

從馬吊到馬將—— 小玩意與大傳統交織的一段歷史因緣

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晚明成型的馬吊〔馬弔、馬掉〕與晚清出現的馬將〔麻將、麻雀〕，在中國游藝史上具有相當特殊的地位：儘管它們都是市井的「小玩意」，但卻不時成為士林「大傳統」中種種政治與文化論述所關注的議題。它們由於極具感染力，從閭閻、閭閻到閭閻，竟得跨越階級、身分與性別的藩籬，風潮所至，幾成眾樂同歡的全民活動。晚明刊行的各種牌經與牌譜，不僅鑽研譜式，同時講究牌品，甚至與儒家道德論述相互比附，足見不少士大夫試圖將此一市井的遊戲，轉化為正經的學問。馬吊牌戲裡的機遇性，使它始終沾染博弈的色彩。同時也由於馬吊具有跨界的群眾性格：一入戲局，眾生平等，因此又成為社會各階層文化的共相與交集。

明代崩解後，馬吊變成眾矢之的，不僅明代遺民將之定讞為亡國妖孽，清朝官方也視之為洪水猛獸，屢申禁令。逮至晚清，新興的馬將牌上承馬吊遺緒，亦迅速廣播南北。部分以啟蒙自許的知識份子欲禁絕而不能、思改造而未成。民國成立後，知識份子一度將馬將標舉為「國粹」、封擬為「國戲」，或甚至是「國民性」具體而微的化身，將馬將視為檢驗時代精神或批判社會心態的關鍵線索。從東風到西風，馬將於二十世紀初期西傳，隨即於英美等地發展並在一九二〇年代蔚為風潮，成為西方通俗文化裡的新寵。東方主義的想像交織著異國情調的浪漫，流傳於異域的馬將竟轉而化身為中國古老智慧的精華、文化傳統的象徵。馬將變得既現代、又中國。從明末的馬吊到民國的馬將，在傳統士大夫或現代知識份子的「大雅」論述裡，這前後兩種具有血緣關係的「小道」，總無法當作一個普通的玩意、一種單純的遊戲。

關鍵詞：馬吊〔馬弔 馬掉〕 馬將〔麻將 麻雀〕 博戲 小道 大雅

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Madiao and Mahjong in Popular Culture and Elite Discourse

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This article examines two games that once dominated the world of leisure in China. It traces the origins and development of *madiao* and mahjong, the routes by which they spread, their impact on everyday life, and, most importantly, the controversial assessments of these games in elite discourse.

The *madiao* card game, popular in the late Ming, and its successor, mahjong, which emerged in the late Qing, shared similar paths and a peculiar fate in the cultural history of Chinese recreations. They were pastimes originally enjoyed among the urban lower classes, but later spread from market towns to the central capital, and from the lower levels of society to the upper ones. Their popularity crossed social and gender boundaries. Once people entered the inviting world offered by these games, social and political distinctions temporarily melted away and the players united as *homo ludens*, equals as long as they honored the rules of game. Playing *madiao* and mahjong became a common pastime and a shared experience for countless Chinese from a wide variety of backgrounds.

As *madiao* pervaded the daily life of the populace, including that of elite circles, it became a subject of controversy among the literati. Some enthusiasts devoted themselves to the project of elevating the quality of the game by refining or reforming its rules, and many manuals on the rules and tactics of the game were published to meet growing demand. Some enthusiasts even justified the merits of playing the game by comparing it to Confucian moral cultivation, and claimed that the game embodied the Confucian idea of “studying the principle of things” which could lead the master players eventually to acquire the means to “pacify the realm under Heaven.” Some conservatives, on the other hand, expressed their concern over people’s addiction to what was at root a form of gambling and lamented the disruption of social norms the games inspired. After the collapse of the Ming dynasty, *madiao* was repeatedly indicted for compromising the ordered hierarchical ethics and for undermining social morality.

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Moreover, both the rules of the game as well as card designs were interpreted retrospectively as a series of evil portents foretelling dynastic collapse.

Coincidentally, the game of mahjong, originally a card game partially derived from *madio* that evolved into a game played with tiles, also emerged at a time of turmoil: when the reigning Qing dynasty was teetering on the brink of collapse. Mahjong quickly became a craze all over China, and was avidly played everywhere, from squalid urban quarters to the imperial court. There were various attempts to promote mahjong as a more elevated type of entertainment. Some reformers even proposed using mahjong as an agent of “popular enlightenment” by remodeling the designs of tiles and revising the rules of the game. Yet moral conservatives worried that mass indulgence in this pernicious game would aggravate the already desperate condition of modern China. Some traced the emergence of the game to the Taiping Rebellion; some even figuratively joked that the Qing empire would eventually be dethroned by the mighty “Mahjong king.”

Perhaps tinted with the West’s fascination with exotic oriental cultures, mahjong became all the rage in the 1920s in the West and was promoted as the crystallization of ancient Chinese wisdom. This international mahjong craze in turn affected the Chinese perceptions of the game, and it was frequently referred to as the “national game,” the emblem of the “national quintessence,” or even the symbolic embodiment of “national character.” Yet most of these associations were arguably meant in the negative sense. A typical interpretation was to refer to the game to exemplify the Chinese egocentricity, disunity, and lack of cooperative spirit.

Closely tied to the discourse that grew up around them, both the *madio* of the late Ming and the mahjong of the late Qing were never viewed as mere games or simple diversions. They have always been under serious scrutiny, whether seen as a remedy to cure the people or a plague that cursed the nation.

Keywords: *madio*, mahjong, popular culture, elite discourse, national character