Towards Global *Xiqu* Studies:
Situating Latin America on the Trans-Pacific Circuit

Josh Stenberg

2017

A recent focus in the study of *xiqu* (Chinese indigenous theatre, often known as "Chinese opera") has been on its transnational history and practice. The work of musicologist Nancy Yunhwa Rao has deepened the historical analysis of Chinatown theatre in North America, while theatre scholar Daphne Lei has opened new theoretical perspectives in her examinations of historical and current transnational Chinese theatre. Most crucially, historian Wing Chung Ng's 2015 monograph, *The Rise of Cantonese Opera*, has shown the connectedness and integration of trans-Pacific Chinese theatre communities while seeking to broaden the academic *xiqu* conversation from its usual focus on the highly prestigious, "national" forms of *Jingju* or *Kunqu*. With the efforts of scholars in and of Southeast Asia and the United Kingdom to document the special transnational practices of *xiqu* in their areas, we are gradually coming to a further realization of the extension and centrality of transnationalism in the account of modern and contemporary *xiqu*. *Xiqu* studies have long been closely and narrowly associated with practices in the Republic of China (both pre- and post-1949), the Communist People's Republic of China, and the representations sanctioned by these nation-states. Now, *xiqu* studies are beginning to develop a global and intercultural dimension that reflects the geography of *xiqu*'s historical and contemporary practice.

Many individual studies begin with the nation or the city as their unit of investigation, thereby sometimes unintentionally obscuring the international networks such performances inhabit(ed), even as they highlight a single transnational practice. For instance, the focus on *xiqu* in the United States, while invaluable for Asian-American studies, is only gradually being

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

understood also as one node in a pan-American and trans-pacific circuit. Furthermore, the skew in English-language transnational studies is heavily towards networks that include at least one English-speaking territory.[1] However, the wealth and variety of *xiqu* research now makes it possible and desirable to link the achievements of various scholars who operate, just as the troupes they study once did, in a web that stretches over languages and oceans in order to approach *xiqu* as a global object of study. Thus, alongside the relatively well-known history of Chinese itinerant and/or immigrant theatre in North America and the Malay Peninsula, exciting avenues of research await those who begin to recover the history of Chinese *xiqu* troupes performing in places as diverse as Russia, Japan, the Philippines, and Thailand.[2] In this article, I seek to take another step towards this pursuit of a global perspective by linking what can at present be learned of *xiqu* in Cuba and Peru with the existing, more developed, research on transnational Chinese performance networks elsewhere in the Americas.

Theatre histories situated in immigrant communities or otherwise outside of a mainstream society have a more than usually acute problem of paucity of materials. Nevertheless, diligent sifting through archival sources from North America has led Ng to conclude that the cities of San Francisco, New York, and Vancouver "helped anchor an extensive network of transnational theatre that encompassed many verifiable locations in Canada and the United States, with feeder connections to the neighboring countries of Peru, Mexico, and Cuba" (145).[3] In passing, Ng notes that a San Francisco theater used a transiting Peru-bound troupe to "fill the program" in the summer of 1925 (146). For her part, Rao has traced the itinerary of Cantonese tours of the Americas, including Havana as the eastern terminus for various routes crossing the continent from east to west and back again through Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Her work includes the trip of the famous Cantonese opera performer Li Xuefang in 1927-29, who made a round trip between New York and Havana on a Ward Line steamer between late May and July 9, 1927. Another Cantonese opera

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

performer, Huang Xiaofeng, is recorded leaving Havana in April 27, 1925, to return to New York, also on a Ward Line steamer, though the date of her arrival and the duration of her stay are unknown. Rao also notes that earlier records show performers travelling from Halifax to Havana, a route that disappears after the establishment of Chinese theatres in New York (2008, 265-70). More recently, her archival work has shown the deep connections between Chinese commercial network and Cantonese opera, extending between Canada, the United States and Cuba (2017, 306-10). Thus, although Latin America is at the periphery of both scholars' projects, Ng's and Rao's meticulous reconstruction of itineraries and theatre networks in North America provides the scaffolding from which to extend these accounts to Cuban and Peruvian *xiqu*, shedding light on a larger, pan-American itinerary.[4]

If Latin America has been marginal to accounts of Chinese theatre, theatre has also been marginal in accounts of the Cuban and Peruvian Chinese communities. Drawing on Spanish, Chinese, and English primary and secondary sources, the present article seeks to recover Havana and Lima as major nodes of *xiqu* in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, showing how it was practiced and sketching out some of its legacy. Likewise, it reveals *xiqu* as an integral part both of transnational Chinese performance and the local performance scenes of these two Latin American metropolises.

Xiqu in Cuban Contexts

While major Chinese labor immigration to Cuba can be dated to 1847, the Chinese community in the Spanish colony was enlarged and structurally altered by a group of Cantonese who arrived from California around 1860. Unburdened by the exploitative (and often lethal) labor contracts signed by earlier migrants coming directly from southern China, the Californian Chinese had greater means and more agency. Something like two classes formed within the Cuban community, with the Californian Chinese founding a Chinatown along Zanja and

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

Dragones streets in Havana and establishing themselves locally as the owners of laundries, fruit and vegetable stores, and supermarkets (Yuan 38-39).

The first Chinese theater in Havana was apparently used for wood puppetry. Records of the space can be traced back to 1873, when four Cantonese San Franciscans established it on Zanja street in the heart of Chinatown, investing 15,000 pesos (Chuffat 49, 57; Baltar 146-47; López 107). Records indicate that musical material was shared with Cantonese opera practice, suggesting that the genre was a rod puppetry form known as *mutou gongzaixi*, which was popular in Hong Kong and the Cantonese countryside until the 1940s (Yung 40). The puppets themselves may have been locally produced. The names associated with the theater building point to the early involvement of prominent Chinese-Cuban merchants in cultural endeavor (García and Eng 114).[5]

The first records of a theater for live-actor Cantonese opera, in a building known as Sun Yen, are dated two years later in 1875. In January of the same year, the first Cantonese opera company arrived in Havana, performing at Sun Yen with shows running Monday to Saturday from 6:30-10 p.m. and on Sundays from 1-4 p.m. (Baltar 149-50; Linares 44). Theater buildings were also established in Matanzas, east of Havana (1871), and Sagua la Grande, in central Cuba (1876). The latter, "un inmenso edificio de madera, de una altura que bien abarcaría tres pisos, destinado al teatro chino," was "estrenado por una compañía de artistas chinos, compuestas por 94 personas" and reportedly became so popular that laborers abandoned their work in the fields to attend shows (Morillas and del Valle) . In April 1875 a theater was established in Cienfuegos, on the southern coast; the first performances are recorded as being by the Sun Yen Company, presumably the same troupe that performed in Sun Yen's Havana building. In both Havana and Cienfuegos the narratives recorded were "*Chik Yan-Kuei*" (likely the Xue Rengui narrative, 15 days long) and "*She-kong*" (content unknown, 12 days long) (López 2013, 107). Contact with California was ongoing, and it is probable that the Havana Cantonese opera community was

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

further enlarged in the 1890s, when “the anti-Chinese movement and the contraction of the theater market in San Francisco pushed both the Chinese population and their beloved theatre away from California” (Ng 139-40) and towards other markets.

Although they make no comments about specific performers or theaters, three Qing diplomats’ remarks from the late 19th century corroborate the presence of a lively Cantonese theatre in Cuba. Zhang Yinhuan (1837-1900), who in 1885 was an envoy to Spain, the United States, and Peru, remarked on a visit to Cuba that people from

> the three counties of Dongguan, Xin’an and Zengcheng, on the Western people’s market, have established a joint public hall [*gongsuo*] next to which was a theatre.[6] While not opulent, it is very clean, and in the evenings has displays where the villagers [i.e. the natives of those three counties] always meet to watch the music of their native land, expressing the feelings of the sojourner (Zhang Y. 242).

Given that these counties are all located in the Cantonese cultural core, this record suggests that Cantonese opera was the dominant and probably the sole performance genre.

The Qing consul general in Havana from 1893 to 1896, Tan Qianchu, also noted in his *Miscellaneous Notes on Cuba* (*Guba zaji*) that

> Havana has two Chinese theatre troupes. Although they are not very watchable (most of the actors have learnt their art locally), their stories of loyalty, filial piety, probity and virtue, of contentment, anger, sorrow and joy, can also stimulate the conscience, and cause the Chinese not to forget what China looks like.

Tan’s comments are remarkable not only for expressing the then-common view that *xiqu* had a role to play in maintaining the moral values of overseas Chinese,[7] but also because his text suggests that by the 1890s transmission of Cantonese opera was occurring locally. Tan’s successor as consul general, Yu Siyi (1896-99), remarked that “there were originally two [Chinese] theatres in Havana, now there is one that has been closed,” going on to suggest that

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

Chinese are no longer willing to stay long in Cuba and that the community was likely to wither (qtd. in Yuan 39).[8] This suggests that a heyday of Cantonese opera occurred in Cuba in the 1880s and 90s, declining towards the turn of the century.

Although we lack sources on the golden era of Cantonese opera in Havana from Cuban authors, José Martí, eventually canonized as the apostle of Cuban independence, took note in 1889 of the genre on his travels in New York. A rather breathless Martí is evidently charmed by the spectacle, paying particularly attention to the stage conventions, the codified movements and martial arts sequences, the sumptuous costumes and the expressive orchestra, while also noting with displeasure that Americans were visiting the Chinese theatre "a ver de burla" (279).[9] Cubans themselves were not universally thrilled with Chinese theatre in its Cuban incarnation. As in other places of contact with colonial society, Chinese theatre in late-colonial Cuba produced noise complaints. At least one such complaint, from 1888, survives, contending that the music of the opera constituted a disturbance of the peace since the music was "inharmonious" and "deafening." The Chinese association responded that its shows were less noisy than the meat vendor preparing his wares in the middle of the night (López 2013, 108-09).

By 1899, the census recorded 150,000 Chinese in Cuba, of whom 26 were listed as actors, four as artists, and one as a musician. The fact that the census records "actor" as a profession suggests that these performers were professionals working in local troupes rather than overseas visitors. At the same time, contracts with troupes from Hong Kong and Guangdong show groups visiting until the 1940s, after having come through the United States and Canada (Yuan 39). Similar to the scene in Southeast Asia, we can posit that during the interwar years there was a mix of itinerant troupes from the Sinophone heartland alongside local transmission and performance (Stenberg 176). Unlike in North America, where Cantonese theatre was hampered by anti-Chinese legislation and a corresponding diminution

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

in audiences, in Cuba, immigration continued until the 1920s or 1930s, and a certain "boom of Chinese opera" did not entirely abate until the Second World War (Linares 44).

Mid-Century Acculturation and Exchanges

However, by the 1940s, tours in Cuba seem to have dried up, as many performers returned to China or to the United States, and the World War increased the dangers of travel while depressing the budgets for ethnic-enclave entertainment. Faced with this difficulty, local Chinese organizations began in the early 1940s to recruit young Cuban-Chinese to perform Cantonese opera. In this period, up to four Cantonese opera companies were operating in Havana at the same time. Of these, the most prominent was the Chung Wah Opera Company, which seems to have been the performing branch of a more general cultural club founded in 1936, another (probably overlapping) organ of which was a Chinese traditional music orchestra (Baltar 155; Yang 39-40). For the opera, local Chinese or part-Chinese girls and women between the ages of 8 and 20, illiterate in Chinese, were taught to sing through phonetic notation of Cantonese with Spanish orthography (Baltar 159; López 2013, 214-15).[10] Apparently, some of the performers often came to the stage via martial arts associations, which provided some of the training and movement vocabulary required in Chinese traditional theatre. The names of the theatre troupes —Chung Wah, Kuoc Seng (or Sen), and Kuoc Kong— mean roughly "Chinese Culture," "National Sound," and "National Glory," respectively, and point to the integration of *xiqu* into a program of cultural nationalism, not dissimilar to, if less powerful than, the Southeast Asian Chinese cultural nationalism.[11]

By the mid-century, these organizations were clear sings of decline. The Chung Wah opera troupe fell apart in the late 1940s, and none of the remaining troupes seem to have survived the 1950s (Baltar 111, 154-62). Kuoc Seng lasted until 1951 and Kuoc Kong "a few years longer" (Hun). A 1952 report mentioned (but not cited in detail) by Cantonese opera

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

specialist Lai Bojiang gives an idea of how Cuba figured in a global account of the scale of Cantonese opera troupes at this point. While the numbers for Cuba are much smaller than those in maritime Southeast Asia, the Cuban contingent is the only one cited in Latin America, and the figure given, 60+ actors, is slightly smaller than the number in San Francisco (70+), but slightly larger than that of New York (40+) or the total for Canada (50+) (Lai).[12] A performance in 1956 with actors invited from New York and Toronto in collaboration with Chinese-Cuban performers shows a (likely modest) post-war revival of the Americas-wide itineraries (García and Eng 117). The disbanding of the troupes by the end of the 1950s seems, however, to mark the end of theatrical performances for over 30 years. Since much of the Chinese population left Cuba in the wake of the 1959 revolution, the pool of actors and audiences would also have been much diminished.[13]

An account drawing on the biography of actress Ana Li was published in a 1987 journalistic survey of Havana life by the young Leonardo Padura[14] Padura's accounts corroborate the basic chronology of Havana *xiqu* established above, with Li telling him that "trabajé durante 24 años en el teatro chino," beginning with children's roles in the Ko Seng (likely an erroneous or alternate spelling for Kuoc Seng) Company "una de los cuatro que entonces existían," before eventually moving on to principal martial roles. Given that Li was 55 years old at the time of the interview, her career can be calculated roughly as lasting from the mid-1930s to the end of Cantonese theatre in Cuba in the late 1950s. Li mentions weekly performances in such theatres as Águila de Oro and El Pacífico, as well as tours of Santiago de Cuba, Morón, and Camagüey, where the reception was warmer and the pay (on account of gifts) better than in Havana (Padura 29-30).

It is also in the mid-century that one can begin to establish acculturation across Chinese-Cuban arts. In Havana, the lion dance—one of the emblematic practices of Chinatowns in North America and Southeast Asia— is recorded as appearing in the 1937 carnival, swiftly

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

becoming an annual staple (Pérez; López 2013, 214). The *corneta china*, as the Chinese shawm (*suona*) is known in Cuba, became an integral part of the carnival conga music in the eastern city of Santiago. This instrument having arrived via Cantonese immigration from the United States; it seems probable that the opera played a role in its dissemination. Additionally, the Orchestra of the Study of Chinese Music (La Orquesta del Estudio de Música China), performed three times a week on a major radio station, playing both Cuban repertoire and traditional Chinese music with an ensemble composed of mostly Chinese instruments (Baltar 156). García and Eng assert that a wide range of Cuban composers of the "first half of the twentieth century" absorbed the influence of Cantonese opera (115).

A more notorious example of acculturation, or at least cohabitation can be seen in the Teatro Shanghai. This theater, initially built for Cantonese opera in the early 20th century and known originally as the Teatro Chino de Zanja, came into the hands of Cuban entrepreneurs and was used for burlesques, showing Chinese opera on its day off. The Chinese companies were excluded completely after 1950 or so (Baltar 152), and the theater became renowned for the "world's rawest burlesque show" (Mallin 22). Chinese patrons were among the mix of customers, and it seems the curtains had been retained from Cantonese opera days (22). While Chinese theatre was no longer performed after the mid-century, the Chinese impersonator Emilio Ruiz ("el Chino Wong") was sometimes featured (Farr), thus exchanging a genuine Cantonese practice for fakery. But the Shanghai's most enduring imprint on the Cuban imaginary was perhaps serving as an inspiration for the Chinese section of Cuban author Severo Sarduy's neobaroque novel *De donde son las cantantes*. Sarduy's treatment of performing Chinese-Cubans, while suffused with eroticism and exoticism, can be read also as a creation myth for the Cuban people, an equal fusion of Chinese, African, and Spanish sources. The novel's use of tumbling and *nandan* (*xiqu* "female impersonators") to depict the Shanghai suggests that Sarduy may have been drawing also on *Jingju* performances he could have seen

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

in his Parisian exile,[15] in addition to what he remembered of Teatro Shanghai. Of course, the Shanghai could not survive the Cuban revolution as a nightclub. Today, the former site of the theater has become a kind of community park, with a statue of Confucius presiding over the space (Fernández).

Recent History and Legacy

Today, there are various sites of *xiqu* legacy in Cuba. At least one European author incorporated his experience of Chinese theatre performances seen in Havana into notions of the European avant-garde. This was the Spanish leftist Corpus Barga (1887-1975), who wrote a text on Cuban Chinese theatre in the *Revista de Occidente*, an influential Madrid journal of culture, politics, and ideas; the 1928 text must be regarded as one of the first attempts by a European intellectual to cite first-hand experience of Chinese performance as a model for Western theatre. Barga describing the Chinese theatre as “una de las siete maravillas del mundo teatral,” and shows himself impressed with its epic scale (“serviría de ejemplo para hacer el poema del Cid”) and its long performances (“poemas cuya representación dura semanas”), drawing an analogy with installment publications of novels and the episodic nature of cinema (Barga 227-28). He also comments on the space for imagination created by Chinese theatre’s economy of gesture as well as its spare stage set and props.[16]

Alejo Carpentier, perhaps the greatest Cuban novelist, joined the chorus in praising *xiqu* in later years. According to Carpentier, Chinese theatre anticipated Brechtian developments (“La ilusión escénica” 44-45). Frequently visiting the Zanja Chinese theater with friends around 1925, Carpentier reminisces about an art “delicados como un dibujo a pluma, trisangrientos como una tragedia de Shelley” (“Lo que fue”), which “atrajo todos los jóvenes escritores y artistas del momento (“La ilusión escénica” 44). Carpentier also had a grasp of the economic networks of the performers, informing his readers that troupes were contracted from

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

Asia and San Francisco and paid by local merchants. His warmest words are reserved for "una trágica con cara de gato," Wong Sin Fong, who "tenía la ciencia de los gestos sintéticos, reducidos a su máximo sentido lírico o expresivo" ("El amor"). There seems little doubt that the artist who so enthralled an adolescent Carpentier was Huang Xiaofeng, the great Cantonese actress noted in Rao's itinerary. Moreover, Carpentier even knows how much she was paid la bagatela de diecisiete mil dólares por una actuación de cinco meses en un ciclo de dramas históricos ("El amor"). As with Sarduy a generation later, Chinese opera—imperfectly perceived, exotic, integral, but vanished—is a constituent of Carpentier's view of Havana, "la ciudad sin terminar" a fragmentary, kaleidoscopic world made up "de lo inacabado, de lo cojo, de lo asimétrico" ("La Habana").

If Chinese theatre's presence in the oeuvre of Cuba's literary greats constitutes one kind of survival, the Chinese-Cuban community has given the theatre another life of sorts. When the Casino Chung Wah celebrated its centenary in 1993, Chinese-Cubans took the opportunity to reanimate the local Cantonese theatre. Various actors were involved in this initiative, including former actors of the Kuoc Kong and Kuoc Seng companies. Caridad Amarán, who had kept librettos and scores from her adoptive father, the actor Julián Fong (Fong Piu), assisted work on phonetic transcriptions for non-Chinese speakers. Starting in 1996, the group benefited from the expertise of the violinist Milagros Lou, a member of Cuba's National Symphony Orchestra. Their performances, which included a great deal of work making costumes and sets, was supported by the state's Atlas de la Cultura Popular Cubana and later by Chinatown promotional organizations (Hun).

In 2011, the Cantonese opera journal *Nanguo Hongdou* and the Guangzhou daily *Yangcheng Evening News* reported the visit of "two old ladies" from Havana. Georgina Wong (Huang Meiyu) and Caridad Amarán sang excerpts from Cantonese opera at the Bahe Guild in Guangzhou (Chen 37), an important site for the profession (Ng 113-16). The *Yangcheng*

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

Evening News reprinted pictures from a 1947 performance by Amarán in martial dress in Havana, focusing on the story of how she, a "Spanish white person" had been adopted by the Kaiping actor Fong, who apparently left home at age 19 in a dispute with his family about his passion for opera and never returned to China. Amarán, born around 1932 and "picked up off the street" by Fong as an infant, was on the stage by the time she was "eight or nine" and pursued a career in Cantonese opera (Chen 37). After the decline of the Cantonese theatre companies in Cuba, Amarán worked in hotels and as a typesetter for the local Chinese newspaper, *Kwong Wah Po*. Amarán and Wong's symbolic return to the native place of Cantonese opera brought a 140-year history full circle.

Xiqu in Peru

Chinese migration to Peru was the largest in Latin America. As in North America and the Caribbean, it was dominated by exploitative labor migration from Guangdong. The scale of migration, occurring predominantly in the third quarter of the 19th century, ensured that there would be a lively Cantonese theatre in Peru, which we can roughly sketch as emerging by 1869, reaching its height towards the turn of the century, and vanishing around 1930. Newspaper accounts from 1870 and 1875 make it clear that most Cantonese performers were arriving from California (Rodríguez 136, 140). A minority may have come directly from China, and some may have also stopped at the northern Chilean city of Iquique or in other cities of Peru before or after their Lima visits. In contrast to Cuba, there is no evidence in Peru that local troupes were founded or *xiqu* practices transmitted locally (Valladares 154). However, as with Cuba, we can establish an interest from the general population and, rather more modestly, from intellectual quarters, as well as a troubled relationship with municipal authorities. Chinese scholarly sources remain all but silent on the Cantonese theatre of Peru, but the existing work of Peruvian scholars suggests that further archival evidence may yet surface.

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

In terms of historical periodization, the beginnings of Cantonese theatre in Lima closely resemble those of Cuba. A tantalizing but isolated record indicates that Chinese acrobats performed in Callao in 1855, but *xiqu* performance first appears in records in February 1869. This is when *El Comercio* begins to mention the presence of a Chinese theater with daily performances (Muñoz 138-39), with performers arriving from California and landing at Callao. In the same year, the owner of a Chinese theater is cited in newspapers as a suspect in a Chinatown criminal case (Rodríguez Pastor 136). Another theater, at No. 37 Rastro de la Huaquilla wa founded in 1874. Destroyed by fire in 1912, it was rebuilt in the same place in 1916 and renamed Las Delicias in 1920. A third venue, the 1400-seat Odeón theatre, built in 1870, was not intended for Chinese performances and first showed Italian operas and other Western theatre. However, beginning in 1876, it was rented by Chinese businessmen Tay Vo Chang and Fung Elen and represented by a Peruvian middleman named Luis Otaiza. The trio applied for more than 100 licenses for the performances of Chinese shows, finally acquiring the property in 1879.

With three theaters performing Cantonese opera by the late 1870s, Lima seems to have featured, if anything, a more developed *xiqu* scene than Cuba. The French traveler Charles Wiener visited the Odeón in 1877, remarking that the audience and *xiqu* performers were entirely male and describing narratives that lasted for days "comme sur les scènes de Pékin," accompanied by "une musique wagnérienne" (Wiener 455). In Wiener's account, audiences spoke or smoked opium unless the striking of the gong particularly called their attention to the stage. Like other early Western accounts of Chinese music, the description is not flattering, with Wiener commenting on "les vibrations stridentes, continues, monotones, implacables des instruments à cordes sciés, limés, grattés, pincés par des musiciens sans entrailles" (455).

Though the Odeón was converted to other uses in 1878 (Valladares 165), Chinese theatre in Lima seems at the time still to have been in the ascendant, seeming to reach its apogee

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

around the turn of the 20th century. Fanni Muñoz's survey of municipal records shows between 100 and 200 *xiqu* performances at Delicias in the years for which she compiled records (1890, 1891, 1902, and 1903), with Chinese opera always forming either the most popular or second-most popular genre of entertainment in Lima, as measured by frequency of performance. The 196 performances recorded in 1902 constituted over one-fifth of the performances recorded in Lima, narrowly edging out *zarzuelas*, which had 191 performances (283-87). Though these records are unlikely to be complete, it is certain that *xiqu* was a regular, likely even a prominent, part of the capital's entertainment scene. The dips and sometimes complete absence of *xiqu* performances in the winter months of June, July, and August, suggest that in this period troupes left for the North American summer season. There is no discernible spike for the Chinese New Year season; likely Peru was no troupe's principal market.

In 1916, a journalist from *Variedades* visited a performance venue. The journalist, assigned the task, writes:

> pienso vagamente en una visita que hiciera en mis mocedades al Teatro Chino, antes que el incendio lo consumiera. Y la recordé horrorizado. Opio, juego, embriaguez, vicio. Espectáculo innoble y grotesco quedó grabado en mi memoria (Zig-Zag 1354-55).

But remembering Charles Baudelaire's injunction to intoxicate oneself, he presses on, making the usual remarks about the symbolism of Chinese stage sets and the "ruido desacompasado, inclemente é inharmónico" (1355). As elsewhere, including Cuba, the Chinese theatre provoked commentary on gender, as male actors playing female roles would have been usual, although not necessarily universal. Having asked to be presented to "una chinita agracadio," the reporter is startled when

> la gloriosa Diva empezó desnudarse, sin pizca de vergüenza, en presencia del numeroso público que invadía el "camerino" y de mí, que era el más rendido de sus admiradores. Cayó la tunica y cuando pensé contemplar el más bello cuerpo, espaldas mórbidas,

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

nacimiento tentador de senos, cuello níveo ¡Dios mío, lo que ví! espaldas escuálidas, cuello sin harmonía, pecho deforme y sin turgencias. Y la Diva, en su impudor, seguía desvistiéndose. ¡Claro, come que era un hombre! (1356)

This reaction is interesting in that it shows that the European and US fascination with *xiqu* cross-dressing—with its titillating and exoticizing tone—could operate equally (and apparently independently) for a Latin American observer.[17]

Peruvian intellectual interest in the local Chinese theatre seems, however, to have been substantially more limited than in Cuba. It received mentioned in the 1905 *Diccionario teatral del Peru*, where it is listed as attracting a mixed audiences and lasting through the night (Moncloa y Covarrubias 158). Indeed, troupes were fined for disturbance caused by late performances, but preferred to pay fines (*Memoria* 225) rather than desist (Muñoz 139). The unenviable reputation of the theatre must have stemmed from low prices and frequent performance, sometimes up to six a day. There is also a suggestion in the papers of the day that "los trasnochadores profesionales, los bohemios trashumantes; los periodistas nocturnos y la chiquillería" (*El Comercio*, qtd. in Valladares 155) were attracted by a risqué milieu (Muñoz 139, 141).

The presence of non-Chinese members and of tourists recurs often enough in accounts of *xiqu* in Peru that one can supposed that they formed a regular feature of the audience, as they were in Southeast Asia and in North America (Balta 149). Apparently, as in San Francisco Chinese theaters, interpreters were for hire (Aldo).[18] Especially before the turn of the century, the Chinese theaters were thought to be associated with a milieu of opium and gambling, as seen in Wiener's and Zig-Zag's accounts. They were also a periodic target of the health authorities and of newspapers concerned for the morality of the population and were closed temporarily on numerous occasions (Muñoz 142-43).[19] The characterizations of the Chinese

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

theatre as seedy but atmospheric are no doubt a combination of racism, romanticism, and economics.

Over time, the theatre seems to have become increasingly respectable. Newspaper accounts from 1917 show the Huaquilla theater hosting performances as part of National Day celebrations and, in 1923, for Lima-based diplomats (*Variedades*, "Fiesta"; *Mundial*). It may be that the attempt to limit the theatre to "gente seria" in 1920 (*El Comercio*, qtd. in Valladares 156), after the Huaquilla theater was rebuilt, is a sign that the Chinese theatre was attempting to alter its reputation and atmosphere. The owner from the 1910s until the 1930s was Federico Tong. Tong began bringing in troupes of up to 40 people, including at least some girls (*Variedades*, "La Lima exótica").[20] The tone of newspaper articles and the presence of dignitaries suggested that the theater had by this time elevated both its tone and its prominence, being considered also appropriate for visits by tourists. It was considered among the most convenient of the Lima theaters. Besides Cantonese opera, the theater was also used for cinema and various other forms of theatre (Laos 94).

By the 1930s, the shows seem to have been on the wane. A 1935 municipal publication features an ad for Teatro Delicias, claiming that it had the capital's best acoustics and indicating that Tong was still the owner, but there is no mention of what kind of shows were hosted there (Editorial "Minerva"). Performances probably ended in the late 1930s, slightly anticipating declines in Cantonese opera elsewhere in diaspora (Ng 149-51). Certainly the Great Depression was a major factor in this decline, though it may also have been the war that supplied the full stop. Two brief accounts from 1960, produced by the National Radio, speak of the Delicias theater as something well-past though within human memory. They describe performances beginning at 11 p.m. and going until 4:30 or 5:00 a.m., and reminisce about the presence of Chinese food in the audience before Chinese cuisine became more generally popular (Rivera 87, 98-99).[21] Other accounts mention a tea room, a fruit stall, and billiards tables (Balta 149).

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

A 1984 interview with an ex-soldier born in the Barrios Altos was quoted by the journalist Rafael Hernández in his report on Chinese theatre in *Diario*:

> yo he visto el teatro de los chinos. Su teatro quedaba en la calle de la Huaqillo, lo que hoy es el cine Delicias, aquí en los Barrios Altos. Sus funciones duraban toda la noche y asistía mucha gente del pueblo; a mí me llevó mi padre cuando yo era niño. Recuerdo que ese teatro era cantado, en chino supongo, porque parecían gatos. Al compás de sus instrumentos bailaban, y sus vestuarios eran muy vistosos. Era impresionante.

If thirty years ago, the Chinese theatre lived only in the memories of a few older people, then perhaps even those with the clearest memories among the oldest generation of *limeños* would be unable to personally recall Lima's once-vibrant Cantonese opera today.

Conclusions

To a substantial degree, these two Latin American examples confirm and extend the "convergent arc of spectacular vibrancy for Cantonese opera on both sides of the Pacific in the 1920s" (Ng 4). Connecting the more extensively researched North American networks with Cuba and Peru allows the further validation of the "overseas circuits, largely unmapped and unstudied, [that] made Cantonese opera the most transnational of all China's regional performance genres" (Ng 7). As the facts of this theatrical tradition are pieced together, various other avenues of potential inquiry emerge. The attention of major Cuban intellectuals to Cuban theatres prefigures the later European reaction to Chinese theatre, made famous by the work of Brecht, Meyerhold, and others. Reception, particularly of male performers of female roles, can be tied not only to gender anxieties in diaspora but also to the images of deficient masculinity that have been common in Latin American images and narratives of the Chinese.[22]

Xiqu as a global field of studies offers multiple avenues for investigation. Some case studies—such as Mei Lanfang's tours abroad—have already been fruitfully investigated in

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

scholarly works, contributing to the increasing focus on intercultural networks and performance. *Xiqu* troupes and performers with lower prestige, on the other hand, appear in a more sporadic manner in the written record. Yet improved access to materials through digitalization and other avenues for scholarly exchange can enrich the historical background, while fieldwork around the world can bring new light to the panoply of Chinese performance. It is already clear from similarities of chronology, milieu, social perception, and purposes of *xiqu* practice that we are dealing always with global, as well as regional and national, histories. Increasingly, we are in a position to "gain a fuller appreciation of how [*xiqu*] theaters were [and are] linked to, steered by, and shaped by the transnational performing network, and in turn, how the network was affected by them" (Rao 2017, 297).

Attending to the texts and contexts of diverse performance histories and practices, whether regionally or transnationally, puts pressure on essentialist conceptions of "Chineseness." The presence of performers of Chinese theatre without Chinese blood, such as Caridad Amarán, complicates any easy narrative of identity through genealogy, or of Chinese theatre as an essentialist cultural product.[23] Since *xiqu* is often considered "the ultimate, quintessential representation of Chinese identity" (Huang 173), highlighting the varieties and flexibilities of its performance stimulates the conception of Chineseness as negotiable, changeable, and relational.

Works Cited

Aldo, Claudio. "El único amor de Tórtola Valencia." *Mundial*, vol. VI, no. 161, June 1923, p. 22.

Bai Ruosi [Berezkin, Rostislav]. "Zhongguo xiu zai Eluosi chuanbo yu yingxiang (1788-1900)." *Minsu quyi*, no. 191, 2016, pp. 109-51.

Balta Campbell, Aída. *Historia general del teatro en el Perú*. Universidad de San Martín de Porres, 2001.

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

Baltar Rodríguez, José. *Los chinos de Cuba: apuntes etnográficos*. Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 1997.

Barga, Corpus. "Diálogo sobre el teatro judío de Moscú y el teatro chino de La Habana." *Revista de occidente*, no. 62, 1928, pp. 224-36. *Dialnet*, https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=4277129.

Campos García, Lissette Marie Beatriz. "Teatro tradicional chino en el Perú: sistematización y descripción de sus fuentes de información 1869-1935." 2016, ateneo.unmsm.edu.pe/ateneo/bitstream/123456789/5040/3/Campos_Garcia_Lissette_Marie_Beatriz_2016.pdf.

Canevaro, Gen. César, editor. *Memoria de la Administración Municipal de Lima (Enero de 1889 a Noviembre de 1890.* Imprenta Torres Aguirre, 1890.

Carpentier, Alejo. "El amor a la ciudad." *Nexos*, 1 oct. 1996, www.nexos.com.mx/?p=8019. Accessed 10 June 2016.

---. "La ilusión escénica." *Letra y solfa: Teatro*. Edited by Raimundo Respall Fina. Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1994, pp. 43-45.

Chen, Weiqing. "Guba laotai de yueju xungen zhi lü." *Nanguo hongdou*, no. 4, 2011, p. 37.

Chuffat Latour, Antonio. *Apunte Histórico De Los Chinos En Cuba.* Molina, 1927.

Dorsey, Joseph C. "Identity, Rebellion, and Social Justice among Chinese Contract Workers in Nineteenth-Century Cuba." *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2004, pp. 18-47. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3185182.

Farr, Yolanda. "Instantánea 17- El Shanghai. Un teatro muy especial. Primera parte." *Yolanda Farr*, 25 Feb. 2012. https://yolandafarr.blogspot.com.au/2012/02/el-shanghai-un-teatro-muy-especial.html. Accessed 13 March 2018.

Fernández, José Hugo. "El teatro Shanghai: de Supermán a Confucio." *Cubanet.* 12 Dec. 2014. https://www.cubanet.org/destacados/el-teatro-shanghai-de-superman-a-confucio/. Accessed 13 March 2018.

García Triana, Mauro and Pedro Eng Herrera. *The Chinese in Cuba, 1847-Now.* Translated by Gregor Benton. Lexington Books, 2009.

Guerrero, Gustavo and Xose García Canido. *El oriente de Severo Sarduy*. Instituto Cervantes, 2008.

Hernández, Rafael. "Sobre el teatro chino en el Perú (1848-1930)." *Diario* (5 mayo 1985)." *Cantera de sonidos.* 31 Oct 31 2012. http://canteradesonidos.blogspot.com.au/2012/10/fuente-diario-lima-5-de-mayo-de-1985.html. Accessed 13 March 2018.

Huang, Alexander C. Y. *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange*. Columbia UP, 2009.

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

Hun Calzadilla, Julio G. “El teatro china de Cuba: un destino diferente.” *Monografias.com*. http://www.monografias.com/trabajos81/teatro-chino-cuba/teatro-chino-cuba.shtml. Accessed 13 March 2018.

Irwin, Will. “On the Trail of a Chinese Script.” *The New York Times,* 3 February 1946, p. X1.

Kwee Kek Beng. “Het culturele Leven der Chineezen in Nederlandsch-Indië.” *Koloniale Studien*, nos. 5–6, 1936, pp. 78–96.

Lai Bojiang. “Yueju haiwai cangsang lu.” *Zhuanti ziliaoku xitong.* http://resource.dglib.cn/resource/web/information.do?actionCmd=view&id=4512 Accessed 27 March 2018.

Laos, Cipriano A. *Lima, la ciudad de los virreyes (El libro peruano)*. Editorial Peru, 1927.

Lee, Tong Soon. "Chinese Theatre, Confucianism, and Nationalism: Amateur Chinese opera tradition in Singapore." *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2007, pp. 397-421. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/atj.2007.0036.

Li, Siu Leung. *Cross-dressing in Chinese Opera*. Hong Kong University Press, 2003.

Linares Savio, Maria Teresa. “Expresiones de la cultura china en Cuba: El teatro, la música.” *Catauro: una revista cubana de antropología* vol. 1, no. 2, 2000, pp. 41-49. *La Jiribilla*, http://www.lajiribilla.co.cu/2002/n75_octubre/1753_75.html.

López, Kathleen. “Transnational Histories : A Dual-Sided Approach to Researching Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Migration to Cuba.” *Chinese Oversas: Migration, Research and Documentation*, edited by Tan Chee-Beng, Colin Storey, and Julia Zimmerman. The Chinese University Press, 2007, pp. 167-201.

---. *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History*. University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

López-Calvo, Ignacio. *Dragons in the Land of the Condor: Writing Tusán in Peru.* University of Arizona Press, 2014.

Mallin, Jay. “Shanghai Theater: World’s Rawest Burlesque Show.” *Cabaret,* Sept. 1956, pp. 20-22, 44.

Marshall, Alison R. *Cultivating Connections: The Making of Chinese Prairie Canada*. UBC Press, 2014.

Martí, José. *Obras Completas*, vol. 12. Editorial Nacional, 1963.

Editorial “Minerva.” *Lima en el IV centenario de su fundación*. Editorial “Minerva,” 1935.

Moncloa y Covarrubias, Manuel. *Diccionario teatral del Perú.* Badiola y Berrio, 1905.

Morillas Valdés, Francisco D. and Marlene Marjorie del Valle Torres. “El teatro chino en la Cuba colonial: Siglo XIX.” *La Jiribilla*, no. 4, Aug-Sept. 2005, n. pag. http://epoca2.lajiribilla.cu/2005/n229_09/fuenteviva.html. Accessed March 13, 2018.

Mundial. “En el teatro chino.” vol. IV, no. 176, 28 Sep 1923, p. 11.

Muñoz Cabrejo, Fanni. *Diversiones Públicas En Lima, 1890-1920: La Experiencia De La Modernidad.* Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2001.

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

Ng, Wing Chung. *The Rise of Cantonese Opera*. University of Illinois Press, 2015.

Ong, Larissa. "The Chino Cubano Complex: Five Artists' Strategic Self-Orientalization and Reclamation of Chinese Identity." *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* vol. 7, no. 2, 2017, pp. 119-38. *eScholarship*, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4hc7h655.

Padura Fuentes, Leonardo. *El viaje más largo: en busca de una cubanía extraviada*. Editorial Plaza Mayor, 2002.

Pérez Fernández, Rolando Antonio. "The Chinese Community and the Corneta China: Two Divergent Paths in Cuba." *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, vol. 46, 2014, pp. 62-88. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.5921/yeartradmusi.46.2014.0062.

Rao Yunhua [Nancy Yunhwa Rao]. "Chongfan Niuyue! Cong 1920 niandai Manhadun xiyuan kan Meizhou de yueju huangjin shiqi." *Qingxun zuji erbainian: Yueju guoji yantaohui*, edited by Zhou Shishen and Zheng Ning'en. Xianggang zhongwen daxue, vol. 1, 2008, pp. 261-94.

Rao, Nancy Yunhwa. *Chinatown Opera Theater in North America.* University of Illinois Press, 2017.

Rivera, Leonidas, ed. *Del vivir limeño de antaño: Charlas de evocación perifoneadas por Radio Nacional Del Perú, 1959-1960.* Impr. Eetsa, 1960.

Rizal, José. 1961a. *Diarios y memorias*. Comisión Nacional del Centenario de José Rizal.

Rodríguez Pastor, Humberto. "Comentarios a noticias especiales sobre chinos del siglo XX." *Cuarta Época* no. 1, 2003, pp. 127-40.

Sarduy, Severo. *Cobra*. Translated by Suzanne Jill Levine. Dutton, 1975.

_____. *De donde son los cantantes*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1993.

Stenberg, Josh. 2016. "A Preliminary Overview of Dutch East Indies and Indonesian *Xiqu* History and Current Practice." *Asian Theatre Journal* vol. 33, no. 1, 2016, pp. 170-97. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/atj.2016.0017.

Tan Qianchu. "Guba zaji." In *Xiao fanghuzhai yu dicongchao,* edited by Wang Xiqi. Taiwan xusheng chuju, 12 *zhi* 1 *juan*, 1975.

Thorndike, Guillermo. *Ocupación, testigo: La edad de plomo*. Universidad de San Martin de Porres, 2003.

Valladares Chamorro, Odalis. "El teatro tradicional chino en Lima." *La inmigración china al Perú: Arqueología, historia y sociedad*, edited by Richard Chuhue, et. al. Instituto Confucio, Universidad Ricardo Palma, Editorial Universitaria. 2012, pp. 153-65.

Variedades. "La fiesta del aniversario chino." vol. XIII, no. 502, 1917, p. 1068.

_____. "A través de la Lima exótica." vol. XVII, no. 666, 1920, pp. 221-22.

Wiener, Charles. *Pérou et Bolivie: récit de voyage.* Librairie Hachette et Cie., 1880.

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

Wong, Jackie. “The Mysterious Life of Wah Kwan Gwan.” *Ricepaper*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2012, pp. 8-11. *Joomag* https://view.joomag.com/ricepaper-magazine-173-4-winter-fall-2012/0233355001420501636.

Yuan Yan. “Guba Zhongguo xiyuan de lishi bianxian—cong biaoyan muouxi, yueju, dao fangying dianying.” *Lading Meizhou yanjiu* no. 6, 2011, pp. 37-40.

Yung, Bell. *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Zhang Dongchuan. “Chuchu yangyizhe renmin de youyi.” *Xiju bao* no. Z3, 1960, pp. 25-27.

Zhang Yinhuan. “Sanzhou riji” (excerpt). *Wanqing haiwai biji xuan.* edited by Fujian shifan daxue lishi xi Huaqiao shi ziliaoxuan. Haiyang chubanshe, 1983, pp. 231-44.

Zig--Zag (pseud.) “En el teatro y el barrio chinos.” *Variedades* vol. XII, no. 450, 14 Oct 1916, pp. 1354-56.

Notes

[1] This largely accounts for the relatively large amount of English-language scholarship on *xiqu* in Malaysia and Singapore, compared to the little English-language work on *xiqu* in Burma, Thailand and Vietnam.

[2] In March 2016, an article appeared that represents, to the best of my knowledge, the first effort to delineate *xiqu* history in Russia (Bai).

[3] Translations from Spanish and Chinese are my own. I thank the much-missed Susana Alaiz for help with language. I am indebted also to Lissette Marie Beatriz Campos García, who generously shared scans of three Peruvian newspaper sources with me. Campos García’s invaluable bibliographic work is available at ateneo.unmsm.edu.pe/ateneo/bitstream/123456789/5040/3/Campos_Garcia_Lissette_Marie_Beatriz_2016.pdf

[4] It seems probable that future research will illuminate the place of Mexican stops on this same *xiqu* itinerary.

[5] García and Eng provide the following names of San Francisco Chinese who in 1873 founded a society dedicated to building a Chinese theatre: Carlos Chang 陳, Li Weng 李永，Wong Yat Sen 黃一聲 and Lay Fu 賴福.

[6] Xin’an County is present-day Shenzhen, while Zengcheng is now within Guangzhou city limits, and Dongguan is situated between Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

[7] Consider, for instance, the Dutch East Indies Chinese intellectual Kwee Kek Beng’s comments in 1936:

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

"[T]heatre forms one of the invisible ties that still connect overseas Chinese with the old homeland, on which the great heroes and sages, whose deeds they follow with rapt attention, fought and lived. Statues are not erected to China's great men, but they live on through theatre and literature in the hearts and minds of the people and thereby enjoy virtual immortality" (Kwee 85).

[8] It is worth noting in passing that another Qing diplomat in Cuba, Liao Entao, also has a surprising place in the history of Sino-Cuban dramatic interaction, in that he composed a drama about the execution of Cuban medical students by Spanish colonial authorities during the Ten Years' War in 1871 (Yuan).

[9] There is a strange parallel in the diary of that other great revolutionary, literary José Rizal, who had been taken to see Cantonese opera in Hong Kong a year earlier, and made similar observations (Rizal 1961, 206).

[10] Kathleen López, conducting fieldwork in Cienfuegos seventy years later, discovered that one respondent has "a collection of postcards of Chinese opera singers in Cuba from the 1940s," providing at least anecdotal evidence of continuing popularity of Cantonese opera among Chinese-Cuban youth of the period (López 2007, 181).

[11] For a Singaporean example, see Lee. For an Indonesian case, see Stenberg 180.

[12] There is no guarantee that Lai's figures were new at the time, either. His writings on Southeast Asian *xiqu* often seem better to reflect the pre-war state of affairs.

[13] On the other hand, there was after the revolution at least one major performing arts tour of Cuba as part of the early People's Republic of China's intensive cultural diplomacy. *Jingju* (Peking opera) artists featured prominently (Zhang D. 26).

[14] Padura has since become a prize-winning novelist, best known for his detective stories.

[15] *De donde son los cantantes* was published in 1967 (in Mexico, and in French translation in Paris), but Sarduy had been living in Paris since 1960 and had seen a *Jingju* performance at some point during his time there. (Guerrero and García Canido 91). Sarduy again mentions the figure of the *Jingju* actor briefly in the first chapter of *Cobra,* where he suggests in passing an affinity between the titular transvestite and Mei Lanfang. In this vision, the lady readers are, Sarduy jokes, presumed to have discovered that the Cobra is an octogenarian Mei "receiving the bouquet of flowers, the pineapple and cigar box from the virile president of a Cuban delegation" (6).

[16] Fifteen years later, another major European figure who seems to have discovered *xiqu*'s "legendary drama"

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来

and found it “worthy of comparison with our own noblest dramas” was the conductor Erich Kleiber (García and Eng 116), then the director of the Havana Philharmonic. Kleiber was in exile due to his principled stand against the Nazi regime, though he was neither Jewish nor politically blacklisted; his son was the renowned conductor Carlos Kleiber. Regrettably, García and Eng do not cite their source for Kleiber’s comments.

[17] Of course, this is also the feature of *xiqu* that most captured Sarduy’s attention, but he may well have been influenced in this by the French reception of *xiqu* cross-dressing. For a treatment of *xiqu* cross-dressing, including the often distorting Western reactions to it, see Li.

[18] The American journalist Will Irwin wrote in the *New York Times*, recalling San Francisco Cantonese opera at the beginning of the century, “I don’t speak Chinese; but Chinese houseboys, whom I picked up at the entrance, would for the price of admission sit beside me and whisper a translation of the action.” (Irwin X1).

[19] The association between Chinatown and a variety of vices, including gambling, opium, and opera can be found throughout the Americas. A Cantonese Christian minister, recounting his life of sin in Victoria (British Columbia) Chinatown before conversion, attributes the fact that all his “savings were used up” to the “fifty dollars in tickets to the theatre and Chinese operas, together with after theatre snacks usually with several fellow-theatre lovers” (qtd. in Marshall 43).

[20] Tong also owned a chain of cinemas and occupied an important position in Chinese temple life and had families with both Chinese and Peruvian women (Thorndike 189). It also seems probable that this was the same Federico Tong who was active in horseracing (Editorial “Minerva”).

[21] The author Julio Villanueva Chang, in a family memoir piece, notes that his immigrant grandfather had a *chifa* (Chinese restaurant or stand) in the Chinese theatre (López-Calvo 184). An account from the period, while noting the availability of food, disagrees somewhat on the time of performance, reporting shows beginning at 8:30 p.m. and running until 2:30 a.m.

[22] See, for instance, Dorsey 42-43; Ong.

[23] An analogous example is the British Columbia First Nations performer of Cantonese opera, Wah Kwan Gwan (Wong).

Preprint
Reconocimiento - No Comercial - Compartir Igual - Sin restricciones adicionales
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Documento cedido por su autor a la biblioteca de Tusanaje 秘从中来