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Lingnan Literati and Cantonese Love Songs

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I. Introduction

Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962) is probably best known for the leading role he played in China's Vernacular Literature Movement (*Baihua yundong* 白話運動) in the early 1900s; the publication of his "Tentative Proposals for the Improvement of Literature" (*Wenxue gailiang chuyi* 文學改良芻議) in 1917 is often viewed as the opening salvo that launched the movement.[1] What is less well known is that he was also interested in the use of regional Chinese vernaculars in literature. In a 1925 preface for the collection *Songs of Wu (I)* (*Wuge jiaji* 吳歌甲集), Hu explicitly argues that promotion of written vernaculars in China should include vernaculars other than Mandarin, and makes particular mention of Wu (Suzhounese) and Cantonese. Of these two, Hu feels Suzhounese has the most potential as a literary language, and he offers several reasons: China's Wu-speaking region is large; use of Suzhounese in writing has a 300-year tradition; all over China people who learn to sing Kun opera have training in Suzhounese; Wu-speaking Shanghai has risen to be China's commercial centre; and the beautiful girls of the Jiangnan region have won the hearts of China's youth. In the following year, in the preface to a new edition of the novel, *Flowers of Shanghai* (*Haishanghua liezhuan* 海上花列傳),

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1 Jerome Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance: Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution, 1917–1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 76.

he argues that the appearance of this novel is another reason to believe Suzhounese has a bright future as a literary language.[2]

In contrast, Hu views Cantonese as having somewhat dimmer prospects as a written language, largely because Cantonese is too distant from other varieties of Chinese. However, he acknowledges that Cantonese already has a significant written tradition, and makes special mention of a collection called *Cantonese Love Songs* (*Jyut Au* 粵謳)[3] by Zhao Ziyong 招子庸 (1793–1847). Hu feels these songs have considerable literary merit, and that they should be viewed as the "centre" of the written Cantonese tradition.

Over the subsequent century, as we now know, Cantonese actually developed more as a written and even literary language than Wu did, but we should not be too critical of Hu's assessment of the situation in the 1920s—most of his reasons for predicting the brighter future for written Wu were by and large quite reasonable, at least at the time when he was writing. Having said that, I think that it is fair to point out that Hu missed one attribute of the written Cantonese tradition, one that suggests that, even by the 1920s, it had already developed further as a written language than Suzhounese had: the number of socially prominent individuals associated with the written Cantonese tradition and, more specifically, with the Cantonese love song genre. In essence, my argument will be that the number of prominent and influential individuals associated in one way or another with the Cantonese love song genre is an important indicator that—with the exception of Mandarin—it had developed further as a written language than other Chinese vernaculars.

I certainly do not intend to suggest that the Cantonese love song genre was the only written Cantonese genre associated with socially prominent people. For example, in the early 1800s, He Huiqun 何惠群 (n.d.), an imperial

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[2] Hu Shi 胡適, "Wuge jiaji xu" 吳歌甲集序 [Preface to *Songs of Wu (I)*], in *Hu Shi wenji* 胡適文集 [Hu Shi's collected works], vol. 4, edited by Ouyang Zhesheng 歐陽哲生 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998 [1925]), p. 576; Hu Shi, "Haishanghua liezhuan xu" 海上花列傳序 [Preface to *Shanghai Flowers*], in *Hu Shi wenji*, vol. 4 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998 [1926]), p. 406.

[3] Romanization for texts written in Cantonese follows the Jyut Ping system, as found in Robert Bauer, *ABC Cantonese-English Comprehensive Dictionary* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2021).

examination degree-holder (*jinshi* 進士) and official, compiled a collection of texts in Cantonese called *Jottings of Lingnan* (*Lingnaam ziksi* 嶺南即事) and wrote the famous Cantonese southern song (*naam jam* 南音), "Sighs of the Fifth Watch" (*Tann Ng Gaang* 嘆五更).[4] Later in the 1800s, He Danru 何淡如 (n.d.), a holder of the provincial examination (*juren* 舉人) degree, became the first person to write classical-style poems using Cantonese.[5] In the late 1800s, degree holder and prominent educator Chen Ronggun 陳蓉滾 (1862–1922) wrote literacy primers and textbooks partly in Cantonese,[6] and reform leader Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) designed educational materials for children that included Cantonese southern songs.[7]

However, I very much agree with Hu Shi's view of the importance of the Cantonese love song genre and will argue that for a number of reasons the genre is especially important in the history of Cantonese's development as a written language. Here we should note that the growth of written Cantonese—and written vernaculars in general—often does not take the form of a smooth gradual increase. Instead, its growth tends to occur more in spurts, as new genres appear and push the written vernacular into new territories. There are a number of ways in which the Cantonese love song genre made special contributions to advancing the role of written Cantonese. For its time, the genre was unusual for its extensive and obligatory usage of a regional language.

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[4] Liang Peichi 梁培熾, *Nanyin yu Yueou zhi yanjiu* 南音與粵謳之研究 [A study of Nanyin and Yueou] (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2012), p. 83; Tan Zhengbi 譚正璧 and Tan Xun 譚尋, *Muyuge ji Chaozhouge xulu* 木魚歌及潮州歌叙錄 [An annotated bibliography of wooden fish songs and Chaozhou songs] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012), p. 45.

[5] Li Wanwei 李婉薇, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie* 清末民初的粵語書寫 [Late Qing and early Republican Cantonese writings], revised edition (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 2017), p. 147.

[6] Bernard Luk, "Lu Tzu-Chun and Ch'en Jung-Kun: Two Exemplary Figures in the *Ssu-shu* Education of Pre-war Urban Hong Kong," in David Faure, James Hays, and Alan Birch, eds., *From Village to City: Studies in the Traditional Roots of Hong Kong Society* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1984), p. 127; Li, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie*, p. 282.

[7] Li, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie*, p. 272.

But the main point I wish to emphasize in this paper is the unusual degree to which the Cantonese love song genre was associated with prominent degree-holders, government officials and diplomats, and political figures, the list including not only Zhao Ziyong but also Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 (1848–1905), Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), Liao Entao 廖恩燾 (1863–1954), Cecil Clementi (1875–1947), and even—in a brief cameo appearance—Hu Shi himself. There simply is not anything else quite comparable to this in the histories of other regional written vernaculars in China.

II. What Does the Growth of a Written Vernacular Actually Entail?

What we will examine in this paper is one small but important aspect of the growth of one particular written vernacular in China. But before launching into the story of the Cantonese love song genre, it may help to step back and take a broader look at what the "growth" of a written vernacular actually is.

In the context of this paper, the phrase "the growth of a written vernacular" refers to the development of a new vernacular-based written language in a society where a classical written language—sometimes called a sacred language—is already well-established.[8] In other words, we are looking at the growth of the written form of a spoken vernacular in a society where a written language already exists (rather than in a society that lacks a written language), and where the transition under consideration is one from a classical/sacred written language to a vernacular-based written language (rather than from orality to literacy).

Like many premodern societies, premodern China was a diglossic society. As described by Ferguson,[9] diglossia is a form of societal multilingualism in which two distinct types of languages play well-defined and differing social roles: (1) The society has a "high" language (H) that is used for many/most formal or socially prestigious purposes, including most or all writing. Often H is only known by a relatively small and elite segment of the population whose social standing is based in part on their command of H. One example of this would be the role played by

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[8] Don Snow, "Revisiting Ferguson's Defining Cases of Diglossia," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 34.1 (2012): 63.

[9] Charles Ferguson, "Diglossia," *Word* 15.2 (1959): 325–40.

Latin through much of Europe's history. In premodern China, the H variety was Classical Chinese. (2) The society also has one or more "low" languages (L), which are used for most or all regular daily communication by most or all members of the society. If L is written at all, its role is generally limited to a range of low-prestige texts.

As societies begin to modernize, particularly as a mass publication industry develops, often one or more of the L varieties gradually expands into the domain of written language and print culture. Usually, it first appears in a small number of low-prestige texts that have especially close ties to spoken language. Then, as societies undergo the changes typically associated with modernization, such as the development of mass media, expansion of education and literacy, and government promotion of language policies, generally one of the L varieties is officially chosen as the new national language, and expands into all social domains, replacing H in most or all social roles. A good example of this phenomenon is the aforementioned Vernacular Literature Movement in the early 1900s in China, which led to an L variety—Mandarin—being chosen as China's national spoken and written language and replacing an H variety—Classical Chinese—as the dominant written language.

Usually long before an L variety is chosen as a national language, it has already begun "growing" as a written language, and doing so in quite a diverse variety of ways. That is to say that rather than growing along one single line—like a stalk of bamboo growing primarily in one direction—its growth is more like that of a banyan tree, with stalks, roots, and branches spreading out in many different directions.

Some of these lines of growth—and indicators that mark growth—have to do with the written language itself. For example, one line of growth has to do with increasing faithfulness to the spoken language. Early texts that incorporate elements of L are often not very similar to the spoken vernacular; for example, many texts might be better described as written in H with a light admixture of L vocabulary. However, over time, styles of writing often develop which are more consistently similar to the spoken language in their vocabulary and/or grammar. Another line of growth relates to increasing degrees of standardization. As people begin to use an L vernacular in writing, there is often a long period in which there is little agreement about how spoken words should be written down. Over time, however, a consensus may grow as to how vernacular words should be written, and also as to how one should go about creating new written forms of words for which there is no existing written form.

A second set of lines of growth relates to the texts in which the written language appears. One of these is an increase in the number of texts published.

Initially there may be very few written texts that use the vernacular, but over time the number of texts that are written partially or fully in the vernacular may increase as the vernacular is used in a wider range of different texts, or as more copies of given vernacular texts are published. Another line of growth consists of use in an increasing range of genres. When L first begins appearing in written texts, its use is often limited to a very few genres; for example, L may only appear in genres that have a particularly close tie to spoken language, such as song texts or play scripts. However, over time, L comes to be used in a wider range of genres, perhaps including some that do not have such an explicit tie to speech. Yet another closely related line of growth relates to use for an increasing range of purposes. Early on, L usually only appears in texts that have one or two purposes; for example, L may only appear in texts that are intended to entertain. However, gradually L is deployed for a wider range of purposes, such as to persuade, to instruct, or to inform.

A third set of markers has to do with readership. The main one here is growth in the number of people who are literate in the written vernacular. When the vernacular first begins to appear in written texts, it may be difficult for members of the speech community to read, which reduces the number of people able or willing to read the text. This often happens because, when members of the speech community are taught to read and write, the written language they learn is normally an H variety, and the result is that when these people first encounter L in written texts, they may find it unfamiliar and hard to understand. However, over time the number of people who can readily read and write the written vernacular may increase; similarly, there may be an increase in the number of people who develop the habit of regularly reading and writing in the vernacular.

A final, and very important, set of growth markers has to do with the social role of the written language. Lines of growth in this category include:

- *Increasing social acceptance and prestige*: In the early phases of the development of a written L vernacular, its use in written texts is often quite stigmatized, especially by anyone with a relatively high degree of education. However, over time, there may be a general increase in the social acceptability of writing in the vernacular, or at least acceptance of the vernacular in certain genres.
- *Increasing appeal to members of the speech community and perhaps even those outside*: Over time, the fact that a text is written partially or fully in vernacular may come to exert a positive appeal to some or many readers who take pleasure or pride in seeing their spoken language in print, and who may

come to view reading and/or writing in the vernacular as an "act of identity" that associates them with a desired speech community and its culture.

- *Increasing sense of historicity*: In the early phases of a written vernacular's development people often have little sense that the practice of writing in the vernacular has any degree of tradition, and it is not taken seriously as a "real" written language. However, as the body of texts written in the vernacular increases in quantity and social acceptability, there may also be a growing sense that the written vernacular does in fact have a tradition and heritage, and it begins to develop something of a respectable historical pedigree.
- *Increasing number of textbooks and reference works about the written vernacular*: In the early phases of a written vernacular's growth, it is often not considered worthy of attention from scholars, educators, and so forth. However, over time, textbooks and reference works may gradually begin to appear which not only promote learning and standardization of the written vernacular but also confer on it a greater sense of legitimacy and respect.
- *Increasing government recognition and support*: At some point in its development a vernacular-based written language may attract recognition and support from government, for example, being taught to some degree in schools.

Within this last category, one final indicator of the growth of a written vernacular is its increasing association with socially prominent people who use the written vernacular themselves or advocate its use. While it sometimes happens that socially prominent people publicly engage with the promotion of a new written vernacular from early on, it is more often the case that in the early phases of the development of a written vernacular, most people who write in the vernacular are at the margins or lower levels of the social order; people of some social standing may choose not to publicly associate their names with any works they write using the vernacular. However, over time, the written vernacular may attract socially prominent people who are willing to be associated with writing in the vernacular. This is the indicator this paper will focus on.

In premodern China, there were four L vernaculars that experienced significant development as written languages. The most important of these was obviously the variety of Chinese that we now know as Mandarin (Putonghua), which started out as the spoken language of much of northern China, then came to be the lingua franca used by Chinese government officials and the language in which much of China's premodern popular literature was written, and eventually went on to become China's national language.

Three other spoken varieties of Chinese also developed fairly significant written traditions—Suzhounese (Wu), Cantonese, and Southern Min.[10] The early development of these three other written languages was similar in several regards. First, in each case a fairly significant number of texts appeared that made obvious and significant use of elements of the local language, though the language of most texts was not a very close approximation of the spoken language.[11] Second, in each case only a limited number of genres drew on the local vernacular, generally types of "spoken/sung literature" (*shuochang wenxue* 說唱文學), and the vernacular only appeared in texts that were intended for oral performance or intended to replicate it.[12] Finally, in each case the kinds of texts that made significant use of the written vernacular were generally considered fairly low in prestige. Most works were not signed by authors, and even in the case of long texts, such as plays in Minnanese like *The Tale of the Lychee and Mirror* (*Li jing ji* 荔鏡記), long Cantonese wooden fish novels such as *The Flowery Scroll* (*Faa zin gei* 花箋記), and Chaozhou songbooks (*Chaozhou gece* 潮州歌冊), the authors today are unknown.

However, in the early 1800s a genre appeared in the Cantonese-speaking regions of China—Cantonese love songs (*jyut au* 粵謳)—which I will argue was a major breakthrough in the history of written regional vernaculars in China, especially with regard to winning acceptance from people of high social standing.

III. Beginnings

Cantonese love songs were a song genre established in the early 1800s. While the songs in the genre were usually called *jyut au*—written either as 粵謳 or sometimes 越謳 —they were also often called *gaai sam* 解心 (literally "open your heart") or *gaai sam si* 解心事. Most were fairly short, and were performed with instrumental

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[10] For the purposes of this paper, I will include the written Teochew (*Chaozhouhua* 潮州話) under Southern Min (*Minnanhua* 閩南話). While recognizing that there are differences between these spoken and written varieties of Southern Min, in early texts that are written in these varieties, such as *The Tale of the Lychee and Mirror* (*Li jing ji* 荔鏡記), there is a considerable degree of overlap.

[11] Don Snow, "Towards a Theory of Vernacularization: Insights from Written Chinese Vernaculars," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 34.6 (2013): 4.

[12] Snow, "Towards a Theory of Vernacularization," pp. 5–6.

accompaniment. At least in the early years, they were almost all love songs that focused more on expressing feelings than, for example, on telling stories or making social commentary.[13]

The genre most likely began with songs sung by courtesans on the "flower boats" of the Pearl River Delta. These were probably based on older folk song traditions and were sung in the local language—Cantonese.[14] In the 1820s, these songs attracted the attention of two local literati who began transcribing them and writing new songs in a similar form. One of these scholars—and perhaps the first to begin putting them on paper—was a degree holder named Feng Xun 馮詢 (1792–1867); unfortunately, his works have now all been lost.[15] The person whose work did the most to establish the genre was the second scholar, Zhao Ziyong.

Zhao Ziyong was a successful examination candidate who eventually attained the provincial level (*juren*) and national level (*jinshi*) degrees, and he went on to serve as an official in Shandong province for over a decade from 1829 to 1841. He was also well known in the Lingnan region as a painter.[16] After his first unsuccessful attempt to obtain the national level degree, he returned to Guangzhou for a period of time to make a living selling his paintings and spent considerable time with courtesans on the flower boats. It was during this period that he became invested in Cantonese love songs and started collecting and writing them.[17] In 1828 he published a collection of songs in Guangzhou entitled *Cantonese Love Songs—Jyut Au*—which came to be very popular and widely reprinted.[18] Of course, *Cantonese Love Songs* was not the first folk song collection produced by a member of the literati in Chinese history; for example, during the Tang dynasty Liu Yuxi

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[13] Liang, *Nanyin yu Yueou zhi yanjiu*, pp. 129–35; Tan and Tan, *Muyuge ji Chaozhouge xulu*, p. 45.

[14] Liang, *Nanyin yu Yueou zhi yanjiu*, p. 137; Li, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie*, p. 126; Bell Yung, "The Scholar and the Courtesan's Songs on the Pearl River's Flower Boats," *CHINOPERL: Journal of Chinese Oral and Performing Literature* 41.1 (2022): 38.

[15] Liang, *Nanyin yu Yueou zhi yanjiu*, p. 139; Chen Zhiqing 陳志清, *Nanyin Yueou de cilü quyun* 南音粵謳的詞律曲韻 [The tonal rhyme patterns of southern songs and Cantonese love songs] (Hong Kong: Xianggang wenxue baoshe, 1999), p. 23; Tan and Tan, *Muyuge ji Chaozhouge xulu*, p. 45.

[16] Liang, *Nanyin yu Yueou zhi yanjiu*, p. 147.

[17] Yung, "The Scholar and the Courtesan's Songs," p. 51.

[18] Liang, *Nanyin yu Yueou zhi yanjiu*, p. 195.

劉禹錫 (772–842) produced a folk song collection entitled *Bamboo Lyrics* (*Zhuzhi ci* 竹枝詞), and during the late Ming dynasty Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1646) published a collection called the *Mountain Songs* (*Shange* 山歌). However, the Cantonese Love Song collection was distinguished by the unusual degree to which it made use of a regional language, Cantonese. As Yung writes:

> First known to be sung by women on the so-called flower boats moored on the Pearl River, these songs are celebrated in part because of their use of what at that time was called 吐音 —native language, that is, colloquial Cantonese—which the locals welcomed, even though the elites thumbed their nose at them.[19]

He further notes: "Considered the first known publication written in the Cantonese language by a highly educated literatus, the text mixes colloquial Cantonese with classical idioms, allusions, and literary references . . ."[20] Of course, this was by no means the first printed text that made significant use of Cantonese. In fact, since the late Ming dynasty, printed texts in the Lingnan region included genres such as wooden fish songs (*muk jyu go* 木魚歌), southern songs, and sometimes dragon boat songs (*lung zau* 龍舟) that made regular and conspicuous use of Cantonese vocabulary.[21] However, they generally did not include as much Cantonese vocabulary as Zhao's *Cantonese Love Songs* did. Whereas the earlier wooden fish song and southern song texts often only had a few Cantonese words per printed page, accounting for 3–4 percent of the vocabulary in the text, Cantonese vocabulary appeared much more frequently in the Cantonese Love Song texts, with distinctively Cantonese vocabulary often accounting for approximately 10 percent of the vocabulary in the text.[22] (Here and below, "distinctively Cantonese vocabulary" refers to vocabulary which is normally used in Cantonese but not normally used in other varieties of Chinese. Of course, technically all the vocabulary *Cantonese Love Songs* is Cantonese in the sense that vocabulary which is shared by different varieties of Chinese belongs to all of them.) Interestingly, *Cantonese Love*

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[19] Yung, "The Scholar and the Courtesan's Songs," p. 38.

[20] Ibid., pp. 38–39.

[21] Don Snow, *Cantonese as Written Language: The Growth of a Written Chinese Vernacular* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), pp. 67–87.

[22] Ibid., pp. 222–26.

Songs also included a glossary of Cantonese words, presumably for the benefit of those who did not speak Cantonese or who had not seen Cantonese words in print before. Even though Zhao clearly wanted his Cantonese love songs to be works of literary merit, and accessible to an audience that extended beyond the Cantonese speech community, he also made a considered choice to include much Cantonese vocabulary, despite the low regard which educated people in China generally had for writing in the vernacular.

IV. Successors

One important indicator of the success of *Cantonese Love Songs* was the number of subsequent people who tried their hand at the genre in published works. One early milestone in the development of the Cantonese love song genre was a published collection called *New Open Heart Songs* (*San gaai sam* 新解心) by an unnamed author. While the precise year of publication is not known, the collection seems to have appeared not long after the first Opium War, and rather than limiting itself to songs of love between courtesans and patrons, it includes songs that discuss events of the Opium War and satirize the opium sellers.[23] This collection broadened the range of topics with which Cantonese love songs dealt and the purposes the genre served.

A somewhat later milestone was the collection *More Cantonese Love Songs* (*Zoi jyut au* 再粵謳), published in 1901 under the pen-name Xiang Mizi 香迷子. While the author's actual identity is not known for certain, Xiang Mizi may have been Huang Luxian 黃魯逸 (1869–1926), who was active in the reform movement of the period.[24] The songs in *More Cantonese Love Songs* were generally similar to the songs in Zhao's original collection[25] and thus less ground-breaking, but the popularity of the collection helped keep the Cantonese love song genre in the public eye.

In the same year, another publication of a rather different nature also called additional attention to the Cantonese love song genre. Cecil Clementi was an Oxford graduate who came to work in the civil service in Hong Kong, and

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[23] Li, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie*, pp. 127–28.

[24] Liang, *Nanyin yu Yueou zhi yanjiu*, p. 198.

[25] Ibid., p. 129.

later went on to serve as the Governor of Hong Kong (1925–1930) and Governor of the Straits Settlement (1930–1934). In 1904, not long after he passed his Cantonese examination for Hong Kong's civil service, he published an English language translation of Zhao Ziyong's collection *Cantonese Love Songs*, making Zhao's collection one of the earliest Chinese literary works to be translated in its entirety into a foreign language.[26] Clementi chose to translate these songs in large part because he felt they had considerable literary merit—in the preface to his translation, he compares the songs to the poetry of Bunyan, Virgil, and the Greek poets. He was, nevertheless, aware that the publication of such songs raised some eyebrows and went on to defend his decision in the preface:

> The Songs were not long in gaining popularity, and during the nineteenth century they established themselves so firmly in the Canton province, and especially in the city of Canton itself, that to-day they are known to high and low, rich and poor: they are sung alike by "toys of paint and powder" on board the gilt and scarlet flower-boats, by blind minstrel-girls in the houses of wealthy men, and by the dirty beggar in the suburban slum. Only sedate old age and high officialdom can find the heart to sneer at these love-songs as beneath the dignity of those who philosophize with Mencius by day, and by night pore over abstruse diagrams in the Book of Changes.[27]

He also points out that the widespread popularity of the songs "is due, in the first place, to the fact that the Songs are written in the provincial language and must, therefore, naturally appeal to those who, 'born and bred in southern villages, ply the country-speech'." Granted, he assumes that readers would sometimes have difficulty in understanding Zhao's *Cantonese Love Songs* because of "the large number of allusions to history, mythology, and novel literature—allusions which are not always familiar even to well-read Chinamen," but concludes that "context usually places the general meaning of the passage beyond doubt."[28]

A final milestone was the 1924 publication of the *New Cantonese Love Songs* (*San jyut au gaai sam* 新粵謳解心) collection by Liao Entao, the elder brother of famous revolutionary leader Liao Zhongkai 廖仲愷 (1877–1925). Liao Entao

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[26] For a more recent English translation, see Peter Morris, *Cantonese Love Songs* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1992).

[27] Cecil Clementi, *Cantonese Love Songs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), p. 1.

[28] Ibid., pp. 1–2.

received much of his education in the United States, where he grew up while his father worked for a British bank in California, but he also received a traditional Chinese literary education in Guangdong after he returned to China at the age of seventeen. In 1887 he became China's counsel in Cuba and began a long diplomatic career that included diplomatic postings in Korea, Japan, and various parts of Europe.

Despite his Western educational background, Liao also had a strong background in Chinese literary culture and became well known as a poet. In fact, among his publications is a popular collection of classical-style poems (*gelüshi* 格律詩) in Cantonese that was first published in 1924 and went on to be frequently republished in a variety of editions.[29]

However, for the purposes of this paper Liao's most important literary accomplishment was the publication of the *New Cantonese Love Songs* collection. Liao began writing Cantonese love songs in the late 1800s, and twenty-two of the approximately 100 songs he wrote during that period were published in the literary journal *New Fiction* (*Xin xiaoshuo* 新小說), where they were acclaimed by prominent people such as Liang Qichao. Later, from 1921 to 1923, he went on to write even more songs, and these were the primary material for the *New Cantonese Love Songs* collection published in 1924.[30] His interest in Cantonese love songs grew in part out of his broader interest in promotion of vernacular writing styles that were more accessible to the average reader,[31] but the large number of Cantonese love songs he wrote suggests he also simply liked this particular genre and found it a good vehicle for expressing his thoughts and feelings.

While Liao's Cantonese love songs clearly show the influence of Zhao's songs in both their content and style, he also used his Cantonese love songs for a broader range of purposes than Zhao had, often using them to comment on social issues of the day, for example, satirizing China's warlord governments.[32] In this sense, *New Cantonese Love Songs* was important not only in keeping the Cantonese love song genre in the spotlight, but also in deepening the tradition of using Cantonese love

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[29] Liang, *Nanyin yu Yueou zhi yanjiu*, pp. 211–12; Li, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie*, pp. 148–50.

[30] Li, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie*, pp. 130–31.

[31] Liang, *Nanyin yu Yueou zhi yanjiu*, p. 217; Li, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie*, p. 140.

[32] Liang, *Nanyin yu Yueou zhi yanjiu*, p. 217; Li, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie*, p. 134.

songs for social as well as literary purposes. Moreover, it deepened the tradition of employing Cantonese in literary texts, as Liao used a style even closer to colloquial Cantonese than Zhao's had been.[33]

In short, in the century after Zhao's original collection was published, Cantonese love songs went on to become a widely popular genre. Zhao's collection was often republished, and over ten editions of his collection have survived. Furthermore, as we have seen, the tradition was carried on by a number of popular subsequent collections, while individual Cantonese love songs were also frequently published in Guangzhou and Hong Kong newspapers, in some papers even appearing daily.[34] If imitation is indeed the greatest form of flattery, Zhao's collection was flattered by many—including some people with a considerable degree of social prominence.

V. Advocates and Influencers

The lustre of the Cantonese love song genre was enhanced not only by the many prominent people who chose to write in the genre, but also by others who wrote to praise texts in the genre. Below we will mention three: Huang Zunxian, Liang Qichao, and Hu Shi himself.

Huang Zunxian was born into a gentry family in Jiayingzhou, a Hakka-speaking part of the Lingnan region. After passing the civil service examination to obtain the provincial level degree in 1876, he embarked on a long and distinguished career as one of China's earliest diplomats, having been posted to Japan, the US, Europe, and eventually Singapore. In 1897 he was also appointed salt intendent in Hunan province, "a major center of reform," and helped make Hunan a model of successful reform.[35] After the failure of the 1898 reforms, he retired to his ancestral home in Jiayingzhou, where he passed away in 1905.

Huang was an early promoter of vernacular writing in China; as Schmidt notes, long before Hu Shi was even born Huang had "proposed practically all the ideas of the Vernacular Literature Movement initiated by Hu Shi in 1917. . . ."[36]

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[33] Li, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie*, pp. 139–40.

[34] Chen Ji 陳寂, "Xu" 序 [Preface], in Zhao Ziyong 招子庸, *Yue Ou* 粵謳 [Cantonese love songs] (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1986), p. 1.

[35] Jerry Schmidt, *Within the Human Realm: The Poetry of Huang Zunxian, 1848–1905* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 37–38.

[36] Ibid., p. xiii.

Furthermore, he was the originator of the phrase "My hand should write what my mouth speaks" (*Wo shou xie wo kou* 我手寫我口),[37] which became one of the best-known slogans of vernacular language movements in China. He also developed an interest in writing in local vernaculars such as his own native Hakka, and in the late 1860s began experimenting with writing folk songs in Hakka which were later published as *Mountain Songs* (*Shange* 山歌) in his collected poetic works. While the Hakka songs he produced did not in fact include much distinctively Hakka vocabulary and were generally not very faithful representations of spoken Hakka,[38] his efforts in this direction demonstrate a sincere interest in developing writing styles based on local vernaculars.

Huang's tie to the Cantonese love song story lies partly in that, even though his own native language was Hakka rather than Cantonese, he knew and appreciated Zhao Ziyong's Cantonese Love Songs, and was particularly moved by the song titled "Dirge for Qiu Xi" (*Diu caohei* 吊秋喜)[39], which he later alluded to in one of his own poems.[40] More importantly, as he became involved in China's reform movement he came to feel that literary genres which employed regional languages, such as Cantonese love songs in Cantonese and plucked lyrics ballads (*tanci* 彈詞) in Suzhounese, would serve well as models for a new literature in China, and proposed this idea in a 1902 letter to Liang Qichao,[41] the prominent personage we turn to next.

Liang Qichao was one of the most prominent and famous advocates of reform in the late Qing period, playing a major role in Kang Youwei's failed 1898 reform movement. Born in 1873 in Xinhui, Liang first studied under Kang Youwei alongside classmates such as the aforementioned Chen Ronggun. In 1896

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[37] Zhou Xiaoping 周曉平, *Wenhua xianqude jiaojian shenzi—Huang Zunxian zai Zhongguo Xin wenxue jiangou zhong de lishi diwei yanjiu* 文化先驅的矯健身姿——黃遵憲在中國新文學建構中的歷史地位研究 [The finesse of a cultural pioneer—A study of the historical role of Huang Zunxian in the building of China's new literature] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2014), p. 82.

[38] Schmidt, *Within the Human Realm*, p. 66.

[39] For English translations, see Clementi, *Cantonese Love Songs*; Morris, *Cantonese Love Songs*, pp. 121–23; also Snow, *Cantonese as Written Language*, pp. 225–26.

[40] Li, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie*, p. 126; Yung, "The Scholar and the Courtesan's Songs," p. 50.

[41] Schmidt, *Within the Human Realm*, p. 63; Li, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie*, p. 125.

he was then one of the founders of the reform-oriented publication *Journal of Contemporary Affairs* (*Shiwubao* 時務報), which was "immensely popular, with a run of more than ten thousand copies, and is usually considered the first modern Chinese magazine."[42] Here he worked alongside Huang Zunxian, who then invited him in 1897 to become an educator in Hunan Province. After the failure of the 1898 reform movement, he fled to Japan and continued to influence thought in China through his extensive writing efforts.

Like Huang, Liang believed strongly in the value of vernacular-based writing styles, which he felt had the potential to reach a larger portion of China's population and also to improve the quality of China's thought and literature. As a native of a Cantonese-speaking part of Lingnan, Liang's concept of the vernacular included regional languages such as Cantonese, and in his writing he repeatedly advocated use of the vernacular, for example, praising literary works in local vernaculars and suggesting that such works should be included in educational materials. He also experimented with writing a Cantonese opera, which was performed in Japan in 1905.

Liang made his impact on the Cantonese love song genre primarily as an advocate and promoter—what we might now call an influencer. For example, in a 1902 article in the *New People's Newspaper* (*Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報), Liang described Zhao Ziyong's *Cantonese Love Song* collection as an inspired work ("*shen pin*" 神品). The following year, when six of Liao Entao's Cantonese love songs were published in the magazine *New Fiction* (*Xin xiaoshuo* 新小說), Liang soon wrote in support and praise of these new literary works.[43] As someone who was widely known and influential in China, especially among younger reform-oriented people, by calling attention to and praising works in the Cantonese love song genre, Liang helped enhance the profile of literary works that might otherwise have been confined to regional Cantonese-speaking circles.

Last but not least, we return for a moment to Hu Shi, the man credited with launching China's Vernacular Literature Movement, and one of the most famous intellectuals in early Republican China. As we have already seen, even in the 1920s Hu was describing Zhao's *Cantonese Love Songs* as works of literary

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[42] Schmidt, *Within the Human Realm*, p. 36.

[43] Li, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie*, p. 124.

merit. Furthermore, at one point in 1935, he was actually moved to attempt to write a Cantonese love song of his own—despite the fact that he was not from the Lingnan region and most certainly not a native speaker of Cantonese.[44]

In short, in the century after Zhao first published his collection, the public reception and acceptance of the Cantonese love song genre was built and enhanced not only by those who adopted the genre in their own writing, but also by praise from other prominent people—including at least some who were not Cantonese-speaking natives of Lingnan, and whose influence was national rather than primarily regional.

VI. Cantonese Love Songs and the Growth of Written Cantonese

Generally, the story of how written vernaculars developed in China is organized around genres.[45] One may argue that written vernaculars developed genre by genre, as new genres appeared in which greater use of the L vernacular was considered increasingly acceptable, despite the fact that the norm was to use Classical Chinese (H) for written texts. The Cantonese love song genre is important in the history of written Cantonese because, in a number of ways, its success as a genre broke into new territory and established a greater role for the vernacular in the domain of written language.

One important feature of the Cantonese love song genre was that, for its era, it made relatively heavy use of local language. Of course, by the 1800s there were written genres in several parts of China in which there was considerable use of regional languages, but most did not use the local language as much as Cantonese love songs used Cantonese. For example, in the 1700s and 1800s some types of opera scripts in the Jiangnan region included sections in Suzhounese. Such sections can be found in lines of some characters in Kun opera performance scripts in the *Patched Cloak of White Fur* (*Zhui baiqiu* 綴白裘) collection, and similarly in some dialogue in plucked lyric ballad (*tanci*) play scripts like *The Hibiscus Cave* (*Xiuxiang furong dong* 繡像芙蓉洞). However, in such texts use of Suzhounese only appears

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[44] Li, *Qingmo Minchu de Yueyu shuxie*, p. 159.

[45] Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 5–26.

occasionally in the lines spoken by characters of certain role types, for example, the clown (*chou* 丑) role, and doesn't appear in the lines of most characters.[46] In contrast, all the voices represented in Cantonese love songs use Cantonese.

Another example would be courtesan novels such as *Flowers of Shanghai* which began appearing in the late 1800s, which included considerable amounts of Suzhounese. However, Suzhounese was limited to the dialogue in the text, and narrative sections were entirely in Mandarin, so the overall role of Suzhounese is more limited than the role played by Cantonese in Cantonese love songs, in which the vernacular appeared throughout.

A final example would be the many Chaozhou songbooks—actually, long narrative ballads—which were published in the late 1800s and early 1900s in the eastern part of the Lingnan region and employed a considerable amount of Teochew (Chaozhou) vocabulary. As in the Cantonese love songs, Teochew appears in the lines of all characters in the story, and appears throughout the text. However, the amount of Teochew used in these songbooks tends to be somewhat lower than the amount of Cantonese used in Cantonese love songs. For example, roughly 10 percent of the vocabulary that appears in a Cantonese love song like "Dirge for Qiu Xi" is quite distinctively Cantonese; in contrast, in a typical Chaozhou songbook text the corresponding amount of distinctively Teochew vocabulary would be considerably less, around 5–6 percent.[47]

My point here is that, when compared to other 1800s genres that made use of regional Chinese vernaculars, the Cantonese love song genre stood out in terms of both the amount of regional vocabulary it used and the degree to which the use of distinctively Cantonese vocabulary permeated the entire text.

A second way in which the Cantonese love song tradition stands out is that it was a genre in which use of a local language was *obligatory* and found in all texts written in that genre. In contrast, while some kinds of opera scripts from the Jiangnan region did include lines in Suzhounese, many did not. In fact, appearance of Suzhounese in written opera texts was more the exception than the rule. Similarly, while *Flowers of Shanghai* and a number of other late-Qing / early

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[46] Don Snow, Zhou Xiayun, and Shen Senyao, "A Short History of Written Wu, Part I: Written Suzhounese," *Global Chinese* 4.1 (2018): 151–53.

[47] Don Snow and Jiajia Eve Liu, "The Language of Chaozhou Songbooks," *Global Chinese* 9.1 (2023): 63.

Republican-era courtesan novels set in Shanghai used Suzhounese in dialogue sections of the text, not all did, and by the 1920s use of Suzhounese in such novels was dwindling away.[48] In this regard, Chaozhou songbooks are an exception in that Teochew can generally be found in all Chaozhou songbook texts, though there is variation in how much Teochew is used. So the main difference between Chaozhou songbooks and Cantonese love songs is that the former were generally confined to Teochew-speaking communities, whereas the latter were able to attract a degree of attention and even acclaim outside Cantonese-speaking regions.

All of the above leads us to our third and most important point. As I have argued in this paper, one of the most important attributes of the Cantonese love song genre was a long tradition of association with prominent people. Granted, famous names were also associated with vernacular genres in other parts of China. For example, well-known authors of fiction and opera scripts such as Feng Menglong and Li Yu 李玉 (n.d.) wrote at least some texts that included use of Suzhounese; Feng Menglong's *Mountain Songs* would be a well-known example. However, during the 1800s we simply do not see a strong pattern of connection between prominent individuals and texts that used Suzhounese. One possible exception would be Han Bangqing 韓邦慶 (1856–1894), the author of *Flowers of Shanghai*, who had passed the county-level examinations (*xiucai* 秀才). However, this was the lowest of the imperial degrees, and Han Bangqing was not ever appointed as a government official. As for Chaozhou songbooks, in the great majority of cases the names of authors are not even known.[49]

In contrast, for Cantonese love songs, from the 1820s on—and well before general support for vernacular writing developed in the May Fourth era—we see degree holders, government officials and prominent reformers either writing in the Cantonese love song genre or acclaiming works written in that genre. Admittedly, not everyone who wrote Cantonese love songs chose to be publicly associated with these works; as noted above, the *New Open Heart Songs* collection was published anonymously, and *More Cantonese Love Songs* was published under a pseudonym.

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[48] Alexander Des Forges, *Mediasphere Shanghai: The Aesthetics of Cultural Production* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), p. 35.

[49] Xiao Shaosong 肖少宋, *Chao-Shan bentu ticai Chaozhou gece zhengli ji yanjiu* 潮汕本土題材潮州歌册整理及研究 [Arrangement of and research on Chao-Shan-theme Chaozhou songbooks] (Shenzhen: Shenzhen baoye jituan chubanshe, 2017), p. 5.

However, as we have seen, there were also prominent figures who were quite willing to be associated with the genre in one way or another. This was important in the development of written Cantonese because, as mentioned earlier, before an L language is chosen and promoted as a national language, its use in writing is often quite stigmatized, being widely viewed—especially by educated people—as vulgar, inappropriate, wrong, a mark of poor education and even poor character. This was particularly true in traditional China, where learning to read and write in Classical Chinese was so closely tied to upward social mobility and was so important as a marker of social standing. Learning Classical Chinese and the classic texts written in that language was the road to career success and often wealth; it also associated successful examination candidates with the wisdom of the ancients in ways that set them off from the masses. In this sense, Classical Chinese was definitely an H sacred language. When people who had achieved a high degree of social standing, often through mastery of the classical H language, wrote texts using the L vernacular, or praised those who did, this made it easier for others to make similar choices, offering them a degree of protection from accusations of vulgarity and lack of education. Finally, it should be noted that well into the 1800s Guangdong province was generally considered to be a relatively backward and uncivilized region,[50] so extensive use of Cantonese in a text with literary pretensions ran the risk of marking the author as something of a country bumpkin.

While they are not the main focus of this paper, I wish to briefly comment on the possible reasons that a genre that made relatively heavy use of Cantonese—rather than one in Suzhounese, Minnanese, or some other regional language—was the first to develop to such a degree.

To some extent, we could say that the success of the Cantonese love song genre was a contingent event in which a well-written collection of texts appeared in the right region at the right historical time, and then proved flexible enough that it could readily be adapted by others for an increasing range of purposes. It also had the right degree of local language use in that while it contained more Cantonese than the regional genres that were already established, it generally

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[50] David Honey, *The Southern Garden Poetry Society: Literary Culture and Social Memory in Guangdong* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2013), p. xiii; Steven Miles, *The Sea of Learning: Mobility and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Guangzhou* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 1.

used the same words with which readers of Cantonese texts were already familiar rather than challenging readers with a flood of new and unfamiliar words and Chinese characters. In other words, while it took a step forward in the degree to which it used Cantonese, the step was a modest one rather than a great leap. It seems likely that the texts would not have been overly difficult for readers who were already accustomed to texts that used Cantonese, and they would probably still have been accessible even to readers who were not used to written Cantonese. Here we might remember Clementi's comment that audiences sometimes did have difficulty in understanding Zhao's *Cantonese Love Songs* because of "the large numbers of allusions to history, mythology, and novel literature—allusions which are not always familiar even to well-read Chinamen," but we should also remember he concluded that "the context usually places the general meaning of the passage beyond doubt."[51]

But was there also something special about this region and language that would make a genre using so much Cantonese more acceptable or at least less unthinkable? Let me cautiously suggest that there probably was. Most obviously, as of the 1800s, the Lingnan region had had more contact with Westerners and Western ideas than other parts of China. In particular, during the 1800s there were increasing numbers of Western missionaries in the Lingnan region, and in the latter part of the 1800s they were actively engaged in publishing Bible translations and other foreign texts not only in Classical Chinese and eventually Mandarin, but also in written Cantonese.[52] In fact, in the 1800s the Cantonese texts created by Western missionaries often used much more Cantonese vocabulary—and were closer to spoken Cantonese—than any texts produced by Chinese people. At least some of the prominent Chinese figures we discussed above had some connection with the missionary community; for example, Chen Ronggun was not only influenced by Western approaches to literacy education, but eventually became a Christian himself. Similarly, Liao Entao's father graduated

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[51] Clementi, *Cantonese Love Songs*, p. 2.

[52] For examples, see Shin Kataoka 片岡新 and Lee Yin-Ping 李燕萍, *Wanqing Minchu Oumei chuanjiaoshi shuxie de Guangdonghua wenxian jingxuan* 晚清民初歐美傳教士書寫的廣東話文獻精選 [Selected Cantonese publications by Western missionaries in China, 1828–1927] (Hong Kong: T. T. Ng Chinese Language Research Centre, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2022).

from St. Paul's College in Hong Kong, so the family would have had some contact with the Western missionary community. Others among the figures we discussed above had an unusual degree of exposure to Western ideas through experience abroad. For example, Huang Zunxian had substantial exposure to Western philosophical ideas during his time in Japan, where he would also have seen a society that was beginning to move away from writing styles influenced by Classical Chinese and toward writing styles more closely based on spoken Japanese. Similarly, Liao Entao had deep exposure to the West through his experience being raised and schooled in California, and then later serving as a diplomat in a number of foreign countries. Finally, Liang Qichao lived in Japan for a considerable period of time.

The other thing I would tentatively suggest is that the geographical location of Lingnan as a region far removed from the centre of China may have contributed to greater willingness to countenance texts written in the local vernacular. Granted, all of the personages discussed above were deeply dedicated to China and its cultural traditions. Many of them had achieved their social positions through success in China's traditional examination system, thus well-socialized into China's national cultural norms. Here we might remember that even though Huang Zunxian developed an interest in writing songs in Hakka, he eventually found the pull of his Classical Chinese education too strong and was never able to break free from it enough to write in a style that was really based on his local vernacular, and even Liang Qichao was reluctant to write in a style that fully abandoned Classical Chinese in favour of vernacular Mandarin.[53] Many also owed their careers and prominence to service in national government, generally outside Lingnan. Finally, while many of the reformers who appear in our story were from the Lingnan region, their focus was firmly on the reform and strengthening of China as a whole nation, rather than limited to Lingnan. However, being rooted in a strong and proud local tradition with a long history of prosperity—and one that was geographically quite far from the national centre—most likely allowed these prominent members of Chinese society to view Chinese cultural norms from a greater range of perspectives—national, but also regional and even

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[53] Elisabeth Kaske, "Cultural Identity, Education, and Language Politics in China and Japan, 1820–1920," in David Hoyt and Karen Oslund, eds., *The Study of Language and the Politics of Community in Global Context* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), pp. 215–56, esp. p. 224.

international—that most likely helped create an early openness to considering options that people more embedded in China's cultural centre would probably have found too new and different.

VII. Conclusion

In the May Fourth period, prominent cultural leaders such as Hu Shi were very publicly associated with promotion of vernacular-based writing styles in China, primarily those based on Mandarin/northern Chinese speech, but even at times including texts written in Wu languages such as Suzhounese and Shanghainese. However, prior to that time, few prominent names were associated with written Wu. In contrast, by the beginning of the Republican period, written Cantonese was already firmly established in a genre that had almost a century of association with people of social standing.

During the Republican era, the story of written Cantonese continued to develop. The print culture domain in which Cantonese appeared continued to grow; for example, in the 1920s, Cantonese began to appear in printed Cantonese opera texts.[54] All the while, people continued to produce texts in genres where Cantonese already had an established role. For example, in the Hong Kong Dialect Literature Movement from 1947 to 1949, most of the texts actually written and published were in traditional rhymed "spoken/sung literature" genres, and quite a few of these were in the Cantonese love song genre.[55]

The Cantonese love song genre played a major role in the development of written Cantonese. Of course, one reason why it was so important is that many people—both famous and not—enjoyed these songs; here we should remember that the origins of the genre lie in folksong traditions that were first adopted and

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[54] See Marjorie Chan, "Vernacular Written Cantonese in the Twentieth Century: The Role of Cantonese Opera in its Growth and Spread," in Richard VanNess Simmons, ed., *Studies in Colloquial Chinese and Its History* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2022), pp. 36–58.

[55] Huang Ningying 黃寧嬰, "Tan Guangdong fangyan de yunwen chuangzuo" 談廣東方言的韻文創作 [A discussion of the writing of Guangdong dialect verse], in Zhonghua quanguo wenyi xiehui Xianggang fenhui fangyan wenxue yanjiuhui 中華全國文藝協會香港分會方言文學研究會, ed. *Fangyan wenxue* 方言文學 [Dialect literature], vol. 1 (Hong Kong: Xin minzhu chubanshe, 1949), pp. 33–41.

developed by courtesans, so from its very beginnings the genre was rooted in the lives of the common people as well as the elite. However, the long popularity and success of the genre—and of writing in Cantonese—was aided by a succession of prominent people who, over the decades, either chose to write in the genre or to praise those who did. The ability of a genre of songs written in Cantonese to attract the affection and engagement of people of social standing was not only one indicator of the development and social growth of Cantonese as a written language, but also what we might think of as an accelerant; in short, the social success of the Cantonese love song genre helped make it more acceptable and easier for written Cantonese to be used in a wider range of genres and roles.

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Lingnan Literati and Cantonese Love Songs

(Abstract)

Don Snow

In the 1800s and early 1900s, the Cantonese love song genre played a very important role in the development of written Cantonese in several ways. First, this genre made relatively heavy use of local vocabulary when compared with writing in other contemporary regional vernaculars, such as Suzhounese and Southern Min. Moreover, the use of Cantonese was obligatory in this genre to a much greater degree than the use of the local language in Suzhounese or Southern Min texts. Even more importantly, by the early 1900s, a number of socially prominent people had become publicly associated with the genre by either writing and publishing Cantonese love songs, or by publicly praising and advocating the genre. This association of prominent individuals with the Cantonese love song genre—and, by extension, with written Cantonese—suggests that by the early 1900s written Cantonese had attained a higher degree of social acceptance than was true for the written forms of other regional languages, such as Suzhounese and Southern Min.

Keywords: Cantonese love songs written Cantonese Cantonese written vernaculars diglossia

嶺南文人與粵謳

（提要）

唐斯諾

在十九世紀和二十世紀初，粵謳體裁在幾個方面對書面粵語的發展起了非常重要的作用。首先，與其他當代地方白話（如蘇州話和閩南話）的寫作相比，這種體裁相對大量地使用了地方詞彙。此外，這種文體必須使用廣東話，其程度遠高於蘇州話或閩南話。更重要的是，到二十世紀初，許多社會知名人士已公開寫作和出版粵語情歌，或公開讚美和鼓吹粵謳，因而與粵謳結下不解之緣。這種知名人士與粵謳體裁的關係，以及由此引申的與粵語書寫體裁的關係，顯示在 1900 年代初，粵語書寫體裁已獲得較高程度的社會認同，而其他地方語言（如蘇州話和閩南話）的書寫形式則不然。

關鍵詞： 粵謳　書寫粵語　粵語 / 廣東話　書寫方言　雙言現象