

The Problematic Nature of Song Literati's Penchant for *xiaohuan*

by

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A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Approved November 2012 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2012

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines poems and anecdotes about *xiaohuan* 小鬟 (little chignon) written by literati of the Song 宋 (960–1279). The first chapter of this paper provides a brief history of household courtesans and the popularity of *xiaohuan*. The second chapter includes eleven poems and one anecdote on *xiaohuan*. All works are translated and followed by a critical analysis. Through a close reading of these works, I will examine the imagery of *xiaohuan* in the Song literary context, bring to light the major motif of the works, and reveal the reasons that contribute to literati's penchant for *xiaohuan*. The imagery of *xiaohuan* is based on their tender age. Poets use flowers to metaphorize *xiaohuan*'s lithe, slim, short, and delicate figures. A major characteristic of the *xiaohuan*'s youth is their inability to understand *qing* 情 (affection) and this relative innocence and absence of desire becomes a major part of their representation. Consequently, their youth and virginity rather than their beauty are strongly stressed in the poems. This may be explained by poets' desire for longevity, pursued through the "Techniques of the Bedchamber," or *fangzhong shu* 房中術, which suggests intercourse with pre-pubescent girls would bring men longevity or even transmutation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Stephen H. West. Thanks to his knowledge and consideration, this three years turn out to be a great journey for which I greatly appreciate. I am also grateful for Professor West's patience, encouragement to help me wade through some tough times in my life. I cannot overemphasize the support I received from him. I also sincerely thank my committee members. Thanks Professor Cutter for his teaching of vast breadth of knowledge and rigorous scholarship attitude. Thanks Professor Oh for his teaching of Chinese language history and moral support. I would also like to thank all other faculty and my colleagues at Chinese department in Arizona State University for their teaching and support. Finally, I am truly indebted to my family for their supporting and understanding in my pursuit.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The History of Household Courtesan

In Chinese history, female entertainers can be categorized into three groups: government-registered entertainers, commercial courtesans, and household courtesans.¹ In this thesis, I will mainly focus on *xiaohuan* 小鬟 (little chignon), which belong to the last group.

As best as I can determine from surviving references, the earliest historical record of the practice of *xu* 畜 (keeping, as “raising” living stock) household courtesans began with Duke Dao of Jin 晉悼公 (586 BC–558 BC), who bestowed eight female entertainers on the minister Wei Yi 魏繹 (?-510 BC) in 562 BC.² It developed into a popular practice among the nobles and statesmen of the Southern and Northern dynasties 南北朝 (316–589). The story of the prominent Jin 晉 (265–420) statesman Xie An 謝安 (320–385), who wandered on Eastern Mountain while accompanied by his household entertainer fascinated later readers.³ Some powerful nobles and statesmen kept several thousand household courtesans during Southern and Northern dynasties.⁴ Sometimes the number of household courtesans even outnumbered those in the royal palace. In the Sui 隋 (589–

¹ For more information about the other two categories of courtesans, see Wang Shunu 王書奴, *Zhongguo changji shi* 中國娼妓史 (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 2004); Liu Dalin 劉達臨 comp., *Zhongguo gudai xing wenhua* 中國古代性文化 (Yinchuan: Ningxia renming chubanshe, 1993).

² Zuo Qiuming 左丘明(?502BC–?422BC), *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, ed. Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (Changsha: Qiuli shushe, 1988), 198.

³ Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (579–648) et al., *Jin shu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 2072.

⁴ Given the penchant in classical Chinese for the use of hyperbolic numbers to indicate “many”, we cannot take these numbers literally.

609) and Tang 唐 (609–906) period, the fad spread to a larger population. Not only nobles and statesmen, but also high-ranking officials picked up this fashion. To halt the trend, on the second year of Shenlong 神龍 period (706), the Tang government issued an edict that “officials of ranks three and above could keep one troupe of female entertainers, and officials higher than rank five [to three] can keep no more than three female entertainers. 三品已上, 聽有女樂一部. 五品已上, 女樂不過三人.”⁵ But, in the tenth year of Tianbao 天寶 reign (743), Emperor Xuanzong decreed that “officials of rank five and above, who are in the regular ladder of ranks and who are honest, as well as military commissioners and prefects in the countryside, are all permitted to keep musicians in their homes in order to spread joy and happiness, and to perform music in this burgeoning age. 五品已上正員清官, 諸道節度使及太守等, 並聽當家畜絲竹. 以展歡娛, 行樂盛時, 覃及中外.”⁶ This allowed officials higher than rank five to keep as many courtesans as they could afford. Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846), for instance, kept at least six household entertainers when he held the position of Attendant Gentleman of the Ministry of Justice, which was in category of rank four.⁷

⁵ Wang Pu 王溥(922-982), *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1968), 628.

⁶ *Ibid*, 630.

⁷ The translation of official titles is based on Charles O. Hucker, *The Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Taipei: Nantian shuju youxian gongsi, 1988). These women are well documented in Bai’s poems.

櫻桃樊素口, A cherry is Fansu’s mouth,

楊柳小蠻腰. A willow the waist of Xiaoman

Meng Qi 孟啓(fl. 875), *Ben shi shi* 本事詩, 2.8, in *Cong shu ji cheng chu bian* 叢書集成初編, comp. Wang Yunwu 王雲五 (1888-1979) (Shanghai: shanghai shang wu yin shu guan, 1937).

Another poem entitled “Xiao ting yi you yue” 小庭亦有月 (There is also a Moon in the Courtyard) reads

Song literati perpetuated the Tang practice of keeping household courtesans. Observing from existing references, household courtesans were a conspicuous feature of the households of Northern Song elite. By Southern Song, this fad spread to the whole literati class. Several factors contributed to the development. First was that while the literati classes had accesses to other types of courtesans, such as government-registered entertainers, they were not allowed to be seen in public, and indulgence could be a cause for demotion:

(When) Zhang Xuanhui, known as Andao was prefect in Chengdu, he favored a government-registered courtesan whose name was Chen Fengyi.⁸ Several years later, Wang Yimin, known as Zhongyi left the capital to become prefect in Shu.⁹ Andao congratulated him and gave him a letter. When Zhongyi reached the commandery, he summoned Fengyi and asked her, “Was Minister Zhang particularly good to you?” Fengyi wept. Zhongyi said, “In the past he also sent you some correspondence, do you still perhaps have them?” She said, “I have kept them stored away, even unto today.” Zhongyi said, “The Minister has a letter for you, to gather up all of his old notes. I want to read them all. You should not hide any from me.” Consequently Fengyi took them all to show to Zhongyi. She kept them tightly sealed in in a brocade bag. Zhongyi said to her, “The Minister is established at court as a strong and unyielding person, and those who join him are few, those against him, many. You should not dishonor the Minister because of this.” Then (Zhongyi) took the letters, faced Fengyi, and burned them together with the bag. Later Zhongyi told this to Andao, and Zhang was deeply moved by this.¹⁰

菱角執笙簧, Lingjiao holds the mouth organ reed,
谷兒抹琵琶. Gu'er strokes the pipa;
紅綃信手舞, Hongshao dances with abandon,
紫綃隨意歌. And Zishao sings as she likes.

⁸ Zhang Fangping 張方平(1007-1091), whose style name was Andao 安道, was a native from Yingtian 應天, today's Shangqiu 商丘 in He'nan province. He called himself Master Lequan 樂全居士. He was the Commissioner of Southern Court of Palace Attendants 南宣徽使.

Chang Bide 昌彼得 et al. comp, *Songren zhuanji ziliao suoyin* 宋人傳記資料索引 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1991), 2349.

⁹ Wang Su 王素(1007-1073), whose style name was Zhongyi 仲儀, was a native from Kaifeng 開封. His posthumous name was Yimin 懿敏.

¹⁰ Ding Chuanjing 丁傳靖 (1870-1930), *Songren yishi huibian* 宋人軼事匯編, 3 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 423-24.

張宣徽安道守成都，眷籍娼陳鳳儀。後數年，王懿敏仲儀出守蜀，安道祝仲儀，致書與之。仲儀至郡，呼鳳儀曰：“張尚書頃與汝留情乎？”鳳儀泣下。仲儀曰：“亦嘗遺尺牘，今且存否？”曰：“迨今蓄之。”仲儀曰：“尚書有信至汝，可盡索舊帖，吾欲觀之，不可隱也。”遂悉取呈，韜於錦囊甚密。仲儀謂曰：“尚書以剛勁立朝，少與多仇。汝毋以此黷公。”乃取書對鳳儀，並囊盡焚之。後語安道，張甚感之。

This anecdote suggests that officials might have suffered political attacks for involvement with the government-registered courtesans.

Moreover, the court was also concerned that officials might abuse their access to government courtesans. For instance, those who belonged to Supply Commissioners and Circuit Supervisors were subject to exile for two years if they were caught attending banquets where government-registered courtesan were in attendance. Because of the potential punishment for having a relationship with a government courtesan, more and more literati were inclined to keep household courtesans. The Song also abandoned the Tang's sumptuary regulations that limited the number of household entertainers officials could keep. One major reason leading the Song government revoking this edict might be the early Song's increasingly commercialized economy.¹¹ Together with the civil examination test, the economy produced an unprecedentedly large elite class. Under such circumstances, more and more men could afford to purchase household courtesans. In fact, before the government responded to the demands of this new class, the market itself had adjusted to satisfy this request. Southern Song historian Wu Zimu 吳自牧(fl. 1270) related the female labor market in Hangzhou 杭州 in the book entitled *Mengliang lu* 夢梁錄 (The Record of Dreaming of Liang).

¹¹ Guo Xuexin 郭學信, "Songdai " shi daifu shengji zhi yue xianxiang guangui" 宋代士大夫聲伎之樂現象管窺, *Shandong shifan daxue xuebao* 56(2011): 131.

There are official and private female brokers to assist officials or rich families who wish to buy a concubine, a singer, a dancing girl, a female cook, a seamstress, or a maid work on coarse or meticulous task. They bring in and line up the girls and women and one merely points to have one of them step down). 如府宅官員, 富豪人家, 慾買寵妾, 歌童, 舞女, 廚娘, 針線供給, 粗細婢媼, 亦有官私牙嫂. 及引置等人, 但指揮便行踏追逐下來.¹²

Since the prerequisites to maintain household courtesans, such as financial means to afford them and a relaxed sumptuary code made household courtesans ubiquitous in Song literati society:

Zhang Jiuhe was prefect of Shu. Generally, officials who took a position in Shu were not allowed to take families with them. When they reached the office, it was a customary principle to take courtesans there. Jiuhe was the only one who did not take them. Officials under his command, therefore, did not dare to take courtesans. Jiuhe heard about this and consequently bought two courtesans. Only after this did those under his command dare to keep courtesans. When Jiuhe was about to leave his position, he summoned the courtesans' "mothers" and told them, "You should marry these girls well." And Jiuhe gave the girls generous gifts to send them away. The girls were still virgins.¹³

張九何鎮蜀, 凡官於蜀者, 既不得已子屬行. 及至官, 例置婢, 惟九何不置, 官屬遂無敢置婢者. 九何聞之, 遂買兩婢, 官屬乃敢畜之. 九何將去任, 呼婢母囑之曰, "當善嫁此女." 且厚贈遣之, 猶處子也.

This story tells us that keeping household courtesan had become a common practice for elite classes on Song. Therefore it was regarded as a form of moral merit for those who did not participate in it. Evidence to such statement was that it was marked on funeral inscription if the man who passed away did not keep household courtesans during his lifetime. "Youchao yi dafu Liang gong muzhi ming" 右朝議大夫梁公墓誌銘 (The Epitaph for Duke Liang who was the Right Grand Master of Court Discussion) recorded

¹² Wu Zimu 吳自牧(fl. 1270), *Meng liang lu* 夢梁錄 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1994), 183.

¹³ Shi Decao 施德操 (fl. 1131), *Bei chuang zhi guo lu* 北窗炙輿錄, 209, in *Quan Song biji disanbian* 全宋筆記第三編, Shanghai shifandaxue gujizhengli yanjiusuo 上海師範大學古籍整理研究所 comp. (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chuban she, 2008), vol 8.

that “When he lived idle at home, his speech invariably would be appropriate to his parents. Cultivating his body while being frugal and humble. He had no relationships with female singing entertainers. 家居言必稱父母, 奉身儉菲, 無聲妓之好.”¹⁴ Another epitaph claimed that “(the late Commander Governor) had no interest in musical courtesans, no delight in touring and sightseeing, and no words of bantering or joking. 無聲妓之奉, 無遊觀之娛, 無戲謔之語.”¹⁵

It is safe to predict that one’s funerary inscription should record the person’s most important merits. Repeatedly praising men’s determination not to keep household courtesans implies that these men were esteemed as keeping certain moral integrity.

The popularity of keeping private courtesans also caused social change in low-ranking families. Historical records show that many low-ranking families prefer to raise girls as future merchandises. Liao Yingzhong 廖瑩中 wrote that “Lower ranking households in the capital did not put a premium on having sons, but treasured each daughter born as though she were a jewel. As she grew up, they taught her an art in accordance with her natural talents, so that she would be ready to be chosen by some gentleman as a companion in pleasure. 京都中下之戶, 不重生男, 每生女則愛護如捧璧擎珠. 弗長成, 則隨其資質, 教以藝業, 用備士大夫採拾娛侍.”¹⁶ Chen Yu 陳鬱 (d. 1274) also

¹⁴ Chao Buzhi 晁補之 (1053-1110), *Jibei Chao xiansheng Jilei ji* 濟北晁先生雞肋集, vol 65, in *Sibu congkan chubian suoyin ben* 四部叢刊初編縮印本 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1969).

¹⁵ Yuan Kui 袁燮 (1144-1224), “The Epitaph of Commander Governor Hu” 胡府君墓誌銘, in *Jie zhai ji* 絜齋集 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1969), 367.

¹⁶ Liao Yingzhong 廖瑩中, *Jiang xing za lu* 江行雜錄, 5, in *Cong shu ji cheng chu bian* 叢書集成初編, comp. Wang Yunwu 王雲五 (1888-1979) (Shanghai: shanghai shang wu yin shu guan, 1937).

recorded similar situation, “The custom of Suzhou area esteems luxury.¹⁷ If poor family has a daughter, they must train her in musical arts to prepare for a summons from a banquet host. Do not disobey the master’s orders. . . . They were termed private entertainers, and after maturing they were sold as concubines. 吳下風俗尚侈, 細民有女, 必教之樂藝, 以待設宴者之呼. 使令莫逆.....名為私妓, 長大鬻為妾.”¹⁸

Reasons to keep household courtesan

As we know, Song women who had sexual relationships with men can mainly be divided into three groups, wives, concubines, and courtesans. Sima Guang’s 司馬光(1019-1086) wide-circulated *Sima shi shuyi* 司馬氏書儀 (Sima’s Book about Rites) provided us an example of perfect upper-class wife. He claimed that wife should be kept in inner quarters, away from the outside world:

In housing there should be a strict demarcation between the inner and outer parts, with a door separating them. The two parts share neither a well, a washroom, nor a privy. The men are in charge of all affairs on the outside, the women manage the inside affairs.¹⁹

凡為宮室, 必辨內外, 深宮固門. 內外不共井, 不共浴室, 不共廁. 男治外事, 女治內事.

Of course, wives were expected to provide children for the family to ensure continuation of the family line. And men also brought concubines into the household to bear their children, particularly if the wife were not capable of doing that. But, courtesans are exclusions. They were expected to have some entertaining skills, such as dancing, singing,

¹⁷ Wuxia 吳下 refers to today’s Suzhou 蘇州 area.

¹⁸ Chen Yu 陳鬱 (d.1274), *Cang yi hua yu* 藏一話腴 13, in *Shuo fu* 說郛, ed. Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (1329-1412), *juan* 60(Shanghai:Shangwu yinshu guan, 1927).

¹⁹ Sima Guang 司馬光(1019-1086), *Sima shi shuyi* 司馬氏書儀 4.42, in *Cong shu ji cheng chu bian* 叢書集成初編, comp. Wang Yunwu 王雲五 (1888-1979) (Shanghai: shanghai shang wu yin shu guan, 1937).

or playing a musical instrument. When the master hosted a banquet with his friends, the courtesan's functions including urging guests to drink, carrying on witty conversation, exchanging poetry, and performing her specialty. Compared with the master's wife and concubine, the courtesan had many advantages: first of all, she could provide public female companionship to both the master and his literati friends. Her clever banter lent a special element to the banquet's air. Secondly, though a man had to marry a woman arranged by his family, he could choose a courtesan at will. This freedom enabled the man to mark his own taste in sexual life. Thirdly, while Song people would frown on spouses' expression of affection in public, they could tolerate men's flirting with courtesans. Finally, this romantic posture contributed to the men's successful image in the Song dynasty. Among all the skills household courtesan had, dancing and singing were the most desirable. As we mentioned above, one of the main reasons for Song literati to keep a household courtesan was to urge wine drinking at a banquet and provide female companionship in the master's leisure time. Dancing was regarded as a necessary entertainment at banquets both public and private.

The "Daxu"大序 (Great Preface) of *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Odes) says,

The affections are stirred within and take on form in words. If words alone are inadequate, we speak them out in sighs. If sighing is inadequate, we sing them. If singing them is inadequate, unconsciously our hands dance them and our feet tap them.

情動於中而行於言,言之不足,故嗟嘆之,嗟嘆之不足故永歌之,永歌之不足,不知手之舞之,足之蹈之也.

Dancing was the natural way to express the *qing* 情 (affection) of a person, especially when those passions were stirred while dinking. The vivid image can be caught from the banquet recitals in poems from *Shijing*. Guests behave kindly and gently when they first

reached the banquet, but after they got tipsy, “they abandoned their seats to move, and danced continually like immortals. 捨其坐遷, 屢舞仙仙.”²⁰ When talking and signing were not enough to express their *qing*, only dancing could be the proper outlet. In his book entitled *Zhongshan shihua* 中山詩話 (Zhongshan’s Notes on Poetry), however, Liu Bin 劉頎 (1023–1089) tells us that it was not the case anymore during Song dynasty. He complains that, “Present dancers inevitably exhaust the extraordinariness and wonder, moreover [guests at the banquet] feel ashamed to imitate the arts of musical specialists so they are even more reluctant to dance regularly as the ancient people did. 今時舞者必欲曲盡奇妙, 又恥效樂工藝, 益不復如古人常舞矣.”²¹ Since people no longer left their seats to dance together as described in *Shijing*, they chose to enjoy the dancing of household courtesan as an alternative.

Xiaohuan

xiaohuan refers to pre-pubescent girls wearing a distinctive paired chignon hairstyle. In Song poetry and anecdotes, the focus of single dancers often seems to focus on *xiaohuan*. Part of the reason might be found in Liu Bin’s complaint that Song dancing emphasized twisting, twirling, and back bending. Generally, girls at a young age master these motions much better than adult females. Kong Pingzhong 孔平仲 (fl. 1065) also wrote below couplet in the poem entitled “Jun ju” 郡聚 (Commander Gathering).²²

老婦歌猶好 Singing, old women are still the best,

²⁰ Mao 220/3

²¹ Liu Bin 劉頎 (1023–1089), *Zhongshan shihua* 中山詩話 11, in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chu ban she, 1995-).

²² Beijing daxue guwenxian yanjiusuo 北京大學古文獻研究所 ed., *Quan Song shi* 全宋詩 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chuban she, 1991), 10910.

雙鬢舞最能

Dancing, *xiaohuan* are the most capable.

Zhao Dingchen 趙鼎臣 (fl. 1101) mentioned that his friend “recently bought a dancing *huan* who was extremely beautiful and still immature. 新買舞鬢甚麗而尚稚” in the preface of a teasing poem.²³

Su Shi wrote one series of poems about one dancing *huan* named Shengzhi who was fourteen years old.²⁴

Junyou’s back quarters were completely filled.²⁵ Dongpo often enjoyed the music in the hall. The lyric, which (Dongpo wrote) says “it turned out that her style name was Shengzhi” talks about the one who was most favored by Junyou.²⁶ When Dongpo returned to the North, he passed Nandu. And this woman had already belonged to Houzhi, the son of Zhang Fangping.²⁷ Dongpo saw Shengzhi after the banquet started. He could not bear the situation then he covered his face and cried loudly. The courtesan looked at him and simply laughed out loud. Every time Dongpo always told people about this as a warning not to keep household courtesans.

²³ Ibid, 14908.

²⁴ See poem 7,8 in chapter 2 for the series of poems.

The dramatic meeting again was recorded in the poem entitled “Gushu zai jian Shengzhi” 姑熟再見勝之 (Meet Shengzhi again in Gushu).

Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), is also known as Su Dongpo 蘇東坡, was a native from Meishan 眉山, in modern Sichuan province. He was a versatile scholar who had no peer throughout the long Chinese literary history.

²⁵ *houfang* 後房 (back quarter) refer to one’s concubines and household courtesans.

Xu Dezhi 徐得之, whose style name was Junyou 君猷, was a native from Yangdi 陽翟, modern Yuzhou 禹州 in Henan province. He married the daughter of Han Jiang 韓絳 (1012-1088).

²⁶ This line comes from the lyric entitled “To the Tune ‘Shortened Magnolia Flower’ ” 減字木蘭花. For the analysis of the poem, see chapter 2.

²⁷ Zhang Shu 張恕, whose style name was Houzhi 厚之, was a native from Songcheng 宋城, modern Shangqiu 商丘 city. He was the son of Zhang Fangping 張方平.

君猷後房甚盛。東坡常聞堂上絲竹，詞中謂表德元來字勝之者，所最寵也。東坡北歸，過南都，則其人已歸張樂全之子厚之怨矣。厚之開燕，東坡復見之，不覺掩面號慟。妾乃顧其徒而大笑。東坡每以語人，為蓄婢之戒。²⁸

The erotic components are frequently hinted or directly uttered in *xiaohuan* dancers' poems. The anecdote below recorded such one case. I will do more analysis in chapter 2.

Chao Wujiu was demoted to Yushan.²⁹ When he passed Xuzhou, Chen Shidao, whose style name was Wuji, had been cashiered and lived idly at home.³⁰ Wuji set out a banquet and sent out his *xianhuan* whose name was Tingting to dance to Liangzhou song.³¹ Wuji composed one lyric entitled "To the Tune of 'Shortened Magnolia Flower Song'." The lyric reads, "Delicate, lithe, slender, and graceful, / The tips of the peony show small pink. Dancing sleeves drop and turn, / The guest already knows her heart has been at the young man's side. Golden cup with jade wine, / She wishes me 'long life amid the flowers.' No, no, stop, stop. / Wearing flowers in white hair makes me embarrassed." Wuji sighed and said, "People suspected that 'Rhapsody of Japanese Apricot' written by Commander Song was not in the category of his way being a person since the poem was so clear and gorgeous."³² The lyric of Wuji far surpassed the 'Rhapsody of Japanese Apricot'."

²⁸ Wang, *Huichen houlu*, 43.

²⁹ Chao Buzhi 晁補之(1035-1110), whose style name was Wujiu 無咎, was a native from Juye 鉅野, in modern Shandong province. He called himself Jibei 濟北.

Chang, *Sonren jishi huibian*, 1953.

³⁰ Chen Shidao 陳師道(1053-1101), whose style name was Wuji 無幾(another style name was Lvchang 履常), was a native from Pengcheng 彭城, in modern Xuzhou city. Later scholars call him Mr. Houshan.

Ibid, 2607.

³¹ Liangzhou 梁州 is the song title from Tang dynasty. It also can be written as Liangzhou 涼州. On Kaiyuan 開元 period, Xiliang 西涼, which is today's Gansu 甘肅, presented the song to Tang court. See

Liao Xunying 廖珣英 ed., "*Quan Song ci*" *yu yan ci dian* 《全宋詞》語言詞典 (Beijing: zhong hua shu ju, 2007), 353.

³² Commander Song refers to the famous Prime Minister Song Jing 宋璟 (663–737), whose style name was Guangping 廣平. After he saw the flourishing Japanese Apricot in his official dwelling in Dongchuan 東川, he wrote one poem entitled "the Rhapsody of Japanese Apricot" 梅花賦. *Rong zhai san bi* 容齋三筆 (Three Strokes of Study Named Rong) recorded that Pi Rixiu 皮日休 (834-883) commented that he thought Song was one person whose heart was made out of stone and whose intestines were made out of iron, however, Song's "Rhapsody of Japanese Apricot" demonstrated that Song was also distinguished and unconventional in life style." See, Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123 – 1202), *Rong zhai suibi* 容齋隨筆 (Jilin: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 1994), 480.

晁無咎謫玉山，過徐州時，陳無已廢居裏中。無咎置酒，出小姬娉娉舞梁州。無已作減字木蘭花，雲：“娉娉裊裊，芍藥梢頭紅樣小。舞袖低徊，心到郎邊客已知。金尊玉酒，勸我花間千萬壽。莫莫休休，白發簪花我自羞。”無咎嘆曰：“人疑宋開府梅花賦清艷不類其為人。無已此詞，過於梅花賦遠矣。”³³

Moreover, the famous narrative painting of “Han Xizai ye yan tu”韓熙載夜宴圖 (The Night Revels of Han Xizai) presented us the visual image of *xiaohuan*. In the picture, the dancing figure is dramatically smaller in size than other entertaining women. Moreover, it seems like that she is wearing *xiaohuan* hairstyle. From the picture, we can conjecture that the common image for dancing household courtesan in Song was just like the one in the painting—a smaller size girl wearing paired chignons.

Judging from surviving references, *xiaohuan* were by no means exclusively dancers. The term can also be used to refer to girls who sing, play musical instruments, or even do household chores. In a poem to thank Wang Lizhi 王立之 (1069–1109) for sending apricots as a gift,³⁴ Chao Wujiu wrote one couplet,

芳菲意淺姿容淡，	The meaning of flowers and grass is shallow, the form and appearance light.
憶得素兒如此梅。	I remember Su'er was just like this apricot.

Here, Su'er 素兒 was Wang Lizhi's *xiaohuan*. According to the anecdote, she was especially beautiful and elegant.³⁵

Zhang Lei 張耒(1054–1114) related one singing girl that,³⁶

³³ Zhang Bangji 張邦基 (fl. 12th century), *Mozhuang manlu* 墨莊漫錄, 40, in *Quan Song biji disanbian* 全宋筆記第三編, Shanghai shifan daxue guji zhengli yanjiusuo 上海師範大學古籍整理研究所 comp. (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chuban she, 2008), vol 9.

³⁴ Wang Lizhi's 王立之(1069–1109) style name was Zhifang 直方. He was a native from Mixian 密縣, modern Xinmi 新密 city, which is in south-west of Zhengzhou.

Chang, *Songren zhuanji ziliao suoyin*, 268.

³⁵ *Quan Song bi ji di san bian*, 120.

盈盈雙鬢女， Just fifteen, a girl of double chignon
身小未及床。 Her body is too short to reach the bed.³⁷

And Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045-1105) even recorded one ugly *xiaohuan* who can mop floor to be like mirror.³⁸

It does not say that there were no adult female entertainers. It's easy to jump into anecdotes describing such household entertainers when one is reading Song *biji* 筆記 (miscellaneous notes). However, for many reasons, Song literati had a penchant for *xiaohuan* as the household entertainers. In the rest of the thesis, I will read poems and lyrics about *xiaohuan* closely. Survey the imagery of *xiaohuan* in the literary works, and explore various reasons contributed to the Song literati's penchant for *xiaohuan*.

³⁶ Zhang Lei 張耒, "Wen Zhouhan yao zhi Wang Caiyuan yuan yin" 文周翰邀至王才元園飲, *Zhang Lei ji* 張耒集 (Beijing: zhong hua shu ju, 2005), 182.

³⁷ It means she is too young to accompany in the bed. In another word, she is not ready for intercourse yet.

³⁸ Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅, whose style name was Luzhi 魯直, was a native from Fenning 分寧, modern Xiushui 修水 in Jiangxi province. He also called himself Taoist Shangu 山谷道人. He was the leader of Jiangxi school. He was an accomplished poet, essayist as well as a calligraphist.

Chapter 2

POEMS AND ANECDOTE TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

No scholar of Song literature or theatre would be surprised by the suggestion that courtesans were important in Song society.³⁹ Literary works about courtesans were ubiquitous in Song poems, especially in *ci* 詞 (lyric) genre. However, *xiaohuan* themed poems were quite rare. Most of them are found in anecdotes and in *ci* lyrics. In this chapter, I will read closely ten poems and one anecdote, all of which take *xiaohuan* as the subject.

Poem 1

To the tune 'Magnolia Flower Lyric' 木蘭花令⁴⁰

可憐翡翠隨雞走	What a pity that kingfishers learn to walk from chickens. ⁴¹
學縮雙鬢年紀小	Learning to bind up double chignons, (you) are so little.
見來行待惡憐伊	As soon as I see you I sympathize and pity you.
心性嬌癡空解笑	(Your) heart and nature are simple and naïve, I can only laugh. ⁴²
紅葉照映霜林表	The red lotuses shine and reflect on the frosty branch ends.
楊柳舞風腰裊裊	A willow dancing in the wind, her waist is graceful and delicate.
衾餘枕剩盡相容	The unused half of coverlet is completely compatible with an unused pillow. ⁴³

³⁹ Beverly Bossler, "Shifting Identities: Courtesans and Literati in Song China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 62.1 (2002): 5.

⁴⁰ *Quan Song ci*, 393

⁴¹ *fei* 翡 is the male and *cui* 翠 is the female halcyon or kingfisher. They have a bright greenish-blue plumage; the term is also used to refer to jade.

⁴² *jiaochi* 嬌癡 (naïve and simple) is a conventional phrase to describe girl's youth, which stress the subject's ignorance of worldly matters.

⁴³ The image of the surplus coverlet and the left pillow is one traditional way to describe one alone in the inner quarters.

只是老人難再少 It is just that it is difficult for old men to be young again.

Judging from the last line, Huang Tingjian wrote this *ci* in his old age. The second person pronoun *yi* 伊 (you), hints it is a *ci* gift to present to the *xiaohuan*. Several characteristics of this *ci* deserve comments. The first two words *kelian* 可憐 (pity) implies that this will not be a typical banquet *ci*, which focus on appreciating *xiaohuan*'s entertaining skills or extraordinary body beauty. In contrast, author stresses her naïvety and simplicity that characterize her tender age. The image he used to describe her physical attractiveness also focuses on the subject's tenderness and fragility. The image of the red lotuses (her feet) shining on frosty tree ends (his hair) provokes readers to imagine the picture of a white hair old man with the young naïve *xiaohuan*. The poem's sexual overtone is also apparent. The phrase 'red lotus' can also be read as women's red shoes.⁴⁴ In Song context, women's feet or shoes at least symbolize a certain intimacy. And the willow, which is also commonly read as women's waist, has a stronger erotic implication. And this assumption is proved by the last couplet, the scenario moved to the lonely room set. The unused pillow and the empty half of the coverlet remind readers that they were supposed to be shared by another person. Reading over the song, readers can feel the poet's ubiquitous presence as he baldly acclaims his feelings. The poet relates *xiaohuan*'s ingeniousness not only by stressing her lovely features, but also by pointing out the

⁴⁴ Du Fu 杜甫(712-770), wrote one line in the poem entitled "Qianqiu jie you gan" 千秋節有感 (Express Feelings on the Ten Thousand Autumns' Festival).

羅襪紅蕖豔。 Silk socks and red shoes are gorgeous.

reason why he thinks *xiaohuan* could only make him laugh in vain. We can read the poet's unsaid message that *xiaohuan* is too young to understand his *qing*.⁴⁵

In the poem, the imagery of *xiaohuan* was established to provide strong contrast to the poet's oldness. Originally, the poet regarded *xiaohuan* as a kind of balm, just like wine, something to assuage the relentless passage of time. However, as he moves through the poem, he expresses the realization that this balm is useless because youth can never be recaptured. Thus, when we read the last couplet, we get a sense that even the half-used coverlet and left pillow is appropriate, since there is such a huge gap between the old man and the naïve *xiaohuan*. This sense of a lost access to passion enables readers better understand poet's frustration.

Poem 2

To the tune 'Qing-ping Music' 清平樂⁴⁶

舞鬟娟好	The dancing <i>huan</i> is beautiful and lovely,
白發黃花帽	White hair, yellow flower and the hat. ⁴⁷
醉任旁觀嘲潦倒	(I am) drunk and allow onlookers to jeer at my old and feeble age.
扶老偏宜年小	To support the old it is exactly perfect to have one so young.
舞回臉玉胸酥	Her turning face is like jade and her breasts are soft and smooth.
纏頭一斛明珠	We present one <i>hu</i> of pearl to the dancer in acknowledgment of her skill. ⁴⁸

⁴⁵ I believe *qing* here not only refers to men's love to women, but also refers to men's worldly sentiments.

⁴⁶ *Quan Song ci*, 393

⁴⁷ *huanghua* 黃花 (yellow flower) here refers to chrysanthemum.

塵世難逢開口笑，
菊花須插滿頭歸。

It is hard to encounter open-mouth smile in this dusty world.
(One) must wear chrysanthemum on whole head when return.

The chrysanthemum is not only a symbol for the Double Ninth festival but also a token for longevity. As a late fall flower, chrysanthemums blossom just as other flowers whither and tree leaves fall. Therefore, it was believed to have certain magic to promote longevity and keep old age at bay. It was recorded that Tao Qian 陶潛 (376-427) steeped its petals in wine to make a longevity potion. The idea that chrysanthemums serve as nostrum for the longevity is also expressed by Cao Pi 曹丕 (186-226) to his friend's letter entitled "Wei Wendi yu Zhong Yao jiu ri song ju shu" 魏文帝与鐘繇九日送菊书 (The Letter from the Emperor Wen of Wei to Zhong You about Sending Chrysanthemum on the Ninth Day).⁵² Cao wrote,

As for trees and grasses, there is nothing grow out the land. But as for the fragrant chrysanthemums, (they) abundantly bloom by themselves. If they did not contain the pure harmony of Heaven and Earth and embody the spiritual air of fragrance, how could they be like this? Therefore When Qu Yuan sorrowed for the gradual aging, he thought about to eat the falling petals of autumn chrysanthemums for supper. For supporting the body and prolonging life, nothing is as valuable as chrysanthemums. I sincerely present one bunch of (chrysanthemum) to aid you to practice the art of Pengzu."⁵³

羣木庶草，無有射地而生，至于芳菊，紛然獨榮。非夫含乾坤之純和，體芬芳之淑氣，孰能如此。故屈平悲冉冉之將老，思飡秋菊之落英。輔體延年莫斯之貴，謹奉一束，助彭祖之術。

Pengzu 彭祖 was a legendary figure believed to had lived over 800 years before he disappeared into the west. Later generations were fantasized by his life nourishing techniques, especially the art of bedchamber.

⁵² Cao Pi 曹丕, was also known as Zihen 子恆. He was the founding emperor of the State of Wei.

⁵³ Cao Pi 曹丕, *Wei Wendi ji quanyi* 魏文帝集全譯, annot. Yi Jianxian 易健賢 (Guizhou: guizhou ren min chu ban she, 1998), 251.

Peng Zu said that now men who wish to gain great benefits, it is best for them to intercourse with the girls who have not known the *Tao* yet⁵⁴. Moreover they should initiate the pre-pubescent girls (into sex). Then their appearance and facial color would also be like (those) of virgin girls. However, (men) are distressed by women who are not young anymore.⁵⁵ If obtain (girls) older than fourteen or fifteen while younger than eighteen or nineteen, the repay is also good. But (women's age) should not older than thirty. One cannot benefit from having sex with those younger than thirty but already have given birth. My late instructor who passed me this method gained three thousand years life span. Combine with drug use can obtain immortal status.⁵⁶

彭祖曰：夫男子欲得大益者，得不知道之女為善，又當禦童女，顏色亦當如童女，女苦不少年耳。若得十四五以上，十八九以下，還甚亦佳也。然高不過三十，雖未三十而已產者，為之不能益也。吾先師相傳此道，得三千歲。兼藥者可得仙。

The idea of extracting energy from female, and especially the pre-pubescent girls, might offer some insight to understand the controversial line “To support the old it is exactly perfect to have one so young.” *xiaohuan* became certain ingredient for poet's longevity wish. The ending couplet reinforced poet's desire. Huang repeats word “*ri ri*” 日日 (day after day) and “*nian nian*” 年年 (year after year) to provoke readers to believe that life is endless when banquet and festival keeps going. All the ingredients, chrysanthemum, *xiaohuan*, banquets and festival are just ways to achieve longevity.

Poem 3

Watching Liu Yuanzhong's *xiaohuan* dance 觀劉元忠小鬟舞⁵⁷

桃小未開春意濃

The peach tree is young hasn't blossomed yet, but the springtime feelings are deep.

⁵⁴ According to *Yi jing* 易經 (The Classic of Change), the interaction of one Yin and one Yang is called *Tao* (the Supreme Path or Order). And one Yin and one Yang always refer to a woman and a man. Thus, a girl who hasn't known the *Tao* means she is still a virgin.

Ruan Fangfu, *Sex in China: Studies in Sexology in Chinese Culture* (New York: Plenum Press, 1991), 12.

⁵⁵ Traditionally the early youth refers to age range from ten to sixteen.

⁵⁶ Tamba Yasuyori 丹波康賴 (912-995), *Ishiompo* 醫心方, annot. Zhao Mingshan 趙明山 et al. (Shenyang: Liaoning ke xue ji shu chu ban she, ?) 1133.

The translation is based on Ruan, *Sex in China*.

⁵⁷ Beijing daxue guwenxian yanjiu suo 北京大學古文獻研究所 ed, *Quan Song shi* 全宋詩 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chuban she, 1991), 3260.

梢頭綠葉映微紅 The green leaves on the tree-tips glint with faint pink.
君家歌管相催急 In your home the songs and pipes urge each other on.
枝弱不勝花信風 The branch is too fragile to stand up the flower-blossoming wind.

Poetry title claims that it is about appreciating *xiaohuan*'s dancing. However, read through the poetry, it does not contain any description about dancing performance.

Instead, the poet used figurative language to talk about the youth of *xiaohuan*.

As discussed above, most poets chose *ci* or anecdote fashion for *xiaohuan* works.

Unexpectedly, Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣(1002-1060) chose *shi* 詩(poetry) style to write such an erotic poem.⁵⁸

As we know, peach is spring herald. Its blossom signals spring arriving. In the poem, peach trees have not blossomed, which means it is not spring yet. But the poet claims that springtime feeling has already been deep. The contradictory hinted that it is love affection atmosphere, which is deep. Readers receive poet's implied message that the master had strong sexual desire for the girl even though she is under age.

The next two lines are more titillating. Poet moves to the current scene description and uses a direct tone to address the master. *ji* 急 (literally means urge or impatient) characterize not only the action of songs and pipes, but also the master's attitude to the *xiaohuan*. Therefore, the fragile branch cannot stand the flower-blossoming wind. In metaphor sense, the *xiaohuan* will succumb to the master's carnal desire even though she is not of age yet. *huaxin* 花信 (flower-blossom) also refers to the girl's first period, which signals she comes to maturity.

⁵⁸ Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣, who was also known as Shengyu 聖俞, was a native from Xuancheng 宣城, in modern Anhui 安徽 province. Later scholars call him Mr. Wanling 宛陵先生.

Comparing the pre-pubescent girl to not-blossomed flower or just-blossomed flower is not rare in Song poetry. Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修(1007-1073) related that,⁵⁹

愛君小鬢初買得, “(I) like your recently bought *xiaohuan*,
如手未觸新開花. (She) is like just-blossomed flower, which has not been
 touched by other hands.

In these poems, *xiaohuan*'s virginity is highly valued. It signifies the master's exclusively ownership. Combining the last two lines together, we can get a sense that the master might forcefully had sex with the *xiaohuan*.

Poem 4

To the tone 'Shortened Magnolia Flower' 減字木蘭花⁶⁰

— Confer to the dancing *huan* of Chao Wujiu 贈晁无咎舞鬢

娉婷裊裊	Delicate, lithe, slender, and graceful,
芍藥枝頭紅樣小	The tips of peony show a small pink.
舞袖低迴	Dancing sleeves drop and zigzag,
心到郎邊客已知	The guest already knows her heart has been in the young man's side.
金樽玉酒	Golden cup with jade wine,
勸我花前千萬壽	She wishes me ten thousand years lifespan among flowers.
莫莫休休	No, no, stop, and stop.
白髮簪花我自羞	Pin flower in white hair makes me embarrassed.

⁵⁹ Beijing daxue guwenxian yanjiu suo, *Quan Song shi*, 3633.

⁶⁰ According to *Qing bo za zhi* 清波雜誌 written by Zhou Hui, this poem has another slightly different version. It reads like below, 娉婷裊裊, 芍藥枝頭紅玉小. 舞袖遲遲, 心到郎邊客已知. 當筵舉酒, 勸我尊前松柏壽. 莫莫休休, 白髮簪花我自羞.

Zhou Hui 周輝 (1126-1198), *Qing bo za zhi* 清波雜誌, anno. Liu Yongxiang 劉永翔 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 449.

According to the anecdote, Chen Shidao's poem startled the host Chao Wujiu by its frank voluptuousness. The opening line is common in *xiaohuan* subject poems. It projected a typical slim *xiaohuan* image. It is the second line, which astonished readers with its erotic implication. In Chinese poetry, peony is a conventional metaphor for vagina. And the second line explicitly refers to girl's under-developed vagina. The subject of zigzag is not only the dancing sleeve but also *xiaohuan*'s heart. This is explained in the next line. The poet refers himself to be "the guest" and he has known the sad fact that *xiaohuan*'s heart is falling in love with some young man instead of the sitting old man (refer to himself).

In the second stanza, *xiaohuan* urges the guest to drink and wish him longevity.

However, reaction of the poet was somewhat bizarre, "No, no, stop, and stop. I feel embarrassed to wear flower in white hair." As we know, it was a popular practice for men to wear flower on banquet on Song dynasty. And the image of wearing flower in white hair became a conventional expression of longevity.⁶¹ Su Shi wrote below couplet in the poem entitled "Jixiang Si shang mu dan" 吉祥寺賞牡丹(Enjoying Peony in Jixiang Temple).⁶²

人老簪花不自羞,	People who are old should not feel ashamed for wearing flowers,
花應羞上老人頭.	Flowers should feel ashamed to be on the old men's heads

⁶¹ Zheng Xumen 鄭續猛, "婀娜花枝含深意---論宋詞中的簪花, 戴花意象," *Ankang xue yuan xuebao* 2(2012):8-10.

⁶² Zhonghua shuju 中華書局 comp., *Song Yuan fangzhi congkan* 宋元方志叢刊 (Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 1990), 4043.

xiaohuan's presence only provoked the poet's sentiment that he is old and would not be young again, which characterize *lang* 郎 (young man).

Just like other *xiaohuan* poems, her dancing performance was barely touched. The poet cleverly manipulated *xiaohuan*'s disfavor to express his stirred feeling about aging.

Poem 5

To the tune 'Shortened Magnolia Flower' 減字木蘭花⁶³

- Giving as a gift to Shengzhi 贈勝之

雙鬟綠墜	The black and shine double chignon drops. ⁶⁴
嬌眼橫波眉黛翠	Seductive eyes with fluid glances, her eyebrows are black.
妙舞蹁躚	(To perform) wonderful dance, (she) whirls around.
掌上身輕意態妍	(Dance) on the palm (because) her body is so light, and her expression and gesture are so seductive. ⁶⁵
曲窮力困	When the song was over, her strength was exhausted.
笑倚人旁香喘噴	Leaning against people with smile, she puffs out fragrant airs while she breaths.
老大逢歡	The old man encounters happiness,
昏眼猶能仔細看	Dim eyes are still able to look carefully.

Su Shi wrote this poem on 1082 when he was demoted to Huang prefecture. Xu Junyou was the prefect who often hosted banquets to treat Su. Therefore, Su wrote a series of

⁶³ Shengzhi was Xu Junyou's 徐君猷, who was the prefect of Huangzhou 黃州, household dancing *huan*

⁶⁴ 綠 (literally means green) used to describe blackness and shine of the hair.

⁶⁵ "On the palm": alluding to the notorious imperial concubine Zhao Feiyan 趙飛燕 (?-1B.C.). On "Za wu" 雜舞 (Various Dance) of *Bai Kong liu tie* 白孔六帖 (Six Notes of Bai and Kong), the text reads, "Zhao Feiyan's body was so light that she was able to dance on the palm. 趙飛燕體輕, 能為掌上舞."

poems about Xu's entertainment courtesans to show his appreciation.⁶⁶ And this is one of them.

The poem describes and captures the beauty and youth of the dancing *huan*. The poet used the narrative mode and tried to be invisible. The dynamic of the first stanza is perfectly balanced. The first two lines describe *xiaohuan*'s appearance in still fashion. Then the poet moves to relate her light and quick dancing movement. A short stanza brought us the vivid image of a slim, young and vigorous dancing *huan*. The second stanza describes the intersection between the dancing *huan* and her master. There is a strong contrast between the dancing *huan*'s youth and the host's old age, which could be detected by the phrase "dim eyes"

Poem 6

To the tune 'Shortened Magnolia Flower' 減字木蘭花

天然宅院	The natural courtyard house,
賽了千千並萬萬	Competed thousands and ten thousands.
說與賢知	Tell you to know, ⁶⁷
表德元來是勝之	It turns out that her name is Shengzhi. ⁶⁸
今年十四	(She) is fourteen this year,

⁶⁶ For other poems, see

Zou Tongqing 鄒同慶 and Wang Zongtang 王宗堂, *Su Shi ci bian nian jiao zhu* 蘇軾詞編年校注(Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 2002), 434-37.

⁶⁷ *xian* 賢 is the polite term for second person pronoun "you", Zhang, *Shi ci qu yu ci hui shi*, 757.

⁶⁸ *biaode* 表德 is a general term for one's name, style name or nickname. Zhang, *Shi ci qu yu ci hui shi*, 771.

海裏猴兒奴子是 (She) is a good child and a young servant maid.⁶⁹

要賭休癡 If want to gamble, do not be obsessed.

六只骰兒六點兒 (As for) six dices, (every dice) gets six dots.⁷⁰

Su Shi wrote this poem on the same year as the previous one for the same recipient, Shengzhi. Several features of the poem deserve to comment. The whole poem is written in colloquial language. This made the poem natural and animate, which are also the most distinguished characters of *xiaohuan*.

It is obvious that erotic association is downplayed in this poem, which is quite rare in *xiaohuan* theme poems. Another uncommon characteristic of the poem is that the poet seriously presented *xiaohuan*'s name here. Most *xiaohuan* poems avoid the subjects' names. And these two features might were relevant in Song context. It was common for Song literati to promote household courtesans to be concubines, especially if they are pregnant. The possibility that some literati's birth mothers are household courtesan came into the poets' minds. They had to evade potential embarrassment that the literati's mothers were subjects of erotic components. Therefore, readers rarely encounter names in the erotic *xiaohuan* poems. In a word, the poet would try to stay away from the erotic implications only if he did not claim *xiaohuan*'s name clearly. By doing this, Song literati avoided certain social embarrassment.

Poem 7

⁶⁹ *hai li hou er* 海裏猴兒 is a diminutive way to say good child. *hai* 海 pronounce close to *hao* 好, and *hou'er* 猴兒 pronounce similar to *hai'er* 孩兒. Therefore, 海裏猴兒 just means good child.

Zhang, *Shi ci qu yu ci hui shi*, 829.

⁷⁰ It means the result is the best. Others can't match it. Here, it refers to no one can match the beauty and wisdom of Shengzhi.

To the tune 'Shortened Magnolia Flower' 減字木蘭花

- Giving as a gift to *xiaohuan*, who is good at playing *pipa* 贈小

鬢琵琶

琵琶絕藝

(*xiaohuan* is) playing *pipa*, the consummate art skill.

年紀都來十一二

Her age is no more than eleven or twelve.⁷¹

撥弄玄弦

She fiddles with the thinnest string,

未解將心指下傳

Hasn't understood how to pass her heart under her fingers.

主人瞋小

The master was vexed for her youngness.⁷²

欲向東風先醉倒

Facing the east wind, he wants to get drunk before (others).

已屬君家

She has already belonged to your house,

且更從容等待他

Then at this moment slow down to wait for her.

Poem 8

To the tune "Wash Stream Sand" 浣溪沙

- Springtime Sentiment 春情

道字嬌訛苦未成

(She) pronounce words lovely with errors, of which she had tried hard to get rid but has not succeed yet.

未應春閣夢多情

(She) should not have spring dream in the inner quarter.

朝來何事綠鬢傾

For what matter her black shine hair tilt?

綵索身輕長趁燕

Above the swing, her light body extends to chase swallow.

紅窗睡重不聞鶯

Under the red window, she slept soundly that she couldn't hear oriole (crying).⁷³

⁷¹ *dulai* 都來 means no more than.
Zhang, *Shi ci qu yu ci hui shi*, 394.

⁷² According to *Shuo wen* 說文 (Talking about Patter), *chen* 瞋 literarily means open one's eyes widely.

困人天氣近清明 The weather makes people sleepy because it is close to Qing
Ming festival.

Poem 9

To the tune “Wash Stream Sand ” 浣溪沙

- Springtime Sentiment 春情

桃李溪邊駐畫輪 The painted boat stationed beside brook, which had peach and
plum trees (on the bank).

鷓鴣聲裏倒清尊 Pour the crystal wine cup in franklin sounds.⁷⁴

夕陽雖好近黃昏 Though the sunset is fine, it is close to evening.

香在衣裳妝在臂 The fragrance lingers on the cloth and the make up exist on arm.⁷⁵

水連芳草月連雲 Water connects with fragrant grasses while the moon connects
with clouds.

幾時歸去不銷魂 When to return you soul will not be melt (by happiness)?

⁷³ This alluding to the scene described in Jin Changxu’s 金昌緒 poem “Chun Yuan” 春怨(Springtime Complain). The poem reads,

打起黃鶯兒, Hit orioles to fly.
莫教枝上啼. Make them can’t cry on branch.
啼時驚妾夢, Their cries awake my dream.
不得到遼西. Then I will not be able to reach Liaoxi (in my dream).

Lu Yitian 陸以湑(1802-1865), *Leng lu za shi* 冷廬雜識, anno. Cui Fanzhi 崔凡芝 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 189.

⁷⁴ The franklin sounds contain the meaning to urge guests to stay.

⁷⁵ This line is alluding to the story of Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯 written by Yuan Chen 元稹(779-831) entitled “Yingying zhuan” 鶯鶯傳(The Biography of Yingying). One night, the Crimson maid took Miss Cui to the student Zhang’s bed. Next morning before sun arose, the Crimson maid came back to hold Miss Cui on her hands and left quickly. The student Zhang was too happy to believe it was real. He suspected it was female immortal, who shared one night with him. Until he saw Miss Cui’s make up was still on his arm and smelt her fragrance was still on his cloth, he believed that it was indeed Miss Cui.

Su Shi wrote this series of poems on 1097 when he was living in Huizhou 惠州. And all three poems were written for Zhou Yanzhi's 周彥質 *xiaohuan* who is good at playing *pipa*.⁷⁶ The group of poems is like telling a story happening between the master and his household courtesan. The presence of Su's speaking voice is obvious in this poem. Unlike other poets using figurative language to signify *xiaohuan*'s youth, Su Shi explicitly tells readers her age by his guess in the first poem. Second couplet narrates *xiaohuan*'s performance. Different from typical performance *ci* focused on the marvelous skill show off, Su wisely stresses the imagery of a young and naïve *huan* by referring to the picture of a *xiaohuan* playing the thinnest string. Su drew a conclusion about *xiaohuan*'s performance on the last line of the first stanza. Even though *xiaohuan*'s skill was marvelous, she could not pass her heart or her *qing* through playing *pipa*. When Su wrote this line, there is no doubt that he had the female figure from "Pipa xing" 琵琶行 (Ballad of *pipa*) on mind. On "Pipa xing," the female player impressed Bai with her ability to pass her *qing* through playing. The poet believed that her rich life experience contributed to her capability to evince her sentiments through the music. Su reversed this allusion to successfully make *xiaohuan*'s naïve and simple imagery stands out. In another word, the reason why *xiaohuan* could not pass her heart under her fingers was her youth. Plus, *wei* 未(not yet) implies that poet understood *xiaohuan*'s worry-free innocence status would only be temporary. Someday, *xiaohuan* will also know how to pass her heart to the

⁷⁶ Su also wrote one *shi* entitled "Xunshou lin xing, chu *xiaohuan* fu yong qian yun" 循守臨行出小鬟復用前韻 (Using previous rhyme Before the Inspector of Imperial Tour left).

listeners. This will only happen after she experienced love, betrayal, happiness, sadness and etc.

Su moved his focus from *xiaohuan* to the master in the second stanza. The host was annoyed by the fact that she was too young to understand his feelings, to comfort him, or even to intercourse with him. Therefore he wants to get drunk in the east wind to forget about this. Su is clearly punning with *dongfeng* 東風 (east wind). East wind not only just refers to wind come from the east, but also the spring wind forces flowers to blossom, which is a conventional metaphor for men to wake up virgin's sexual desire. The clever punning implies that the host wants to have intimate relationship with *xiaohuan*. This explains why the poet urges the host to wait till *xiaohuan* reaches the proper age to understand his feeling, and more importantly, to have sexual relationship. In this poem, the imagery of *xiaohuan* still focuses on her youth, naïve and simple. However, Su added one layer to that imagery. He pointed out that the youth wouldn't last long. Someday it would be replaced by experienced, which would enable the subject to understand *qing*. The story continues. Su suspects that the master did not take his suggestion to slow down his pace. He sneaked in this question in the first stanza of the second poem. As expected, the poet stresses *xiaohuan*'s youth by citing the fact that she was too young to say words correctly. Then the poet naturally commented that she should not have spring dream yet because of her age. Here, the question was asked, "For what matter her hair tilt in the morning?" Even though the poet used the sleeping weather to camouflage for his friend's benefit in the second stanza. We all know the implied answer is that the prefect intimated with *xiaohuan* in the morning, which is confirmed in the third poem.

Sunset is a conventional metaphor for one's senior age. The poet's sigh in the third line hints that *xiaohuan* serves as the balm, just like wine, to assuage the master's sadness of relentless aging.

Poem 10

To the tune "Double Lotus Leaves" 雙荷葉⁷⁷

— The little courtesan of Jia Yunlao, who was from Huzhou, named Double Lotus Leaves 湖州賈耘老小妓名雙荷葉

雙溪月	Moon of two brooks, ⁷⁸
清光偏照雙荷葉	The clear light especially shine on the double lotus leaves.
雙荷葉	Double lotus leaves,
紅心未偶	The red heart hasn't mated,
綠衣偷結	The green cloth secretly knotted. ⁷⁹
背風迎雨淚珠滑	Turn back to the wind while facing rain, tears slide down.
輕舟短棹先秋折	Light boat and short paddle, (I encourage you to) pluck (lotus) off before autumn arrives.
先秋折	Pluck off before autumn,

⁷⁷ Jia Shou 賈收, whose style name was Yunlao 耘老, was a native from Wucheng 烏程, in today's Huzhou 湖州 city.

Chang, Songren zhuanji ziliao suoyin, 3070.

Su Shi composed this lyric to the given tone of "Yi Qing'e" 憶秦娥 (Recalling Qin'e).

⁷⁸ Two brooks refer to Tiao xi 苕溪 and Zha xi 霅溪, both in today's Zhe Jiang province. Hu Zai recorded that "Jia Yunlao had one waterside pavilion on Tiao brook in the past.....Su Shi passed it several times when he was the prefect." (賈耘老舊有水閣, 在苕溪之上.....東坡作守時屢過之.)

Hu Zai 胡仔(1110-1170), Tiao xi yu yin cong hua qian ji 苕溪漁隱叢話前集, ed. Liao Deming 廖德明 (Beijing: ren ming wen xue chu ban she, 1962), 408.

⁷⁹ Mao 26

Mao believed that the poetry entitled "Lv yi" 綠衣 (Green Upper Cloth) talks about one concubine usurped the wife. Here, it just refers to Jiao promoted the little courtesan to be his concubine.

煙鬢未上 (She) hasn't wear adult hairstyle yet.⁸⁰

玉杯微缺 The jade cup has a slight breach.

Su Shi wrote this *ci* on 1072 to celebrate his friend Jia Shou took *xiaohuan* named Double Lotus Leaves as his concubine. Wu Yu 吳聿 (fl. 1147) wrote that “(The courtesan) bound two topknots side by side, just like two lotus leaves on her head. Therefore, (Su) used it to name her. 兩髻並前如雙荷葉, 故以名之.”⁸¹

The concept of Yin-Yang is essentially simple, yet its influence on Chinese culture is extensive. According to Yin-Yang philosophy, all objects and events are the products of two elements, forces, or principles.⁸² Yin believed to be negative, passive, weak and destructive, while Yang was defined to be positive, active, strong, and constructive. Traditionally, men are labeled as Yang and women as Ying. And moon was regarded as the essence of Grand Yin. The second line states that the lotus leaves receive full coverage of moonlight, which in metaphor sense, *xiaohuan* contains full Yin without any leak in this stage.

Taking her name as a link, the poet used lotus as a metaphor for the girl. The line that “red lotus pistil hasn't in pairs” signifies both girl's youth and her virginity, *bing di* 並蒂 (in pairs) can also refer to the intercourse between man and women. This line implies *xiaohuan* doesn't have sexual experience yet. Having Mao's allusion in mind, the last line in the first stanza echoes the happy event of promoting *xiaohuan* to be a concubine.

⁸⁰ *yan huan* 煙鬢 (mist hairstyle) refer to adult women's hairstyles.
Liao, “Quan Song ci” *yu yan ci dian*, 682.

⁸¹ Zou, *Su Shi ci biannian jiaozhu*, 19.

⁸² Ruan, *Sex in China*, 11.

Poet encouraged his friend to pluck off the lotus in early autumn before flowers withered.

This reminds readers the famous couplet.

花開堪折直須折 One should pluck flowers off, when the flower is still
blossoming and can be plucked off.
莫待無花空折枝 Do not wait till there is no flower, when pluck off brunch
for nothing.

Poet's implied message is clear that Yunlao should intercourse with the Double Leave Lotus in her tender age because of her Yin essence is full as a virgin. Taoist text proclaimed pre-pubescent virgin is the best sex partner for men's benefit. And the last couplet confirmed that Yunlao did take poet's suggestion. It's interesting that in the last line, the poet used *yubei* 玉杯 (jade cup) to refer to women's maiden body. In Taoist sexual books, the women in her role as sexual partner was called ding 鼎.⁸³ The ding was originally a cooking vessel with two loop handles. Basically it is a container, which functions similar to the jade cup. The poet uses the image of a jade cup with a breach as a metaphor for the girl lost her virginity.

In another sense, the lyric projects a stage, in which the poet and his friend, instead of *xiaohuan*, perform as the leading roles. The poet set *xiaohuan* as plot-device to fulfill his performing goal, to poke fun of his friend, which is one aspect of their friendship. This is more obvious in Su Shi's "Da Jia Yunlao shu" 答賈耘老書 (Letter to Respond Jia Yunlao).

(There) are several new poems haven't received (your) notes to present, why? Poverty is common for poets. Your falling teeth and dim eyesights should be caused by being trapped by Double Lotus leaves. You should not blame poems exclusively.
新詩不蒙錄示數篇，何也？貧因詩人之常。齒落目昏，當是為雙荷葉所困，未可專咎詩也。

⁸³ Ruan, *Sex in China*, 55.

The letter hints that the theme of “old husband and young concubine” is a frequent teasing topic between Su Shi and his friend Jia Yunlao.

Anecdote

(My) maternal uncle, whose style name was Hongfu was born and raised up in a rich family.⁸⁴ He was distinguished, admirable, generous and self-restraint. He was known for being an official. And he was good at reciting poetries, which were as good as roast meat every mouth (loves).⁸⁵ During Shaoxing period (1131-1162), he guarded Huangzhou. There was one, who wearing double chignon hairstyle, named Xiaopin. She was quite intelligent and crafty. Hongfu made her to recite Dongpo's “Qian Chibi fu”前赤壁賦 (Former Rhapsody of Red Cliff) and “Hou Chibi fu”後赤壁賦 (Latter Rhapsody of Red Cliff). She substituted (Hongfu) to recite poetries when guests arrived. People all appraised her.....Later on, Hongfu returned to Shangyao. Back to then, Zheng Gudao,⁸⁶ Lv Juren,⁸⁷ Chao Gongdao were Zeng's residential guests.⁸⁸ (They) come back and forth from day to night. Cups of wines were moving. Gudao taught his xiaohuan to work on reciting skill too. Hongfu looked at Zheng and laughed, “This is exactly what's called ‘imitating pin.’”⁸⁹

舅氏曾宏父，生長綺紈而風流醞藉，聞于薦紳，長於歌詩，膾炙人口。紹興中守黃州，有雙鬟小鬟者，頗慧黠，宏父令誦東坡先生赤壁前後二賦，客至代謳，人多稱之.....後歸上饒，時鄭顧道、呂居仁、晁恭道俱為寓客，日夕往來，杯酒流行，顧道教其小鬟亦為此技，宏父顧鄭笑曰：“此真所謂效顰也。”

⁸⁴ Zeng Dun 曾惇, whose style name was Hongfu 宏父, was a native of Nanfeng 南豐, in today's Jiangxi 江西 province.

Chang, *Songren zhuan ji zi liao suoyin*, 2800.

⁸⁵ *kuai zhi ren kou* 膾炙人口 literarily means the roast meat is so good that every mouth loves. Here, it is a metaphor for the wide-circulated poetries. Every mouth loves to recite them because they were so good.

⁸⁶ Zheng Wangzhi 鄭望之(1078-1161), whose style name was Gudao 顧道, was from Pengchen 彭城.

Chang, *Songren zhuan ji zi liao suoyin*, 3706.

⁸⁷ 87 Lv Juzhong 呂居中(1084--1145), whose style name was Juren 居仁, was from Shouzhou 壽州.

Chang, *Songren zhuan ji zi liao suoyin*, 1199.

⁸⁸ Chao Qianzhi 晁謙之(?-1154), whose style name was Gongdao 恭道. His ancestor was from Tanzhou 澶州.

Ibid, 1957.

⁸⁹ Wang, *Hui chen lu*, 216.

Hongfu is punning of *pin* 顰 (frown). It was the *xiaohuan*'s name. At the same time, it alludes to the famous story of *Dongshi xiao pin* 東施效顰 (Dongshi Imitates Frowning).⁹⁰

The anecdote tells us one reason why Song literati favored *xiaohuan* to be household courtesan. Some *xiaohuan* were still children when their masters bought them. The masters could train *xiaohuan* in accordance with their wills, like what Zeng Hongfu did to Xiaopin. Other literati described similar motivations. Northern Song poet Mei Yaochen claimed that,⁹¹

欲買小鬢試教之，	I want to buy <i>xiaohuan</i> to try to teacher her (by myself),
教坊供奉誰知者。	Between the actor and actress belonging to the imperial Music Bureau, who knows her?

xiaohuan became some products to fulfill masters' aesthetic views.

⁹⁰ Zhuangzi 莊子 recorded that there was a beautiful girl named Xishi 西施 who frowned when she had heart pain. One neighbor named Dongshi 東施, who was ugly, imitated the frowning since she thought it was attractive. It turned out people tried to avoid her because her frowning was unbearable.

⁹¹ Mei Yaocheng 梅堯臣, "Ting Wen Douzhi chui xiao" 聽文都知吹簫, *Mei Yaochen ji bian nian jiao zhu* 梅堯臣集編年校注, edit. Zhu Dongrun 朱東潤 (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 2006), 1081.

Chapter 3

CONCLUSION

A close reading of the poems and anecdotes brought us to understand the imagery of *xiaohuan* in Song literary context, the major motivation to write the works and the reasons for Song literati's penchant for *xiaohuan* as household courtesans.

Imagery of xiaohuan

Pre-pubescent girls clearly fascinated men with their ages. *xiao* 小 (little) is the most obvious characteristic poets stressed. Poets uttered *xiaohuan*'s youth explicitly in all ten poems. Because of their ages, girls' physical appearances are tender, slim and light, which was the ideal woman figure in Song literati circle. The smaller size also made *xiaohuan* the perfect candidate for dancing since they can better master twisting, twirling, and other professional dancing movements. Some Song literati bought *xiaohuan* in their teen ages, which enabled the masters to train *xiaohuan* by their tastes and preferences. *Xiaohuan*'s inability to understand *qing* and this relative innocence and absence of desire becomes a major part of their representation.

Poets' Motivations behind the Works

The simple and naïve personality characterize *xiaohuan*'s tender age became poets' superficial complain. At the same time, the masters would not give it up. The magic might rely on *xiaohuan*'s presumed innocence. The girls could show off their youthful good looks, naïve speech, unrestrained laugh, and childish actions. No one would take these as forward, manipulated or based on sexual desire. However, men felt proud when they feel they were able to awake the maiden girls' desires. Therefore, at one hand, the

masters or poets were blaming *xiaohuan*'s ignorant of *qing*, on the other hand, they were trapped in their desire to wake up *xiaohuan*'s sexual desire.

Another common motif to write about *xiaohuan* is that using girls as a vet for poets expressing their aging sadness. Some poets regarded *xiaohuan* as one kind of balm, just like wine, to assuage their relentless passage of time. Some poets preceded one step further. They took *xiaohuan* as one magic component to obtain longevity based on the techniques of bedchamber.

The Reasons of Song Literati's Penchant for xiaohuan

Nourishing life in bedchamber was a popular topic in Song literati circle. Su Shi had one whole section of "Yangsheng" 養生 (Art of Nourishing Life) in *Dongpo zhi lin* 東坡志林. He recorded that "people, who are sitting on the banquet, are talking about how to nurse *qi* 氣 (air) and cultivate life. 坐中論調氣養生之事."⁹² Zhang Lei 張耒 related that one alchemist, whose name was Liu Ji 劉幾, taught him the techniques in bedchamber.⁹³

Wang Mao 王懋 (1151-1213) proclaimed to use the art of bedchamber for continent purpose.⁹⁴ Some Song literati believed that the art of bedchamber is essential for longevity. Some declined it for various reasons. No matter which side they are taking, one thing for sure is that Song literati were familiar with the techniques in bedchamber. The main goal for the techniques in bedchamber is that men have to control ejaculation and retain semen to nourish their brains. The purpose of having sex is to prolong

⁹² Su Shi 蘇軾, *Dongpo zhi lin* 東坡志林, ed. Zhao Xuezhong 張學智 (Xi'an: San qing chu ban she, 2003), 27.

⁹³ Zhang Lei 張耒 (1054-1114), *Ming dao za zhi* 明道雜誌, 2860. 23, in *Cong shu ji cheng chu bian* 叢書集成初編 (Shanghai: shang wu yin shu chu ban she, 1937).

⁹⁴ Wang Mao 王懋 (1151-1212), *Ye ke cong shu* 野客叢書, anno. Zheng Ming 鄭明 (Shanghai: shang hai gu ji chu ban she, 1991), 218.

longevity, even transmutation, instead of fulfilling one's desire. Therefore, sex and continence are magically integrated in the art of bedchamber.

Pre-pubescent virgins were highly valued as sex partners in the art of bedchamber. As we have discussed in the second chapter, the legendary Taoist figure Pengzu claimed that the best candidate for sex is *tongnv* 童女 (pre-pubescent girls). Almost all Taoist sex handbooks recommended that the *ding* 鼎 (the big three-leg cooking vessel) should be a girls of 14 to 16, just before or after menarche.⁹⁵ While modern readers might suspect that Taoist's highly recommendation of pre-pubescent betrayed their rather obvious partiality to youthful beauty, but this was not the case. In fact, virginity and youth, instead of carnal seducement, are what highly admired for longevity. Sun Simiao 孫思邈 (581-682) explicitly stated,

The women (with whom you will have intercourse) do not need to be beautiful, but they must be adolescents who have undeveloped breast and are well covered with flesh. They will prove advantageous.⁹⁶

凡婦人不必有顏色妍麗, 但得少年未經生乳, 多肌肉, 益也。

This explained why most *xiaohuan* themed poems mainly stressed on *xiaohuan*'s youth and virginity instead of their beauty. Traditionally, serving women appeal men with their extraordinary beauty. However, virgins, which were believed that their supply of Yin energy had not yet been depleted, were strongly desired by the poets in these *xiaohuan* themed poems.

Moreover, it was believed that men maximize their benefits if women experienced orgasm during the process. *Sunv jing* 素女經(The Classic of White Lady) said that,

⁹⁵ Ruan Fangru, *Sex in China* (New York: Plenum Press, 1991) 56.

⁹⁶ Sun Simiao 孫思邈, *Qian jin fang* 千金方, ed. Liu Xingguo 劉清國 (Beijing: Zhongguo zhong yi yao chu ban she, 1998), 640

Take below to be principle (during sex), and be cautious, do not dare to violate. If woman feel happy, men would not wane.⁹⁷
以是為節, 慎無敢違, 女即歡喜, 男則不衰.

This might explain the reason why some poets urged the masters to wait for *xiaohuan* to reach appropriate age, when she would be able to enjoy sex, to intercourse. Whether or not female would enjoy the sex process is essential in deciding how much nourishment men could gain.

Song literati's social anxiety

The appearance of female labor market in Song society leads to frequent movement of concubines and serving maid. Some literati chose *xiaohuan* as household courtesan, who had chance to bare master's children, to secure offspring's blood pureness. Moreover, the erotic association, which is ubiquitous in *xiaohuan* poems, is minimized on the poems contain *xiaohuan*'s names. The reason for doing this is to avoid potential social embarrassment that some literati found that their birth mothers are subjects of erotic poems.

⁹⁷ Tamba Yasuyori, *Ishiompo*, 1136.

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