4 may 1919, is the movement against imperialism and caused direct to treaties Unequal imposed on China after the First World War "the Treaty Versailles"⁶ and the inability of the

³This magazine appeared in September 1915 in Shanghai then moved its headquarters to Beijing in 1917 when he was appointed 'Chen' head of the Chinese Literature Department.

⁴ The author here presents the story of a liberal girl finally decides to leave the House and leave with her husband and has chosen in the face of the father the alive in traditional rituals and myths that secured, her speech says that marriage is a matter of life and that they alone should decide about it.

⁵ The hero here is presents a married women, her husband's grandmothers often brought up the same day that the family receives her husband's new concubine, and when a husband's aunts reveal this secret was kept by, and tell her to accept the reality of modern women as wife of the heroine rejects any compromise on this. And once you get the divorce leave the House carrying her baby in her arms in the company of the courtesan who convinced her by not trusting husband sneak. And following the surprise of all the members of the family of this leave, draining all: Ah! What a licentious

⁶ China had entered the first world war, the Triple Alliance allies in 1917 with the condition that all German spheres of influence in China would be returned to it again, but after the war "the Treaty of

Government to protect Chinese interests and allow Japan to take the Province of Shandong Which had surrendered to Germany, and this has led to widespread national revolt where a student resistance movement Involving various groups in the whole country.

The movement of the 4th of May, is the source of for ideas and important events in the history of modern China, where many believed that getting out of problems adopted Western ideas such as equality and democracy and called on nationalists to reject the traditional values and the abandonment of the Confucian approach which emphasized the hierarchy in the relations of the terms such as "Mr. science" and "Ms. Democracy"⁷, most important symbolic words in that in order to highlight point was that the Chinese extremism was walking into the western direction thought and the idea of liberal democracy, it was the first modern western stream they signal the start of absorbing new trends, and shaking off some of the old agreements outdated, detailed considered contempt of movement of traditional Chinese culture, where it began introducing new and different ideas to China through the rebellion cultural movement.

After the previous culture changes of the translation movements and the magazine New Youth and the movement of the 4th of May, and the rejection of traditional values and traditional theatre as does not reflect the reality was necessary to stream theatrical different of traditional theatre and the emergence of here came the emergence of the little theatre are an inevitable product of the reality of Chinese society and the little theatre for the first time in 1920, has appeared and it was called (aimei de xiazi) "amateur theatre", And has become a large scale movement, but soon calmed down during the conflict between the Communist Party of China and the Party of Kuomintang, but sent back in August 1982 when " Gao Xingjian's" play "The absolute sign" where the view in small rehearsal hall in the theatre of the people in Beijing and this has led to great popularity of play's little theatre and high performance of the "Little theatre"⁸

The importance of play in big bold text at the theatre and at the level of output where the dramatic love story between "Khai DZ" a young man who seeks to find a job and "Mei fang" little girl, but due to the harsh economic conditions could not marry, having "Khai DZ"- and an Assistant train driver- the commands to the assistant and lighting the red light which represent the absolute sign to make the train enter safety to the station discussed the play here the problem of finding a job and faced by young people in that period, and had a show like this topic in this period, a large bolder by the author and director, noted a shift in dramatic themes of historical topic to topics which reflect the reality we live as well as a new method to realize the psychological world of the characters and the play that gave the force attracting the fact and the importance of play in breaking the shackles of old theatrical, it is provided in circumstances in which most of the plays feature a traditional individual molded style, where made the public living in an atmosphere of reality, dream, illusion and

Versailles ‘ in April 1919 the Germany rights empowerment the Shandong province to Japan and that make raising of the nationalist sentiment in China and to the movement of the 4th of May.

The movement of the 4th May ‘Shandong article‘ , Wikipedia.

⁷ ^ Article the movement of the 4th May, Wikipedia.

⁸ By the mid 1980s, Huaju troupes in China's major cities were staging productions in newly created Little Theatre's pace. Juchang, Xiao 2011 - Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture - Little Theatre.

memories as well as attracted the public toward depth figures revealed psychological and emotional and psychological situation of these figures on the stage.

Little theatre have paved to the apparition of the experimental stream, and we considered and classified "Meng Jinghui"⁹, one of the most important directors so, in 1990 he is called as "leader of the experimental theatre" because he was considered the most familiar literate of the experimental theatre arts, and Ming dramas has raised a storm of drama in China and its name become synonymous with the Avant-garde.

In the early 1990s, when people asked Meng Jinghui what he and his fellow dramatic upstarts meant by "experimental drama," the young director reply, "I don't really know!" But he certainly knew what it wasn't. "We wanted to do something different from the state-run theaters, our teachers at the dram academy, and the Party propaganda that's encouraged by the Ministry of Culture. We wanted to create something new, something that didn't exist."

Meng says, "We were trying to find a new name to define what we were trying to do. So we decided on 'experimental.' This derived in part from the foreign concept of experimental, but more importantly it meant a new kind of drama to express ourselves in a manner that truly belonged to us."(Christopher Barden)¹⁰

When asked today for a precise definition of experimental drama, Meng responds, "I know what isn't experimental drama. So what we're doing is whatever constitutes the opposite of non-experimental drama!"(Christopher Barden)

The most important characteristic of the Ming's dramas that he draws its themes from real life where it shows the suffering of the people and their confusion on stage and the inner world of the characters on stage and the humanitarian concern and the value of life through experimental drama, he also use the output level theatrical techniques are rarely used on stage by such as electronic music and strobe lighting in a new attempt to convince the audience mentally and visually is what brought unprecedented change in the Chinese modern drama.

Meng adopted the manner of the realistic expression of irony from a perfect world and that was the basic on which topics on ancient Chinese theatre, where the audience is thinking through the irony of historical backgrounds, and could exploited the slogans of the revolution, to reported on the deteriorating situation of the reality of Chinese society, it is appears in the play "total thinking" and is quoted on the record of one of the writers Ming's anonymous dynasty entitled "Si fan"(Boa LinKhai:2010), the

9 Born in 1964, Bachelor degree from Chinese Department, Beijing Normal University, Master degree in Acting and Directing Department, Central Academy of Drama, acted the leading role in "The Rhinoceros, directed "Waiting for Godot" by famous French playwright Samuel Beckett in 1991, wrote and directed drama "Si Fan" in 1993, wrote and directed experimental drama "I Love XXX" in 1994, directed "Rhinoceros in Love" and "Bootleg Faust" in 1999 and The first movie "Chicken Poets" debuted in September 2002, then become the leader of experimental movement in China.

Meng Jinghui: A Trailblazer of Chinese Experimental Drama, China culture, 2003.

¹⁰ Barden, Christopher, Experimental Drama Comes of Age: Meng Jinghui's new production plays to packed houses

play “Rhinoceros In Love” is one of the most important plays directed by hui in 1999 which was the beginning of the little theatre and the fame of hui.

Economic changes:

The appearance of little theatre was not the only result of the culture reasons, but also referred to the economic changes role, and the apparition of the little theatre considered as a direct reflection of social and economic changes during the China’s transformation from a planned to a market economy, and as a response to the pressures of the subsidy reduction, because the small theatre depends mainly on lower production costs and serve while the needs of the audience.

Economic reform has brought dramatic changes in Chinese society and the Chinese Theatre in the late 1970, after the economic collapse that occurred in China, the "Ding Xiaoping" reformed in the economy, where the Chinese from the planned economy from the planned economy system¹¹ to the system of market economy¹² and the impact on the general life in Chinese society, so the money was controlled of everything, become the measure of success or failure and the money is the primary goal in life, and played the role in Chinese society to change from a society based on social status to a civil society based on the market, as well as China’s entry into the World Trade Organization and the culture of consumer goods, then was the beginning of the appearance of the comic and commercial theatre and increased the playwright interest of the willingness of the public and the ways to selling and promotion the play, reflected in the topics addressed by traditional ideas, has departed completely from the idea plays principles and high morality which was addressed by the plays of old and started paying attention to topic that deal with the psychological and emotional state, and the frustration of youth in crisis That period.

Analysis of the two plays

After review and analysis of economic and cultural changes to Chinese society of early 20th century researcher discusses the vulnerability of Chinese Theatre and culture changes are breaking down stereotypes of dramatic and theatrical in the little theater or keep each through a critical study for scene of two plays "Suolin liang" and “Rhinoceros In Love” by using the methodology of semiotics, and how this impacts on the level on the level of theatrical elements and issues raised in the presentations.

Scenarios level

The traditional theatre "Beijing Opera" is different the little theatre where the subjects on stage, where Beijing Opera provided legacy topics with a deep

¹¹ Is a type economic system, where the State’s macroeconomic police and trade activity, but allow free economic decision with regard to employment and consumption at a certain level. There no control by the State over the factors of production, in addition to planning center around results and how the production and of the production, but with the freedom of individual decisions, such as choosing a job. The criticism is centrally planned economic system sometimes because they are not the organization correctly, or not a reservation quality control workers and incentives. This is known as “oriented economy”

¹²A market economy or the Capitalist economy, is a classical liberal economic system, which is an essential component of economic liberalism and the idea of a free economy is the lack of State interference in economic activities and let the market adjust itself.

understanding of virtue and high principles such as loyalty and honor and courage which always triumph of good over evil in the end and other ideals and divided into military plays "Wu" and civilian plays "Wen", they are discussed social problem and marriage and other matters of life, the little theatre is The social plays the modern reality of society through to show the suffering of the people in life, it puts human qualities and Good Bad wayfarer on stage, he is trying to dive into the depth Human soul.

If we look at the plays in question we can understand what we mean, we find that a "Suo Linnang" is civil play, dating to 1940 wrote by "Weng Ouhong" revolves around the idea of Fidelity and giving and generosity and fulfillment of During the heroine of the offer and is "Xue xiang ling" a rich and a good heart decide on her wedding day that own jewelry bag given to "Zhao shuo zhen" after she heard her crying and sympathized with her, but after 6 years of losing her family and her wealth in "xue" flood and find work as a maid at "Zhao", and remember "Zhao" and remember her gift so she help to reunite her family.

The play off the little theatre "Rhinoceros In Love" in which the writer "Liao yimei" reflects the feelings and emotion of the simple life and the psychological conditions of young people and their concerns and express simple problems, where the theme revolves around the love story between two young city, one a young man named "Malo", a janitor in the Zoo where grazing animal Rhinos and is similar in its lethargy and his stupidity and love with a girl named "MingMing", do for her everything he can and in spite of that he didn't get half of what he offered to her and in the eyes of the other person "Malo" considered a fanciful man caused by his exaggeration in this evaluation of his sweetheart and eventually "Malo" kills the rhino and it is a reference to the killing of his love, where shows that death is better than live without freedom and he lowered his head to the customs of the society in the end.

And if we look at the economic and culture changes in this period, the little theatre is the most reflective of reality, where the dramatic situation of the unit and the deficit was felt by young people after their long previous value principles and reflected the mindset of the people of the cities after the social changes that have occurred in the community of interest of the funds at the expense of human feelings of moral values, this play is a vivid picture of Chinese society at the period, and the traditional theatre still plays traditional Chinese so far on the stage and still the idea of Utopia and the ideal are the values dominant theme, this of course does not underestimate traditional plays as far as takes us away from reality in which we live.

It is clear from the foregoing that the evolution in the level of topics in theatre for little theatre, which rejecting the ideals which unsung Chinese community search for theatre and themes reflection the social situation and the frustrations that surrounds them at the time and reflected the reality of Chinese society and critique him too..

Performance's acting:

The primary role of actor and takes the main axis in the play, featuring the art of Chinese actor that specific profession acquired actor and need preparation period ranging from six or seven years of childhood, and it's called (comprehensive) actor,

the actor in theatre heritage must learn Mime, dance, fencing, and even boxing and aerobatics, acrobatics, and martial arts, singing, here shows the complexity of this art.

To present a play, the actors depended on the stylization performance presented in gestures and movement of stationary normal spectator Code recognizes that do not change, but rather than actors of mastery, representative performance style of the actors is determined by the heritage of centuries, where the stylization performance details and a large number of formulas of the performing, there are about fifty formula for hands gestures, and the multiplicity also formulas for traffic and legs, feet, head, and torso formations, and rely too many skills, including beard, propeller, quantum skills, heroine adopted "Xue" skill sleeves throughout the theater premiere of expression her felling, whether sadness or happiness(image1)



(Image1)

The actors in particular the heroine "Xue", in her representative performance depended on the unusual technique¹³ and to use maximum effort to get less done and which appeared in the movement of the heroine "Xue".

The actors in "Rhinoceros In Love" depended on reincarnation performance, "Stanislavski's approach" and it is one of the most famous courses, which relied on protective Stanislavski curriculum in the representative performance, In scenes of emotion Stanislavski advised to recall the representative any incident occurred in his life be happy events or bad depending on the scene presented, confirming the

¹³ The three principles that Eugenio Barba dimming them representative of the Far East theatres in General, are

- a- The unusual technique
- b- Breach body balance
- c- Dynamic contrast or meeting of contrast and a technique similar to the movement of 'frog' in jump, before jumping frog forward it back down a bit back and is the same as the movement representative, before applying a representative falling back to back, it pulls together the most energy.

principle of realism in the representation, the actors movements and their realistic performances, does not depend on the blades or specific movements to symbolize a certain act, and is what expands it spread by masses more on the level of state of China or the rest of the world due to its dependence on the movements or the language of most of the global body of the characters could anywhere in the world to understand it.

Fashion level

Fashion vast difference between the legacy theatre and the little theatre, where the traditional theater depended on the clothes of legacy patterns and forms of specific origin is due to the middle of the 14th century, can The public that distinguishes type of personal and social class of the desired artist through service and head coverings, each layer has a different costume fashion presents a civil plays characters that have a special costume, and dubbed "Xingtou", a rich layer of clothing with bright colors such as personalized 'Xue' (image2) and headgear decorated and is a reference to the



(image2)

class and most importantly is the sleeve, the wide sleeves worn by the upper class flip over the champion of the middle class her dress without sleeves (Image3).



(Image 3)

But in the little theatre the actors wearing a modern clothes, for example, Malo wearing a white T-shirt and black pants, Ming wearing a red dress they are fashionable clothes do not rely on private Chinese society semantics (image4)



(image4)

Makeup level:

While it is the make-up of the most important elements in Legacy theatre, lacking in the little theatre, the actors in the little theatre did not put any makeup, either in the theatre, the audience recognize the legacy qualities by makeup for each has a specific meaningful such as the red which indicates noble qualities, as courage and sincerity ,and this has appeared during the play, the hero "Xue" (image5) is



(Image5)

courageous and sincerity, firstly she sacrifice the special jewelry for girls, 'Zhao', and different color semantics make up from the far East and the Middle East (Arabic States), while the white color in the theatres of the Middle East symbolizes peace, purity and honesty and transparency symbolizes the make-up of the Chinese theater to all that is bad and snider in the human soul and is what confuse the Egyptian spectator while watching the play_ if unfamiliar with the basic of the legacy theatre_ and is due to direct cause by different cultures.

And there are some characters have makeup like clown personality 'Chu', a piece of chalk in amid-face (image6) from the lower class, entertaining character of a villain.



(Image 6)

Decoration level:

There is no decoration in the Chinese traditional theatre, and this is evident in the play, if we search for decorations in the play "Suo linniang", we look in vain for the decorations have been designed by the painter, despite frequent changes of (backgrounds), it's not considered décor in the Western sense of the word , there is no

decoration on stage only extensions of the theatre, such as table and some chairs with a straight back(image7), which is use calculates and economy either pots and cups



(Image7)

and oars, they used to use a realistic and this is what appeared on stage, in the minute(1:16:50) an actor's appears constipated a paddle seems like a boat in the middle of the River in an attempt to escape the flood (image8), similar to the little



(Image8)

theater with traditional in this elements, it is also the lack of decoration, the display is a black curtain used as a background(image9), as well as some accessories for theatre,



(image9)

such as tabletop and seats are simple but varied casual use, the traditional theatre is sometimes used for multiple purpose in this revelatory, as sometimes used as Thrones (image10) and sometimes as lawn seats and sometimes impenetrable barriers if it gets the heroine in distress behind her, either in little theatre it uses realistically or accurately as use in usual life.



(image10)

But the lack of decoration in both plays causes by demobilized, the fact that the traditional theatre is based on the art of acting, this art represents the basic element and the little theatre, either because the lack of decoration for economic reasons, the economic collapse that occurred in China and reducing of the subsidy, to theater resulted in the adoption of the theatre the least possibilities to reflect reality, second reason is the rise of the little theatre based rejected the idea in the traditional theatre extravagance at the clothes and makeup.

Conclusion

- 1- Chinese traditional theatre depended on the blades or specific semantic's actors at the level of the elements of performance and make-up, clothes, decor make him a culture specificity that distinguish it from any other form of theatre.
- 2- The modern drama fully disagree in traditional drama art from in the art form instead of the idea of dancing and singing in the legacy theatre, is designed to create real optical effects on the stage, mainly through dialogue and physical activity.
- 3- The apparition of little theatre came as a result of the many forma of culture, social and rebellion that was the legacy theatre rejected for traditional values and to look to the west.
- 4- There are similarities between the Chinese legacy theatre and the little theatre at the level of theatrical presentation elements, such as the lack of use, and also the use of lighting in the theatre instead of decorative lighting, but for different reasons.
- 5- The little theatre borrowed theatrical practices of the western actors, in terms of approach and performance apparel and discovered the Chinese spoken drama.
- 6- The difference between scene of legacy and little theatre, in the little theatre is largely realistic in terms of the topics they are reflecting the social life, unlike traditional theatre is learning more to the use of both legacy themes or display elements.

Recommendations:

- 1- Increase culture exchanges between Asian and Africa, in particular, countries of the Middle East.
- 2- Increase translated books and special Chinese theatre in general to the English language as an international language and marketed them in the Middle East.
- 3- Translate the Chinese play into English language.
- 4- The national authority had to facilitate the procedures associated with missions and culture exchange between the two countries.
- 5- The need for the media to raise awareness of culture legacy theatre plays.

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