

## GAC instructions concerning Xiqu reform work

5 May 1951

The people's xiqu is an important weapon with democratic spirit and patriotic spirit to educate the broad people. Our country's xiqu heritage is extremely rich, and has a close connection with the People, inheriting this sort of heritage and enhancing, is fully necessary. But in this sort of heritage, many parts have been used by feudal rulers as a tool to drug and poison the people; therefore, we must differentiate well good and bad, and select them, and on a new basis, transform and develop them, only then is it possible that they conform to the interest of State and people.

Since more than one year, xiqu reform work in all localities has already achieved clear results. New xiqu has already emerged in large quantities, and has received the welcome from the broad masses; many performers have learned new knowledge and new points of view, becoming backbones for xiqu reform activities. But some weak spots still exist in work, the most important one is that examination and approval of plays still lacks uniform standards, and that in revising script work, there are still a few revisionist and formulist tendencies. The Central People's Government Ministry of Culture's nationwide xiqu work meeting held in November 1950, thoroughly discussed the situation of xiqu reform work in all localities, and put forward the policies for work from now on. The Administrative Council, after hearing the Ministry of Culture's report of this meeting, hereby makes the following instructions:

I, Xiqu shall have carrying on the new patriotic spirit of the people, and encouraging the people's heroism in revolutionary struggle and productive labour first. All xiqu propagating resistance to invasion, resistance to oppression, love for the motherland, love for freedom, love for labour, commending the People's righteousness and their decent disposition shall be encouraged and popularized, conversely, all xiqu preaching feudal or slave morals, preaching savagery and terror, or obscene, wanton or drug activities, uglifying and humiliating the labouring people shall be opposed. All localities culture and education organs must according to the above standards, be responsible to conduct examination of staged plays, shall not let matters slide, but shall adopt vigorous reform policies. The main localities conducting reform shall rely on the cooperative work of the broad performers, rely on them to jointly examine and approve, revise and compose scripts, and rely on newspapers and periodicals to suitably engage in xiqu critique, standard localities shall not rely on administrative orders and the method of prohibiting plays. Were bans must be imposed against xiqu gravely harming the people, the Central Ministry of Culture will deal with this uniformly, all localities may not ban plays without authorization.

II, At present, xiqu reform work shall put the main effort into examine and approve the most broadly spread old programmes, necessary and suitable revision will be conducted over plays among those with harmful content or harmful performance methods. We must abolish ideological content with important harm, and where performance methods are concerned, delete all sorts of components that are savage, horrible, uncivilized, enslaving, insulting to the own ethnicity and anti-patriotic. Good old or revised plays shall act as affirmation for ethnic traditional plays, and all healthy, progressive and beautiful elements in them will be continuously carried on. When revising old scripts, attention shall be paid not to violate historical truth and the results of the people's education.

Xiqu reform is a serious task in reforming the old society's cultural undertakings, and it is unavoidable that many complex problems will be encountered, therefore, xiqu reform work must be conducted gradually. Generally speaking, we shall start from the scope that is the easiest to start with and the

easiest to obtain the agreement from the majority of performers, and then progressively extend it. We must prevent rash emotions in xiqu reform work, and the crude methods coming from this.

III, Chinese xiqu varieties are extremely plentiful, and must be used, reformed and developed generally, the free competition of all sorts of xiqu forms must be encouraged, facilitating "Letting a Hundred Flowers Bloom" in xiqu art. Local operas, and especially folk operettas, have relatively simple and vivacious forms, which easily reflect modern life, and are also easily accepted by the masses, they must be given especially high regard. From now on, all local xiqu improvement work shall take the drama type that has the most influence on the local masses as the main target for reform and development. To this end, we shall extensively collect, annotate, print and publish new and old scripts for local operas and folk operettas, as provision for research and improvement. Under feasible circumstances, every year, we shall organize a nationwide xiqu competition and public performance once, to exhibit the improvement achievements of all drama types, award excellent works and performances, in order to guide its development.

Chinese quyi forms, such as the drum ballad, storytelling, etc., are simple and also rich in power of expression, extremely convenient to speedily reflect implementation, and must be given high regard. Apart from having to create large amounts of new quyi texts, we shall also reform for our own use many songbooks with historical stories and excellent folk legends that the people know well.

IV, Xiqu performers bear a great responsibility in the undertaking of entertaining and educating the people, they shall strengthen study concerning politics, culture and profession, and raise themselves. All localities' culture and education organs shall earnestly organize performers' education and pay attention to foster cadres for xiqu reform work from the performers. In the countryside, where mobile professional old theatre troupes and groups cannot train in a concentrated manner, it is permitted to send xiqu reform work cadres to all groups and troupes in turn to conduct education, and according to feasibility and requirement assist their rehearsal of new plays.

New culture and art workers shall vigorously participate in xiqu reform work, mutually learn from xiqu performers, closely cooperate with them, jointly reform and compose scripts, improve xiqu music and stage art.

V, Some unreasonable systems in old theatre troupes, such as the old apprentice system, the adopted daughter system, the "manager-agent" system, etc., gravely harm human rights and the well-being of performers, and shall gradually be reformed, this sort of reform must mainly rely on the awareness and voluntarism of performing masses.

VI, Xiqu work shall be uniformly led by all localities' culture and education controlling authorities. All provincial cities shall take old opera troupes and theatres with relatively good traditions as basis, and under the principle of commercialization, adopt methods of public operation, public-private joint operation, or private operation with public assistance to establish model opera troupes and theatres, performing new place in a planned and regular way, improve theatre management, to act as a stronghold for moving forward local xiqu reform work.