

The Palace Entertainment Institutions in the Tang Poetries

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Abstract The names of some palace entertainment institutions of the Tang Dynasty often appeared in the Tang's poems, such as Nei Jiaofang, Liyuan, Xuanhui Yuan and Zhangnei Jiaofang, which had no clear descriptions before. This paper not only introduces those related institutions but also explains Diyi Bu that was a title of a kind of members in the institutions and Faqu that was a type of music to help readers to understand the poetries meanings correctly. With these institutions' information, the readers can understand the Tang's poetries well.

Key Words Palace entertainment; Jiao Fang; Tang Peotries, Chinese music

During the Tang Dynasty, the palace entertainment institutions were an important part in the music performance and development so their names always appeared in the Tang poetries. It is hard for readers in nowadays without related information to understand those poems deeply. Thus we will introduce some necessary historical facts of the palace entertainment institutions and a type of music, Faqu (法曲 a kind of entertainment music), as following.

Nei Jiaofang (内教坊)

Xuan Zong(玄宗, r. 712-756) set up Nei Jiaofang in 714 (Kaiyuan 开元 2nd year), "In Kaiyuan 2nd year, Xuanzong set up Nei Jiaofang beside the Penglai Palace (蓬莱宫)" (Ouyang and Song 816). Following its creation, Nei Jiaofang became the most important musical institution in the palace. Although there were wars in Chang'an (the Capital city of the Tang 长安) and some emperors loved other entertainment institutions more, Nei Jiaofang was sustained and developed until the end of the Tang Dynasty.

From the Daizong (代宗, r. 762-779) Period, the functions of Nei Jiaofang changed. It not only served the emperor in the palace, but it also supplied the musical services to the court and some social activities. During Xianzong (宪宗, r. 805-820),

Wenzong (文宗, r. 827-840) and Xuanzong (宣宗, r.846-859), Jiaofang's influence was restricted to some extent. However, on the whole, because of the eunuchs' strong influence and the emperors' love of entertainment from the middle to the end of the Tang Dynasty, Nei Jiaofang's power remained strong.

Meanwhile, Jiaofang began to exert influence over Shijing Ji (市井妓 the performers who worked in the cities and the way for them to make a living was similar as geisha in Japan) of Chang'an. These influences included controlling their name registrations, ordering them to perform in some large scale programs, and managing their services during feasts held by Jing Zhao Yin (京兆尹 the government of Chang'an). Jiaofang's management of Shijing Ji was grew and expanded during the Song (宋 960-1729), Yuan (元 1206-1368) and Ming (明 1368-1644) Dynasties.

Wang Jian (王建, 767?-831?) wrote about Jiaofang ordering girls to enter the palace in his poem that narrated a story about a Shijing Ji who learned to play Konghou (箜篌 a kind of instrument) when she was young, and then was selected into the palace by Jiaofang. She lived with Gongnv (宫女 women worked in the palace) after entering the palace. He wrote, "She learned to play Konghou at thirteen and was selected from Shijing Ji. She joined Jiaofang yesterday. This morning, the Gongnv, her roommate, helped her to comb hair" (十三初学擘箜篌, 弟子名中被点留。昨日教坊新进入, 并房宫女与梳头) (576). The reason Jiaofang selected Yueji (乐伎 female performers) for entrance into the palace was to perform music. Normally, Jiaofang's Yuegong (乐工 performer) did not live with Gongnv. The girl in the poem who lived with Gongnv showed how Jiaofang had some control over Gongting Nvyue (宫廷女乐 another kind of entertainment institutions of the palace whose members were Gongnv).

During this time, Jiaofang had begun to let Shijing Ji join in performances which was illustrated in another Wang Jian's poem that described a story about a young Shijing Ji who joined the dance performance on Chunshe Day (春社 a festive in spring). He wrote, "The young pretty Shijing Ji' names were always recorded by Jiaofang. In Chunshe Day, there were many dance teams playing before the palace. The leaders of these dance teams asked for costumes" (青楼小妇研裙长, 总被抄名入教坊。春设殿前多队舞, 朋头各自请衣裳) (Wang Jian 632). This poem showed how much control Jiaofang had over Shijing Ji.

Diyi Bu (第一部)

"Diyi Bu" was the title of some Yuegong with excellent musical skills in Nei Jiaofang, Liyuan (梨园) and Zhangnei Jiaofang (帐内教坊). The Yuegong of Diyi Bu in these institutions were the emperor's first choice to perform for him.

"Diyi Bu," "Diyi Bu Gongfeng" (第一部供奉 the first branch to serve),

“Gongfeng Diyi Bu” (供奉第一部 the first branch to serve) and “Yuqian Gongfeng Diyi Bu” (Yuqian means in front of the emperor 御前供奉第一部 the first branch to serve for the emperor) had the same meaning. Musicians of “Diyi Bu” were also highly skilled performers who were deeply loved by the emperor. After performing for the emperor Muzong (穆宗, r.820-824), Zhang Jian (张渐) was rewarded and asked to perform in “Gongfeng Diyi Bu” of Zhangnei Jiaofang. (Li Youbai) Li Mu (李暮), the famous flute player during the Kaiyuan Period, was also “Diyi Bu.” (Zhou 619)

The “Diyi Bu” Yuegong had nothing to fear because of the emperor’s love. Even in the case when they offended, they were not penalized. Such a situation was illustrated in the story of the minister Zhang Jun’s feast:

Zhang Jun (张浚) was the prime minister. Once he went to Wanshou Si (万寿寺 a temple) with other officials in the court to hold a feast and watch peony. Performers who supplied music services in the feast all belonged to Yuqian Gongfeng Diyi Bu. They were proud and had nothing to fear because they were loved by the emperor. The feast continued through nightfall. Suddenly, one of performers, Zhang Yin (张隐), stood up and sang loudly (with disrespectful lyrics). After the end of the song, he left immediately. All the guests were surprised and speechless. Thus the party was over (Ren 1171).

Zhang Yin could sing songs sneering at current politics and stride away without looking back, even at a party held by the prime minister without repercussions. Because of being loved by the emperor, Yuegong of “Diyi Bu” were so respected and valued, they did not fear the court officials.

Musicians of Diyi Bu would be called into the palace by the emperor at any time. For example, Yuegong of Diyi Bu in Liyuan was urgently summoned back to the palace when they played outside as was written in *Taiping Guangji*:

Taifu Qing (太府卿 official title) Cui Jie (崔洁) went around with Chen Ton (陈彤). They bought fish and met a person with Ziyi (紫衣 purple cloths showing honorable). Ziyi said he was Diyi Bu in Liyuan and was good at cooking fish. When Ziyi was cooking, an eunuch came to issue the edict that the emperor went to Longshou Chi (龙首池 a lake in the forbidden garden) and ordered Diyi Bu Yinsheng (音声 singers). Ziyi brought his cloth (when he cooked, he took off his purple cloths) and left in a hurry without saying good-bye to Cui Jie and Chen Tong. (1125)

Those performers could go out when they were not on duty. However, they must let their managers know where they were, so they could be found quickly, because Chang’an was so large it was difficult to find performers quickly.

Being members of Diyi Bu, stood an equal chance of being summoned by the emperor, but “Pian Zhao” (偏召 someone being summoned specially and frequently) still existed. That meant some musicians were called into the palace by the emperor more often. For example, Zhao Bi (赵璧), who was written about in the poem of Yuan Zhen (元稹 779-831), was “always summoned more times by Dezong and other members of Diyi Bu” (众乐虽同第一部, 德宗皇帝常偏召) (322). Playing in officials’ mansions was an important source of Yuegong’s incomes (Wang Li). However, because Zhao Bi was kept by Dezong often, he had no chance to perform in other places to make a profit like other Yuegong.

Bai Juyi wrote in his famous poem *Pipa Xing*: “She said she lived in Hama Ling in the capital city. She learned playing Pipa when she was thirteen years old and belonged to Diyi Bu of Jiaofang” (自言本是京城女, 家在虾蟆陵下住。十三学得琵琶成, 名属教坊第一部) (241). This not only showed Diyi Bu members had the high level skill but also showed that Jiaofang controlled Shijing Ji.

Liyuan and Faqu

Liyuan, another music and dance institution of Xuanzong in the palace, was created in 714. It was often misunderstood and people associated “Liyuan Dizi” (梨园弟子 the performers of Liyuan) with actors when they were actually singers or dancers. It was also a mistake that people regarded Liyuan in the Tang Dynasty as the earliest ancestor of drama.

According to Qingshang Yue (清商乐 a kind of entertainment music), Xuanzong created Faqu during the Tang Dynasty. He used some of Qingshang Yue’s instruments, rhythm, Gongdiao (宫调 musical note) and performance styles to create a new, elegant kind of music. Besides modifying some old Qingshang Yue, most of Faqu consisted of newly written music and the incorporation of other music. Since he hoped to develop this new music on a large scale, it was necessary for Xuanzong to establish a new institution. “Li Sanlang (李三郎 Xuanzong’s nick name was Sanlang and his last name was Li) loved Faqu deeply and established Liyuan as his Fabu (法部). Fabu was the Yuebu (乐部 a team of performers) who performed Faqu.” (Qiu 49) Therefore, the most important part of Liyuan was Fabu because Liyuan was created for Faqu’s performances.

In Wang Jian’s *Nishang Ci* (霓裳辞), he mentioned Fabu:

Fabu was called to play “Ni Shang” which was newly written after Xuanzong’s order.

Guifei came upstairs to inspect the preparations. Neiren carried down a case of color silk

cloths. (传呼法部按霓裳，新得承恩别作行。应是贵妃楼上看，内人鼻下彩罗箱) (437)

Liyuan had a substantial impact on Faqu during the Tang Dynasty. Although Liyuan had been merged into Taichang Si Fabu during the Dezong Period, the name of “Liyuan” was still used and became the another name of Taichang Si Fabu in later ages.

For example, in Liu Yuxi’s (刘禹锡 772-842) *Chou Yang Si Ye Juyuan Jian Ji* (酬杨司业巨源见寄), “Liyuan Dizi came and asked for the words to a song.” (梨园弟子请辞来) (Peng 4085) Another writer, Yang Juyuan (杨巨源 755?-?), had a poem *Listen to Li Ping Play Konghou* (听李平弹箜篌) which showed that Taichang Si Fabu existed after Dezong’s succession:

The emperor left his palace to hear music. The wind blew music from the forbidden garden. (This showed the emperor went to the forbidden garden to listen to the music.) The people in Li Yuan were happy because the emperor was visiting. The music had a high-pitched sound. (听奏繁弦玉殿清，风传曲度禁林明。君王听乐梨园暖，翻到云门第几声) (Peng 3742)

This poem described the emperor listening to music in Li Yuan (梨园 the pear garden) which was used as an entertainment site after Dezong’s succession. Li Yuan in the forbidden garden was still used as entertainment place after Liyuan was dismissed.

Besides Faqu, Liyuan also played songs and dances which were written about in Bai Juyi’s (白居易 772-846) poem “Jiangnan Yu Tianbao Yuesou” (in the south of China, I met an old musical who had played in the palace during the Tianbao Period 江南遇天宝乐叟), “An old man with white hair cried and said that he joined Liyuan before the An Shi Rebellion, and always accompanied Xuanzong in Huaqing Chi (华清池 a famous hot spring during the Xuanzong Period, also known as Wenquan Palace) because he could play both Pipa and Faqu” (白头病叟泣且言，禄山未乱入梨园。能弹琵琶和法曲，多在华清随至尊) (288).

There were also members of Yuegong in Liyuan who were good singers or dance experts. Wang Jian wrote about the dancers in Liyuan in his poem, *Wenquan Gong Xing* (温泉宫行 poem of Wenquan Palace): “Yuegong in Liyuan had stolen the musical score and taught singing and dancing out of the palace when they were old” (梨园弟子偷曲谱，头白人间教歌舞) (Wang Jian 11). Liyuan, Faqu and Wenquan Palace (Huaqing Chi) were popular vocabularies in the Tang’s poetries.

Xuanhui Yuan (宣徽院)

After the Mid-Tang Period, Xuanhui Yuan began to participate in the entertainment of the emperors. In the Northern Song Dynasty (北宋 960-1127), Xuanhui Yuan even took the place of Taichang Si as the main musical institution of the country (Tuo 2549).

Xuanhui Yuan was set up at the end of the Dali Period (大历 766-779) and was divided into two parts, South and North, which was equal to Shumi Yuan (枢密院 the institution in the palace to control the army). (Zhang Guogang 112) Xuanhui Yuan located in the Xuanhui Dian (宣徽殿 Xuanhui Palace) of Daming Palace (大明宫) (Zhao Yule 57). The reason it was established was related to the eunuchs' growing power (Ma 526). Like Shumi Yuan, Xuanhui Yuan's power was gradually increasing (Sun Guangxian 1858). Eventually, without Neishi Sheng's control, Xuanhui Yuan became a real powerful institution in the latter part of the Tang Dynasty (Meiwei 303). Theoretically, it was controlled by the emperor but in actuality the eunuchs were in control of the palace's political power and were constantly battling to keep that power. (Zhao Yule 58).

Xuanhui Yuan not only supplied musical services to the emperor but also controlled the palace. There was a sentence in Bai Juyi's poem "He Yu" (贺雨 congratulation raining) written during the Yuanhe Period, "Gongnv were sent out from the palace by Xuanhui Yuan and the emperor decreased the number of horses he owned"(宫女出宣徽, 厩马减飞龙)(Bai Juyi 1). This showed Xuanhui Yuan was in charge of the Gongnv.

At the end of the Tang Dynasty, on April,904 (Tianyou 天佑 1st year), Zhaozong had to dismiss many palace institutions. Xuanhui Yuan was one of the nine institutions that were kept (Liu Xu 527).

Zhangnei Jiaofang

Zhangnei Jiaofang did not belong to the palace, but belonged to Jinjun (禁军 the guarding army of the emperor). Zhangnei Jiaofang was not set up to provide entertainment for the emperor. But after the Mid-Tang Period, it began to supply musical services to the emperors.

Cheng Dachang (程大昌) wrote:

There were two parts of Jinjun: Nanya (南衙) and Beiya (北衙). Nanya's camp was located at the south of the palace. Beiya's camp was in the forbidden garden.

Beiya was divided into the Zuojun (左军 left army) and the Youjun (右军 right army). Zuojun was east of Dong Neiyuan and Youjun was north-east of Xi Yuan (西苑). (173)

Actually, Zuoyou Shijun (左右十军 ten armies of Zuojun and Youjun) included Yulin (羽林), Longwu (龙武), Shenwei (神威), Shence (神策) and Shenwu (神武) (Ouyang and Song 874). Each of these five armies was divided into two sections: Zuo and You and totaled ten armies.

Five armies came from different groups but they all did not have the same rights and responsibilities. Longwu came from Taizong's (太宗, r. 627-649) Baiji (百骑 the guard army of Taizong) and Xuanzong had its name changed to Longwu. (Ouyang and Song 872) Longwu had an intimate relationship with the emperor. They always accompanied the emperor to hunt and there were many performances held in Longwu's camp so the emperor loved to visit Longwu. Du Fu's (杜甫) poem describe their relationship: "The emperor planned to go to Qujiang (曲江 a famous scenic spot of Chang'an) but first he visited Longwu's camp and stayed for a long time" (龙武新军深驻辇, 芙蓉别殿漫焚香) (Du Fu 450).

Besides playing regular music, Zhangnei Jiaofang performed for the guarding army's polo games. It was a tradition for music to be performed for polo games which continued until the Song Dynasty (Xiang 80). This was written about in Wang Jian and Lady Hua Rui's (花蕊夫人 ?-976) poetry:

It is hard to defeat the emperor in polo because hitting the ball behind the emperor was forbidden. Neiren sings Qunci songs well and the emperor's horse is fast. (对御难争第一筹, 殿前不打背身球。内人唱好龟兹急, 天子鞞回过玉楼) (Wang Jian 558)

The polo ground is near the end of a pool of water. The officials are called to enter the palace to play polo. Beside the grounds, the seat for the emperor is decorated. And the sound of the music wakes up mayflies in the pool. (小球场近曲池头, 暄换勋臣试打球。先向画楼排御幄, 管弦声动立浮油) (Peng 9064)

Zhangnei Jiaofang supplied musical services to the emperor in two ways. When the emperor visited the guarding army, the guarding army supplied the feast and Zhangnei Jiaofang played during the feast. This was the regular way and it was the most common style of performance for the emperor after Xianzong. This was the subject of He Ning's (和凝 898-955) poem: "After the emperor sat down in the guarding army's camp, Yuegong of the guarding army began to play Baixi and they sang the praises of the political situations" (坐定两军呈百戏, 乐臣低折贺生平) (Peng 8483). According to the guarding army's arrangement, Zhangnei Jiaofang performed in other places for the pleasure of the emperor. This was another way for Zhangnei Jiaofang to serve the emperors. All in all, the main task and daily job of the Zhangnei

Jiaofang was to perform during the guarding army's officials feasts.

Besides these, Gongting Nvyue, Neiyuan Xiaoer (内园小儿 under aged male performers of the forbid garden) and another Nei Jiaofang created before Nei Jiaofang, Wude Nei Jiaofang, also belonged to entertainment institutions of the palace during the Tang Dynasty. All these institutions had different functions, performances and organizations and they played different roles in the entertainment life of the emperors. Therefore, when the literature works involved them, the basic historical facts of these institutions are necessary to be known to understand the literature works better.

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