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Anthropology

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CONTEMPORARY CHINESE CULTURE

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## Contents

Editorial team	vii	<b>Entries A-Z</b>	<b>1</b>
List of contributors	ix	Index	739
Preface	xvii		
The Visual Art entries	xxi		
Classified entry list	xxiii		

## A Jia

b. 1907, Jiangsu; d. 1994

Theatre director

A Jia was a brilliant director, playwright and theatre theorist who devoted his impressive fifty-year career to the study and practice of **Xiqu** (sung-drama/opera). He made the first major systematic study of Xiqu's aesthetic principles, and is perhaps most famous for his work as director and head writer of *Red Lantern* (*Hongdengji*), the first of the model revolutionary modern plays (*yangbanxi*) of the **Cultural Revolution**.

A Jia studied poetry and calligraphy in his youth. Before joining Mao in Yan'an in 1938, he spent time as a teacher, reporter, labourer and even briefly as a monk. He also participated in many amateur Xiqu performances. At Yan'an he entered the Yan'an Academy of Arts and Literature and joined the Communist Party in 1941, serving as director and later vice president of the Yan'an Pingju (also known as **Jingju**, 'Peking Opera') Research Academy, which was established in 1942. Involved in hundreds of productions, he became one of the area's most renowned Xiqu performers, wrote and directed many new plays, and adapted traditional plays to conform with his Communist ideals. After 1949 he studied at the Central Academy of Drama (Zhongyang xiju xueyuan) which broadened his understanding of major schools or styles of Xiqu performance as well as Western theories of performance. These ideas he incorporated into a prolific body of theoretical writing.

# A

A Jia held numerous leading positions in the arts, including Director of the People's Government Research Institute to Reform Xiqu (Zhongyang renmin zhengfu wenhuabu xiqu gaijinju yishuchu yanjiushi zhuren) and Head Director of the China Jingju Company (Zhongguo jingju yuanyong daoyan). He is known for his deep practical and theoretical understanding of traditional Xiqu and for being one of the most successful innovators of the genre as he discovered ways to portray modern life on the Xiqu stage.

### Further reading

- A, Jia (1999). 'Truth in Life and Truth in Art'. In F. Fei (ed.), *Chinese Theories of Theater and Performance from Confucius to the Present*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 146–53.
- Liu, Y. (1988). Trans. D. Hu *et al.* 'Ah Jia's Theory of Xiqu Performance'. *Asian Theatre Journal* 5.2: 111–31.

MEGAN EVANS AND ELIZABETH  
WICHMANN-WALCZAK

## academic e-journals

The late 1990s saw the rapid growth of electronic Chinese-language journals that published articles on a diverse range of issues in the social sciences and humanities. *China News Digest* (*Huaxia wenzhai*) was one of the earliest (US-based) Chinese e-journals to feature several scholarly essays among those on popular topics that it normally carried. Since