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Multi-Discursive Ethnography and the Re-Narration of Chinese Heritage: Stories about the *Yueju* Opera Performance at the Heavenly Queen Palace of Quzhou*

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ABSTRACT

Recognizing the discursive nature of heritage and its crisis of representation, this paper proposes to use what we call “multi-discursive ethnography” as a methodological and writing strategy to re-narrate and thereby remake heritage in contemporary China. Multi-discursive ethnography, as its name indicates, is a form of ethnography that encompasses multiple discourses of a subject matter and strives to facilitate dialogue among them. Scholars are required to conduct fieldwork and other research procedures to expose them to varied discourses, and then write up an ethnography by assembling and weaving together those discourses they find useful for representing dialogue and diversity. As a case study, we present a multi-discursive ethnography of the Heavenly Queen Palace (*Tianhou Gong* 天后宮) in Quzhou (衢州), Zhejiang Province, focusing chiefly on the *Yueju* opera (越劇) performances that many local people attend. Stories are told there, allowing us to rethink and reconstruct heritage beyond disciplinary knowledge and universalized meaning-making. This multi-discursive ethnography, we argue, problematizes globalized heritage discourses and invites a diverse and dialogical reconceptualization of a local past in the present by foregrounding vernacular voices and deep cultural discourse, especially with regard to *li* (禮), which is considered to be “the determinate fabric of Chinese culture, and...the language through which the culture is expressed” (Hall and Ames 1998, 269).

Keywords: *Yueju* opera, Chinese heritage, multi-discursive ethnography, crisis of representation, local voices, deep cultural discourse, dialogue, diversity

Introduction

By July 2016, China had fifty sites on UNESCO’s World Heritage List, ranking second around the globe, and thirty items on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, ranking first in the world. Moreover, it has numerous sites and items inscribed on domestic heritage lists by the central and local governments. To echo David Lowenthal, the Chinese could also say that

“HERITAGE IS EVERYWHERE—in the news, in the movies, in the marketplace” (1998, 1, capitalization in original). But what is heritage? What meanings and values does heritage have in and for the present? How should heritage be preserved, managed, and utilized? Basic questions like these are often given spur-of-the-moment answers with reference to the charters, conventions, and guidelines issued by UNESCO, ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), and other international authorities. Their concepts, categorizations, codes, criteria and so forth are translated into Chinese and taken as essential knowledge for the identification, evaluation, and management of China’s world, national, and local heritage. The “heritage fever” in contemporary China, we can say, is part of the global heritage movement, which is largely shaped and constrained by what Smith (2006) terms Western “authorized heritage discourse” (hereafter AHD) and, as we will discuss in more detail later, other globalized ways of heritage representation.

As critical heritage scholars explicate the politics of heritage (movements) and suggest bringing to the fore alternative voices, discourses, and experiences to recapture heritage in varied cultures and localities (Lowenthal 1998; Smith 2006; Harrison 2012), it is natural that more ethnographic studies of heritage are called for, since ethnography is a most fertile means for exploring “local knowledge” (Geertz 1983), indigeneity, and heterogeneity. Nevertheless, many current ethnographies of heritage, like those of other subjects, may fall into the crisis of representation (Marcus and Fischer 1986, 7). To frame the alterity they encounter scholars in the field often use terms and theories that are foreign to the culture they research. *How then might ethnographies help us go beyond globalization and homogenization in talking and thinking of heritage, or how might they better deal with the crisis of heritage representation?* This paper is a modest attempt to address this question in the Chinese context. We propose what we call *multi-discursive ethnography* as a methodological and writing strategy to re-narrate and, in so doing, remake Chinese heritage. We attempt to show how such an approach challenges global heritage discourses (such as the AHD) and at the same time promotes local voices and deep-cultural meanings of the past in the present for dialogue and diversity. As a case study, we present a multi-discursive ethnography of the Heavenly Queen Palace (*Tianhou Gong* 天后宮, hereafter HQP), a major heritage site in Quzhou (衢州), Zhejiang (浙江), in eastern China. We tell stories, especially those about Yueju opera (越劇)¹ performances in the HQP, that allow us to rethink and reconstruct heritage beyond disciplinary knowledge and universalized meaning-making. Foregrounding vernacular voices and linking them to textual fragments in ancient Chinese classics, such a multi-discursive ethnography, we argue, deconstructs globalized heritage discourses and invites a diverse and dialogical reconceptualization of what heritage is and does.

In this paper, we first elaborate on our theoretical premise: the concept of heritage involves a form of discursive practice, and a global, homogenous discourse

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of heritage leads to a crisis of representation. We then propose *multi-discursive ethnography* as a means to assemble divergent cultural voices, meanings, and understandings, especially local ones, to rethink and remake Chinese heritage. This is followed by a case study of the HQP in Quzhou focusing chiefly on the *Yueju* opera performances therein. We use stories collected in our fieldwork to disturb and diversify meanings of globalized heritage discourses and thereby to facilitate dialogical understandings about relevant issues. Lastly, we conclude this paper by summarizing how our multi-discursive ethnography is written to break boundaries between the past and the present, the tangible and the intangible, and to open up diverse and dialogical understandings of heritage making in concrete narratives.

Heritage as Discourse and Its Crisis of Representation

Over the past few decades heritage has been increasingly recognized as a representation and discursive construction of the past in the present, in the process of which views and values, experiences and expectations, and knowledge and ideology interact with one another and thereby shape what the past is like and how it should be managed (Walsh 1992; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Waterton and Watson 2010). Heritage is therefore never objective or neutral. Neo-liberalism, postcolonial cultural hegemony, nationalism, racism, sexism and the like have all been seeking expression in heritage making (Hewison 1987; Byrne 1991; Littler and Naidoo 2005; Reading 2015). With these critical reflections in mind, Smith (2006, 13) goes further to declare, “There is no such thing as heritage”; it is a discourse that signifies and constructs itself. She writes,

Heritage is a discourse. The idea of discourse does not simply refer to the use of words or language, but rather . . . refers to a form of social practice. Social meanings, forms of knowledge and expertise, power relations and ideologies are embedded and reproduced via language. The discourses through which we frame certain concepts, issues or debates have an effect in so far as they constitute, construct, mediate, and regulate understanding and debate. Discourse not only organizes the way concepts like heritage are understood, but the way we act, the social and technical practices we act out, and the way knowledge is constructed and reproduced. (Smith 2006, 4)

That is to say, how we refer to and talk about heritage does not only reflect but also constitutes what heritage is. The discourse of heritage generates both conceptual and material consequences: it circumscribes and shapes the ways we define and identify, interpret and evaluate, and preserve and utilize our heritage (Smith 2006).

Since heritage is supposed to be culturally-bounded, there should be different cultural ways of representing and constructing it, or, in other words, we should have diverse cultural discourses of heritage around the world. The contemporary heritage movement, however, promotes and perpetuates the AHD

¹ *Yueju* opera (越剧) is a form of traditional Chinese opera popular in Zhejiang and neighboring areas, such as Shanghai and Jiangsu. It should be distinguished from *Yueju* opera (粤剧) or Cantonese opera, which is popular in Guangdong and Hong Kong.

and its senses of monumentality, materiality, and authenticity as well as the so-called “universal values” of heritage. Reflecting a consciousness, a perspective, an outlook, and a taste that originated from Western Romanticism and Enlightenment philosophies, the AHD is based on Eurocentric aesthetics, cultural logic, and ways of thinking about the past (Smith 2006; Waterton 2010). The AHD functions as knowledge/power through at least the following four major routes: First, it informs the international charters, conventions, and guidelines that standardize heritage knowledge and establish criteria and models for best practices, most notable examples being the *Venice Charter*, the *World Heritage Convention*, and the *Burra Charter* (Smith 2006, chapter 3; Waterton et al. 2006; Waterton 2010, chapter 3). Second, the AHD further permeates into legislation and policies of heritage in different nations and regions (see Waterton 2010 for a persuasive exploration of this phenomenon in the UK). Third, the AHD is a professional, expert discourse that appears to be objective, truthful, and ahistorical (Smith 2004). Lastly, the AHD works to frame representations of heritage in museums, tourist destinations, mass media, and educational settings, formulating common perceptions of what heritage is (Stone and Molyneux 1994; Winter 2007; Waterton and Watson 2014).

Western rationalist thinking should not dictate heritage discourse in other parts of the world. The designation of intangible heritage, an initiative originating in East Asia (Japan and South Korea in particular), showcases culturally divergent understandings of the past in the present. Emphasizing intangible cultural forms, such as performing arts, folklore, festivals, beliefs, and craftsmanship, as well as living traditions (rather than materiality from the past), the concept of intangible heritage posits a significant cultural Other in opposition to the dominance of the AHD. It might be noted that major Western nations (the UK, the US, and Australia for example) have not yet ratified the 2003 UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Smith 2006, 89-95). We argue, however, that intangible heritage is now an international, authoritative discourse, and moreover that it needs critical reflection as well. As Byrne (2009, 229) points out, the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* tends to “regard social practices, skills and traditions as the equivalent of heritage objects, places or landscapes.” The meanings and values of intangible heritage are accessed as if they were “fixed and immutable.” Indeed, intangible heritage practice largely mimics tangible heritage preservation. It does not really transcend the Western ethos of cultural conservation (Alivizatou 2011). Furthermore, the UNESCO programme of intangible heritage, as described by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “is also exclusive in its own way,” producing “a phantom list . . . of that which is not indigenous, not minority and not non-Western” (2004, 57).

For us, it is also important to note the growing tendency toward standardization or globalization in representing and understanding intangible heritage. This can be attributed chiefly to disciplinary concepts and professional ways of categorization and interpretation in intangible heritage practice and research. For example, performing arts (music, dance, theatre, etc.), the most visible in the UNESCO list of intangible heritage, are usually documented and evaluated by referring to terms and ideas in musicology, dance studies, theatrical arts, and

other related disciplines. However, most of these disciplinary terms and ideas, again, originated from the West, although they purport to be global. As discussed below, this is not that much different from the AHD's uses of archeological and architectural notions and ideas.

When the discursive nature of heritage is acknowledged, the crisis of representation naturally emerges as a crucial issue (Merriman 2000; Russell 2006, section III). Heritage representations usually favor national stories that feature "chosen high points and memorable achievements" (Hall 1999, 5), privilege meanings and values from expert standpoints, and speak a language that does not make much sense to the stakeholders at the grassroots. Just like the crisis of representation in writing culture (Marcus and Fischer 1986; Ho 2008), the language and discourse of the local stakeholders are often excluded or at best marginalized in heritage making. And, like the crisis of representation in writing history, heritage is discussed mainly "through the linguistic signs of the present," which "conceals the meanings of another time and another space" (Duara 1995, 48). From the global perspective, the crisis of heritage representation also rests on the fact that non-Western cultural discourses about heritage are little heard or valued. The global heritage movement, for critical heritage scholars such as Lowenthal (1998), acts like a crusade that erases or devalues Eastern and indigenous ways of representing, understanding, and remembering pasts and traditions.

In China, as elsewhere, the politics of heritage penetrate many areas of life. As Silverman and Blumenfield (2013, 4) observe, these politics are connected to "tourism, economic development, government ideology, national and ethnic imaginaries, social sustainability, and intraregional, interregional, and international relationships within the framework of China's fast-paced modernization in the context of globalization and China's assertive political maneuvering on the world stage." China's rapid modernization and globalization is largely a process of acquiring and assimilating international, or rather, Western discourses to remake reality, rewrite history, and reimagine the future to come. In the field of what we today call "heritage," a consciousness of protecting cultural relics and ancient architecture was gradually established under Western influence during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This occurred through two primary channels: first, European and American archaeologists' fieldwork in China, by means of which many Chinese heritage objects were taken out of China; second, the pioneering works of the early *haigui* 海歸 (Chinese intellectuals with a degree from universities overseas), such as Li Ji (李濟 1896-1979) and Liang Sicheng (梁思成 1901-1972) (Lai, et al. 2004; Shepherd and Yu 2013, 9-10). Guided by Western terms, theories, and frameworks, they discovered a wide range of Chinese pasts for conservation and protection. The consciousness and policies of protecting historic architecture and cultural relics were developed under their influence. The recent "heritage fever" in China, as outlined at the outset of this paper, is more explicitly a process of acquiring and implementing global discourse and knowledge. Controlled by governmental and professional authorities, such global discourse and knowledge are then used and abused to serve ideological, political, and economic interests (Peng 2008; Su and Teo 2009; Blumenfield and Silverman 2013; Shepherd and Yu 2013; Yan 2015).

Ethnography and Heritage Representation: A Proposal for Multi-Discursive Ethnography

Ethnographies of heritage are supposed to challenge the universalized, professional discourses and, more importantly, to explore local practices, alternative narratives, and vernacular meanings and values beyond the repertoire of global knowledge. However, many of them do not manage to escape the crisis of representation. We are promised local voices, but hear few of them, as they are often glossed over by the abstractions of the ethnographer's academic discourse, such as "the politics of heritage" and the "identity work of heritage." "The politics of heritage" or "the politics of the past" are perhaps the most prominent discourses in heritage ethnographies. However, researchers tend to use this discourse to frame local practices, rather than use what they see and hear locally to diversify or transform their understanding of heritage politics, and show in specific terms how a certain politics of heritage *in situ* is different from what has been frequently seen in the literature (e.g., Harrison 2010). As Clifford (2004) warns us, we should not place local, indigenous heritage (re)making under the narrowly politicized framework of "the invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Moreover, Clifford (2004) contends, "A complex approach to the politics of tradition" (23) is needed to account for local people's struggle for self-determination and their aspirations for the future, or "a great deal of indigenous cultural process and politics" (22) will escape our sight. The "identity work" of heritage is another prominent academic discourse in ethnographies of heritage. Like the "politics of heritage," it has been applied everywhere. Nonetheless, the understanding of identity is narrowly confined to such categories as race, nation, culture, class, community, and gender (see e.g., Graham and Howard 2008). In China and many other non-Western settings, though it is not wrong or unreasonable to link heritage practices with racial, national, cultural, class, communal, or gender identities, we need to be careful with this mainstream modern discourse of identity rooted in Western thinking. It may blind our eyes to local people's identification in their heritage practices with ancestors, sage-kings, or moral models from the distant and recent past.

We should reiterate that this is not suggesting that these terms/discourses in heritage ethnographies are inherently problematic. Quite the contrary, they are often valuable concepts that help elucidate the cultural dynamism of heritage making. But their use become problematic when they serve to suppress or replace local voices, discourses, and stories. In other words, ethnographers should be cautious and not allow themselves to be controlled by their academic language.

Considering all of this, we here propose what we call *multi-discursive ethnography* as a strategy to re-narrate and thereby remake heritage in the Chinese context. Indeed, if there is nothing meaningful outside of discourse (Foucault 1972), a plausible way to address the above-noted crisis of heritage representation is to facilitate co-existence and dialogue among different discourses about heritage. As we have suggested elsewhere (Hou and Wu 2016), multi-discursive ethnography is a form of ethnography that encompasses multiple discourses and endorses reflexive dialogues among them. It should be noted that multi-discursive ethnography is not completely new or different from the ethnographic writing experiments and

advancements in diverse fields during the past few decades. Rather, it draws on ideas and techniques from critical, reflexive, multivocal, dialogic, and historically-minded ethnographies (Davis 1999; Madison 2005; Wade 1998; Wang 2003). By terming this approach *multi-discursive* instead of multivocal (or something similar), we intend to highlight its concern with multiple discourses (not just multiple voices or texts). It also shares some basic premises and research strategies with Cultural Discourse Analysis, which is concerned with the “historically transmitted expressive system of communication practices, of acts, events, and styles” and aims to explicate their meanings with ethnographic study to facilitate intercultural dialogue (Carbaugh et al. 2011, 169; Carbaugh 2005). However, a key difference is that multi-discursive ethnography is more interested in showing the cultural stories as they were communicated in the field than with analyzing them.

A multi-discursive ethnographic approach to Chinese heritage requires scholars to be open to various discourses when conducting fieldwork or applying other research methods. They then produce ethnographies by assembling and putting into meaningful dialogue the discourses they find useful. Those discourses manifest themselves in different kinds of texts, which may be transcriptions of fieldwork interviews or local people’s conversations, ethnographic descriptions of scenes and activities observed, different modes of data collected during fieldwork, such as signs, plaques, pictures, posters, and (fragments in) local historiographies and other historical texts (Hou and Wu 2016, 5). Usually, cultural discourse analysis is adopted to better understand the collected texts and uncover the underlying ideologies, values, processes of meaning-making, (cultural) ways of thinking, or how they relate to the construction of knowledge, reality, and identity. The results of discourse analysis help determine which texts are to be used and how they are to be used in writing the multi-discursive ethnography, but they themselves will generally not appear in the published work (Hou and Wu 2016, 5-6). A multi-discursive ethnography of Chinese heritage should aim at challenging the partiality and universal claims of authoritative discursive constructions of the past in the present, especially the AHD and disciplinary discourses of intangible heritage. This also means that Chinese local and cultural discourses of heritage should be foregrounded. They should take up a larger portion of the writing so as to confront the dominant global discourses that have already become naturalized or even internalized in people’s mindsets and actions regarding heritage. For example, temples built in pre-modern China are often recognized as architectural heritage, the value of which is assessed in terms of architectural science and art. Though some of the temples may also be identified as sites for traditional beliefs, the globalized, disciplinary discourse of religion tends to dominate the way their meanings and values are interpreted. Local words and worlds are glossed over or even ignored.

A multi-discursive ethnography of Chinese heritage strives to invite dynamic and diverse interpretations. For us, this is perhaps the most imperative in coping with the representational crisis of heritage, which has resulted in people’s interpretations of the past being highly constrained, coerced, and controlled in the present. Once the space for heritage interpretations is opened up, the crisis

naturally dissolves. Nonetheless, this is by no means an easy task. When we represent our research about heritage, we always desire to convey our ideas and interpretations, and argue for something that we think is right. Considering this, researchers should try to contest themselves—their knowledge and ideology, language and interpretations—to make their multi-discursive ethnography of Chinese heritage a form of writing with vast possibilities of interpretation. Thus, their fieldwork seeks something that discharges or problematizes their theories and ideas, something that may disturb or enrich their vocabularies and ways of speaking of the researched. Above all, they go to the field to learn, rather than discover data to support their terms, theories, or interpretations. When reporting what and how they have learnt during fieldwork, they also need to be cautious with their own academic language. They are encouraged to let what they have learned from the locals speak for itself, and to leave the space of interpretations wide open to their readership (Wu 2014). From a deep Chinese cultural perspective, this is to encourage researchers to follow the Confucian teaching of “*shu er bu zuo*” (述而不作 transmitting instead of creating) (Wu 2012). Confucius, though one of the greatest thinkers in the world and the most influential one in Chinese history, did not write any books to explicitly advance ideas or thoughts that were new or creative. Instead, he devoted much of his life to transmitting the ancient through editing and expurgating the words and works from the past. In the same vein, a multi-discursive ethnographer of Chinese heritage should commit more to transmitting the local than doing anything else. To illustrate this, we present a case study of the HQP in Quzhou that illustrates a multi-discursive ethnographic rewriting of heritage beyond official discourse and globalized meaning-making. But before coming to that, a brief introduction to the HQP is necessary.

The HQP in Quzhou

The HQP is located in the northwestern corner of the old walled city of Quzhou. Built in the early 1800s, it is now a major protected heritage site. In 1993 it became a “Municipal Key Unit of Cultural Heritage Preservation,”² and it was upgraded to a “Provincial Key Unit of Cultural Heritage Preservation” in 2011. We conducted a project on the theme of heritage and cultural memory based in a historical preservation area in urban Quzhou from July 2010 to December 2012 (For more about the project, see Hou and Wu 2016, 6-7). The HQP is in that historical area and became a major case study for our research. The historical, scientific, and aesthetic values of its architecture can be easily recognized, for it is well preserved from the viewpoint of heritage materiality. However, like other temples of its kind, the HQP is more generally understood as a place to worship and commemorate the Heavenly Queen or Mazu (媽祖 literally mother-ancestor), a goddess from Chinese

² The “Unit of Cultural Heritage Preservation” (文物保護單位) is part of a system of tangible heritage conservation on the Chinese mainland. Instituted in 1956, it has been the major policy instrument for regulating the practice of Chinese heritage protection. The system operates on three levels: national, provincial, and municipal. Heritage sites nominated and protected on these levels are called National, Provincial, or Municipal Key Units of Cultural Heritage Preservation.

folk religion popular along Chinese coastal areas, especially Fujian and Taiwan, and among the Chinese immigrant population from these areas in Southeast Asia and the wider world. It is held that the Mazu, like most divine beings in traditional Chinese beliefs, was once a historical person, a woman named Lin Mo (林默). A number of stories are told about her life. They vary in some of the details, but are essentially the same. It is said that she was born in Meizhou (湄洲), Fujian (福建) during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). She could predict the weather for fishermen and often saved lives at sea, yet died young herself on a rescue mission during a storm. Local people built a temple to memorialize her and gradually she came to be worshipped as a deity—the Chinese goddess of the sea. She started to receive titles of nobility from emperors during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), meaning the worship of Mazu was officially recognized and endorsed. In 1409, the Emperor Yongle (永樂) of the Ming Dynasty ennobled Mazu with the title of “*Tianfei*” (天妃 Heavenly Imperial Concubine). And the Emperor Kangxi (康熙) of the Qing Dynasty ennobled her as “*Tianhou*” (天后 Heavenly Queen) in 1684 (Cai 2006, 2; for more about Mazu and the history of Mazu belief, see Watson 1985). Since then, the Mazu temples have officially been called “*Tianhou Gong*.” Today the belief in Mazu is also recognized as heritage by the Chinese government, and in 2009, UNESCO added “Mazu belief and customs” to its list of intangible heritage.³

Quzhou, located in western Zhejiang, is not a coastal city, nor a city where the worship of Mazu has been most popular. Local historiographies show that the HQP was built by Fujian merchants posted to Quzhou in the beginning of the nineteenth century to worship their goddess and house their provincial guild (Zheng 1984, 380). It was commonplace during the late imperial and Republican eras for non-local businessmen in a particular place to unite by establishing a provincial or prefectural guild (*hui guan* 會館), and a temple based on popular belief from their home region often served also as the headquarters of such guilds. The HQP is one of several Mazu temples in Quzhou's history but the only one that survives today. In the center of the HQP is a statute of Mazu, to which worship is still offered by local people, especially on the mornings of the first and fifteenth days of each lunar month. Nonetheless, according to our observations attendance is low, with only about twenty people attending on each day of worship. None of these people identified themselves as being from Fujian during our ethnographic interactions with them.

If observed mainly through the specific worship rites performed in the HQP from a globalized intangible heritage perspective, one might say that its importance as a heritage place of Mazu belief has declined steeply, since, as documented in local histories of Quzhou, in the past official rites to Mazu were performed twice a year with a large throng of local believers coming to worship the goddess in the HQP (Zheng 1984, 380; 460), while today official worship is absent and local

³ See the UNESCO web page for this: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/mazu-belief-and-customs-00227>.

worshippers are limited in number. However, when delving deeper to see how local people live with and use the HQP, it is not hard to find that it is more than an example of architectural heritage, the values of which are largely unknown by locals. In people's living world, the HQP is not only a site where belief and practices related to Mazu may be observed in daily conversations and other forms of activities, but also a lively place where they come to perform and watch *Yueju* operas on a regular basis. The *Yueju* opera, mostly seen in Zhejiang, Shanghai, and parts of Jiangsu, ranks second only to Peking opera among the five most popular Chinese traditional opera forms. It is included on the Chinese national list of intangible heritage. In the multi-discursive ethnography presented below, the central theme is the HQP as a place for the performance and enjoyment of *Yueju* opera.⁴

A Multi-discursive Ethnography of the HQP: Focus on the *Yueju* Opera Performances

Our first visit to the HQP in Quzhou was during a blistering summer afternoon in July, 2010, the second day we were conducting fieldwork with a research team. The English name used in this paper—Heavenly Queen Palace—was written on a small tourist sign on its front wall. It is a word-for-word translation of its Chinese counterpart *Tianhou Gong* (天后宮), vertically carved above the lintel of the main gate of the building.

Yueju Opera Performances in the HQP

As architectural heritage, the HQP did not seem particularly appealing to us when we first arrived. However, our attention was drawn to a small blackboard leaning against one side of the main door. On it was written that the *Pearl Pagoda* (珍珠塔)⁵ would be performed by the Quzhou Xihe Yueju Opera Troupe (衢州西河越劇團) at 1:15 pm and that the ticket price was RMB 3 *yuan*. That was amazingly cheap. A theatre ticket for a *Yueju* opera performance in any of the cities in Zhejiang costs at least RMB 50 *yuan*. Also indicated on the blackboard was that because of the extremely hot weather, this would be the last performance for the season, with shows only resuming in September.

A white wooden sign vertically placed on the right side of the main gate was no less eye-catching. It read *Quzhou Xi'an Xiyuan* (衢州西安戲院 Quzhou Xi'an Theatre) and was written using the traditional Chinese characters officially abandoned since the 1950s in mainland China but still in use in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. *Xi'an* (西安)⁶ was an old name of the county where the seat

⁴ There were other interesting and meaningful events observed and documented during our fieldwork. We cannot report on all of them in this paper, but strategically chose to focus on this most notable one.

⁵ The Pearl Pagoda is a famous and venerable work in the traditional Chinese opera repertory; it is performed in *Yueju* opera and many other forms. The story it tells is adopted from folklore performances of the early Qing Dynasty.

⁶ This should be distinguished from today's Xi'an City in Shaanxi (陝西) Province, which was called Chang'an (長安) since the Western Han Dynasty (202 BC-8AD) and became known as Xi'an in the early Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).



Figure 1. Waiting for the Yujue opera performance to start
Photograph: Zongjie WU, July 5, 2011

of Quzhou prefecture was located from the Xiantong era (860-874) of the Tang Dynasty to the founding of the Republic of China in 1911. According to the HQP gatekeeper, whom we interviewed a few days later, *Quzhou Xi'an Xiyuan* had first performed there in the early 2000s. For some, the use of the old name *Xi'an* and the traditional Chinese characters to mark this place adds a misplaced flavor of historicity and politics of nostalgia since the *Quzhou Xi'an Xiyuan* is not really that old. For others, it marks the importance of cultural memory. Whatever our interpretations are, the local people who frequent this place would not describe the words and style of writing in these terms. When asked about the wooden sign, their responses were often simply that *Xi'an* was an old name for the city of Quzhou.

To understand a place, whether recognized as a heritage site or not, it is essential to look into how people live and interact with it, talk about it, and invest it with meanings (Tuan 1977; Basso 1996; Dicks 2000). The *Yueju* opera is one of the most important activities or events that draws local people to the HQP. The audience members coming to the performances are generally above the age of 60. Many of them are from the countryside and need to travel an hour or more to reach the HQP. For younger generations, *Yueju* opera and many other traditional Chinese opera forms are outdated, or at best command little interest. They prefer pop music, movies, TV programs, computer games, and other modern entertainment options. The performers and the musicians of the troupe are seniors, too. And, notably, all the performers are female: a situation very similar to the 1930s, when the *Yueju* opera troupes were often all-female, and to the early 1940s, when female troupes dominated *Yueju* performances in Shanghai (Qian, et al. 2006, 1; Jiang 2009). Most of the female performers in the Quzhou Xihe Yueju Troupe had their training and experience of traditional opera acting in childhood and/or youth. The pursuit of such traditional opera forms was discontinued during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The current performers joined the troupe to re-embrace *Yueju* opera



Figure 2. Chatting before the *Yueju* opera performance under the *xianglou* (厢楼 wing)
Photograph: Song HOU, October 13, 2011

after retirement. Their performances at the temple render the HQP a vibrant place with fluid meanings. During our fieldwork, *Yueju* operas were performed in the HQP from Monday to Thursday each week on a regular basis, except during the hottest summer months (late July, August, and early September) and national holidays.

The performance started at about 1:15 pm. Many of the audience members came earlier, about twenty to forty minutes before it began. A few even arrived at the HQP over an hour early. Thus they had some time to talk and interact with friends and acquaintances in the audience. What they talked about is not easy to summarize. It could be about anything or anyone, history or present matters, family, or even about a total stranger they saw the other day.

Performances usually ended at about 4:30 pm. Some of the audience members might leave half an hour earlier than that to pick up their grandchildren after school. Some others might linger for a while after the performance ended, helping put the scattered chairs and benches back in their places. They also cleared away the trash baskets and surveyed the grounds to ensure that everything would look neat. Sometimes an actress would accompany these audience members out of the HQP to say goodbye. None of these activities would be expected in modern theatres. Before purpose-built theatres became the norm in China, it was common for people to enjoy traditional Chinese opera performances in the open air or in (ancestral) temples, where a stage was usually constructed. The HQP is a temple of this kind. If someone enters through the front gate in the first *jin* (進 section) of the building, he or she will be confronted with an elevated stage, about two meters above the ground. Audience members find themselves a spot for watching in the court or in the wings (*xianglou* 厢樓), which are raised about two meters above the ground along the left and right sides of the court (see Chart 1).

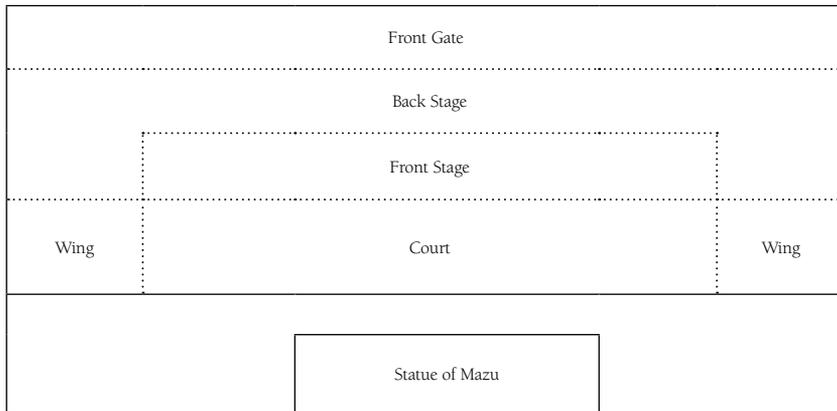


Chart 1. The structural layout of the HQP

For local people, the HQP had been one of the major venues for traditional opera performances in the past. Today in Quzhou, traditional operas are not commercially viable when performed in theatres, so this temple again serves as the main site for *Yueju* opera performances.

Space and Traditional Operas

As in other temples, the stage in the HQP faces the statue of the goddess Mazu (see Chart 1). It was traditionally believed in China that performances are given not only to entertain humans, but also to entertain gods. Nowadays, in many festivals, especially in rural and minority areas of China, we can still see traditional opera performances that seek to fulfill such a ritual function (Cooper 2014). During our fieldwork in the HQP, we heard more than once from the audience that “Mazu likes operas” or “Mazu is watching the opera.” According to Grandpa Wang, who has lived near the HQP since his childhood and was now in his early 90s, when he was young the performances in the HQP often took place from the latter half of the first lunar month to the Tomb Sweeping Day (*Qingmingjie* 清明節) on April 5. Audience members were expected to seat themselves in particular areas while watching traditional opera performances in the HQP. Grandpa Wang recalled his childhood experience:

Men were sitting in the front of the court, women were behind them. Young adult women were in the wings, kids were under them. Women brought with them big benches, which were pretty tall. Under the stage where the performance went on, vendors were selling fruits and snacks, many kinds of them. A very jolly scene.

The words of Grandpa Wang echo what is documented in the “*Yueji*” (樂記 *Record of Music*), a chapter in the ancient Chinese classic of the *Liji* (禮記 *Book of Rites*) which states that “Music (*yue*) serves to unite (*tong* 同); Ritual serves to differentiate (*yi* 異). With uniting there is mutual closeness; with differentiation there is mutual respect” (Cook 1995, 42). At that time, local people’s spatial



Figure 3. Spatial choices of senior men and women watching Yueju opera in the HQP
Photographs: Zongjie WU, July 5, 2011

practices while watching traditional operas in the HQP established clear divisions. Men and women, adults, youth, and children segregated themselves by taking their appropriate places within the HQP. Spatial differentiations were still observable amongst the senior members of the audience in the HQP when we were doing fieldwork there: women were rarely seen in the front of the court; men were seldom in the *xianglou*. However, exceptions were observed from time to time.

The Ancestor of Xiaohualian

Granny Chen has been an actress in the Quzhou Xihe Yueju Opera Troupe for many years. The role she chiefly plays is Xiaohualian (小花臉 literally “little flowered face”) or that of Chou (丑, a clown), one of the main role types in Chinese traditional opera. During an interview, one of the authors praised Granny Chen for her devotion, carrying on with the performance despite the hot weather (about 35 degrees centigrade without air conditioning) in the HQP, Granny Chen attributed it to her “ancestor.” She said, “We have professional ethics. No matter how hot it is, once I take the stage, I must fulfill my obligation to the audience. If we fail in this, it means we are unworthy heirs of our ancestor. Our ancestor is the Emperor Ming of Tang.”

She uttered this with a sense of pride. For purposes of this discussion, it is particularly noteworthy to consider why the Emperor Ming of Tang is believed to be her “ancestor.” Granny Chen explained:

In the Tang Dynasty, the imperial palace once had a troupe that performed operas. Huadan (花旦, Xiaosheng (小生),⁷ and other roles were all there. The only role left unfilled was

⁷ There are four main roles in traditional Chinese operas, namely, Dan (旦), Sheng (生), Jing (淨), and Chou (丑). Huadan, as a subcategory of Dan, is a female character “most commonly depicted as a maidservant or ladies’ maid, who captivates the audience with her mischievous and flirtatious byplay” (Scott 1988, 124). Xiaosheng is a main subcategory of Sheng, referring to characters of young men (For more, see Scott 1988, 123-6).

Xiaohualian. The Emperor Ming of Tang was very fond of operas. There was no way out. [The Emperor said] ‘I’ll act in it myself.’ And he did. Thus we now worship the Emperor Ming of Tang. He was our ancestor, our earliest forebear.

Though this story is not easily verifiable today, we do have historical records that reveal the Emperor Ming of Tang’s affection for traditional music as well as his experience as a royal teacher to performers:

The Emperor Xuanzong⁸ . . . selected 300 performers from the royal department of music and dance and taught them at the pear garden. Every single error in their singing would be caught and corrected by the Emperor. These performers were called “the Emperor’s pear garden disciples.” (Ouyang et al. 2000, 315)

Today traditional opera as a profession in China is also called the “pear garden profession” (*liyuanhang* 梨園行) and the performers are still referred to as “pear garden disciples” (*liyuan dizi* 梨園弟子). Traditional opera performers (especially of the role of Xiaohualian) like Granny Chen, have widely acknowledged the Emperor Ming of Tang as their ancestral master. This is their history, or their collective memory. It affects the way Granny Chen performs on the stage, and how she understands herself as a Xiaohualian performer. If “identity” is really a useful term for capturing this process, we would like to note that here identity is oriented to a particular person, an “ancestor” in the far past, and provides Granny Chen with a sense of belonging to a professional lineage. It is the connection with and veneration of that ancient ancestor and her belonging to the professional lineage that allow Granny Chen to find meaning in devoting herself to the *Yueju* opera performances on the stage of the HQP, facing the statute of Mazu and her earthly audience from urban and rural Quzhou. As such, it is different from the identity work we have seen in heritage ethnographies where identity is analyzed through such terms as race, nation, culture, gender, class, and community.

Moreover, the noble ancestor of the Xiaohualian is remembered and commemorated in a number of ways by Granny Chen and her troupe. For instance, the performer specializing in the Xiaohualian role enjoys many privileges. Granny Chen said:

When we move on to the stage, I go first. As for the others, if they are playing males, it is fine [for them to get on the stage]; if acting as a female,⁹ absolutely not. Only after I burn incense to offer sacrifice and bow, may those who are performing female roles go [on to the stage]. . . . There are also rules for sitting on storage cases. A particular actor is permitted to sit only in a particular place. I, as Xiaohualian, can sit anywhere I want.

Such commemorative practices in the troupe presuppose and reinforce the

⁸ Emperor Xuanzong is another way of referring to the Emperor Ming of Tang.

⁹ Cross-gender performance has been common practice in traditional Chinese operas. In Granny Chen’s troupe, an all-female one, the male characters are also played by women.

collective memory that the Emperor Ming of Tang was the ancestor of performers specializing in the Xiaohualian role. Only because Xiaohualian is regarded as a royal descendant of the Emperor Ming of Tang can the performers of this role type enjoy the privileges reported by Granny Chen. And in a Xiaohualian performer's practice of these privileges, this collective memory is activated and strengthened. In fact, this is not a unique phenomenon in Granny Chen's troupe, but one that is widely observable in Chinese traditional opera troupes in general (Chen 2011).

Granny Chen also revealed to us that they used to offer worship and sacrifices to the ancestor of Xiaohualian in the HQP and other places:

There used to be an effigy. We put it in a high place and offered sacrifices. All professional troupes like us would do this. We took it with us one place after another; wherever we traveled to, the first thing [we did] was to offer sacrifice to him.

It has been a common practice in traditional and even modern China that people who engage in a particular profession would commemorate and worship the founder of the profession as their "ancestor." Today, this tradition is disappearing rapidly. From Granny Chen's words, we can infer that offering sacrifice to her noble ancestor—the Emperor Ming of Tang—was common in her troupe as well as many other professional troupes of Chinese traditional opera. However, this seems to be infrequently performed now. When asked whether she still performed such sacrifices, Granny Chen simply uttered "no" and quickly switched back to talking about the sacrifice in the past. We tried to ask her again to talk about the sacrifice in the present; she then told us about a time they offered a sacrifice to the Emperor Ming of Tang when they were invited to perform in the nearby city of Kaihua:

This time we went to Kaihua (開化), I offered sacrifice. We bought incense, and we bowed to worship. Well, first, superstitiously speaking, it was to bless us with a smooth performance, a bit more solidarity [among us], a bit more safety. That was the purpose [for offering sacrifice]. Furthermore, the Emperor Ming of Tang is the highest.

We are not sure whether they continue to offer sacrifices to the Emperor Ming of Tang in the HQP. One thing we do know is that the heritage sector of Quzhou has fire regulations: burning incense or paper money in the HQP and other heritage sites is only allowed at a few designated spots. In fact, we also saw the director of her troupe burning incense to worship Mazu on the first and fifteenth days of the lunar month when she came to the HQP to perform.

Sacrifice in the Chinese tradition is a fundamental type of ritual or *li*. As stated in the *Liji (Book of Rites)*, "Ceremonies [*li*] are of five kinds, and there is none of them more important than sacrifices" (*Li Ki* 22: 1; Legge 1885, XXII, 236). Nowadays scholars tend to see sacrifice as a religious activity, forgetting that religion was initially a Western notion, and that the way they speak of world religions is largely shaped by Western theology (see, e.g., Masuzawa 2005). As Seligman and coauthors (2008, 6) state, "ritual is not a particularly or solely religious phenomenon. In fact the only reason that most of us tend to see ritual

in this light is because of the Protestant, but more broadly Christian, separation of religious from secular realms that we are all so accustomed to.” Though in ancient China the word *zongjiao* (宗教, the term used to translate religion) did exist, its meaning was quite different then. The contemporary Chinese term *zongjiao* is borrowed from Japanese, and the Japanese term for *zongjiao* is a translation of the Western notion of “religion” (Zeng 2015). This is not to say that a religious perspective on sacrifice is wrong or irrelevant in the Chinese context. As reflected in Granny Chen’s words, their offering was for obtaining the blessings of smoothness, solidarity, and safety, goals shared by religious prayers and ritual ceremonies. Granny Chen herself called this superstitious, a common term those who have endured the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and the propaganda that science (or scientific thinking) is more civilized may use when they speak of ritual or religious phenomena. If we turn back to *li*—which provides the indigenous perspective on Chinese religion and ritual (Puett 2013) and “the determinate fabric of Chinese culture, and . . . the language through which the culture is expressed” (Hall and Ames 1998, 269)—to view their sacrifices to the Emperor Ming of Tang and Mazu, we may better understand Chinese *liyue* (禮樂 rites and music) culture, which has been almost lost in the confrontation with modernization and the globalization of music.

“This is not jili”; “Today’s opera was not good”

Granny Bao, a local in her early 70s would rarely miss any of the Yueju opera performances in the HQP. “Their performances are great,” she oftentimes commented. For several days during the fieldwork, the first author chose to sit beside her in the audience. Once as they were talking before the performance, Granny Bao said, “Niangniang likes watching operas.” By Niangniang (娘娘) she meant Mazu.

“Really?” asked the first author.

“Yes,” she replied, “but you wouldn’t understand it.” The starting music of the *Yujue* opera began when she uttered those words. She then turned her eyes to the stage. For her, perhaps, a young Chinese man in his early 30s like the first author would have little possibility of believing in Mazu or any other gods.

Another thing Granny Bao revealed is even more interesting: that someone taking pictures of the performance in the HQP ought to be very cautious. When as an ethnographer, the first author was about to make a photographic record of the scenes on the stage, Granny Bao stopped him, “Don’t shoot pictures of this!” She did this twice: first during a scene when a father was very ill and his daughter was weeping at his knees, and second when a woman was attacking her husband’s mother with a pair of scissors. In the interval between the two, however, she turned to the first author and said, “Shoot this. This is good!” She explained when the first author looked at her, puzzled after she stopped him the second time, “This is not *jili* (吉利), don’t shoot this! Only take pictures of those [scenes] that are *jili*.” *Jili*, the Chinese cultural term mentioned by Granny Bao, might be translated as being blessed, free from curses, or related to luck. But in translations we always lose certain meaning(s). Both *ji* (吉) and *li* (利) are key words in the *Book of Changes*



Figure 4. A picture of a *jili* scene: Daughter and cousin meet at the birthday ceremony of the former's father
Photograph: Song HOU, October 24, 2011

(*Yijing* 易经), a fundamental classic of Chinese civilization. *Jili* as a word is very commonly used in Chinese daily life. Underneath it, there is a whole range of cultural understandings of how the cosmos works and how human beings should respond to it.

Though we had not previously encountered this criterion for picture taking, it was readily understandable for any Chinese. The first author decided to do as he was told. When he saw on the stage that a ghost was talking to herself in front of the mirror, he asked, “We shouldn’t take a picture of this, should we?”

“Right!” Granny Bao instructed, “Don’t shoot this.”

Later, an old man’s birthday ceremony was portrayed on the stage. His daughter entered to extend her birthday wishes and greeted her cousin who had come from afar for the event and to whom she would be engaged by the end of the play. The first author swiftly approached Granny Bao’s seat and squatted at her knees, softly inquiring, “Is this good to shoot?”

She affirmed with a big smile, “Yes, this is good!”

The first author took several shots and showed Granny Bao the pictures on his camera screen. She took the camera and held it closely to her eyes, saying, “Terrific!”

When the play came to the end and the audience stood up to leave, Granny Bao frowned. She said to the first author, “Today’s opera was not good.” When he expressed that he could not understand why it was not good, she clarified, “The daughter was so bad, grabbing a pair of scissors to stab the eye of her husband’s mother. How could she do that to her? And her husband, she treated him like that! Even her own father, she cheated him. No good!”

The way Granny Bao judged a *Yueju* opera is very different from the artistic perspective usually taken in the globalized discourse of intangible heritage. Description and documentation of performing arts as heritage authorized by this discourse focus much on the singing, the acting, the instrumental music, the costumes, the stage design, and so forth. Granny Bao's way of seeing leads us to think of *li* again. Confucius remarks,

Look not at what is contrary to propriety [*li*]; listen not to what is contrary to propriety; speak not what is contrary to propriety; make no movement which is contrary to propriety. (*Analects* 12.1; Legge 1991, 250)

Granny Bao's critical comments all focused on those scenes that run counter to *li* or propriety in family relations. For her, such scenes ought not to be seen in the public. Therefore, it is no good if a *Yueju* opera performance in the HQP has these scenes. *Li* and *yue* in traditional China were often intertwined with one another. They worked together to maintain order, harmony, and morality in society. In particular, during the Ming and Qing periods, *yue* was understood as a manifestation of the Confucian doctrine of *li* (Mackerras and Wichmann 1988, 5). With China's struggle for modernization, however, such basic cultural values have largely been considered obstacles to developing a modern, rational nation-state.

Breaking Discursive Boundaries and Remaking Heritage in Cultural Stories: Concluding Remarks

In the above multi-discursive ethnography of the HQP, we have focused on stories around the *Yueju* opera performances we attended during our fieldwork. As we discussed briefly above, as a Mazu temple, the HQP is also a place where local people offer worship and pray. We have touched upon how such practices link to general understandings of the ritual function of the temple, but have chosen not to include detailed narratives. This is not only due to the space limitation of the present paper, but also is a strategic decision taken to challenge common understandings of the HQP and thereby diversify its meaning as heritage. In the mainstream conceptualization and practice of heritage, to (re-)trace and preserve the past is the most important task. The presentness of heritage is either neglected, or taken as a source of potential danger to the ability of heritage to operate as evidence of the past. However, this "past-present" dichotomy itself is often problematic. Walz notes, "The actions, narratives, and contexts of today, perhaps more so than any site or artifact, guide us toward meaningful understandings of deeper pasts. It is time to engage the present, not just to better understand bygone times but to know presents (and aspects of pasts) as reflections of their voices and our practice" (2009, 22).

In most ethnographies of heritage, the present is indeed the researchers' main concern. Rather than a source of danger or harm to heritage authenticity, it is usually portrayed as a site of capital control, postcolonial politics, ideological manipulation and/or identity struggle (Butler 2007; Silva and Santos 2012). Such attention to the presentness of heritage-making does assist us to rethink "their

voices and our practice,” but only in inadequate ways. “Their voices” are declared to be most significant, but are often glossed over, or framed to serve our scholarly discourse and practice. “Our practice” is reflected on, but more often than not we have actually adopted the practice of scholars who subscribe to another paradigm or approach. Ethnographers will often challenge the heritage discourse and practices of archeologists, architects, and art historians who dwell on the pastness and the material aspects of heritage; they reflect much less on their own discourse and practice, their own understanding and writing about heritage, particularly on its functions in the present. We contend that it is neither useful nor accurate to conceive of the pastness and the presentness of heritage in an either-or mode. If we observe and listen to local voices attentively, we may find a rich co-existence of past and present. As the stories around the *Yueju* opera performances in the HQP have shown, local voices and practices in the present can direct us to the past, even the deep cultural past dating back thousands of years, such as that represented by *li* in the Chinese tradition. The *Yueju* opera performances in those stories not only speak of “bygone times and disappearing cultural phenomena,” but also showcase local Chinese expressions and ways of remembering and enlivening the past in the present.

Apart from contesting any boundary between pastness and the presentness of heritage, the multi-discursive re-narration of the HQP also attempts to blur the demarcation between tangible and intangible heritage, which is another flawed binary mode of thinking that fundamentally influences contemporary heritage practices in China and the wider world. In ethnographic stories, heritage becomes uncategorizable and undefinable. The HQP is officially an example of tangible heritage, more specifically architectural heritage, sanctioned by the provincial government of Zhejiang. It may also be regarded as the locus of the UNESCO inscribed intangible heritage “Mazu Belief and Customs.” In our multi-discursive ethnographic writing, these aspects are mentioned, but we have chosen stories from our fieldwork to disturb such globalized ways of categorizing and conceptualizing heritage. The HQP as heritage is not materially or artistically valuable as the AHD speaks of it, nor is it the place that UNESCO intangible heritage discourse takes it to be. If read carefully, one can find that the HQP is not even a place simply for the *Yueju* opera as state-sanctioned Chinese intangible heritage. This multi-discursive ethnography of *Yueju* opera performances attempts to bring forth local voices and deep cultural discourses (especially that of *li*), in the hope that they will defy and diversify existing definitions and understandings of intangible heritage. Meanwhile, these local voices and cultural discourses add new meanings to the HQP as a heritage place. It operates quite differently from how it is perceived in the AHD. Together with local people in the place, there are the deity (Mazu) and the “ancestor” (the Emperor Ming of Tang), and memories of the past, all caught up in the dynamics of living in the present.

In articulating his way of constructing historical narratives in the *Records of the Great Historian* (*Shiji* 史记), the father of Chinese historiography Sima Qian (司馬遷 ca. 145 BC-ca. 90 BC) referred to Confucius,

Confucius remarked, “I could have documented [history] with empty words; but it would be better to make it seen through concrete acts and events, which are deep and right to the point, crystal-clear and illuminating. (Sima 1982, 3297; translation ours)

In our multi-discursive ethnography, we prioritize stories to speak of the local. Through the stories that show local understandings, practices, and ways of living with the past or tradition in the present, we see fluid, localized meanings about Chinese heritage and deep and concrete insights into Chinese culture, instead of statements framed as enduring fact that actually describe contingent, conditional, and changeable phenomena. The storied memory of spatial choice in watching traditional Chinese operas in the HQP and the stories of Granny Chen and Granny Bao unfold local and deep cultural understandings that negotiate the meanings of the *Yueju* opera and the HQP as a heritage site. Dialogue with globalized discourses of heritage is expected in each specific reading and reflection of these stories, where the ethnographer is not an authority observing and interpreting, but a learner in the field and a transmitter of the local.

Ethnography constructs and affects the researched; it also provides us with sites and ways for learning and becoming. That is why we still need more heritage ethnographies. They may well transform the ethnographer and through him/her transform the discourses in which they operate, including the AHD. Multi-discursive ethnography is intended to achieve such transformations; its ultimate goal is to promote dialogue between different discourses and thereby facilitate diversity in conceptualization and practice. As demonstrated, it is useful not only to challenge globalized heritage discourses that constrain our understanding and ways of preserving the past in contemporary China, but also to make heard and plausible local and deep cultural senses of what we today call “heritage.” Indeed, if heritage is a discursive construct, the way to localize and to diversify it in China and the wider world should depend heavily on the localization and diversification of heritage discourses. We suggest that multi-discursive ethnography is a strategic and practical way to rethink and remake heritage not only in the Chinese context; it may also be applicable elsewhere in the world if properly revised by drawing on particular local, cultural wisdoms.

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GLOSSARY

Chou	丑	Quzhou	衢州
Fujian	福建	Quzhou Xi'an Xiyuan	
jili	吉利		衢州西安戲院
jin	進	Quzhou Xihe Yueju Opera Troupe	
haigui	海歸		衢州西河越劇團
Huadan	花旦	Shiji	史記
huiguan	會館	shu er bu zuo	述而不作
Kaihua	開化	Sima Qian	司馬遷
Kangxi	康熙	Tianfei	天妃
li	禮	Tianhou	天后
Li Ji	李濟	Tianhou Gong	天后宮
Liang Sicheng	梁思成	Xi'an	西安
Liji	禮記	xianglou	廂樓
Lin Mo	林默	Xiaohualian	小花臉
liyuan dizi	梨園弟子	Xiaosheng	小生
liyuanhang	梨園行	Yijing	易經
liyue	禮樂	Yongle	永樂
Mazu	媽祖	yuan	元
Meizhou	湄洲	Yueji	樂記
Niangniang	娘娘	Yueju	越劇
Qingmingjie	清明節	zongjiao	宗教

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