

by and large determined by their personal relationships with the reigning emperors. This tendency was especially true in the case of Mingdi, who, in order to maintain his own position of political leadership, not only appointed his former Eastern Palace staff members to high level posts, but also on his death bed appointed a favorite member of the imperial family and one of their frequent rivals, Xiyangwang Yang 西陽王彧, to act along with them as an adviser to the next Emperor Chengdi 成帝. The author adds that since this political state of affairs was mainly dependent on the personal character and political sagacity of each individual emperor, what was happening can by no means be termed a full-fledged system of imperial autocracy.

The Ming Dynasty's *yanlu* System during the Wanli Era:  
The Shuntian County Examination Incident of 1588

CHEN Yongfu

The debates that raged over policy concerning the *yanlu* 言路 system (the submission of opinions and proposals to the emperor) during the Wanli Era have been dealt within the research to date from the standpoint of the Donglin 東林 Faction, and have thus been framed in terms of an opposition between repressing input and facilitating it. However, from an examination of an incident regarding the Shuntian 順天 County Examination of 1588 involving Wang Xijue 王錫爵 and his son Wang Heng 王衡, the author of the present article shows that *yanlu* was not repressed as argued by the Donglin Faction. Rather the *yanlu* system found itself in a very overheated and chaotic situation characterized by advocates utilizing the forum for the purpose of taking revenge on political enemies or furthering their personal careers by reporting ambiguous or absolutely groundless facts that would hopefully incite negative public opinion.

Those officials who kept their distance from the Donglin Faction by no means disagreed with the proposition to open up the *yanlu* system; but rather sensed the danger of the possible social chaos that *yanlu* could cause by allowing irresponsible attacks on political opponents and opportunistic social climbing. Such measures as the Shen Shixing 申時行 Cabinet's moratorium

on removal from office (*chuwai* 出位) to restrict the range of *yanlu* input aimed to merely relieve the overheated and chaotic situation, rather than clamp down on the flow of public opinion. It was merely a practical attempt to promote the same duty to office and responsible debate urged by the Donglin Faction itself. Then, under the Wang Xijue Cabinet, the moratorium was lifted because it was not deemed to be getting at the root of problems facing the *yanlu* system, and an attitude was adopted allowing free exchange of ideas. In lieu of the moratorium, Wang demanded that all ad hominem *yanlu* input be based on fact.

The author concludes that the situation regarding the *yanlu* system and measures taken to resolve it during the Wanli Era was far more complicated and fluid than a mere dichotomy between the repression and promotion of free speech.

#### The Social Aspects of Local Stage Drama in Qing Period China:

##### Participation by Local Bureaucrats and the Military

MURAKAMI Masakazu

In contrast to the conventional research done to date on locally based dramatic arts emphasizing the role of kinship and lineage relationships, the present article, in an attempt to clarify the actual situation on the ground from a sociological standpoint, focuses on local bureaucrats and military garrisons as important elements in the development of thespian culture in the countryside.

The author begins with an examination of the economic conditions of the dramatic troupes which played the central role on the local dramatic scene, a subject that has been neither well studied nor is well documented. Based on concrete examples of actor's salaries and compensation paid to script writers, the author shows that with the exception of a few regions, like Suzhou 蘇州, troupes were quite poor in economic terms.

Next, the article turns to the role played by local bureaucrats, who in the research to date have been accused of repressing the performing arts in their jurisdictions. To the contrary, the author indicates that local bureaucrats were