

# Ming-Qing Commentaries on *Xixiangji* 西廂記

by Reiko HIROSE

Among the pieces of Yuan zaju 元雜劇, *Xixiangji* 西廂記 has been a popular title through the history of Chinese classical drama. Beginning in later Ming, over 40 editions of *Xixiangji* text were published one after another, while it was also popular as an onstage play.

The author discusses two editions with full commentaries; composed by Wang Jide 王驥德 in the late Ming, and Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 in the early Qing. Their work follows the model of the commentaries and annotations 注疏 on the Confucian canon. They tried to reconstruct the "original" version which was already lost but imagined as an ideal one, by way of putting notes to prove the authenticity of the chosen text.

After Wang wrote the basic commentaries, Mao produced more detailed readings of the text. Although drama was not included in the subjects of traditional scholarship, Mao, who was a scholar of the classical studies, applied its methodology to his work on *Xixianji*. Mao's work can be recognized as the first sort of literary researches from our modern viewpoints. Also it can be said that the commentary works served a major role in the process of making *Xixiangji* a canonical piece of Chinese classical drama during late Ming and early Qing period.

To illustrate the features of these works, the author gives some typical examples of commentaries both by Wang and by Mao.