

## The Colloquial Text Collection of the Finnish Sinologist Hugo Lund

Stefan Kuzay

Some time after Hugo Lund—a young man in his late twenties, with his wife Saima, having narrowly survived the Boxer Rebellion and the besiege of the Legation Quarter in Peking—disembarked from the Dutch battleship that brought them back to Shanghai, he went to a photographic studio to have his picture taken.

The person looking out of the photo straight into the eyes of the beholder seems well aware of his future role in the world of science, most probably as a professor at the University of Helsinki. He knows that it is his task to bring back from the East the time-honoured scriptures of Chinese Antiquity, not unlike his Tang dynasty predecessor, monk Xuanzang who took off for India to fetch scriptures from the West. By no means was he aware that over one hundred years later he would be known in the small circle of researchers of Chinese theatre and music, even though his fame was not due to any actual scientific accomplishments in that field, nor to the fact that he was among the first Finns ever to set foot on the «Pearl of the East».

Hugo Lund (2.9.1872-11.12.1915), born in Hämeenlinna, was meant to become the first scholar of Chinese Studies in Finland. After being trained in both Classical and Modern Chinese at the Humboldt University in Berlin he was sent 1898 by the Finno-Ugrian Society to China to deepen his studies. Furthermore, his mentor Otto Donner had advised him to collect books for the university library of Helsinki. After two and a half years he returned to Finland in the aftermath of the Yihetuan 义和团, or Boxer Rebellion, as the anti-foreigner uprising of the White Lotus Societies of Northern China is called in the West.<sup>1</sup>

During the besiege of the Legation Quarter in Peking he lost all the books and other materials he had acquired up till then. On his way back to Finland he decided to stay on in Shanghai for some while, and again directed his energies into the purchase of many valuable books that made good for most of his former loss.

---

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed history of Hugo Lund's journey between 1898 and 1901 see Harry Halén: *Hugo Lund Kiinassa, 1899-1901. Suomen ensimmäisen sinologin kokeuksia Kaukoidästä päiväkirjamerkintöjen sekä kirjeiden valossa*. Unholan Aitta 4, Helsinki 1994, in the following abbreviated as: *Halén*. All excerpts from letters and Hugo Lund's diary refer to this source.

The vast majority of these books relate to Classical Literature and Learning, interesting today also to the bibliophile. But while these works are long since catalogued and made public there is also a small collection of hitherto untouched texts of colloquial literature. It is the nature and origin of these texts in a stack of 105 slim booklets that this paper sets out to investigate. Along with the description of the texts and a first analysis of the genre they belong to, it will throw some light on the book market of Peking and Shanghai in late Imperial China.

Hugo Lund spent time in Shanghai on two occasions. On his journey to China he and his wife had arrived first in Hong Kong (4.4.1899), from where they set out and reached Shanghai (9.4.1899), being received there most friendly by representatives of the Russian Embassy (11.4.1899). One month later they boarded a ship that would bring them to Tientsin, from where they finally proceeded by train and donkey to Peking. The second time they arrived in Shanghai was from the North. They disembarked at Shanghai harbour on 7.9.1900 and stayed 16 months, leaving the city only on 21.12.1901 by a German steamship, never to return to China again.

Hugo Lund kept a travel diary and made notes of his doings in his agenda. A further source concerning his activities in China is his correspondence with Otto Donner, as well as with his family. One of the few omissions, however, is related to his spending time in Shanghai. Whether it was the loss of all his notes from the first half of the journey that made him resign or whether other reasons kept him from writing is not known, but, as the following pages will reveal, it is exactly this time that would be of great interest.

**The texts.** All of the 105 booklets in Lund's collection «follow the same pattern». They consist of 6 to 15 pages, size 16 x 10 cm, of very fragile poor quality paper. The front pages in most of these booklets all follow the same structure. In the ideal case they bear four lines: One horizontal line at the top, which tells about the edition and a melody type. Next there is one vertical line each at the left and at the right, flanking a field in the centre: The line on the right side notes the number of the edition and gives some general comment on the content. The centre part, in bold letters, presents the title, while the line on the left side finally relates the place where it has been printed.

For example, the information contained on the front page of Text 1 may be analyzed as follows: «A Banquet at the Teahouse» *Dachahui* 《打茶会》. The horizontal line at the top says: «*Shidiao*-Melody, freshly cut (print letters)» 新刻时调. The right side repeats «carved in the New Year» 新年刻, while the left side informs the reader that the piece has been «done at our own premises (hall)» 本堂兑. The central field finally

tells the title. On the first reading this front page provides rather little real information. The time reference («freshly cut, New Year») does not tell us the year and thus does not lead very far, neither does the place reference («by the house»), which appears with slight variation on 22 of the 105 front pages). I will come to the «melody type» later, but even the title of the genre as such, *Shidiao*, «Seasonal Melody», seen isolated and unrelated to other information, is rather evasive. To expound the features and history of *Shidiao* Melodies would lead too far in the scope of this article, but they have been fashionable in varying forms nearly all over China for a long period of time.

**Place reference.** This front page of *Dachahui* 《打茶会》 stands as a typical example for most of the other booklets as well. In most cases the left line, containing the place name or the name of a print shop remains empty. Thus the place of origin (and thus a source for speculation on where Hugo Lund had bought them) is often missing. In a number of cases the name of the publisher or print shop is given, like, for instance, «House of Accumulating Luck». Still, these are mostly poetic names, and it is obvious that an original name of a city or of a publishing house would be more helpful in finding a way through the alleyways of Zhejiang and Jiangsu. A careful search through all material on print shops in that area available to me revealed nothing but that «House of Accumulating Luck» was a popular name for theatre halls, teahouses, whore houses, and also print shops, in the 19th century. Still, seven such front pages also bear the name of an actual city:

- (A) Gusu 姑苏, a poetic synonym for Suzhou
- (B) Suzhou 苏州
- (C) Shen 申, a poetic synonym for Shanghai
- (D) Shangyang 上洋, a poetic synonym for Shanghai
- (E) Junning 郡宁, referring to *Ning* 宁, a poetic synonym for Nanking
- (F) Dangzhou 荡州, a city in Jiangsu province
- (G) Jiangbei 江北

Thus, according to the information on these front pages, 7 out of the 105 texts relate to Jiangsu, Shanghai and the surrounding cities as the place of printing, with Nanking as one rather distant source.

By the autumn of the year 1898, only a few months before Lund arrived in Shanghai, the railway to Nanking via Suzhou, and also the Hangzhou line, was put into use. To reach Dangzhou was not possible by rail and given the social climate and atmosphere between foreigners and the Chinese after the crushing of the *Yihetuan* uprising it seems very unlikely that a foreigner might have visited rural areas at that particular time. Lund himself indicated that much on 12.4.1901 in a letter to Otto Donner: «[...] going somewhere further inside the country is probably not

wise.»<sup>2</sup> Still, as Lund has seemingly visited Hangzhou on the business of buying books, he could also have taken the train to Suzhou, the more so as both cities were more interesting to the scholar of Chinese studies than Shanghai.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Suzhou has a long tradition of publishing and printing. Thus it is possible that Lund bought the texts in at least one of these three cities. I will later return to the question of the place of origin and move on to the genres and topics involved.

**Melody types.** As the front page indicates a variation of melody types and, also, as some of the booklets bear titles identical with some of the range of Chinese Opera, it would appear safe to assume that they contain arias or other sung material. Now, if it were a question of opera libretti the role types of the actual play would be given in brackets or in negative print on top of the line, giving also orders for directing, like, for instance, whether the actual role is singing, sighing or talking. Further, they would unfailingly tell which melody from the range of Chinese Opera (*Qupai* 曲牌) the role is about to sing. The textbooks in Lund's collection, however in no case contain more than two role types, though in the vast majority of cases (103 out of 105) they name none. Yet they do contain in several cases the directing orders for sung and prose parts.

The briefness of the texts alone, or the absence of structuring features like, for instance, scenes would not yet exclude the possibility that they belonged to some sort of local opera, such as *Zhezixi* 折子戏. Opera performances consisting of a loose arrangement of popular arias and scenes do exist.<sup>4</sup> Textbooks for solo performances of particular successful and popular arias are not unusual, either, but none of the 105 titles relates to any of those famous dramas that stock the fundus for tragic or heroic singing.

Even so, the absence of role type categories and *Qupai* titles makes it quite sure that no branch of Chinese Opera is involved here at all. Instead, the fact that it seems to be a question of a type performance that uses exclusively monologue or dialogue structure points to another direction. The only genre to use just one or maximum two persons is ballad and teahouse singing. This conclusion is further supported by some of the melody types, as listed on the front pages. The melody types most commonly used in the texts are *Toudiao* 偷调 and *Shidiao* 时雕. Both are melody types that form a part of the *Suzhou Tanci* 苏州弹词, a branch of ballad singing in which sung and prose parts alternate. *Tanci* in

---

<sup>2</sup> Halén, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> cf. *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne*, vol. XXI/6 (1903), p. 28. For this information I am much indebted to Harry Halén.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, the present situation in Chinese Opera houses indicates that in a few years' time the performance of a complete opera, from the first to the last scene, will be an unheard-of phenomenon and the *Zhezixi* the norm.

itself is diversified into many different styles. The *Toudiao* 偷调 originated from Tou Xiushan 偷秀山, an artist who lived in the first half of the 19th century in Suzhou, and became soon popular along the Southern areas of Jiangsu 江苏 down to Shanghai and Zhejiang 浙江. This is also part of the Wu 吴 area, where *Wuyu* 吴语 is spoken.

The term *Tanci* 弹词 is an abbreviation of *Tanchang cihua* 弹唱词话, meaning 'plucking [string instruments], singing and reciting', in other words, 'vocals and strings'. Already during the Yuan and Ming dynasties *Tanci* was very popular and widespread. At that time it was still sung with drum percussion and the accompaniment of instruments, as they are still used today in the *Nanguan* 南管 music of Fujian and Taiwan. One of the appealing features of *Tanci* up to the present day is the fact that it is a genre that picks up new topics according to the time and reacts quickly to social and political changes.<sup>5</sup> The *Tanci* booklets here in question also contain texts that reflect the many social problems of Old Shanghai and the French Concession.

*Shidiao* 时调, unlike *Tanci*, are popular songs that are less a matter of performance but were mainly sung at the time of recreation. Still, occasionally *Shidiao* could also be performed by semiprofessional or professional singers at teahouses and on market places or in the streets. During work times it was customary in the Wu area to sing *Shange*, which were explicitly work songs. In Lund's text collection there are 19 *Shange*. Already at the end of Ming times *Shidiao* became popular in the Yangzi area, spreading later to Nanbei, Hubei, Anhui, Suzhou, Hunan, Guangxi and further on.

All in all, the 105 texts in the collection name over 40 different melody types. It would go beyond the scope of this article to discuss them all, but it may be generalized that they relate to various musical traditions from the range of ballad singing in the area of Suzhou and Shanghai. As such they correspond well with the place names given above. Thus, to recapitulate: The textbooks in Lund's collection contain songs and prose texts for *Toudiao* 偷调 as well as other similar ballad performances for one or two actors. The melody titles given are not typical for opera, but for popular vocal music in the Wu area.

**Time reference.** Out of the 105 textbooks only six show a time reference. Apart from one, all relate to the period Qing Guangxu 清光绪 (1875-1908) prior to the year 1900 as the year of printing.<sup>6</sup> This corresponds reasonably well with the time Hugo Lund spent in Shanghai. Thus, the

<sup>5</sup> Cf. e.g. *Shanghai Shuochangji* 《上海说唱集》 [Collection of *Shuochang* texts], Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe 上海文艺出版社, 1978.

<sup>6</sup> Only one textbook bears a postscript that identifies it as a reprint from the year Qing Tongzhi 清同治 5 (1866). The absence of any time reference in the remaining texts in fact reflects the casual attitude of the public concerning colloquial literature.

texts could have been on sale and performed at the time of his visit. But since Hugo Lund spent over a year in Shanghai it is necessary here to cast an eye on the actual places where such songs were sung, and also on the content of the songs as well as, finally, on the publishing market and availability of such texts.

Though a detailed literary analysis of the songs will be given in a forthcoming publication it can be said already at this point that they deal to a substantial part with love and passion. Longing for absent lovers or the pleasures of a banquet at a brothel are among the typical topics. In between, ballad versions of folk operas, heroic or humoristic tales, Buddhist folk material, and even a lament on the abysses of drug addiction can be found. But titles like «Nun, Craving for the World of Dust», «Song of the Fifth Night Watch» or «The 18 Strokes of Massage» may speak for themselves.

While already back in Shanghai, Lund received a letter by Otto Donner in which the latter urges him to «try and get Chinese Literature from older and newer times, so that your new collection of books and manuscripts shall be as rich and valuable as possible.»<sup>7</sup> Beside the large collection of around 40 meters of classical books that Lund sent to Finland from Shanghai this small package of «Chinese Literature from newer times» is hardly visible. Still, it is amusing to note that a man who already in London took his lodging with the secretary of a Bible Society and also in Shanghai visited members of a Missionary Society returned to Finland in the possession of dozens of semierotic songbooks. But there is no doubt that these songbooks match the overall impression Shanghai made on Lund and his contemporaries. As one missionary put it: «If God lets Shanghai prevail then he owes Sodom and Gomorra an apology.» Some statistical numbers may illustrate this exclamation: In the year 1900 the population of the two Shanghai Foreign Concessions counted altogether 44,000 people, out of which 7,400 were foreigners and far beyond 4,000 were prostitutes. The ratio men to women in the year 1930 was still 164 : 100.<sup>8</sup>

Whether Lund was aware at all of what he was buying is more than doubtful, as the language of the texts contains many colloquialisms which he had no chance to understand. Obviously, he has not read the song texts, nor has anybody else. The condition of the paper is pristine and good. Despite the fragile consistence of the thin paper no scratches or stains can be found. This could hardly be the case if the booklets had been

---

<sup>7</sup> see *Halén*, p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> Gao Fujin 高福进: *Yang yule de liuru* 《洋娱乐的流入》 [The Spreading of Foreign Entertainment], Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe 上海人民出版社, 2003, p. 125, 56. The numbers given here do not even reflect the actual situation, as Gao took only those prostitutes into consideration that were officially employed by brothels. He assumes that several thousand more worked on private account.



bought on a visit to a *Tanci* performance, with someone around able to understand them. Although he had found a private teacher, Lund obviously had not shown the texts to him, for even browsing through the booklets would inevitably have left marks in them. In fact, none of the booklets shows any signs of having been opened even once. No page is dented. Furthermore, they have all been neatly stacked, and some even appear in doublets. The latter circumstance leads us to the conclusion that the buyer has taken them from some shelf and by mistake grabbed two copies at the same time.

**The book market in late Imperial China.** Around the end of the 19th century the print market in Shanghai with all its multitude of book shops, large printing houses, small print shops and book stalls, was divided into seven sectors:

(1) **Western bookshops:** Here books and newspapers produced in local Western-style print houses were on sale. The lithograph technique had been introduced to China in Shanghai by a British missionary church called London Society in the year 1843 for the printing of Bibles. Later, the American Missionary Society opened the American Chinese Bookshop, using brass letters. Modern print technology spread from Shanghai to other Chinese cities.

(2) **Chinese bookshops,** selling traditionally mainly thread-bound books 线装书, printed in the traditional technique and packed (包) in blue cotton covers. The older technique of storing the volumes of thread-bound books in wooden caskets, preferably from cherry or appletree wood, had by the end of the 19th century already become rare. Caskets were still produced, but they had achieved the status of collector items.<sup>9</sup> The history of some of these book shops goes back as far as to Ming dynasty. While Peking was the centre of government printing and the publishing of orthodox literature, book merchants and publishing houses of the Suzhou and Jiangxi regions dominated the market for fiction and popular literature. Up to the end of the 19th century the majority of bookshops at *Liulichang*, the major Peking book market, were from the southern Yangzi region.<sup>10</sup>

Many of those bookshops also offered antiquarian sales, as in the Guangxu period it was still customary for wealthy educated gentlemen to engage in collecting rare prints. The prices for antiquarian books were not fixed and serious bargaining was part of the collector's joy. The

<sup>9</sup> Chu Yihua 屈义华 & Xun Changrong 荀昌荣 (eds.): *Zhongguo Shuwenhua* 《中国书文化》 [Chinese Book Culture], Changsha: Hunan Daxue Chubanshe 湖南大学出版社, 2002, p. 75. See also Denis Twitchett: *Printing and Publishing in Medieval China*, New York 1983.

<sup>10</sup> Evelyn S. Rawsky: «Economic and Social Foundations of Late Imperial Culture. The Publishing Industry», in: D. Johnson & A. J. Nathan & al. (eds.), *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, p. 27.

difference to bargaining in everyday life was that book bargaining was not verbal but happened to take place in the wide sleeve of the *Changpao* 长袍, the traditional long dress of the Chinese scholar. Hands and forearms of the two parties met in the sleeve. Via the invisible finger signs the two parties would agree on a price and none of the bystanders would ever know the real price for which the book was sold. Such confidential arrangements were advantageous for both the seller and the customer.

As the workers in the Western printing houses were in the majority Chinese, the skills for modern technique spread rapidly. Gradually also Chinese entrepreneurs engaged in founding modern printing houses and newspapers.<sup>11</sup> One of the first major projects for printing Chinese classical literature in the new technique was the new edition of the *Gujin tushu jicheng* 《古今图书集成》 by the Tongwen Shuju Publishing House 同文书局 of Xu Hongpu 徐鸿甫 in the first half of the Guangxu period. Thereafter also Classical Chinese novels, as well as the *Peiwen yunfu* 《佩文韵府》 and the *Ershisi shi* 《二十四史》 appeared in modern print.<sup>12</sup> Thus, from the final part of the Guangxu period onwards, the structure and techniques of Chinese publishing houses adjusted to Western standards. Still, traditional printing and binding, being more expensive in production, went on in smaller quantities and was designed for the upper market.<sup>13</sup>

(3) **Antiquariats:** Secondhand bookshops offered not only the usual antiquarian services. They also organized a very peculiar kind of blind auction, called *fenghuo* 封货, «locked commodity». If, for instance, a collector decided to part with some of his books he would deliver them to an antiquarian. The antiquarian would evaluate the collection and classify the books in groups. The best books would get tags attached to them with numbers between e.g. 1 and 20. The next quality group received the numbers 21 to 50, etc. On the day of the auction the seller/clerk raised a sign with nothing but the number of a certain book. The customers thus knew the category of the book, but neither the title or edition, nor the condition. There was a possibility that he might get a very valuable edition for a relatively low price. It was equally possible though that, for various reasons, the offer was not worth bidding at all. Only after having secured the bid the customer got certainty of his purchase. This system, being close to betting, might have had its risks, but it incorporated high

<sup>11</sup> Tong Zhiqiang 童志强 (ed.): *Shanghai bainian wenhuashi* 《上海百年文化史》 [Shanghai Cultural History of 100 Years], Shanghai: Shanghai Kexue Jishu Wenxian Chubanshe 上海科学技术文献出版社, p. 1383.

<sup>12</sup> Gu Bingquan 顾炳权 (ed.): *Shanghai Fengsu Gujikaoh* 《上海风俗古迹考》 [Research on Old Traces of Shanghai Customs], Shanghai: Huadong Shifan Daxue 华东师范大学, p. 302.

<sup>13</sup> *Chu Yihua* 屈义华 & Xun Changrong 荀昌荣 (eds.): *Zhongguo Shuwenhua* 《中国书文化》, p. 92.



chances for both the customer and the seller. As with any auction, part of the sum acquired went to the auctioneer.

(4) **Temple print shops**, producing Buddhist Sûtras or Daoist scriptures, amulets and charms and selling exclusively on the temple grounds.<sup>14</sup> Popular religious literature was found in most families at the end of the 19th century, as E. T. Williams reported from the years 1900-1901.<sup>15</sup> But in non-Buddhist temple compounds also secular book-stalls could be found.

(5) **Newspapers and magazines**: From the very beginning, Shanghai was the centre of mass media in China. In the year 1889 already more than 60 different newspapers and magazines appeared regularly there. On 14.2.1901, when Hugo Lund had been just half a year in town, the leading Chinese newspaper *Shenbao* 申报 published its 10,000th issue.<sup>16</sup> If he was well informed of the cultural scene he might have noticed that with the theatre periodical *Wenmingxi* 文明戏 an artistic magazine for the first time took up the topic of the Boxer Rebellion from a Chinese perspective—that very event that certainly was among the most crucial in his life.<sup>17</sup> The new trend in cultural circles, as reflected in the theatre publications of *Wenmingxi*, was foremost represented by a generation of young actors and writers, some of whom had returned from Japan and initiated a debate on reformist and patriotic ideas that was one of the major intellectual movements of the decade in Shanghai.

(6) **Street side book stalls**: Perhaps the most frequented place to buy books for the local and uneducated customer were *Shutan* 书摊, simple book stalls, pitched up in the morning against a wall or at a street corner and stored away at sunset. They provided a wide range of popular reading, mainly low quality booklets that could be classified as cheap in every aspect. In the upper range of their products lay folk stories like Meng Jiangnü 孟姜女, the paragon of chaste women, ghost stories and fairy tales. But the main selling item of *Shutan* was knight and warrior novels that until today count among the most favourite reading for the Chinese youth. They also provide the background for a large section of the Chinese film industry and have in the last two years provided the topics for the three most successful movies in China.

<sup>14</sup> Meng Lingbing 孟令兵: *Shanghai wenhua qipa. Shanghai foxue* 《上海文化奇葩, 上海佛学》 [Rare Flowers of Shanghai. Shanghai Buddhism], Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe 上海人民出版社, p. 5ff.

<sup>15</sup> E. T. Williams: «Some Popular Religious Literature of the Chinese», in: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, China Branch, 33 (1900/1901), p. 11ff.

<sup>16</sup> Tong Zhiqiang 童志强 (ed.): *Shanghai bainian wenhuashi* 《上海百年文化史》, p. 195f, 1328f. On the history of the Chinese press, see *Chu Yihua* 屈义华 & Xun Changrong 荀昌荣 (eds.): *Zhongguo Shuwenhua* 《中国书文化》, p.97ff.

<sup>17</sup> Tong Zhiqiang 童志强 (ed.): *Shanghai bainian wenhuashi* 《上海百年文化史》, p. 195f, p. 1280f.

Already in a Late Qing dynasty Shanghai magazine a desperate poet bemoans the devastating influence of such book stalls on the young generation:

«These licentious booklets are most harmful to all,  
The youths that buy and read them give up all their spirit,  
At corners and alleyways, everywhere are these bookstalls,  
Where weird stories of all times turn into real.»<sup>18</sup>

Apart from cheap novels the *Shutan* also provided texts of popular folk songs, of Tanci ballad singing and of popular arias of the Chinese Opera, as they were also available in the tea and opera houses. Entire opera texts were rarely on sale in *Shutan* though, as those used to be published in literary collections by distinguished publishing houses. *Tanci* was considered low class entertainment and in no way comparable to real opera. Furthermore *Shutan* functioned as street libraries, where the customers came to read on the spot, like this poem describes vividly:

«Why gather all these children in such a crowd?  
They came here for nothing but to read those small booklets.  
Gods, and immortals, demons and witches—all sheer fabrication,  
Destroy the spirit of the youth, and lead their good intentions astray.»

A substantial part of the revenue of *Shutan* was the sale of seasonal products and popular semireligious material, like block prints of New Year posters, manuals and calendars. Finally, some of such book stalls sold second hand pamphlets and waste paper. They acquired their material from what was offered to them by people coming along. Not seldom even just fractions of books or magazines, all in a heap and in no order lay out on the table.

(7) **Tanci print shops.** The print shops again, that worked for the *Shutan* were often attached to teahouses and printed the texts that were performed on their stages. The repertoire comprised besides *Tanci* also *Xiaodiao* 小调, so called «Little Melodies», and sometimes excerpts from local opera. Therefore, *Tanci*-songbooks could also be bought directly in the teahouses.

These print shops were of a much lower standard than those in which common books were printed. Their production notoriously contained grave misprints, the lines were of uneven character numbers, the paper was of low grade and the pages were not bound but rather carelessly glued at the back. The product was meant for quick

<sup>18</sup> Woan Zhuren 颐按主人:《上海商业市景词》. This and the following poem 《上海鳞瓜竹枝子》 by Ye Zhongjun 叶仲钧 are quoted from Gu Bingquan 顾柄权: *Shanghai Fengsu Gujika* 《上海风俗古迹考》, p. 308.

consumption and represented the songs currently in fashion. The customers of Tanci print shops usually came from the ranks of the semiliterate and spoke exclusively the local dialect. Thus, also the *Tanci* reflected the spoken language of the day, including both dialect and slang expressions of the city in which they were sung. Characters for terms with entirely different pronunciation got exchanged for others representing Shanghai or Suzhou pronunciation.

The *Tanci* booklets of the Lund collection reveal many irregular characters due to pronunciation differences. The following are some examples from the above-mentioned text *Da chahui* 《打茶会》, which contains many character variations that reflect the Shanghai dialect:

[...] *Qiao shouduan, nai shu wo ying* 巧手段, 奈输我赢  
«[...], a clever move! Handling the loosing I win!»

In the second part of this phrase the character *nai* 奈 (on the left side here written with the *ren* radical 人) does not make much sense. It substitutes the Mandarin *ni* 你 and means also ‘you’ in the Shanghai dialect. Thus the sentence translates: «[...], a clever move! You loose, I win!» Apart from those misunderstandings that go back to a different pronunciation, also dialectal expressions can cause confusion:

*Zui xiang yingtao, han miantang*, [...] , *qing yong dianxin* ,  
嘴像樱桃, 喊面汤, [...] , 请用点心  
«Her mouth is like a cherry, taste the face soup, [...],  
and please have some Dimsum [cakes],»

Most readers might be irritated by the expression «taste the face soup», though this means in Shanghai nothing but ‘wash your face’, here probably before the next course of the meal. Similarly, the characters *she shiti* 舍事体 (舍, written with the *kou*-radical 口 on the left side) are not translated, for instance, «abandon [your] affairs and body». Instead, it is the Shanghai dialect phrase *shashiti*, for which the Mandarin version would be *shen[mo] shi[jian]* 什么事件, meaning ‘what’s going on’ or ‘what are you up to’.

Similar examples could be chosen from most of the texts. Without a certain knowledge of the Wu dialect, spoken in the area between Nanking and Shanghai, and Hangzhou and Wuxi, the texts would be unintelligible. Thus, as is evident from the Wu dialect homonym «misprints» and other irregularities, the print shops that made the *Tanci* texts in Lund’s collection belonged to that lowest of all categories that produced mainly for the *Shutan*, the open air book stalls.

**The publishers of Tanci.** Generally speaking, the publishers of the *Tanci* text books here in question were the very teahouses in which they were

performed. This is evident from the text on the front pages. Most often they identify the publisher by a few lapidary characters:

*bentang fadui* 本堂发兑: «published and produced by the own hall»

*bentang zi* 本堂梓: «produced by the own hall»

*chaoben, bentang fadui, xinke* 抄本。本堂发兑。新刻 «manuscript, published and produced by the own hall, freshly carved».

The phrase «freshly carved» is used in a relative meaning, as the publishers kept the woodblocks in store. At any given time they were taken out again and used to reprint booklets that had been sold out. The production of songbooks under the use of such woodblock prints was quick and inexpensive, as usually unskilled labour like women and children were employed in the lower print shops.

«Hall» is a rather neutral or even an honorary term. It is used in various binomes in the field of urban business life of the time. Most representative might be the title of two professions, which describe the range of meaning the character *tang* transported in the Shanghai and Suzhou teahouse culture at that time: One is *Tangguan* 堂倌, another *Tangzi* 堂子. *Tangguan* 堂倌 stands for a 'waiter' of a teahouse or a theatre, while *Tangzi* 堂子 is a local expression for a 'prostitute' attached to a teahouse and/or a brothel. These two meanings do not contradict each other. Various sources from the Guangxu 光绪 period (1875-1908) reveal that it was common for prostitutes of the higher categories to work in teahouses and also to sing Tanci ballads:

文运街头几次过，枇杷庭院笛声多，拈酸醋曲闻堪鲜，其耐郎心薄幸何！  
«Crossing the street of the Altar of Learning, the sound of flute fills the halls of the pipa tree. The songs of jealousy of customers and flower girls are really peculiar; and how could I suffer the heartless cruelty of my lover!»<sup>19</sup>

The «alleys of the *pipa* gates» 枇杷门巷 is a euphemism for those houses where prostitutes lived. Similar sources, which relate of the singing and music in brothels, are plenty. Evidently, no clear distinction between teahouses, where music and recital was performed, and houses that provided also all services of brothels existed at those times. Thus, the *Tang* halls that published the booklets and printed them in attached print shops were teahouses in which *Tangzi*, higher class prostitutes performed for their (usually male) guests. Up to the 1870s, a clear distinction between Tanci singers and singsong girls was observed. But only twenty years later the line between these two professions had become blurred. The main reason for this development was the growing competition

<sup>19</sup> *Luoru huaguan zhuren* 洛如花馆主人:《春申浦竹枝词》, quoted after Gu Bingquan 顾柄权: *Shanghai Fengsu Gujika*, p. 302.

between the female singers, which forced many to work on conditions far below their education.

The 105 *Tanci* booklets in Lund's collection contain different materials and might not even have been bought at the same occasion. They appear in different designs and bear the names of different publishing houses or print shops. Thus, there are at least two possibilities as to how they could have come into Lund's possession:

The first possibility is that he, during his stay in Shanghai and the surrounding area, frequently visited teahouses himself. This is less weird as it sounds. Any foreigner might very well not have been aware of what was actually going on in front of his eyes. The singsong girls were no prostitutes like those that populated the Shanghai streets in the evenings. They had taken years of training in singing and playing musical instruments. In the daytime the teahouses were perfectly respectable établissements. Among all the multitude of rude entertainments and sailors' bars, the lively atmosphere of the teahouse was probably among the rather appealing and enchanting ones. Still today, the few teahouses that are left display an atmosphere of lightness and pleasure. The *Tanci* ballads and *Xiaodiao* melodies might not sound as mellow as the *Nanguan* ensembles of Xiamen and Fuzhou mentioned above, but they are still melodic and nice to listen to.

The second possibility is that Lund had asked some third party to collect such (or any kind of) texts for him. Considering that he had employed the services of a private teacher from Peking in Shanghai this might also very well have been the case.

To conclude this contemplation on a young man in the maelstrom of historical events I would like to direct attention to the fact that the Sinological scholarly circles at the *fin de siècle* generally did not engage in popular culture. Among the first who recognized the value of such a thing as colloquial literature, and of the artistic expression of the common people, was Zheng Zhenduo 郑振铎 (1898-1958), who, however, only from 1926 onwards published his first articles about ancient folk songs and the *bianwen* 变文 transformation texts of the Tang dynasty.<sup>20</sup> But even he initially chose to investigate colloquial literature in remote antiquity, while he could have gone and listened to the *Guci* 鼓词 singers in the outskirts of Peking, where the ballads are performed up to the present day. Only after having thus established an historical foun-

<sup>20</sup> Zheng Zhenduo 郑振铎: 《郑振铎说俗文学》 [Talks by Zheng Zhenduo on Popular Literature], Shanghai: Guji Chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 2002, p. 7; *Baixue yiyinxuan* 《白雪遗音选》 [Collection of Sound Traces from the White Snow], originally published 1926 in *Gudai mingexuan* 《古代民歌选》 [Collection of Ancient Folk songs].

dation, did he go on to study contemporary Chinese folksongs. It is thus perfectly understandable that Hugo Lund at the turn of the century did not pay much attention to the song texts of teahouse culture. Nevertheless, the fact he had the foresight to buy such material was certainly a sign of an unconventional approach. Perhaps he acted in response to a letter of Otto Donner, who wrote to him: «[...] often it is so that literary treasures are hidden beneath a seemingly modest surface.»<sup>21</sup>

In accordance with the academic spirit of his time Lund directed his energies to Classical Literature. He had been working already in Peking, but also after his return from China, on the preface of the *Shuowen Jiezi* 《说文解字》, the oldest Chinese dictionary with phonetic explanations. On 30.10.1902 Lund gave a paper on Chinese Literature at a meeting of the Finno-Ugrian Society. His university education had supplied him with the tools to deal with classical texts, but nobody at the Humboldt University in 1894 would have been able to teach him colloquial Chinese spoken in the teahouses of Shanghai.

But whether Hugo Lund really had developed a liking for teahouse culture, become a connoisseur in the field of Oolong teas and ballad singing and bought the texts right there on the spot, or whether one sunny day he halted his steps at some street corner, took out a few copper coins and bought a stack of peculiarly-looking booklets with interestingly unusual Chinese characters on the front cover, is a question that probably will never be answered.

---

<sup>21</sup> see Halén, p.52.