Political Frontiers, Ethnic Boundaries, and Human Geographies in Chinese History

Edited by
Nicola Di Cosmo
and Don J. Wyatt

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POLITICAL FRONTIERS, ETHNIC BOUNDARIES, AND HUMAN GEOGRAPHIES IN CHINESE HISTORY

Boundaries – demarcating physical space, enclosing political entities, and distinguishing social or ethnic groups – constitute an essential aspect of historical investigation. Obscured by the influence upon scholars of a myth of unitarian historical and cultural development, not until recently have questions pertaining to boundaries come to represent a fertile ground in the analysis of Chinese history and society.

It is especially with regard to disciplinary pluralism and historical breadth that this book most clearly departs and distinguishes itself from other works on Chinese boundaries and ethnicity. In addition to history, the disciplines represented in this book include anthropology (particularly ethnography), religion, art history, and literary studies. Each of the authors focuses on a distinct period, beginning with the Zhou dynasty (c. 1100 BCE) and ending with the early centuries after the Manchu conquest (c. 1800 CE) – resulting in a chronological sweep of nearly three millennia.

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POLITICAL FRONTIERS, ETHNIC BOUNDARIES, AND HUMAN GEOGRAPHIES IN CHINESE HISTORY

Edited by Nicola Di Cosmo and Don J. Wyatt
IN HONOR OF BENJAMIN SCHWARTZ
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This book began as nothing more than a few casual conversational exchanges and observations on the relatively scant application of the principles of contemporary border theory in the historical study of traditional China, despite the fact that traditional China would seem an entity both ripe for and accessible to such investigation. These original exchanges and observations were subsequently given tangible expression through a double panel at the first International Convention of Asia Scholars meeting (under the sponsorship of the International Institute for Asian Studies) at Noordwijkhout (near Leiden), The Netherlands, in June 1998. The original title of that double panel was “Maps, Boundaries, and Human Geographies in Chinese History,” and the successful reception of the papers presented there – as well as the interest displayed in those highly engaging proceedings by Curzon Press – thus represents the point of crystallization for the entire project. Of the seven panelists at the Noordwijkhout conference, five are among the contributors to the present volume.

As is the case with any work that is so thoroughly collaborative and collective in nature as this one, we are necessarily grateful to many individuals. We first express our gratitude to the two deft and highly encouraging discussants for the original double panel – Michael Loewe, who commented expansively on the ancient and early imperial session, and Evelyn Rawski, who commented enthusiastically on the middle period and late imperial session. We are grateful to those panelists at Noordwijkhout whose presentations we have – for various reasons – not been able to include in the present text, but who have nonetheless contributed to advancing this ultimate articulation of the original project. In particular, we thank Peter Perdue and David Graff. There were also several individuals who attended either or both panels whose salient observations, comments, and references have also proven invaluable in shaping the book into its present form. Among this last group, we thank Wang Tao, Lothar von Falkenhausen, Lynn Struve, Stuart Sargent, and Håkan Friberg.

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INTRODUCTION

Nicola Di Cosmo and Don J. Wyatt

China bounded and unbounded

Boundaries – employed as a means of demarcating physical space, enclosing political entities, distinguishing social groups, and defining ethnic categories – collectively constitute an essential facet of all historical investigation. Indeed, while we have construed them variously throughout history, our belief that boundaries must somehow integrally inform the emergence of our historical understanding has itself remained a constant. Our conception of time as having definable but admittedly arbitrary boundaries is of course one of the key premises underlying our whole notion of historical progress. Our acceptance of imaginary boundaries as the primary means whereby one physical territory is delineated from another as region, empire, or nation-state has always necessarily influenced our ability to understand and effect even the most mundane aspects of governance, statecraft, and interstate relations. Indeed, to cite a contemporary observation on the relationship between history and boundaries construed in the latter purely spatial sense, the scholar Dun Jen Li has written, “If history is a continuous and, let us hope, unending drama, geography is the stage on which such drama is performed” (p. 1).

Nevertheless, despite these sets of tacit connection between history and boundaries, we have unwittingly long regarded China as one of the few places in the world where the aforementioned compartmentalizing functions of boundaries have least applied. Curiously, this blindness to the reality and full array of China’s boundaries has been a tendency shared in common by both Westerners and the Chinese Han majority over the course of history. Even some of the most knowledgeable scholars – doubtless under the spell of its seemingly innate separateness from the world around it and with scant recognition of its rife internal divisions – have preferred to see China as an indivisible entity – one that is, if bounded at all, bounded only externally.

One of the most widely acclaimed books published in the past few years is Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fate of Human Societies*. Chapter 16 of this book, titled “How China became Chinese,” attributes the phenomenon in question to China’s head start in food production, technology, writing, and state
Having acquired such undeniable advantages, Chinese civilization was able both to absorb the “barbarian” in its midst and to exert a “disproportionate” influence on the development of Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia. Hence, China, by virtue of the ancient “melting pot” that it became from the fourth to the first millennium BCE, gives the impression of having been always Chinese. As Diamond puts it, “China has been [emphasis in the original] Chinese, almost from the beginnings of its recorded history. We take this seeming unity of China so much for granted that we forget how astonishing it is” (p. 323). To the scholar of China, and no doubt to the educated Chinese, this assertion may transmit an uneasy sense of exoticism. Paraphrasing Marc Augé, who said that “the culture of others is imagined as second nature to them” (p. 2), we might say that the history of others is often imagined as the natural outcome of that second nature.

There is no question that no other part of the world can boast a cultural and historical continuity and integrity equal to China’s. The differences that can be found among regional cultures, as deep as they may be, never seem to threaten the dominant notion of a fundamental unity that at the same time conceals and holds together regional forms of economic adaptation, social organization, ethnic composition, or religious cults. Indeed, the tensions that such different cultures may express are subsumed and eventually nullified by the prestige value, accepted and recognized throughout China basically from the origin of its recorded history, of the tradition-heavy, state-dominated, class-oriented, predominantly written, and incredibly durable and rich Chinese literati culture and the unified “civilization” it reflected, controlled, and, in part, produced.

This is, in a nutshell, the monolithic impression that the face of China produces. This impression is surely not without substance and surely the sheer breadth of Diamond’s expansive sight entitles him to hold this view. But while it is essential to recognize the importance of China’s “head start,” writing Chinese history on a smaller canvas and with a finer brush requires some awareness of what went on after the “big bang” of food production and technological innovation. It would be a very dull and profoundly unfair portrayal of Chinese history that would, for the past two millennia, simply describe it as an ineluctable process of ever greater “melting” and fusion of areas and cultures radiating farther and farther away from the “center.”

Among the most undesired products of this tendency have been numerous obstructing and debilitating stereotypes. Indeed, perhaps the most ingrained and resistant stereotype we hold of China throughout its traditional epochs is that of an isolated and xenophobic monolith, a static empire mostly turned inward upon itself against the outside world and especially against its own vast and predatory northern “Inner Asian” frontier. Conventional area studies scholarship (at least prior to the past twenty years or so) has adumbrated this image by encouraging us to regard China – the so-called “Sinic” zone – as just one of several discrete and self-contained compartments into which we can neatly
INTRODUCTION

divide the world. This same approach has unquestionably led us to a myopic preoccupation with Chinese civilization in a cultural vacuum and, consequently, to an overly narrow focus on the influential but hardly totalistic history and culture of the ethnically dominant Han people. Scholars have too often failed even to discern – not to mention, explore – the rich and revelatory data to be found within the many internal boundaries that lie obscured beneath the myth of unitarian Chinese historical and cultural development. To be sure, whether fully recognized or not, in recent decades and especially within the last several years, questions pertaining to boundaries have emerged just as compellingly and insistently for the Chinese as they have for many ostensibly more diverse cultural zones.

In Microcosms, Claudio Magris quotes Amedeo Grossi (architect, geometer and surveyor) for having said “the World is widely known, the Province, however, very little” (p. 150). The underlying notion is that the province (one of the “microcosms,” just like the café, the village, the public gardens) has an internal logic that, while it contributes to the formation of the whole, cannot be reduced to it. In other words, looking into a given “microcosm” and mapping its boundaries can bring into the hermeneutic process liminal areas which, while not contradicting a unitarian paradigm per se, nonetheless resist automatic integration. These zones of penumbra, in the end, can be used to rectify the potentially self-reinforcing unitarian paradigm in the name of a clearer understanding of the relative strengths of its underlying processes.

We can attempt an analogy. While Chinese history can be viewed as a whole, its component parts remain divided by internal boundaries that are as material – e.g. mountains, rivers, and available resources – as they are historically determined, by the movement of peoples, by uneven rates in the accumulation of human labor, and by the slow evolution of social networks. This is not to say that culture is the natural product of the material conditions of social evolution. But the independent role of ideas, beliefs, and cultural values, too, suffers from the same historical determinedness, as doctrines and cults often disappeared or became influential in Chinese history largely outside the time or intention of the thinkers who produced them. The awareness of the existence of boundaries, and of the need to clearly demarcate them, then, becomes one of the essential premises of the historian’s work.

Thus, boundaries that were heretofore overlooked or neglected have increasingly come to represent an especially fertile ground for exploration in relation to China. These boundaries, which can be seen alternatively as fractures or ligaments, cross the whole body of Chinese history, cultural, political, ethnic, and economic, and just about any research on the “unity” of China must take stock of their existence. Possibly the process of recognition and conscious analysis of such differences is most advanced in the study of ancient China, and favored by the more fluid nature of historical conceptualization.

Moreover, the regional perspective has no doubt greatly advanced the various sub-disciplines of history in relation to China. The “regionalist paradigm” in
Chinese archaeology has been one of the guiding factors in the development of modern Chinese archaeology, and the partition of the study of early China in a series of regional “cultures” has led to a clearer recognition of “internal boundaries” than in other periods of Chinese history. Concerted efforts in understanding the social history of China, especially in the late imperial period, has likewise led to a better understanding of the regional differences in elite culture and social organization. A series of important works in intellectual history have led to a keener perception of the intellectual “lineages” and associations, often based on principles of birthplace solidarity, family ties, and class affinities.

G. William Skinner’s model of China as divided up in a series of separate economic zones has been tremendously influential in describing the socioeconomic differences of China’s regions and their internal organization. In the political history of China, interest in the impact of foreign domination in China’s history is leading to re-evaluations of the role of Inner Asia in the development of Chinese political culture and institutions. Finally, frontier areas are being studied no longer or not exclusively as marginal zones of Sinic influence, but rather as separate areas in their own right, where new processes of ethnic formation were created by the expansion of the Chinese state or by the ethnic and cultural admixtures resulting from Han Chinese immigration.

Perhaps more impressively in the Chinese case than in any other, newly excavated archaeological materials and newly discovered archival sources—instances of which are, in the present volume, the inscriptions that form the basis of Edward Shaughnessy’s chapter, the Yi documents studied by John Herman, and the Manchu documents presented by Nicola Di Cosmo—have spurred the burgeoning interest in boundaries, which have themselves become interpreted in ever-broadening senses. It is the continuous uncovering of these materials that is casting the many pervasive and long-held views on the monolithic unfolding of Chinese “civilization” in a much more critical light. Unanticipated discoveries in the form of new artifacts and fresh analyses that incorporate either previously unknown or neglected textual data now provide scholars with the kinds of evidence that call the entire notion of the unitarian development of China as a cultural and historical complex into question.

Possibly the most striking concomitant result of the continuous unearthing of new ever-diversifying sources for study is that the act of delineating and disclosing boundaries is increasingly becoming not merely a major objective of historical investigation into Chinese traditional culture but a requisite condition of it. We can no longer avoid the reality of boundaries and we can be confident that the discernment of them—in all their manifestations—has at last come into its own as a methodological staple, and thus become a normative and essential expectation of research conducted on China of any kind. The “divisions within” have become as important as the whole, and by concentrating one’s attention on the single “threshold” or point of encounter between separate entities, and the various intellectual, political, and other processes that inform such points, we may probe deeper into the internal vitality of Chinese history.
INTRODUCTION

Encompassing boundaries

The present collection of chapters came into being as the direct result of a panel of papers presented at the first meeting of the International Convention of Asian Scholars (Noordwijkerhout, Holland, 25–8 June 1998). The purpose of that particular presentation was to bring into focus several types of boundaries in Chinese history. From the beginning this exercise was conceived as non-specific with respect to a single period of Chinese history, interdisciplinary, and “loose” in terms of the types of boundaries to be analysed. The spirit of that initial approach has remained unvaried in the present book.

Drawing from a broad and representative sampling of newly unearthed materials as well as from the more familiar fund of conventional sources, the present volume assembles a collection of chapters that all focus on the single pervading theme of boundaries but from a variety of different perspectives and standpoints. It is especially with regard to its disciplinary pluralism and historical breadth that our book most clearly departs and distinguishes itself from the other works on Chinese boundaries, borders, and ethnicity that have recently become available. While history – in all of its varieties (social, institutional, intellectual, etc.) – and geography comprise the fundamental nexus of disciplines throughout the book, within each chapter, a multiplicity of disciplines is typically represented. Among the disciplines and sub-disciplines exhibited – either singly or in insightful combination – within the book’s ostensibly historical and geographical methodological framework are anthropology (particularly, archaeology and ethnography), religion, art history, and literary studies (specifically, theatre history and dramaturgy).

The result, as we present it now to the reader, is a book spanning across the whole pre-contemporary history of China, with one chapter reaching the critical threshold of the close of the nineteenth century. One of the aims of the collection is, in fact, to reflect, rather than prematurely order, what has been actively pursued at a more informal level of workshops, conference panels, and seminars. That this book does have the coherence often required of a collection of essays is not surprising, as it positions itself rather in between that informal level and the normative “statements” or well-defined thesis propounded in a monograph or closely conceived edited book.

Since we have consciously striven to frame our investigation on boundaries in traditional China in the broadest possible temporal scope, each of the book’s twelve chapters focuses on a distinct period among China’s many ages. In some cases, this period of focus is broad – spanning, for instance, the multiple centuries of a dynastic era; in other cases, the time duration considered is quite limited – involving, at the most, perhaps a decade. While there is occasional temporal overlap between some of the chapters, there is also a more prominent pattern of temporal discreteness. But erudition in isolation is entirely counter to our aims and it is our hope that each chapter, as an example of discourse within the confines of a particular time frame, will nonetheless, in some vital sense, inform
and comment on each of the others. Thus, the ideals in presentation we have sought are both breadth and interconnection, and we have strenuously tried to integrate the two. The temporal locus of the first chapter is the first century of the pre-imperial Zhou dynasty (c. 1100–1000 BCE); that of the last chapter is the last century of the imperial Qing dynasty (c. 1800–1900 CE)—resulting, in sum, in a chronological sweep of very nearly three millennia. Therefore, while at first appearing united only thematically but compartmentalized temporally, each chapter in the book actually contributes to the metadiscourse on boundaries in traditional China over the near-totality of its political, cultural, and historical development. For this reason, taken in aggregate, the chapters can be used to plot a uniquely changing graph line—with its own distinctive dips and trajectories—in traditional China’s developmental experience with respect to the pervasive boundaries obtaining within past cultural life.

The integrity of the book, in sum, resides in the collective attempt by the contributors to identify and explore specific areas in which cultural sensitivity, political balances, ethnic and other types of identities contributed to give special meaning to a variety of boundaries. This is the “mandate” that each chapter has been asked to fulfill. The subjects of the chapters appear to be, perhaps predictably, somewhat marginal areas and periods of transition. Borderlands are the ground (or perhaps “middle ground”) that the chapters have in common, and to seek in this collection greater unity than that would be to go against the spirit of this particular quest. The themes of the chapters do not form a coherent “galaxy” but rather appear as separate “microcosms” and “framed” spaces. They investigate liminal situations and gray areas of transition where values, symbols, and institutions are not so easily depictable on the basis of the standard color palette of Chinese civilization. The reader will gain a hopefully richer perception of how “China became Chinese,” and recapture a sense of the fractures and fissions (often obfuscated by the aforementioned still dominant perception of a monolithic entity developing in linear fashion) so crucial in order to explain the process of change itself. In this respect, the book is not directed primarily at the professional Sinologist, who might still, we believe, profit from reading our chapters, but would not necessarily find them, individually, more innovative than other specialized publications. Instead, we intend for the collection to bring to the attention of general scholarship and the interested public some of the themes that are currently being debated in professional gatherings.

**The chapters**

These overarching goals of cohesion and synthesis notwithstanding, and while recognizing the occasions of temporal overlap and intersection, we have nonetheless made the decision to arrange the chapters themselves more or less chronologically. We have done so despite the fact that, for the sole purpose of presentation, the prevailing themes do suggest other kinds of natural
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and logical groupings. Nearly all of the chapters deal with boundaries as a spatio-geographical construct. The majority of them – but to vastly different degrees – also incorporate some treatment of boundaries as a function of ethnicity. In short, several alternative organizational arrangements of the material herein – most of them involving some sort of topical variation – were both possible and viable. We have nonetheless adopted a basically chronological schema mainly for the convenience of our readers. We hope that it provides the most accessible means of your absorbing the contents of the chapters and of our communicating the objectives of the authors.

In “Toward a social geography of the Zhouyuan during the Western Zhou dynasty: the Jing and Zhong lineages of Fufeng county,” Edward Shaughnessy draws on inscriptions unearthed in the course of archaeological exploration to draw a “cultural map” of the families living during the Zhou period in present-day Fufeng county, at the heart of the Zhouyuan (Plain of Zhou), homeland of the Zhou people. Focusing on two major local lineages, Shaughnessy illustrates in Chapter 1 a methodology that could be profitably applied also to other equally well-documented areas for the study of Zhou demography. Shaughnessy’s analysis enables him to demarcate the area of influence and distribution of prominent lineages, and the researcher to understand in greater detail the rise and decline of these lineages, their mutual relations, in particular with regard to intermarriage, and their relationship to the Zhou state. Mapping the lineages is especially important for our understanding of social “mobility” in the Zhou state, and constitutes a pathbreaking advance in the realm of early Chinese social history.

In Chapter 2, “Mapping a ‘spiritual’ landscape: representation of terrestrial space in the Shanhaijing,” Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann investigates the intellectual process that informs the compilation of the Shanhaijing (the “Classic of Mountains and Seas,” a title re-translated by the author as “Lists of Mountains and Seas” originated from around the first century BCE). This work, the most voluminous terrestrial description surviving from ancient Chinese reports, includes mentions of several places whose locations are supplied with cardinally-oriented directions and precise distances, and, therefore, give an impression of rigid topographical accuracy. However, Dorofeeva-Lichtmann effectively argues that the numerous studies on the chorography of the Shanhaijing have failed to match such localities with any actual topography, and her study shows that the mental process underlying the construction of the special geography of the Shanhaijing can only be comprehended in terms of the Chinese cosmological tradition. This cosmological perspective implies that these locations are part of a larger frame of cultural notions that provide the conceptual basis for the arrangement of these locations. From this perspective, their arrangement is seen as a translation of a “spiritual” landscape, that is, a spatial distribution of divine powers, and the components of this arrangement become vehicles for expressing cosmological meanings. The notion of boundary, therefore, is effectively expressed in at least two separate epistemological areas. On the one hand, the work itself adopts a grid-like
NICOLA DI COSMO AND DON J. WYATT

structure, whereby cardinal points demarcate separate, and in themselves, bounded areas ("quadrates") connected to the others by a system of routes organized along horizontal and vertical lines. On the other hand, the more relevant "boundary" that emerges from the chapter consists, in fact, in the intellectual mediation between actual geographical features and the spiritual meanings that were allocated to them, also personified in the form of various supernatural beings. The cosmological perspective in the interpretation of the Shanhaijing emphasizes it as the product of a mental universe in which space was organized (and populated) with spiritual meanings, and therefore possibly used in the context of magic and spiritual practices. By shedding light on the intellectual process underlying the Shanhaijing, Sima Qian, in Chapter 123 of the Shiji, already warned the reader that the Shanhaijing did not provide reliable information. By bringing a wealth of knowledge and perceptive insight to show why attempts to recapture the meaning of the topography of the Shanhaijing by regarding it as a geographical treatise have not been successful, Dorofeeva-Lichtmann pushes the threshold of research in this important area of early Chinese thought one step further.

Dorothy Wong brings her art historical expertise to the study of ethnic identity during the intricate historical period of North–South division (386–581 CE). Chapter 3, "Ethnicity and identity: northern nomads as Buddhist art patrons during the period of Northern and Southern dynasties," admirably traces a number of non-Han Chinese art patrons among the peoples who came to dominate north China. Through a detailed study of art patrons Wong blurs traditional boundaries between Han Chinese and other ethnic groups whose aristocracy was highly influential – indeed, the true power wielders – in the region. In several instances the names of Buddhist patrons included a variegated array of donors, who were members of different ethnic groups. The visual representation of these donors shows a great variety of different “ethnicities” whose markers are identified in terms of their costume, name, rank, social status, geographical location, and the social and religious groups to which they belonged. While foreigners, in particular the Inner Asian ones, such as the Xiongnu and Xianbi, appropriated Chinese symbolism, language, and visual styles of representation among other things, they also left a separate legacy. This, consisting in the identification of social status through their surnames, in a greater emphasis on hierarchy and militarism, and in the greater public role played by women, is effectively documented in the visual representations of these “foreigners” as a result of their role as Buddhist art patrons.

Chapter 4, “Deep eyes and high noses: physiognomy and the depiction of barbarians in Tang China,” is also concerned with the study of ethnic boundaries, and with the identification of markers of difference between Chinese and “barbarians.” Unlike Wong’s, Marc Abramson’s chapter does not deal with conscious self-representation, but rather with the physical attributes that were attached to foreigners by the Chinese, and with their evolution as a social phenomenon. The boundaries under scrutiny, here too, are multiple. On the one hand, Abramson explores the confluence between ethnic and physiognomic
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discourses. In doing this, several more boundaries are visualized, such as those between supernatural, animal, and barbarian characteristics. Several social and ritual contexts were affected by the representation of barbarians and the special attributes with which they were believed to be endowed. Literary topoi, Buddhist beliefs, funerary practices, and the representation of martiality were all deeply affected by medieval Chinese notions of the physical “essence” of barbarians and of the qualities that such essence was supposed to embody. This cultural study is not only revealing of yet another dimension of the Tang taste for the exotic, but shows how the observation and depiction of the “barbarian” interacted with and built upon beliefs firmly embedded in the Chinese tradition, and produced a distinct discourse of foreignness that penetrated deeply in the interstices of Tang society and culture.

Chapter 5, “Raiding and frontier society in the Five Dynasties,” explores the make-up of the northern frontier at yet another “transition time.” The end of the Tang is a temporal boundary in itself, one that brings to fruition social and economic changes already under way in the late Tang and prepares the ground for their blossoming during the Song period. But the period of Five Dynasties (907–60) was also a time of great political volatility and social fluidity. Northern China, once again, came under the influence of “nomadic” peoples and in several areas the porosity of the borders created the conditions for the formation of new political, military, and ethnic equilibria. Naomi Standen looks specifically at the phenomenon of raiding as one particularly cogent feature of cross-border relations. The notion of raiding as a concept to describe the predatory attitude of nomads towards sedentary societies, is effectively problematized in Standen’s chapter by blurring the boundaries, in the first place, between nomads and sedentary. The “frontier society” was a condition that characterized many of the ephemeral political formations of the Five Dynasties, and in this type of society hard and fast distinctions between steppe and sown are not particularly meaningful. Chinese living on the borderlands adapted to the new political and military climate by adopting raiding techniques similar to those employed by the Inner Asian foes. On the Chinese side, limited raids are replaced with large-scale expeditions and territorial conquest only when the central authority begins to regain its strength. Standen’s analysis of frontier society, then, dispels the ahistorical vision that nomads always raid, while Chinese either defend themselves or “punish” the nomads, and invites critical evaluation of such notions on the basis of the rigorous study of the historical context.

Very different in methodology and subject matter, but equally striving to refine and redefine our perception of China’s northern frontier in the middle period, is Chapter 6, “‘Felt yurts neatly arrayed, large tents huddle close’: visualizing the frontier in the Northern Song dynasty.” Starting with an expert exegesis of fanzü (foreign peoples’) paintings, Irene Leung focuses in particular on the fanzü section of the Xuanhe huapu (Imperial Catalog of Paintings in the Xuanhe Era, 1120) to present a clear and enticing analysis of pictorial conventions used by Song artists to represent the nomadic peoples on the northern frontier. The
result is surprising. Contrary to the often disparaging rhetoric of “barbarism,” the visual representation of the frontier, with its landscapes of horses at pasture and clusters of felt tents, becomes less threatening and hostile. According to Leung, the Song court sponsored a project that, in artistic terms, tended to consciously describe the powerful Khitan (or Qidan) on the other side of a hotly contested border as the prototype of the ethnic other. Once more, the physical boundary between the Song and the Liao becomes a mental boundary between ways in which peoples represent one another. At the same time, the specific conventions that pertain to different forms of expression – from the political utterance to the diplomatic letter, and from the poem to the painting – create additional boundaries of genre that further complicate and enrich the social and cultural meanings generated by the situation of confrontation and coexistence between discrete ethnic and political entities.

Don Wyatt’s chapter, “The invention of the Northern Song,” is concerned with a historiographical problem closely connected with the political history of China’s northern frontier. The object of his investigation is the posthumous emergence of a boundary separating the Song into a “northern” and a “southern” dynasty. When – Wyatt asks – did the notion of the Northern Song arise? Logically it could not have emerged before the Song court was forced to relocate to the south by the onslaught of the victorious Jin armies. After an expert but inconclusive philological quest for the earliest context in which the designation of Northern Song may have been generated, Wyatt turns to the examination of the positions expressed by three Chinese intellectuals involved in the debacle of the Song, as a possible avenue to the discovery of the “mental origins” of the Northern Song. Wyatt proceeds to describe the feelings of representative members of what is regarded as a group of loyal, yet severely disaffected, supporters of the Song. The three intellectuals, Li Gang, Chen Gui, and Zhu Bian represent a variety of individual responses that cannot be subsumed easily under the same heading, given profound differences in training, personal experience, and moral attitude. However, Wyatt argues that, collectively, they express the persuasion that the year 1126 marked a transition of greater import than the mere relocation of the dynasty to the south and loss of the northern territories, as traumatic an experience as it certainly was. Rather, it came to signify the transition from a morally unfit regime, that of the Song before 1126 (the Northern Song) to a sounder and regenerated one. When the dynasty became morally indefensible, then the fracture took place and the notion of the bifurcation of the dynasty into two halves gained momentum, even though that bifurcation was not represented in the standard historiography. Hence, the perceptive conclusion is that the Northern Song was born first and foremost as a mental or psychological product, based on the widespread disaffection of a large sector of intellectuals and on the consequent desire to remove themselves and the later Song dynasty from the moral bankruptcy that led to the disaster.

Proceeding chronologically, two chapters tackle yet another period of transition and crisis: the late Ming. John Herman’s wide-ranging Chapter 8,
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“The Mu’ege kingdom: a brief history of a frontier empire in southwest China,” elucidates the little-known history of non-Chinese political power in what is today Guizhou province. Rich in geographical and historical detail, Herman’s chapter is particularly concerned with the definition of political borders and with the changes in the organization of the political space that resulted from the interaction between local powers and the central power of China. The relationship between this area and the rest of China does not reflect the inexorable advance of civilizations forces. Rather, the frontier becomes an arena of resistance and adaptation as “the state” moves south to threaten delicate and even ephemeral local political balances. As the north, which could be the Mongol Yuan or the Ming dynasties, strives to impose new administrative standards and to re-map local divisions of power, social and economic changes are introduced that transform both the territory and the people of this particular frontier. Such changes are the backdrop of the fierce power struggles culminating in the so-called She–An Rebellion of 1620. Reading this chapter, we can appreciate the discontinuities that marked a process of cultural and political assimilation that is sometimes assumed to be seamless or uncontested. This region only became properly “Chinese” in fact rather recently, and Herman’s detailed study provides the key for a keener appreciation of the full force of the obstacles encountered by the Chinese state in its attempts to expand in the southwest.

Chapter 9, “Traveler’s vocation: Xu Xiake and his excursion to the southwestern frontier,” is similarly concerned with the southwest, but Andrea Riemenschnitter’s take is entirely different. The frontier is, in her case, the object of the “scientific” investigation of a peculiar intellectual, the traveling savant Xu Xiake. At the critical time of the end of the Ming dynasty, travel literature offered the vehicle for freer self-expression, while at the same time allowing the continuation of a dialogue with the classical tradition. Xu Xiake’s journey to the southwest, therefore, was a “border-crossing” experience at many levels. On the most superficial level, it represented the exploration of a part of “China” that was in fact alien and remote, the realm of an exoticism rife with perils which normally would have repelled the scholar groomed in the classical tradition. But the end of the Ming was a period renowned for intellectual eccentricity. Traditional boundaries to what was acceptable and what was not as the object of intellectual investigation became far less impenetrable than they had been in the past. Riemenschnitter shows that Xu Xiake’s exploration was conceived and carried out with the full awareness that he, like other intellectuals, was engaging in a critical rethinking of traditional cosmology. The cosmological order as it was represented in the classical works was no longer to be taken for granted. In a juxtaposition of symbols that is itself by no means alien or novel to the intellectual history of China, Xu Xiake – Riemenschnitter argues – was to express his critical stance towards the corrupt established political order. His quest for new knowledge in new lands was in fact conceived to represent, therefore, a quest for new political horizons and morally sound leadership.
Chapter 10, “Changing spaces of empire in eighteenth-century Qing China,” takes us beyond the watershed of the Ming–Qing transition and into the “management” of space and boundaries exercised not by those who resist or criticize the state, but by the state itself. The “boundaries” examined by Joanna Waley-Cohen are, again, multifaceted. On the one hand, at the core of her chapter, there is the separation between the two principles of the civil and civilized (wen) over the military and martial (wu). Throughout Chinese civilization these two principles have been combined to form a hierarchically conceived dualism, within which wen was to prevail, while wu had to retain a subordinate position. On the other hand, Waley-Cohen delves into the symbolic meanings acquired by certain bounded areas, buildings, and other spaces which were built or landscaped in such a way as to transmit new values specially important to the Qing monarchs, in particular Qianlong. Waley-Cohen’s thesis is that the Qing emperor performed a symbolic operation that tended to redress the balance between wen and wu by giving wu far more prominence than it had enjoyed in a purely “Confucian” cultural and political milieu. The martial origins of the dynasty became something to be celebrated, and to be inscribed, therefore, in various public spaces. By analyzing these spaces loaded with symbolic and evocative meaning, Waley-Cohen effectively sketches a new interpretive approach to the debated issue of the “Sinicization” of the Manchu rulers of the Qing dynasty, one that specifically targets the promotion of military values as an example of Qing “counter-culture,” if by “culture” we mean, in the specific context of acculturation, pedantic and acritical adherence to traditional Confucian values.

In Chapter 11, “Kirghiz nomads on the Qing frontier: tribute, trade, or gift exchange?,” Nicola Di Cosmo examines the way in which the tribute system was formalized not at the court level, but on the frontier. Looking at the Qing relations with Kirghiz nomads in the early nineteenth century, Di Cosmo’s study takes into consideration the vexed problems of the “boundary” between trade and tribute, and of the political realities surrounding the actualization of a “tribute” relationship. Differing in part from other studies, Di Cosmo’s chapter concludes that the tribute relationship on the frontier had a political and ideological rather than preeminently economic relevance. It was conceived as a two-faced relationship. On the Qing (Chinese) side, it allowed the local administrators, through the use of a ritual marked by gravity and authority, to establish a symbolic superiority over the tribute-bearing side. By doing so, the tribute-bearers were incorporated in a space that, while it did not necessarily imply political subordination, implicitly construed their status as inferior, while at the same time it introduced them to possible economic advantages, political protection, and even military support. From the tribute-bearing side, meanwhile, the tribute ceremony could be presented exclusively as a gift exchange, a practice that was common among nomadic people. In this way the local nomadic elites could entertain relations with the Qing while retaining the full prerogatives of their aristocratic status within the tribe, thus reducing the possibility of internal challenges. In Di Cosmo’s analysis, the tribute system as it operated on the
northwestern frontier was an integral part of the political management of the frontier that helped reduce local challenges to Qing authority not so much in terms of its economic content (per se demonstrably scarce), but rather by virtue of the political environment it created.

Finally, Chapter 12, Daphne Lei’s study of the “border-crossing” theme in nineteenth-century literary currents entitled “Envisioning new borders for the old China in late Qing fiction and local drama,” addresses a bundle of “boundaries” encompassing ethnicity, gender, and the nation. At a time in which new subjects were entering popular culture, in particular due to Western presence and influence, popular drama continued to delight in the portrayal of the dualism of “Chinese and barbarians” as self and other. Only, the situation is now complicated by the arrival of another sort of barbarian, who is an outsider and truly foreign one. The distinction evidenced by Lei between the domestic and the alien barbarian helps explain the transfer of negative connotations, sometimes associated with animal-like qualities, from the domestic to the foreign. In some cases these two barbarians join forces to suppress the Chinese spirit of independence, thus providing an early popular forum to sentiments that could be defined as “proto-nationalistic.” On the other hand, descriptions of the barbarian as a woman and as an animal, as in the case of the ape-woman, the barbarian who is tame and endowed with all the virtues of a human woman, but at the same time forever condemned to a feral existence, show, in Lei’s view, the awareness of the existence of the consciousness according to which “an ideal Chinese nation cannot exist without its barbaric counterpart.” The continuing repetitive suicide of Wang Zhaojun, the princess sent as a gift to the barbarian chief, demonstrates, however, that not all boundaries between the “barbarian” and the “Sinitic” universes were so plastic. With Zhaojun’s sacrifice, the “gender border” demonstrates its resistance to change, and eventually becomes the locus of a symbolic self-immolation of China in the face of foreign assault.

Frontiers revisited

It is a recognized fact that “frontiers” and “boundaries” have figured prominently in recent scholarship, both at the “formal” (publications of books and articles) and “informal” (conference panels, workshops, and public talks) levels. We will not attempt, as is sometimes expected, to position this work within a given “field” because the “fractal” nature of this scholarship does not lend itself to a general summary and because the majority of these studies do not encompass the range of topics presented in this book. We must, however, mention one work, and that is the book edited by John Hay, Boundaries in China (Reaktion, 1994). The reason for this is that the chronological span and the variety of disciplines and methodological approaches represented in Hay’s collection is as broad-ranging and varied as ours. We fully agree with John Hay’s candid admission that the search for a “common cause” would be, by and large, elusive. Indeed, an attempt to articulate a unifying, convergent, and coherent pattern
would miss the point, given that variety, divergence, and asymmetrical relations constitute the “generative core” of much scholarship about “boundaries.” Our book, however, differs from *Boundaries in China* on several essential points. In the “Introduction,” John Hay presents two central functions of his book that are not to be found in ours. The first is that the “boundaries” in question are those that separate conceptual categories and methodological approaches, and the second is that the essays, as a collective unit, belong firmly in the “camp” of postmodern scholarship. This is particularly evident in the choice of topics: walls and bodies, resistance and release, gender and sexuality. The contributors to *Boundaries in China* explicitly meet these themes under the intellectual canopy of Foucauldian epistemology.

Our book, on the other hand, does not subscribe to an overarching intellectual agenda. While individual chapters are informed by their own intellectual leanings, intentions, and pursuits, the project as a whole was not born out of the desire to provide any interpretive paradigms. This is not to say that we place ourselves in opposition to *Boundaries in China*, but rather that the motivation for the present book should not be sought in any attempt to reinterpret China with Foucauldian or, for that matter, any other type of spectacles. The issues broached in this book are less determined by a unifying intellectual orientation, and rather more by a special attention to the construction of material frontiers, be they politically, ethnically, or geographically determined. Between political debate and ritual enactment, between artistic performance and literary convention, between imaginary geographies and scientific surveys, between ethnic typologies and visual representations, frontiers and their inhabitants appear to be a central (not a marginal) aspect of the self-image of Chinese culture through the ages.

Thus, preeminent among our goals is to present China – during its extensive traditional phase of development – as, at once, an entity discrete unto itself and yet also one that was, at least in historical terms, rife with and crisscrossed by a variety of boundaries, material and psychological as well as disciplinary and methodological. Often undetected, or at least unquestioned, has been the capacity of these boundaries for vacillation and even transmogrification between extreme rigidity and malleability. To approach Chinese history critically means, in truth, to recognize and open these boundaries to discussion. This discussion, however, is even more cogent once we move to the periphery of Chinese history, that is, to the actual material and territorial frontiers where people were forced to negotiate identities, mental attitudes, and various forms of power. How many times have these frontiers been “brought home” in the forms of renewed intellectual pursuits, or threatening intimations of an imminent disaster, or windows into new worlds in which humans and nature functioned in “altered” ways? No useful discussion of these frontiers is really possible without recognizing the underlying set of boundaries that determine the likely, non-anachronistic range of agency and rationalization. Then as now, our recognition of the existence of the one – that is, frontiers – is completely contingent upon our recognition of the existence of the other – that is, boundaries. This precept has served, in many
ways and on many levels, as the motive impetus for our book. We only hope to have succeeded in bringing merely a modest share of the perhaps infinite demarcating functions of these boundaries to light.

Bibliography


TOWARD A SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE ZHOUYUAN DURING THE WESTERN ZHOU DYNASTY

The Jing and Zhong lineages of Fufeng county

Edward L. Shaughnessy

Fufeng county of Shaanxi province includes perhaps the most thoroughly explored extensive archaeological site in all of China. The western edge of the county, where it borders on Qishan county, comprises part of what is usually referred to as the Zhouyuan or the Plain of Zhou, the traditional homeland of the Zhou people. The Zhouyuan is located about one hundred kilometers to the west of Xi’an, twenty-five kilometers to the south of the Qi Shan mountain range and about the same distance to the north of the Wei River in west central Shaanxi province. As defined by modern archaeological excavations, the site covers only about ten square kilometers, slightly more than three kilometers north–south, and slightly less than that east–west, more or less bounded by the present towns of Jingdang (in Qishan county), and Huangdui and Qicun (both in Fufeng county); see Figure 1.1. Throughout later Chinese history, this small area has been the locus of numerous discoveries of early Zhou cultural artifacts, especially inscribed bronze vessels. In the 1970s, archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Sciences (now Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), from the Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, and from the cultural units of the respective counties joined forces to explore the area thoroughly. While no formal report of this archaeological campaign has yet been forthcoming, most of its significant discoveries have been published piecemeal, and there is a comprehensive cultural record of Fufeng county.2

In this chapter, I draw on these discoveries to construct a cultural map of that part of the Zhouyuan that is in present-day Fufeng county and to show how some of the families there during the Western Zhou period were interrelated. As a test case, I focus on two of the most important families represented in the archaeological and historical record: the Jing lineage of Qizhen and the Zhong
Figure 1.1 The Zhouyuan.

lineage of Renjia cun. Both the individual development of and the mutual relationship between these two lineages illustrate much about the historical processes that characterized the Zhou state during the middle and late Western Zhou.

**Discerning families and lineages from vessels made by and for women**

In mapping these families, it will be helpful first to discuss in brief what we know of families during the Western Zhou dynasty. There was a relatively limited
number of xing or surnames, the most important of these being the royal Zhou Ji. While I will refer to these xing as “families,” it might be helpful to think of them in terms of nationalities or, perhaps better, as analogous to American Indian tribes: while presumably originally deriving from a single geographical area, over time they tended to become dispersed. Some of this dispersal was due to political circumstances (for example, the Zhou policies of colonizing conquered areas with members of the royal family, or, alternatively, of compelling some families of the conquered areas to move to the Zhou homeland); some of it was due to growth and/or segmentation of families, and also to the circumstances of marriage. Family surname passed from father to children, but later texts, and also virtually all contemporary evidence, suggest that there was a strongly felt proscription against marrying within the same family. Thus, women, who ironically were the only people to be referred to by surname, were the primary agents of movement and connection between families. It can be imagined that when she married, a wife brought to her new family not only her own family traditions—which she would have imparted to her children, for whose education she was responsible—but also, especially in the cases of the sort of elite families that we will be concerned with in this chapter, a more or less extensive support staff, possibly including also male members of her natal family.

As they grew and divided, families identified themselves as members of individual shi, which I will refer to as “lineages.” These lineages seem in most cases to have taken their names from the names of places where they settled, and it seems that different families could have identical lineage names if they settled in the same place (thus, there were Dian [or Zheng] lineages of both the Jiang and Ji families, and Feng lineages of both the Ren and Ji families). After further growth (classical texts put the period at five generations, and there seems to be some support for this in the inscriptive record), there could be a further segmentation of the lineage. This segmentation was indicated in name either by yet another place-name added before the lineage name (as, for example, with the Feng Jing and Zheng Jing lineages of the Ji family), or by a seniority marker (such as Guozhong or Guoji, marking the middle and youngest branches of the Guo lineage of the Ji family). While men were sometimes referred to by their lineage name (sometimes in formal court appointments, sometimes retrospectively as lineage ancestors), again it was women who necessarily bore lineage names. Unlike their surnames, which were fixed at birth, women’s lineage identification varied according to family perspective. Before she was married, a woman would be called by both her father’s lineage name and his family name. After marriage, her husband would still refer to her by this combination of names. The following two inscriptions are examples of vessels made by husbands for their wives.

Qi Hou yi
The Lord of Qi makes for the fine woman Guo Meng Ji this treasured yi-ewer.
We know from ancient texts, and also from inscriptive evidence, that lords of the state of Qi were members of the Jiang family, while the Guo was a lineage of the royal Zhou Ji family. It is unclear whether the Meng here is to be read as part of the lineage name (marking one segment of the larger Guo lineage), or whether it is to be construed as a personal intra-generational marker for the woman herself.

Bo zun
Bo makes for Cai Ji this ancestral-temple vessel; may for ten-thousand years generations of grandsons and sons eternally treasure it. 7

This zun beaker, made by a man named Bo, whose family affiliation is unspecified, was apparently made for his wife, a woman of the Cai lineage of the Ji family. That the Cai lineage belonged to the Ji family is known from both traditional historical sources and also from bronze inscriptions, such as the following:

Cai Hou yi
The Lord of Cai makes for Ji Dan this marriage ewer. 8

This inscription is explicitly marked by the word ying as a dowry gift by the woman’s father, although it seems not to indicate into what family she was to be married (the name Dan being most probably the woman’s given name).

After a woman’s marriage, her natal family would begin to refer to her by her husband’s lineage name, in conjunction with her natal family name. The following inscriptions, both also marked by the word ying as dowry gifts from the women’s fathers, illustrate this principle.

Lubo Yufu li
Lubo Yufu made for Zhu Ji Ren this marriage offertory li-vessel; may it be eternally treasured and used. 9

Lords of Lu belonged to the royal Zhou Ji family, and so the daughter’s surname is given as Ji. Since she was marrying into the Zhu lineage, her father thus identified her by that lineage name. In this case, which is somewhat unusual, her given name, Ren, is also mentioned.

Chen Hou gui
The Lord of Chen makes for Wang Gui this marriage tureen, may for ten-thousand years it be eternally treasured and used. 10

This vessel was discovered in 1976 in a cache at Lintong, Shaanxi, together with the famous Li gui. It indicates that the lord of the state of Chen, which all historical sources indicate was surnamed Gui, made a present of the vessel to his daughter upon her marriage either to the king himself or at least into the royal lineage.
Finally, when referring to herself, a married woman seems to have used her husband’s lineage name, as in the following extremely interesting case. 11

Cai Ji gui
Cai Ji makes for her august brother Yin Shu this sacrificial offertory vessel; may Yin Shu herewith comfort with many blessings their august deceased-father De Yin and (mother) Hui Ji. 12

The names mentioned in this inscription indicate that Cai Ji was a woman of the Yin lineage of the Ji family married into the Cai lineage, which as we have seen belonged to the Ji family. The inscription indicates that she made the vessel on behalf of her deceased brother Yin Shu (the adjective huang, “august,” before his name suggests posthumous honor), in the hopes that Yin Shu would in turn serve as a mediator with their deceased parents De Yin and (mother) Hui Ji. It is interesting to note that both of the parents are also referred to by honorific adjectives, de, “virtuous,” in the case of the father, and hui, “kind,” in the case of the mother, combined with the lineage name of the father – Yin, and the family name of the mother – Ji. That Cai Ji’s mother was from the same Ji family into which Cai Ji herself was married may indicate some sort of reciprocal marriage relations in alternating generations. Finally, it is perhaps worth commenting that whereas later traditions indicate that married women had “left” their natal families and did not have any continuing ritual relationship with them, here we have a case of a woman clearly already married making a sacrificial vessel dedicated to her deceased brother. Perhaps he was the only male member of his generation in the lineage, and his death – or that of their parents – required his sister’s return to assume responsibility for ritual production.

These naming rules, though occasionally apparently ambiguous (and thus often misunderstood by modern scholars), are sufficiently consistent to be important clues to discerning inter-family relationships. I will use them at several points in this chapter to show connections between different families living in that part of the Zhouyuan that is presently part of Fufeng county.

Of those families living in the Zhouyuan, I have identified at least eighteen different lineages of at least six different families. These numbers surely do not represent the total number of families living there. This is so not just because the archaeological record of even so comparatively well explored a site as the Zhouyuan will inevitably be fragmentary, but even more important because in bronze inscriptions concerned only with men – which represent the overwhelming preponderance of all inscribed bronze vessels – there is usually no indication of either family or lineage affiliation. Indeed, it is the unique situation in the Zhouyuan, where so many family caches have been found, that allows even this degree of identification of families, since there is good reason to believe that most, if not all, of the bronzes in a given cache – however many generations might be represented – derive from a single lineage. If even one of these bronzes
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were made for a woman, whether by her father, her husband, her descendants, or herself, then we can at least learn something about the family’s connections, and by learning enough such connections can occasionally bring the connections back full circle to learn about the family itself.

In the following discussion of that portion of the Zhouyuan that falls in present-day Fufeng county, I focus on just three different sites where caches of bronze vessels were found. Two of these caches were among the largest ever discovered in the Zhouyuan. Although the third cache was trivial in comparison, it is important in demonstrating that one of the most important lineages of the mid-Western Zhou state had a base in the Zhouyuan. The relationships among these lineages reflect many of the social dynamics that were occurring between the mid-tenth and the late ninth century BCE, dynamics that transformed the Western Zhou state.

The Jing lineage

Let us begin with the trivial cache. In 1966 a cache of three bronzes, two zhong bells and one dou footed-plate, was found in Qizhen, Fufeng county, almost exactly the midpoint of the Zhouyuan site. Only one of these three bronzes, one of the two bells, is inscribed, and even this inscription is only partial, being only the ending portion of the inscription.

Jing ren Ning zhong

. . . the foundation in the ancestral temple’s chamber; and so Ning makes for his Concordant Father this grand stand of bells with which to send back filial piety to please the past cultured men. May the past cultured men be stern on high, and doubly abundantly and richly send down on me broad and many blessings without limit. May Ning for ten-thousand years have sons’ sons and grandsons’ grandsons eternally to treasure and use them in making offerings. 13

Fortunately, other bells have been extant since the nineteenth century with both this same final portion of the inscription and also the complete beginning portion. 14 This is especially fortunate for our purposes because the newly discovered bell includes only the maker’s name (ming), which I transcribe as Ning. 15 The complete inscription, however, gives his complete name as Jing ren Ning, showing that he was a member of the Jing lineage.

Jing ren Ning says: The exalted and compassionate cultured grandfather and august deceased-father were capable of pledging their virtue and obtaining purity and using goodness, eternally ending in auspiciousness. Ning does not dare not to take as a model to use his cultured grandfather and august deceased-father, doubly beautifully to grasp virtue. Ning doubly happily and with sagely brightness roots and places . . .
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The “Jing ren” or “Man of Jing” that prefaces Ning’s name in this half of the inscription indicates his lineage name, which was in turn doubtless based on the name of the place where this branch of a larger family established itself. There is plentiful evidence that the larger family was that of the royal Zhou Ji surname. For instance, several inscribed bronzes from the Yu-family cemetery excavated in 1974–75 near Baoji, Shaanxi, show that Yubo was married to a woman named Jing Ji.16

The only other direct evidence of the presence of members of the Jing lineage in the Zhouyuan comes in the form of the Yu ding, a vessel with a very lengthy and historically very important inscription involving Yu’s role in suppressing a rebellion against Zhou rule, probably early in the reign of King Li (r. 857/853–842/828 B.C.E.).17 This inscription too is known from two examples, one published already during the Northern Song dynasty (960–1126, the vessel of which, however, has long been lost) and another that was discovered in a cache very near Renjia cun, Fufeng, about one kilometer to the southeast of Qizhen. We will consider this cache further below. For now, it will suffice to say that that cache seems to belong to a different lineage from the Jings, and that the Yu ding is extraneous in it.

While the Yu ding is usually studied for the information it bears regarding the important military campaign, it also shows – if only indirectly – that Yu was a member of the Jing lineage. The inscription begins, somewhat unusually, with a praise of Yu’s ancestors, especially his great-grandfather Mu Gong.

Yu ding
Yu said, “Illustrious and great august ancestor Mu Gong was capable of standing beside and assisting the prior kings and settling the four quarters. And so Wu Gong has also not distanced or forgotten my sagely grandfather and deceased-father You Dashu and Yi Shu, commanding Yu to continue my grandfather and deceased-father’s governance at Jing state (bang).”

Two other vessels made by Yu are also extant, one giving his name as Shu Xiangfu Yu (the Shu Xiangfu Yu gui), and the other as just Shu Xiangfu (the Shu Xiangfu gui).

These inscriptions show first that You Dashu, mentioned in the Yu ding inscription, was in fact Yu’s grandfather, and second that Yu was married to a woman named Xin Si, i.e. a woman of the Si family.

Shu Xiangfu Yu gui
Shu Xiangfu Yu said: “I the young son succeed my august deceased-father, beginning to lead and imitate the past cultured ancestors to uphold bright virtue and hold fast to awesome propriety, herewith extending and creating, consolidating and protecting our state and our family, and making for my august grandfather You Dashu this offertory tureen.”18
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Shu Xiangfu gui
Shu Xiangfu makes for Xin Si this offertory tureen; may sons’ sons and grandchildren eternally treasure and use it.19

But more important than Yu’s immediate family relationships is his mention of Mu Gong as his great-grandfather. Mu Gong appears prominently in several bronze inscriptions of the early mid Western Zhou (roughly the reigns of kings Zhao [977–957 BCE] and Mu [956–918 BCE]).20 One of these was apparently made by his wife, Yin Ji, commemorating gifts that the Zhou queen gave to her upon a visit to her family temple, which Mu Gong had constructed for her.21

Yin Ji ding
Mu Gong made for Yin Ji a family temple at X Woods. It was the sixth month, after the growing brightness, yimao (day 52). The beneficent heavenly queen did not forget Mu Gong’s sagely, clear-sighted, bright, and ?? service to the prior king, and entered into Yin Ji’s family temple. . . . The queen praised Yin Ji’s accomplishments, and awarded (her) five types of jade and three horses. (Yin Ji) bows and touches her head to the ground, daring to extol the heavenly queen’s beneficence, herewith making (this) treasured equa-lobed caldron.

Another vessel that mentions Mu Gong, this time, as in the case of the Yu ding, as an ancestor, was discovered only in 1984 in tomb M163 at the Zhangjiapo cemetery near the Zhou capital of Hao, just outside of present-day Xi’an. The archaeologists who excavated this tomb and two other tombs immediately adjacent to it conjecture that it is the tomb of a consort of Jing Shu (here given together with his name [ming] Shu Cai), another member of the Jing lineage who is well represented in inscriptions dating to the reigns of kings Yih (r. 899–973 BCE) and Xiao (r. 872–866 BCE), which is to say two generations later than Mu Gong.22 Thus it was satisfying to find Mu Gong named as Jing Shu’s grandfather.

Jing Shu Shu Cai zhong
Jing Shu Shu Cai makes for my cultured grandfather Mu Gong this grand bell.

This inscription is extremely important because it confirms that Mu Gong, and thus Yu, belonged to the Jing lineage, and that Yu’s “governance at Jing state” was not any sort of anomaly.

It is altogether likely that Jing Shu’s father, or at least a family member in the preceding generation, was also an extremely important figure — indeed the most important figure — at the mid-Western Zhou court: Jing Bo. It would take us too far afield for our purposes here to try to describe in any detail the roles this figure
played during the reigns of kings Mu and Gong (r. 917–900 BCE), but some sense of his importance can be seen in the Fifth Year Qiu Wei ding, a vessel discovered in a cache at Dongjia cun, Qishan county—just about a kilometer and a half to the west of Qizhen. There, in the legal suit brought by Qiu Wei against States-lord Li, Jing Bo served as president of a five-member jury that decided the case. He also assigned the lower ranking officials charged with surveying the fields that he awarded to Qiu Wei.

In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we should probably imagine that Jing Bo, like his apparent son Jing Shu, lived at the Zhou capital one hundred kilometers to the east of the Zhouyuan. Nevertheless, his role in this case would seem to suggest that he was familiar with the geography of the Zhouyuan. Indeed, I suspect that while employed and thus residing at the Zhou capital, the Jings probably maintained a lineage temple in the Zhouyuan, and that is why the Jing ren Ning zhong was found in a cache there. The reason that more Jing vessels have not been found in the Zhouyuan—and the reason why the Yu ding was found in a cache of a different family—may be that the lineage experienced a sharp decline at just about the time of Yu. Evidence for this decline in the Jing family’s fortunes can be seen from vessels in two major caches discovered at the village of Renjia cun—just one kilometer to the southeast of Qizhen. Both of these caches reportedly produced more than one hundred bronze vessels. Although both discoveries unfortunately came before the age of archaeological control, and thus the bronzes were dispersed throughout the world, still enough of them are known to demonstrate several significant relationships with the Jing lineage.

The Zhong lineage

There is evidence that both of these caches contained bronzes cast by members of a single large and widely dispersed lineage, the Zhong lineage. The first of the two caches to be discovered, in 1890, was just to the southeast of the village of Renjia cun, while the second discovery, less than 200 meters away just to the west of the village, came in 1940. Of the 120 vessels said to have been found in the first cache, most and the best known were cast by one Provisioner Ke. These include at least eight ding caldrons (seven Xiao Ke ding, bearing identical inscriptions, and one Da Ke ding), perhaps three xu tureens, six zhong bells, and probably one bo bell. We will come back to consider the Da Ke ding inscription in some detail below; for now, it bears noting only that in it Ke refers to his grandfather as Captain Huafu.

Sets of bronzes from two other figures from the same cache also bear both the name Hua at the end of the inscription, which seems to be a branch lineage name, and the name Zhong, which seems to mark the lineage: two sets of caldrons made by one Zhong Yifu (one set with three caldrons, one with five), and a set of nine li tripods cast by one Zhong Ji. Different interpretations have been advanced with respect to this latter name. Among scholars who have studied
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these vessels most closely, Wu Zhenfeng, for instance, believes because of the presence of the name Hua at the end of the inscription that this woman must have been an unmarried member of Ke’s family. By contrast, Luo Xizhang, implicitly based on the principle that a married woman would refer to herself by her husband’s lineage name and her own family name, assumes that she had married into the family. We will return to this question too in more detail below.

The second cache is also said to have produced more than one hundred vessels, apparently made for the most part for two different figures: Provisioner Liang Qi (among which there are at least two hu vases, two ding caldrons, three gui tureens, one xu tureen, and two zhong bells) and Provisioner Jifu or Xi Jifu (at least one li tripod, two gui tureens, and one ding caldron). One of the vessels made for Provisioner Liang Qi shows that he too was a member of the Zhong lineage, since he refers to his deceased father as Hui Zhong, or Kind Zhong.

Shanfu Liang Qi gui
Provisioner Liang Qi makes for my august deceased-father Kind Zhong and august deceased-mother Kind Yi this offertory gui-tureen.

Provisioner Jifu is one of the most famous figures of the late Western Zhou, known both from bronze inscriptions (he was the patron of the famous Xi jia pan) and from the Shi jing or Classic of Poetry and also other traditional historical texts. Although there is no evidence to show that he too belonged to the Zhong lineage (except for the presumption that all bronzes in one cache belong to members of the same family), at least one bronze from this cache shows that he was married to a woman from the royal Ji family. Therefore, we can be certain that he was not a member of that family.

Shanfu Jifu li
Provisioner Jifu makes for Jing Ji this li-tripod.

At least two other caches in the Zhouyuan reflect the important stature the Zhong lineage seems to have gained by the late Western Zhou. Perhaps the more important of these two pits was located just to the south of Qijia cun, just a little over one kilometer to the west of the Zhong caches at Renjia cun. Discovered in 1960, it included thirty-nine vessels, twenty-eight of which are inscribed. Of those inscribed, six were made for Zhong Youfu, one for Zhong Fafu, and one set of eight bells for a Zhong Yi. Another set of eight bronze bells found in the cache, cast by one Zha, mentions perhaps yet another member of the Zhong lineage, Zhong Taishi, or the Zhong Grand Captain.

Zha Zhong
It is the king’s third year, fourth month, first auspiciousness, jiyin (day 51); Zhong Grand Captain at the right of Zha awards him purple and
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scarlet belts, and jingle-bells. He is to supervise the affairs of the five cities’ fieldsmen. Zha bows with hands folded, and in response extols Zhong Grand Captain’s beneficence, herewith making this grand stand of bells; may sons and grandsons eternally treasure them.

The full date notation of this bell corresponds to the third year of the reign of King You (r. 781–771 BCE), i.e. 779 BCE, and the role that Zhong Grand Captain plays in the award to Zha, taking the place usually assumed by the king, is perhaps indicative of a family at the height of its power and a seriously weakened royal court.

Finally, a late Western Zhou tomb discovered in 1981 in Ningxian, Gansu, just over the Shaanxi border about 125 kilometers almost due north of Fufeng county, contained two inscribed bronzes that provide the key to determining the family affiliation of the Zhong lineage and further evidence of its relationship with the Jing lineage of the Ji family. Both of the vessels were dedicated to women, one of the Jing lineage, Jing Meng Ji, showing as we would expect that the Jing lineage was of the royal Ji family, and one of the Zhong lineage, with the important information that this lineage belonged to the Ji family. What is more, the vessel dedicated to Jing Meng Ji was cast by one Zhong Shengfu, showing intermarriage between the Zhong and Jing lineages.

Zhong Shengfu li
Zhong Shengfu makes for Jing Meng Ji this treasured li-tripod; may for ten-thousand years sons’ sons and grandsons’ grandsons eternally treasure and use it.

Guaibo xu
Guaibo makes for Zhong Ji this offertory.

This clear evidence of reciprocal marital relations between these two important families, even at the remove of just over one hundred kilometers, puts in context evidence for similar marital and other relations between the two families back in the Zhouyuan.

Other possible evidence of marital relations between the two families comes from the Zhong-lineage cache at Qijia cun, in the form of a vessel made by Zhong Fafu and dedicated to a Ji Shang mu or “Elevated Mother of the Ji family.” Also indicative of some kind of relations between the two families is another vessel from the same cache made for someone known only (and somewhat anomalously) as Xi; it includes what looks to be a family mark reading Feng Jing, akin to the Hua mark on several Zhong-lineage bronzes.

Xi yan
Xi makes this sacrificial steamer for sons’ sons and grandsons’ grandsons eternally to treasure and use. Feng Jing
However, perhaps the most intriguing evidence of relations between the Jing and Zhong families is, as discussed above, that the Yu ding, made by the great-grandson of Mu Gong of the Jing lineage, was discovered in the Zhong-lineage cache with Provisioner Liang Qi and Provisioner Xifu’s bronzes just to the west of Renjia cun. Why this vessel should have been found in a Zhong-lineage cache is rather an enigma. However, the inscription on the most famous of all the Zhong-lineage bronzes, the Da Ke ding, may suggest an explanation.

The inscription begins with a long eulogy to Ke’s grandfather, said to have been an important minister to King Gong. It then continues by recounting an award of land and retainers made to Ke by the then reigning king, probably King Li but possibly also King Xuan (r. 827–782). What is important about this award is that several of the lands are specified as having belonged to the Jing family, as are many of the retainers, including some said to have absconded from the Jing lands. Itô Michiharu has used this inscription to argue that the Jing family, theretofore so important, had by this time declined to such an extent that it had essentially disappeared. Indeed, the late Western Zhou inscriptive record seems to show no members of the Jing family after Yu.

Da Ke ding
Ke said, “Stately was my cultured grandfather Captain Huafu. Perceptive and compliant his heart, tranquil and calm in governance; consoling and wise his virtue. And so (he) was capable of steadfastly protecting his ruler, King Gong, remonstrating with and advising the royal family and being helpful to the ten-thousand people, making compliant the distant and capable the near. And so he was capable of being benefited by august heaven and regarded as sincere by (the spirits) above and below, gaining purity with no defect and being awarded rewards without bound. (He) is eternally remembered by his grandson’s ruler, the Son of Heaven. The Son of Heaven is brightly wise, manifesting filial piety to the spirits and continuing to remember his sagely protecting grandfather Captain Huafu, (who was) consistently capable of the king’s service, bringing out and taking in the king’s commands, (and who was) much awarded treasured beneficence. Illustrious is the Son of Heaven! May the Son of Heaven for ten-thousand years without bound preserve and aid the Zhou state and govern the four quarters.”

The king was at Zongzhou. At dawn, the king approached the Mu Temple and assumed position. Shen Ji at the right of Shanfu Ke entered the gate and stood in the central hall facing north. The king called out to Yinshi to record the command to Shanfu Ke. The king said to the effect: “Ke, previously I had commanded you to bring out and take in my commands. Now I am extending and increasing your command, awarding you fine knee-pads, a tri-corner hat, and a ?? ??; awarding you fields at Ye; awarding you fields at Bi; awarding you the Jing family’s attached fields at Yun, with their vassals and women; awarding
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you fields at Kang; awarding you fields at Yan; awarding you fields at Bo Plains; awarding you fields at Han Mountain; awarding you scribes and minor vassals, chimists and flutists, drummers and bellmen; awarding you the registers of men raised by and attached to Jing; awarding you Jing men (who) have fled to Dong. Respectfully morning and night herewith serve. Do not neglect my command. Ke bowed and touched his head to the ground, daring in response to extol the Son of Heaven’s brilliantly fine beneficence, herewith making for my cultured grandfather Captain Huafu this treasured, sacrificial vessel. May Ke for ten-thousand years without bound have sons’ sons and grandsons’ grandsons eternally to treasure and use it.

Concluding remarks

In the above study of the demography of the Zhouyuan, I have focused on only two lineages of two different families, the Jing lineage of the royal Ji family and the Zhong lineage of the Ji family. Just within Fufeng county, it would be possible to provide similar treatment of such other lineages as the Guoji and Han lineages of the royal Ji family, with caches at Qiangjia cun and Kangjia cun respectively; the Wei and Lu lineages, both of the Zi family and both with caches just south of Zhuangbai cun; and the Diao lineage of the Yun family, with a cache at Qijia (immediately adjacent to the Zhong-lineage cache there). If we considered the Qishan county portion of the Zhouyuan as well, it would be possible to include the Mao lineage of the royal Ji family, located at Jinglang; the Lu and San lineages, located at Dongjia cun and Hejia cun respectively, one of which belonged to the Ying family; and the Nangong lineage, the family of which is unclear but which seems to have been centered at Licun. With greater control over the Western Zhou archaeological inventory, it would be possible also to begin mapping these families’ holdings and relationships throughout the greater Western Zhou state. But just the two lineages studied here suffice to illustrate a methodology that can be used in pursuing demographic study of the Western Zhou. Moreover, because these two lineages were of the highest status at two different periods in the later part of the dynasty, information about them and especially about their interactions suggests some of the changes that transformed the late Western Zhou state and society.

Just with respect to the Zhouyuan itself, the data do allow some specific insights to be drawn. We have seen considerable evidence of reciprocal marriage relations. There seems to be some evidence as well that members of one family served as guarantors at court for members of the other. Of course, the dramatic decline in the fortunes of the Jing lineage cannot be generalized. However, it may be interesting to note that the most powerful members of this lineage performed government service (and in at least one case were buried) in the Zhou capital Hao some one hundred kilometers to the east of the Zhouyuan near present-day Xi’an. This might suggest that the Zhouyuan was used by the Jing
lineage as a cult center, albeit with agricultural fields and workers located there; the lineage presumably derived its power from its responsibilities in the capital. However, in the case of the Zhong lineage, the official responsibilities of its various members are less clear. Several had the title shanfu or “Provisioner,” but at least two of these (Ke and Ji) seem to have been important primarily not in administrative proceedings but rather in military campaigns. This may indicate simply that there was an increase in military activity toward the end of the Western Zhou, when this lineage came into prominence. However, it may also indicate a tipping of the balance of power away from the capital itself and toward the periphery, if the Zhouruan can be considered peripheral in any meaningful sense.

Suggestions such as these will need to be tested against numerous further studies of other families and lineages. For now, I will be content that the methodology introduced here provides some specific conclusions with respect to local demography, and also allows some new general historical questions to be asked.

Notes

1 A fuller version of this chapter, then entitled “A Social Geography of the Zhouruan,” was presented to the panel “Maps, Boundaries, and Human Geographies in Chinese History” at the International Conference of Asian Studies, Noordwijkerhout, The Netherlands, 22 June 1998. Due to space limitations, I have had to divide that paper, here discussing only that portion of the Zhouruan that falls in present-day Fufeng county. The section dealing with that portion of the Zhouruan in present-day Qishan county will be published as “Hoard and Family Histories in Qishan County, The Zhouruan, in the Western Zhou Dynasty,” in Studies in Chinese Archaeology, ed. Xiaoneng Yang (Washington, forthcoming). Although the two papers rely on different data sets, their format and conclusions are similar. Moreover, to render each of them individually intelligible, it will be necessary to repeat some of the basic methodological issues that are common to both.

2 Luo Xizhang ed., Fufeng xian wenwu zhi (Xi’an, 1993). Also worth consulting is Chen Quanfang, Zhouruan yu Zhou wenhua (Shanghai, 1988).

3 This section is repeated almost entirely in my “Hoard and Family Histories in Qishan County.”


6 Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan, ed. Ma Chengyan (Beijing, 1988), #497. Bronze vessels are named, by convention, according to the name of the maker of the vessel.

7 Sandai jijin wen can, ed. Luo Zhenyu (N.p., 1937), 11.32.2.

8 Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan, #465.

9 Sandai jijin wen can, 5.31.2.

10 Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan, #464.

11 For a counter example, in which a married woman apparently refers to herself by her natal lineage name, see the Yin Ji ding, discussed in detail below, p. 23 and n. 21.
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12 *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan*, #331.
13 *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan*, #396.
14 For one of these bells, see *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan*, #111. For the others, which were first published in the *Jigu zhai zhongding yiqi kuanzhi* (1804) of Ruan Yuan (1764–1849), see *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng* (Beijing, 1984–1995), #109–11.
15 Both of the bell inscriptions include also a dedication to one Hefu, whom some scholars identify with Gong Bo Hefu, the figure who reigned for fourteen years (841–828) during the exile of King Li. Since Hefu means “Concordant Father,” which is likely to have been a popular name, there seems to be too little evidence to make this identification with any confidence.
16 *Shaanxi chutu Shang Zhou qingtongqi*, vol. 4 (Beijing, 1984), #79–83, #89–90.
18 *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan*, #409.
19 *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan*, #410.
20 For a particularly interesting discussion of Mu Gong and the inscribed vessels in which he is mentioned, see Li Xueqin, “Mu Gong gui gai zai qingtongqi fenqi shang de yiy,” *Wenbo* 1984.2: 6–8. One of the interesting points that Li Xueqin makes in this study is that the Intendant Li who serves as Mu Gong’s guarantor in the court investiture commemorated by the Mu Gong gui gai inscription (for which, see *Kaogu yu wenwu* 1981.4: 27) is none other than the important King Mu-period official Jing Li mentioned numerous times in the *Mu tianzi zhan* (It is worth noting that this same figure is doubtless mentioned also in the *Zhushu jinian* or *Bamboo Annals*, though there written with an incorrect character: in the entry for the twelfth year of King Mu, there is mention of a “Gong Gong Li” as one of three high officials commanded to lead troops, to which James Legge gives the laconic note “should probably be Tsing”; *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 3: *The Shoo King or The Book of Historical Documents* [1865; rpt. Hong Kong, 1960], p. 150 n. 5; the same possibility is alluded to in Lei Xueqi, *Zhushu jinian yizheng* [1810; rpt. Taipei, 1977], p. 314 [21.156b]; Jing is almost certainly the correct reading.) This would seem to allow us to trace the history of the Jing lineage one generation further back in time.
21 It seems certain that this same woman was also the patron of another inscribed vessel, in which however she referred to herself as Gong Ji, the *gong* presumably deriving from her husband’s name or rank. For this vessel and its relationship with the *Yin Ji ding*, see Chen Mengjia, “Xi Zhou tongqi duandai 5,” *Kaogu xuebao* 1956.3: 120.
23 For the inscriptions in which Jing Bo figures, see Wu Zhenfeng, *Jinwen renming huibian*, pp. 25–6; see also, Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History*, pp. 116–17.
24 For a translation of this inscription, see my “Hoard and Family Histories in Qishan County,” forthcoming.
25 See *Sandai jijin wen cun*, 5.16:4–5.17:5.
27 Luo Xizhang, *Fufeng xian wenwu zhi*, p. 57.
28 The most recent study of the Liang Qi vessels has tracked twenty-eight different vessels scattered throughout the world; see Noel Barnard and Cheung Kwong-yue,
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The Shan-fu Liang Kuei and Associated Inscribed Vessels/Shanfu Liang Qi gui ji qita guanxi zhu qi yanjiu /Taipei, 1996.

29 For the Xi Jia pan, see Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan, #437.

30 The lineage affiliation of Provisioner Jifu is unclear. On the one hand, since bronzes of his were found in the same cache with those of Provisioner Liang Qi, who it can be shown belonged to the Zhong lineage, which I will further show below belonged to the Ji family, one of our working assumptions in this study would suggest that he too belonged to this lineage. On the other hand, in the Xi Jia pan, he refers to himself as Xibo Jifu, suggesting that he belonged to a Xi lineage. Nevertheless, in traditional texts the same figure seems to be referred to as Yin Jifu (for the Zhushu jinian, see Legge, The Shoo King, Prolegomena p. 155; see also Mao Shi Zheng jian [Sibu beiyao ed.], 10.7a [“Liu yue”; Mao 177]; although yin was used in the early and mid-Western Zhou as a general official title (with primary responsibilities in the corps of scribes), by mid- to late Western Zhou it had also developed into a lineage name. As a lineage, there is plentiful evidence, including the Cai Ji gui and Yin Ji ding, both quoted above, that it too belonged to the Ji family. It should be noted as well that Li Xueqin has suggested that Provisioners Jifu and Liang Qi were the same individual, in one case using the formal name (ming) and in the other case using a cognomen (zi); see “Qingtongqi yu Zhouyuan yizhi,” Xibei daxue xuebao 1981.2: 7. This does not seem likely to me, but it is certainly possible that Zhong, which usually refers to the junior branch of a lineage, is here an abbreviation of Yinzhong, a branch lineage of the Yin lineage.

31 Another cache apparently related to Zhong Grand Captain was discovered in 1976 just south of the village of Zhuangbai cun, slightly less than one kilometer to the southeast of Qijia cun. The cache, clearly dating to the very end of the Western Zhou (it intruded into a late Western Zhou ash pit), included a xu-tureen made by “Zhong Taishi’s young son” (xiaozi), his name being illegible in the inscription. See Luo Xizhang ed., Fufeng xian wenwu zhi, p. 79.

32 For these vessels, see Xu Junchen, “Gansu Qingyang diechun de Shang Zhou qingtongqi,” Kaogu yu wenwu 1983.3: 10.

33 The dating of the Ke vessels is one of the most difficult problems in the chronology of mid- and late Western Zhou. Since Ke observes in the Da Ke ding inscription that his grandfather served King Gong, who reigned toward the end of the tenth century BCE, it is usually assumed that he must have been active no later than the reign of King Li, in the middle of the ninth century BCE. However, another vessel cast by him, the Ke zhong, mentions in its inscription that the royal appointment ceremony for Ke was held in the Zhou capital in the temple dedicated to the deceased King Li; moreover, its full sixteenth-year date is consistent with the calendar of the year 812 BCE, the sixteenth year of King Xuan’s reign. Thus, it is possible that the Da Ke ding too may date later than usually assumed. For the Ke zhong, see Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan, #294.


35 Xu Shaohua, Zhoudai nantu lishi dili yu wenhua (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 1994), is an excellent start toward this mapping project for one area of the Zhou state.

Bibliography

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GLOSSARY

bang
bangjun
Bangjun Li
Bo
bo (bell)
Bo zun
Cai
Cai Hou yi
Cai Ji
Cai Ji gui
Captain Huafu
Chen
Chen Hou (Lord of Chen)
Chen Hou gui
Concordant Father (hefu)
Da Ke ding
dou
De Yin
Dian [or Zheng] lineage
Diao lineage
Dongjia cun
dou footed plate
Feng Jing
Feng lineage
Fifth Year Qiu Wei ding
Fufeng
gong
Gong Gong Li
Gong Ji
Gongbo Bo Hefu
Guaibo
Guaibo xu
Guai lineage
Guo ji lineage
Guo Meng Ji
Guozhong
Han lineage
Hao (Zhou capital)
Hejia cun
hu vases
Hua
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Mu Gong
Mu Gong gui
gui
gui
Nangong lineage
Ning
Ningxian
Provisioner Jifu
Provisioner Ke
Provisioner Liang Qi
Qi
Qi Hou yi
Qi Shan
Qiangia cun
Qicun
Qija
Qijia cun
Qishan county
Qiu Wei
Qizhen
Ren
Renjia cun
Royal Ji
San lineage
shanfu
Shanfu Jifu li
Shanfu Liang Qi gui
shi (Captain)
shi
Shi jing
Shu Cai
Shu Xiangfu
Shu Xiangfu gui
Shu Xiangfu Yu
Shu Xiangfu Yu gui
Si family
Tsing
Wang Gui
Wei lineage
Wei River
Wu Gong
Wu Zhenfeng
Xi
Xi Jia pan
Xi yan
Xi'an

穆公
穆氏
穆公柴盖
穆天子传
南宫
佞
寧縣
膳夫吉夫
膳夫克
膳夫梁其
齊
齊侯鳩
岐山
強家村
齊村
齊家
齊家村
岐山
褒衛
齊鎮
姓
任家村
姬
散
膳夫
膳夫吉夫葊
膳夫梁其葊
師
氏
詩經
詩烈
叔采
叔向父
叔向父葊
叔向父禹
叔向父禹葊
姐
井
王瑣
微
渭河
武公
吳鎮烽
犀
犀蜄
犀麓
犀麓
超

Xiao Ke ding
Xibo Jifu
Xin Si
xue
xue tentens
Yi Sha
Yin
Yin Ji
Yin Ji fù
You Dashu
You
eyin
Yun family
zai
Zha
Zhu zhong
Zhengjiao
Zheng Jing
Zheng lineage
Zhong
zhong bells
Zhong Fafu
Zhong Grand Captain
Zhong Ji lineage
Zhong Shengfu
Zhong Shengfu li
Zhong Taishi
Zhong Yi
Zhong Yifu
Zhong Youfu
Zhouyuuan
Zhu
Zhu Ji Ren
Zhuangbai cun
Zhu wish
Zi family
Zongzhou
zun

小克鼐
兮伯吉父
辛银
姓
須
鬱叔
尹
尹姑
尹吉父
尹姑鼎
尹叔
尹仲
滿
嬴
幽大叔
彌
禹鼎
彌伯
妘
宰
柞
柞鏘
張家坡
鄭井
鄭
中（i.e. 仲）
鐘
仲伐父
仲太師
中姑
中生父
中生父葊
仲太師
仲義
中義父
仲友父
周原
邾
邾姬
莊白村
竹書紀年
子
宗周
尊
MAPPING A “SPIRITUAL” LANDSCAPE

Representation of terrestrial space in the Shanhaijing

Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann

The Shanhaijing (“Lists of Mountains and Seas,” hereafter the SHJ), compiled no later than the beginning of the first century BCE, occupies a special place among terrestrial descriptions surviving from ancient China. Being the most voluminous among these texts (c. 30,000 characters), it is distinguished by the large scope of territories encompassed, the multiplicity of landmarks enumerated, and the many details related to these landmarks.

This chapter is concerned with the nature of the representation of terrestrial space according to the SHJ. The investigation of this question is preceded by a critical survey of relevant studies and further substantiation of the proposed research.

**Form and content of the Shanhaijing (general characteristics)**

The core of the SHJ is its first and most comprehensive part (c. 20,000 characters), the Shanjing (“Lists of Mountains,” hereafter the SJ), which is considered to comprise the earliest material. This material is presented in a remarkably systematized form. It provides an account of 447 mountains arranged in twenty-six lists. The mountains are featured in a uniformly formulaic way – according to recurrent characteristics. Major characteristics are the plants, animals, and minerals found on a mountain, and the river(s) emanating from it. The location of each mountain is given according to the principle of relative location, namely, with respect to the preceding one in the list, by indicating the cardinal direction in which the next mountain is to be found and its distance from the preceding mountain, e.g. “300 li to the southeast [from mountain A] there is a mountain called B.” Thus, each list features a sequence of mountains located one after the other.

The second part, the Haijing (“Lists of Seas,” hereafter the HJ), is less homogeneous in the landmarks enumerated – the majority of them are “countries” (guo);
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less frequent are mountains and rivers. Also the relative locations are less consistent, the precise distances between them are never stated, and the descriptions of landmarks are more varied. However, the descriptions are still in the form of orderly lists.

In addition to their systematized form, both parts of the SHJ are similar in the supernatural nature of their content. Thus, a considerable number of beings and things found at the enumerated landmarks are so-called “anomalies” (e.g. animals with five legs, people with two heads). Many of these beings and things have magical properties, such as being auspicious or evil signs or producing healing or poisoning effects, and many of the creatures, such as spirits and mythical personages, possess much magical power.

Working out methodological perspectives

To a researcher trained in the modern Western scientific tradition (analytical tradition), or considerably influenced by it, the SHJ seems to have two completely different and sometimes contradictory facets: myth and magic, on the one hand, and “realistic” knowledge approaching “science,” on the other. This distinction still dominates the interpretative studies of the SHJ which are, as a rule, concerned with one or other of these facets. The artificial character and misleading consequences of this distinction are especially manifest in the studies of the SHJ related to spatial issues.

Illusive topographical accuracy of the Shanhaijing

The majority of these studies attempt to reveal the “real” topographical background of the SHJ, and especially of the SJ. These attempts are primarily inspired by the precision of distances between the mountains listed in the SJ, which give an impression, or I would rather say, an illusion of topographical accuracy, supported by occurrences now and then of well-known toponyms and recognizable animals, plants, and minerals.

Explorations into the topographical background of the SHJ are the mainstay of such studies, which strive to derive its “realistic” substratum. This research direction occupies a prominent place in contemporary Chinese sinology, and is a result of an interesting interaction of two conceptually different research traditions.

First of all, this research direction is based on the Chinese tradition of commentaries and studies of the SHJ and other geographical texts, especially the Yu Gong ("Yu’s [System of] Tribute," c. fifth–fourth centuries BCE, included in the Shang/Ste/Shijing). Much attention in these commentaries and studies is given to identifying toponyms enumerated with real landmarks. Interest in determining the real locations of places mentioned in the SHJ can be traced to its earliest surviving commentary by Guo Pu (c. 276–324), but its peak occurred in Qing (1644–1911) scholarship. The rise of interest in the SHJ’s topography among Chinese scholars during this particular period, while continuing the authentic
commentarial tradition, was also stimulated by the diffusion of a "foreign" scholarly tradition – modern Western science.\textsuperscript{15}

A new impulse for evaluating the SHJ with respect to modern Western natural sciences must be attributed to Joseph Needham’s \textit{Science and Civilisation in China} project.\textsuperscript{16} Under its impact this text has been used as a “proof” of the ancient origins of “science” in China, in particular, the science of “geography.” For example, Tan Qixiang in his seminal article on the geographical areas covered by the SJ comes to the conclusion that “though mixed up with some elements of legend and mythology, it is primarily a geographical work that contains much realistic knowledge of the ancient times.” He stresses evidence of the “realistic” characteristics of this geographical “knowledge” and tends to diminish discrepancies between data given in the SJ and topographical reality.\textsuperscript{17} A recent paper by Zhang Jian, in contrast, highlights “the natural geographical mistakes” across the entire SHJ, providing a list of its main geographical errors.\textsuperscript{18} However, despite being seemingly different in their conclusions, both works rest on the assumption that the SHJ was aimed at conveying topographical reality and differ only in their assessment of how well this aim was achieved.\textsuperscript{19}

The assumption that the SHJ refers to real topography has serious methodological drawbacks. It implies that one should accept ancient Chinese representations of terrestrial space as a more or less advanced step in the evolution from “imprecise and incomplete” geographical knowledge towards the “perfection” of modern Western geography and cartography. Quite apart from the simplistic nature of such an understanding of both ancient terrestrial representations and modern geography and cartography,\textsuperscript{20} this leads to the evaluation of an ancient Chinese tradition of representing terrestrial space from the standpoint of a geographical and cartographic tradition developed within a different culture and a different historical setting.\textsuperscript{21}

Moreover, were one still to suppose that the SHJ is aimed at conveying topographical reality, the very studies of its topographical background designed to support this view provide a strong argument against it, as their general result is rather puzzling. Thus, the scope of territories described in the SJ can be approximated rather clearly. The major indicators here are descriptions of rivers emanating from mountains, as in each of these cases the cardinally-oriented direction of the riverflow and its destination are given, e.g. “the river N emanates from it [that is, the mountain described], flows to the south, falls into the river M/sea.”\textsuperscript{22} These indicators allow one to locate a sequence of mountains enumerated in a list in the following way: if its rivers flow to the south and fall into the Yellow River, it is located at the northern bank of the Yellow River; if its rivers flowing to the north fall into the Yellow River and those to the south into the Luo River, it is located between the Yellow and Luo Rivers. Thus located sequences of mountains are concentrated around the basins of the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers. In other words, they mostly relate to the territories occupied by ancient Chinese civilization.

The puzzles begin as soon as one tries to locate individual mountains and other landmarks in these well-known territories, even if these landmarks bear the
names of well-known places. The locations provided in the text appear strikingly inaccurate. One of the main difficulties here is the given distances. They result in many sequences of mountains covering surprisingly long distances, which considerably exceed the basins of the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers. Another difficulty are toponyms which occur only in the SJ. As a result, there are different and often contradictory points of view on their identification with real features of the landscape. Yet, no matter which of these identifications are preferred, each produces a similar effect with respect to the given locations of mountains – namely, these locations fail to match with real topography. This failure can be clearly seen from the following two attempts to represent mountains enumerated in the text as maps.

For example, the map by Wang Chengzu is derived from locating the sequences of mountains with respect to rivers, as just described, and according to the given cardinally-oriented directions and distances between mountains. The mountain ranges do not exist in the real landscape of the basins of the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers. Moreover, the given distances covered by these ranges are much greater than those of the mapped region, and, in order to incorporate them into the real locations of the rivers taken as a frame of reference, the directions given in the sequences had to be slightly changed. This map of a nonexistent landscape allows one, however, to draw a highly important conclusion – that the given locations exhibit attributes of a system.

The map by Liu Siyuan is done with an opposite intention in mind. Here the sequences of mountains are adjusted to the modern physical map of China. The given directions within the sequences, and even the references to the rivers, as found in the text, are outweighed here by the preferences of the author in identifying the listed mountains with real mountains. As a result, the given directions are considerably altered and the continuity of many of the sequences is broken up, or, conversely, discontinuous sequences are in some cases put together.

Consequently, the locations of the mountains given in the SJ and the real topography of those regions of China referred to are not compatible unless the cohesion of these locations is broken up (as found in the map by Liu Siyuan) or real topography is considerably distorted (as found in the map by Wang Chengzu). In other words, we are not dealing here with minor or partial discrepancies between the given locations and topographical reality, as could have resulted from some deficiencies in topographical knowledge or corruption of the text. On the contrary, there is an almost total mismatch, which results from the resistance of the locations as a system to attempts to make them fit real topography. This allows one to suppose that the locations given in the SHJ are built on principles other than the requirement of topographical accuracy.

Orderly maps and spatial schemes: typological similarities

This hypothesis is consistent with conclusions drawn in explorations of Chinese maps produced before the diffusion of modern Western cartography, especially
"global" maps focused on the basins of the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers. Representing the same territories as described in the SJ, these maps provide interesting comparative material.

The earliest surviving global maps were engraved during the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279 CE). These maps are, as a rule, associated with the legendary Emperor Yu’s ordering of terrestrial space as concisely recounted in the *Yugong*. With the establishment of imperial historiography, the *Yugong* became acknowledged as the most authoritative terrestrial description, serving as the foundation stone for the official conception of “terrestrial organization” (dili). The SHJ, in contrast, was considered in early official historiography as a source of extravagant and unreliable content. Having then become associated with the conception of terrestrial organization after the collapse of the first empires, it was again divorced from this conception during the Song dynasty, in the wake of the efforts to restore the original meaning of ancient texts by Song scholars. The latter may explain the absence of maps related to the SHJ among the Song maps. The SHJ is, nevertheless, also associated with the ordering of terrestrial space by the Emperor Yu, with the difference that this version of Yu’s deeds is marginal in comparison with that in the *Yugong*. Therefore, the global maps representing the same territories as those described in the SJ, and being products of the same continuous, if variant and considerably later tradition, provide important material for comparing locations given in the SHJ, which is much more appropriate in this case than modern Western cartography.

Similar to the locations of mountains given in the SJ, those found in the great majority of the surviving global maps are distinguished by a striking lack of topographical accuracy. The inaccuracy of these maps can hardly be explained by a deficiency of topographical knowledge or undeveloped cartographical techniques. Long before the Song maps, Pei Xiu (223–71 CE) formulated six technical principles of accurate cartography, and the many inaccurate maps coexisted with occasional highly accurate mapping. An excellent example of such coexistence is the pair of maps engraved on two faces of a single stone in 1136, the *Yujitu* (“Map of Yu’s footprints”) and the *Huayitu* (“Map of Chinese and barbarian [territories]”). The *Yujitu* is a prime example of the high degree of topographical accuracy that could be achieved by Chinese cartographers, especially impressive in its precision in delineating the coastline and rivers, and applying a consistent scale grid. It is, however, something of an exception when compared to the mainstream of global maps. The *Huayitu* is, in contrast, a typical example of the latter distinguished by roughly delineated coastline and river systems, and sometimes also borderlines between districts and the Great Wall, such as one can observe in a series of such maps, the *Liujingtu* (“Maps related to the Six Classics”) engraved in 1229.

What is most important here is that, having been engraved on a single stone in the same year, both maps are thus recognized as “true” by the cultural tradition, something inconceivable in Western cartography, beginning from the Renaissance, where a more accurate map would automatically supersede a less
accurate one. Moreover, as comparison of the Yujitu with the later Liujingtu series and many other cases shows, there is no step-by-step evolution towards topographical accuracy in traditional Chinese cartography. One can, therefore, draw the conclusion that topographical accuracy, a basic requirement in modern Western cartography, simply did not play such an important role in traditional Chinese mapmaking. Instead, the configuration of maps and given locations of landmarks could be determined by other factors. Among such factors the researchers of Chinese cartography name political, religious, and aesthetic interests; the intention to transmit certain spatial ideas or viewpoints more than geographical facts; and efforts to combine cartography and correlative cosmology or attain a more favorable geomantic structure.

All these concerns are expressed through more or less considerable distortions of real topography, such as relocating and shifting landmarks with respect to their real locations, adding nonexistent landmarks, and distortions in the configuration of the coastline, river flows, and borderlines. Since the concerns of mapmaking could be different in specific cases, they resulted in rather different-looking, but equally recognized representations of the same territory, e.g. the Liujingtu series. Still, all these topographically inaccurate maps are similar in their more or less clearly expressed quest for spatial regularity, and the more regular the resulting view, the less accurate is the map.

Such maps are typologically similar to the orderly terrestrial schemes which occupy a prominent place in the ancient Chinese tradition of representing terrestrial space, primarily the “Nine Provinces” (Jizhou) and the “Five Zones” (Wufu). Since these schemes represent either the “entire terrestrial space” (Five Zones), or the “civilized terrestrial space” (Nine Provinces), I propose to define them as global schemes or cosmograms.

It is necessary to point out here that no ancient graphical representations of these cosmograms have survived, and their acknowledged outlines — the Nine Provinces as a $3 \times 3$ grid, and the Five Zones as a nest of concentric squares (see Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3) — are derived from their descriptions in texts, the earliest being the Yugong.

These textual descriptions are presented in the form of lists of the constituent elements of the cosmograms, e.g. “provinces” and “zones.” The description of each constituent element begins by defining its spatial position. For example, a zone in the Yugong is delineated through giving the distance to its outer boundary from the outer boundary of the preceding zone, each of these distances ($=500 \text{ li}$) being 500 li in length.

In contrast to this purely schematic delineation of zones, explicit indicators of the schematic configuration of the Nine Provinces appear gradually. In the Yugong a province is located with respect to prominent landmarks (rivers, mountains, and the sea, e.g. “between rivers A and B,” “between river C and mountain D”). In a series of later sources composed in the third–second centuries BCE, cardinally-oriented locations of provinces appear (e.g. “to the south of river A,” or “in the southeast”). Locating a province simply at a cardinally-oriented point
Figure 2.1 3 × 3 square grid.

Figure 2.2 Nest of concentric squares.

Figure 2.3 Quinary cross and its transformation into a 3 × 3 grid and a nest of concentric squares.
is an attribute of a 3 × 3 square grid, its nine checks corresponding to the eight cardinal directions and the center.42

The cosmograms, as derived from the ancient texts, are products of an application of a system of cosmological patterns and principles, which impose strong constraints on the conventional tailoring of space.43 Structures generated through these constraints necessarily have regular form and are organized as a set of hierarchically interrelated positions.44 The form of the cosmograms serves, first of all, to symbolize the primary aim of statecraft, as conceived of in ancient China, that is, maintaining hierarchical order, balance, and harmony in the world. It is for this reason that cosmograms are so systematically imprinted on the architectural symbols of power (capital cities, palaces, state temples, and royal tombs) in China,45 which are then visualized (but “silent”) survey images of the world.46 These imprints of cosmograms served as a mise-en-scène of “world-making” rituals effectuated through putting parts of terrestrial space in their proper places.47

In sum, cosmograms are instruments for conveying conceptions of space dominated by closely interrelated political and religious meanings. In order to match these meanings, real topography could be, and, in effect, should be “corrected” or even considerably transformed, as one finds on the majority of global maps.

It is especially noteworthy that many of these maps are directly related to the most important cosmogram, the Nine Provinces. Seen from this perspective, cosmograms seem to play the role of a basic theory or ideal model for the global maps.48 Indeed, in many global maps an attempt is made to present the entire mapped territory and its parts in a square-like shape. For this purpose, the coastline and borders between districts (if any) tend to be depicted as close to straight lines. There are often attempts to achieve symmetry in the mapped territory (e.g. to trace borderlines in the west and north matching the coastline in the east and south). The central part of the map representing the Chinese empire is thus demarcated from the peripheral surroundings, as in, for instance, the Yugong jiuzhou qiangjie tu ("The Map of Boundaries of the Nine Provinces [according to] the 'Yugong'") from the Liujingtū series.49 Furthermore, in the rare examples of topographically accurate maps with an explicit scale (e.g. the Yujitū), only a square grid is applied. This grid, while being a technical means of accurate mapping, still seems to maintain a correspondence to the symbolic quadrature of the earth.50

The similarity of maps and cosmograms is expressed on the terminological level. They are not demarcated clearly in the Chinese tradition of representing space, being either not distinguished from all the other “graphical representations” (tu),51 or both designated as “terrestrial graphical representations” (ditu).52 In this respect, it differs markedly from modern Western geography which is focused on topographically accurate maps, and excludes by definition inaccurate schemes from its study. In the Chinese tradition, in contrast, topographically accurate maps are more the exception than the rule, while cosmograms possess the highest conceptual status, and it is under their conceptual domination that
in the majority of global maps real topography is sacrificed for cosmological harmony.56

**A global scheme behind the textual structure of the Shanhaijing**

It seems highly plausible that the topographical inaccuracy of the SHJ has similar origins. First, the map by Wang Chengzu showing the mountain ranges, as derived from the given locations of mountains, has evident attributes of orderly mapping, and from this point of view is typologically similar to the majority of global maps. Second, the titles of chapters (juan) in the extant version of the SHJ is a typical list of positions in a cosmogram which maps the entire terrestrial space (see Table 2.1). According to these titles, the cosmogram consists of four parts: “Mountains,” “Outside the Seas” (Haiwai), “Inside the Seas” (Hainei) and “The Great Wilderness” (Dahuang), each oriented with respect to the cardinal points.

The most widespread representation of this global scheme is a nest of concentric squares, where the Mountains are placed in the center and encompassed respectively by Inside the Seas, Outside the Seas, and The Great Wilderness (see Figure 2.4).57 This placement is found in the so-called “wheel maps” dating from about 1760 which are found in China and Korea.58 These are the only surviving maps directly related to the SHJ, and are a curious mixture of East Asian and Western traditions of cartography. Thus, the concentric zones have a circular shape in order to give the map a Western look, and on one of the copies the nest of zones has fake meridians and parallels superimposed on it. It is noteworthy that the two peripheral zones (Outside the Seas and The Great Wilderness) are not demarcated from each other on these maps, recognition that the territories described in these parts often overlap.59 This and a number of other indicators allow one to advance a hypothesis of parallel complementary mapping, Mountains and Inside the Seas both representing the central part of the terrestrial space, and Outside the Seas and The Great Wilderness representing its periphery (see Figure 2.5).60 It should also be noted that the zones can be equally represented in a cruciform shape.61 But no matter which configuration is preferred, each has all the attributes of a cosmogram.

**Major shortcomings found in the studies of the Shanhaijing**

Although studies of the global scheme of the SHJ and explorations of its topographical background are dealing, in effect, with two facets of the same subject – representation of terrestrial space – they are usually completely divorced from each other.

Explorations of the topographical background of the SHJ avoid the global scheme, as not matching with realistic/scientific geographical knowledge. The global scheme, however, is discussed either in studies of Chinese cosmology62 or
Table 2.1: Titles of chapters (juan) of the *Shanhaijing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of juan</th>
<th>Title of juan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em><em>Part I. Lists of Mountains</em> Shi</em></td>
<td><strong>Shanjing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lists of Southern Mountains <em>Nan shan jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>[First] List of Southern Mountains <em>Nan shan jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Second List of Southern Mountains <em>Nan ci er jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Third List of Southern Mountains <em>Nan ci san jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lists of Western Mountains <em>Xi shan jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>[First] List of Western Mountains <em>Xi shan jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Second List of Western Mountains <em>Xi ci er jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Third List of Western Mountains <em>Xi ci san jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fourth List of Western Mountains <em>Xi ci si jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lists of Northern Mountains <em>Bei shan jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>[First] List of Northern Mountains <em>Bei shan jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Second List of Northern Mountains <em>Bei ci er jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Third List of Northern Mountains <em>Bei ci san jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lists of Eastern Mountains <em>Dong shan jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>[First] List of Eastern Mountains <em>Dong shan jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Second List of Eastern Mountains <em>Dong ci er jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Third List of Eastern Mountains <em>Dong ci san jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fourth List of Eastern Mountains <em>Dong ci si jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lists of Central Mountains <em>Zhong shan jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>[First] List of Central Mountains <em>Zhong shan jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Second List of Central Mountains <em>Zhong ci er jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Third List of Central Mountains <em>Zhong ci san jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fourth List of Central Mountains <em>Zhong ci si jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fifth List of Central Mountains <em>Zhong ci wu jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sixth List of Central Mountains <em>Zhong ci lu jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Seventh List of Central Mountains <em>Zhong ci qi jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Eighth List of Central Mountains <em>Zhong ci ba jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ninth List of Central Mountains <em>Zhong ci jiu jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tenth List of Central Mountains <em>Zhong ci shi jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Eleventh List of Central Mountains <em>Zhong ci shi yi jing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Twelfth List of Central Mountains <em>Zhong ci shi er jing</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Part II. Lists of Seas* Hai* | **Haijing** |
| Outside the Seas *Haiwai* | |
| 6 | Southern List of Outside the Seas *Hai wai nan jing* |
| 7 | Western List of Outside the Seas *Hai wai xi jing* |
| 8 | Northern List of Outside the Seas *Hai wai bei jing* |
| 9 | Eastern List of Outside the Seas *Hai wai dong jing* |
| Inside the Seas *Hainei* | |
| 10 | Southern List of Inside the Seas *Hai nei nan jing* |
| 11 | Western List of Inside the Seas *Hai nei xi jing* |
| 12 | Northern List of Inside the Seas *Hai nei bei jing* |
| 13 | Eastern List of Inside the Seas *Hai nei dong jing* |
| Great Wilderness *Dahuang* | |
| 14 | Eastern List of the Great Wilderness *Da huang dong jing* |
| 15 | Southern List of the Great Wilderness *Da huang nan jing* |
| 16 | Western List of the Great Wilderness *Da huang xi jing* |
| 17 | Northern List of the Great Wilderness *Da huang bei jing* |
| Inside the Seas *Hainei* – addition | |
| 18 | [Central] List of Inside the Seas *Hai nei jing* |
mythology, which do not regard accounts of specific landmarks as issues of much importance.

In the majority of studies of Chinese cosmology representation of terrestrial space is understood as a development from naturalistic (interpreted as realistic) description towards geometrical/schematic cosmography. This geometrical/schematic cosmography, being the main subject of these studies, is associated with explicit indicators of regular mapping, which often refer to rather abstract regions, and from this point of view, are similar to general patterns applicable to any area, as, for example, the Nine Provinces in the Dixingxun ("Treatise on Terrestrial Shape"). References to specific and well-known landmarks, especially those not accompanied by explicit indicators of spatial regularity, imply, according to the cosmological studies, a naturally irregular landscape, and for this reason relationships between these landmarks are not given much attention. From this point of view the SHJ with its orderly global scheme and general names of terrestrial zones, on the one hand, and the large number of specific landmarks enumerated, on the other, is an inconvenient case to be avoided if possible. Such a restrictive understanding of cosmograms results from a failure to recognize that specific and well-known landmarks can sometimes simply serve as markers for a purely schematic construction, and that a schematic structure can be provided implicitly.

A step in this direction has been made in a recent study of ancient Chinese cosmology, which among many other issues explores the spatial structures of The Great Wilderness and Outside the Seas. In particular, an attempt is made
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to reconstruct the arrangement of landmarks enumerated in these sections within their general cardinally-oriented structures. It is, however, not accidental that the author focuses on these two sections of the SHJ, and does not discuss either Inside the Seas, with its more complex general structure, or the SJ which refers to well-known territories. Indeed, most of the landmarks found in Outside the Seas and The Great Wilderness, even if, according to the author, real and identifiable at one time, are, according to the surviving version of the text, in the majority of cases, apparently fantastic items serving as symbols of far-away zones. Therefore, he, in effect, still maintains the restrictive understanding of cosmograms.

Studies of the SHJ’s mythology – remarkably numerous and international since all the studies of Chinese mythology to date rely on this text as a basic source – do not generally focus on topographical details. They treat the mythical issues found in the SHJ separately from its system of locations. They therefore fail to recognize that each mythical entity, being associated with a specific landmark, is, first and foremost, characterized by its precise place(s) defined with respect to other landmarks. As a rule, only a cardinally-oriented section of a terrestrial zone where an entity is found has been taken into account; at best, a single sequence of landmarks (mountains) which contains the landmark where the entity resides has been pointed out. If mythologically important landmarks are studied, such as the mountains Kunlun and Buzhou, they are not viewed in the context of the entire system of mountains of the SJ. Instead, under the influence of studies of classical mythology which have a much longer history and a strong theoretical basis, the mythical issues of the SHJ are considered as constituent elements of mythological narrative(s), and many studies, in effect, seek only to trace such narrative(s).

Studies which search for the attributes of “realistic” knowledge in the SHJ, in their turn, ignore the magical or sacred value of the landmarks enumerated, because the latter questions the “reality” of these landmarks.

In sum, the SHJ is a product of a distinctive and elaborate tradition of representing terrestrial space that is markedly different from modern Western geography. This text should, therefore, be evaluated in terms of its proper tradition, avoiding modernistic value judgments and distinctions, or those characteristic of other cultural traditions, unless the latter are typologically similar to the representation of terrestrial space in ancient China.

Applying inadequate value judgments and distinctions is, however, as one can see from the above analysis, the main methodological shortcoming of both explorations of the “realistic” background of the SHJ and studies of its mythological issues. Despite their considerable difference in subject and approach, both use interpretative frameworks external to the Chinese tradition of representing space.

Another shortcoming that is characteristic of most studies of the SHJ is that the text is regarded only from one angle, while its other facets are ignored (such as attempting to derive its “realistic” knowledge while ignoring the sacred and magical attributes of the provided description; focusing on mythological issues while ignoring their spatial context; examining its global scheme separately from...
MAPPING A “SPIRITUAL” LANDSCAPE

its detailed topographical filling, and vice versa, etc.). These restrictive approaches are at odds with the remarkably systematized presentation of data in the SHJ, wherein myth and reality, numerous specific landmarks and a general schematic frame, and all the other elements of the provided description seem to constitute a single entity.

The effect of these inadequate and restrictive approaches is to obscure and fragment the representation of terrestrial space in the SHJ, resulting in a mosaic of incoherent, often contradictory, and sometimes wholly misleading insights into what is represented in this text.

Perspectives of the proposed study

I argue that the representation of terrestrial space found in the SHJ can only be reconstructed and comprehended in an adequate and coherent way if seen from holistic and internal perspectives, that is:

1. The systematized account of landmarks found in this text should be considered as a whole. This means that the given locations of landmarks should be explored (a) as a system; and (b) in the context of all the other elements of their description.

2. The derived data should be evaluated with respect to the patterns and principles of ancient Chinese cosmology and other ancient Chinese representations of space, in other words, within a large framework of concepts and cultural presupposition that could determine given locations.

To comprehend a representation of terrestrial space means to determine (a) how it is structured (what are its form and constituent elements); (b) what meanings it conveys; and (c) what functions it serves in thought and practice.

Terrestrial space as a system of itineraries

The structure of the representation of terrestrial space in the SHJ I have discussed in more detail elsewhere. The main principle I have applied in its reconstruction is to ignore, as far as possible, the modern physical map of China, and, instead, to explore how the territories are presented in the text. The core material for this study is found in the SJ, which contains the majority of enumerated landmarks and is distinguished by detailed descriptions of their locations. Here I shall point out the results of this investigation necessary for further discussion.

As mentioned above, the division of the SJ into chapters emulates a division of terrestrial space into the four cardinally-oriented directions and the center (see Figure 2.6), and the listed mountains are arranged into sequences.

This presentation of mountains arranged in sequences implies routes marked by mountains. Each route has a definite starting and finishing point, and a “one
way” direction. Rather surprisingly this attribute of the lists of mountains in the SJ has been almost totally overlooked so far (for example, it is nowhere in evidence in the maps by Wang Chengzu and Liu Siyuan). It should be noted here that routes (dao) marked by mountains paved by the Emperor Yu are
mentioned in the Yugong (nine routes, twenty-seven mountains). No other details, apart from mountains’ names, are found in the Yugong. The SJ contains more routes (twenty-six), considerably more mountains (447), and much greater detail about each mountain, and is, in effect, an extended version of this particular aspect of Yu’s ordering of terrestrial space.

Let us take a closer look at the system of routes in the SJ. Each route has a title which gives the cardinal orientation of the chapter it belongs to, and, beginning from the second list in each chapter, its ordinal number in the chapter (see Table 2.1). The titles then give clear indications to how the routes are distributed within the quinary frame. As one can see from Figure 2.6, their distribution is remarkably balanced, corresponds to the acknowledged symbolic meanings of figures, but is not in proportion to the distribution of individual mountains.

The arrangement of the routes can be derived from the following indicators:

1. The provision of the cardinally-oriented direction and precise distance from one mountain to the next in the list allows one to determine the definitive direction, configuration, and length of each route.

2. Cardinally-oriented directions and destinations of the rivers emanating from mountains allow one to situate the routes with respect to each other, as mentioned above.

The indicators that relate to rivers are less consistent and permit much less precision. The highest degree of precision that can be achieved here is “route A is located to the north of river N, and route B to the south of river N, therefore, river A is to the north of river B.” Rivers also present a danger of imposing their real locations on the reconstructed system of routes (as occurs in the map by Wang Chengzu). It is necessary to consider when using rivers as spatial indicators that if a route goes to the north and its rivers flow to the west and into the Yellow River, this only means that, according to the SJ, the Yellow River at the level of this route is placed in a south–north direction.

The enumerated indicators allow one to reveal the following interesting characteristics of the routes:

1. The routes never cross each other.
2. The routes are always located between rivers.
3. Each route has a dominant direction.

According to these characteristics, the routes delineate neighboring (never overlapping) regions. This is done through tracing the central axis of the region and not through defining its borders. The borders are implied by the rivers and the sea, but are not explicitly articulated.

Figure 2.7 presents a survey of the arrangement of routes in the SJ: their distribution within the quinary frame, dominant directions, and relative placement. Even if the placement of routes can sometimes be open to discussion,
there is no doubt that we are dealing here with a complex, yet orderly system. It has, however, two interesting “imperfections” if regarded from the principles and patterns of Chinese cosmology: asymmetry between the north and the west, on the one hand, and the south and the east, on the other, and the two-fold center.

Notes
*Inside the quinary frame: routes of the “Lists of Mountains.”
Outside the quinary frame: routes of the “Outside the Seas.”
Number with a symbol of a cardinal direction/the center: ordinal number of a route within the corresponding section of “Mountains” (e.g. N2 – the 2nd route of the “Northern Mountains”).
Number in parentheses: order of the route’s appearance in the text.

Figure 2.7 System of routes.
MAPPING A “SPIRITUAL” LANDSCAPE

Asymmetry between the north and the west, and the south and the east

The routes of the north and the west contain a relatively large number of mountains and go from the center to the periphery. The routes of the south and the east are comprised of a much smaller number of mountains, and also move away from the center to the periphery, but as lines parallel to the outside border of their terrestrial section.

This arrangement of routes and number of mountains seems to be influenced by the real topography of the represented territories, as does the deviation of the last eastern route tracing the Shandong Peninsula. Indeed, the “Southern” and the “Eastern” Mountains refer to the south and the east of China, territories that have clear natural boundaries – the seas. The placement of routes of the “Southern” and “Eastern” Mountains reflects these boundaries, and the relatively small number of mountains here corresponds to the naturally limited scope of the represented territories. The “Northern” and the “Western” Mountains, in contrast, refer to the north and the west of China. These regions do not have such obvious natural boundaries, and cover a larger potential area, so it is not surprising that they are crowded with mountains, with routes going far afield.

The arrangement of routes seems, however, to be more complicated than simply inspired by real topography when evaluated with respect to the vertical/lengthwise and horizontal/crosswise axes. Thus, the Northern Mountains belong to the northern branch of the vertical axis. Their routes are arrayed along this axis and point to the north. The same principle is characteristic of the Western Mountains – they belong to the western branch of the horizontal axis, and the routes are arrayed along this axis and point to the west. This arrangement of routes in the north and the west can be regarded, then, as cosmologically “perfect,” while the placement of routes in the south and the east, which run contrary to the axes they belong to, as “imperfect.” These routes of the south and the east also have an interesting common destination – they all come together in the southeast.

The asymmetry in the arrangement of routes and the “imperfection” in the south and the east brings to mind the conception of the deformed cosmos which resulted from a global catastrophe provoked by the mythical being Gong Gong. While contesting with the mythical emperor-to-be Zhuan Xu for power, Gong Gong butted Buzhou mountain, thereby breaking one of the eight pillars (zhu) holding up heaven, and tearing up one of the four nodes (wei) holding together the corners of the square earth. Heaven then tilted to the northwest, explaining the shift of the heavenly bodies in this direction. Earth, in its turn, became deficient in the southeast, accounting for the southeasterly direction of the flow of rivers and dust. This conception is an attempt to explain some natural imperfections, but the explanation is delivered in the form of a cosmic scheme aimed at finding balance even in imperfections.

A strong argument in favor of seeing the influence of this conception in the arrangement of routes in the SJ is that the former appeared at roughly the same
time as the compilation of the SHJ. Moreover, references to this conception are found in texts with many mythological issues similar to the SHJ. Thus, the earliest allusions to it are found among the questions posed in the “Tianwen” (“Questions to Heaven”) chapter (c. fourth century BCE) of the Chu ci. Its earliest detailed description is found at the beginning of the “Tianxiangxun” (“Treatise on Heavenly Symbols”) chapter of the Huainanzi (compiled by 139 BCE).

The two-fold center

The routes of the Central Mountains refer to two different geographical regions: those from the first to seventh cover the Yellow River basin, while those from the eighth to twelfth relate to the Yangzi basin. These two geographical groups are clearly demarcated by the alternation of the order of the routes.

The routes of the Yellow River basin alternate in a remarkably orderly way: those with odd ordinal numbers (C1, C3, C5, C7) go to the east; those with even ordinal numbers (C2, C4, C6) go to the west. Eventually, these routes form an especially regular and compact structure with attributes of symmetry (see Figure 2.7, the lower part of the center). These routes are relatively short, and due to the frequency of references to rivers, they can be determined with a high degree of precision. As one can see in the map by Wang Chengzu, these routes are located around the Yellow and Luo Rivers, forming a dense and prominent set. The singling out of this region is not accidental. Exactly at its center, on the northern bank of the Luo River, Chengzhou/Luoyi, one of the capitals of the Zhou dynasty (1046/45/40–256 BCE), was located. From the beginning of the Eastern Zhou period (770 BCE) it was the only capital. It is firmly associated with the center of the world in all the available descriptions of the Zhou dynasty in ancient texts.

The alternation order changes markedly in the routes covering the Yangzi basin (C8 goes to the northeast, C9 and C11 to the east, C10 to the west, and C12 to the southeast). It is noteworthy that the two groups of routes of the Central Mountains are not differentiated in their titles. This masked two-foldness of the center is a highly interesting ideological characteristic of the representation of terrestrial space in the SJ, not least because the basins of the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers differed considerably in cultural and political traditions, the Yangzi basin being the area of Chu culture.

The marginal status of the Yangzi basin from a Zhou cultural perspective can be clearly seen in the geographical distribution of routes marked by mountains in the Tengang. The inequality of the Yellow and Yangzi River basins is expressed here quantitatively: among a total of nine routes, six marked by twenty mountains are in the Yellow River basin, while only three routes marked by seven mountains are in the Yangzi basin.

According to the SJ, in contrast, the Yangzi River basin is incorporated into the center almost on equal terms with the Yellow River basin (a slight inequality...
in the number of routes – five and seven, respectively, is compensated for by the number of mountains – 111 and 86, respectively). This seems to reflect the considerable political and cultural changes that came with the foundation of the imperial order in China, when former Chu territories became part of the unified empire. However, as shown in the reconstructed scheme, the attempt to integrate the Yangzi basin into the center did not wholly succeed in overcoming the deep differences between the two regions.

Routes are also found in the “Outside the Seas” section (one in each of its four cardinally-oriented chapters), but they are mostly marked by countries, and precise distances between the landmarks are not given. These four routes, as one can see from Figure 2.7, make a sort of frame around those of the SJ.

In sum, single mountains enumerated in the SJ are arranged into routes, routes into orderly cardinally-oriented sets; and these sets constitute an orderly global scheme. Therefore, the individual mountains here are constituent elements of a cosmogram conveying an ideal organization of terrestrial space. This organization is, of course, inspired by some characteristics of real topography (real mountains, natural irregularities of landscape), as one can see from the uneven distribution of mountains and the imperfections in the arrangement of routes. These real characteristics, however, were “processed” through a strong filter of cosmological patterns and principles. As a result, real mountains became markers of positions in an ideal terrestrial space, like the majority of global maps, were possibly combined with fantastic landmarks. Natural irregularities were also given a more balanced form. The system of routes is then a compromise between elements of real topography and cosmology, with the conceptual framework of the latter dominating.

A strong argument in favor of the reconstructed arrangement of routes and its interpretation is that it is typologically similar to the earliest surviving representation of mountains mentioned in the Yugong as markers of routes paved by Yu, the Yu dao shanchuan zhi tu (“Map of Yu’s Paving Mountains and Rivers”) from the Liujingtu series.91 Although the latter is much less elaborate, mountains here are inscribed with certain regularity into a schematically delineated Nine Provinces.92

A landscape determined by spirits

The formal aspects of the arrangement of routes already give us much information about the character of mapping in the SJ (building a cosmogram). In order to determine what specific kind of terrestrial space is mapped through this regular frame, an evaluation of its content is necessary.

The constituent elements of the derived cosmogram are sets of uniform features of the landscape – mountains arranged into an orderly system of routes. Therefore, we are dealing here with a representation of a landscape. The key to the nature of this landscape is provided by the “summaries” appended to the
description of each route. The summaries specify the appearance of guardian spirits (shen) associated with the mountains of a route, and detail sacrifices to be performed to these local spirits. This allows one to suppose that the routes outline a sacred space.

Let us examine the system of routes from the point of view of how the appearance of their guardian spirits is described (see Figure 2.8). The appearance of the spirits is a convenient characteristic for analysis, as it is given in the majority of cases (it is missing in seven routes out of a total of twenty-six) and in a uniform way. The guardian spirits are described as hybrids of different animals, or an animal and a human being, for example, “bird’s body–dragon’s head” (niaoshen longshou) “dragon’s body–human face” (longshen renmian) in the first and the third routes of the Southern Mountains (S1 and S2), respectively. 93

Despite being incomplete in a few places, the received scheme allows us to see clearly that certain kinds of appearance have “preferred” areas (see also Table 2.2). For example, guardian spirits with a snake’s body or, in one case, a snake’s tail, are found only in the north, those with a human head only in the center, and those with a human body only in the east. The east is also distinguished by an emphasis on horns. In contrast, a human face is in evidence in each of the five sections, being especially frequent in the northern part of the center. The areas for the dragon are the south, the southern part of the center and the east; the areas of the bird are the south and the center; and for swine (type 1 and 2, see Table 2.2) are the north and the center.

Yet, in contrast to the arrangement of routes within their sections which constitute distinctive sets, this does not occur with the appearance of spirits. Apart from the snake in the north, human body with horns in the east, and human head in the center, none of the types of appearance is reserved for a specific section. Instead, an overlapping of the types of appearance takes place. For example, the bird is found in the south and both parts of the center, and swine in both parts of the center and the north. Thus, the bird and swine overlap in the center. The southern part of the center is characterized by the largest variety of types of appearance.

As shown in Table 2.2, judging from the parts of the beings that are used for describing the appearance of the local guardian spirits, these beings form three classes:

1 “Upper class”: the human being whose face, head, and body are used. The human face is the most frequently mentioned part (fourteen times) and it is found everywhere, whereas the head and body are relatively rare (both occur twice) and are regional characteristics.

2 “Middle class”: two particular animals – dragon and bird – are conspicuous. Both their heads and bodies are used. The bird’s head occurs only once compared to four references to its body, while the dragon’s head is mentioned more often than its body (four and three times, respectively). From this point of view, the dragon resembles the human being (which shows
clearly its peculiar status among animals), while the bird is closer to the next class of animals.

3 “Lower class”: other animals (snake, swine 1 (zhī) and swine 2 (shī), horse, sheep, bovine, beast). Mostly their bodies or such parts as horns and tail are used, but never the heads.

Figure 2.8 Local guardian spirits.
Table 2.2 Appearances of local spirits in the Shanjing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appearance</th>
<th>East</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>Center</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>South</td>
<td>North</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. HUMAN BEING: both face/head and body are used in the description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>human face (renmian): 14</td>
<td>1 (E2, note: with</td>
<td>1 (S3)</td>
<td>2 (S8; S10)</td>
<td>4 (C2; C4; C7; 2x)</td>
<td>3 (N1; N2; N3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deer’s horns (ge)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (W2, 2x; W3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human head (renshou): 1 +?</td>
<td>1 (C11)</td>
<td></td>
<td>? (C7; 3-head spirits with human face)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human body (renshen) 2</td>
<td>2 (E1; E3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. ANIMALS: both head (shou) and body (shen) are used in the description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dragon (long): 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body</td>
<td>2 (S2; S3)</td>
<td>1 (S1)</td>
<td>2 (C9; C12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>head</td>
<td>1 (E1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (C11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bird (niao): 5</td>
<td>1 (S1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (C8; C12)</td>
<td>1 (C2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body</td>
<td>1 (S2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>head</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. ANIMALS: body and sometimes peripheral parts (horns, tails) are used in the description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>snake (shu): 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (N1; N2; body)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swine 1 (zhi): 3</td>
<td>1 (C11)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (N3b: tail (wei))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8 legs (z) and snake’s tail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swine 2 (shi): 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body</td>
<td>1 (C11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horse (mu): 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (C7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sheep (yang): 2</td>
<td>1 (E3: horns (jia))</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (N3a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bovine (niu): 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beast (shou): 2</td>
<td>1 (E2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (C4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the majority of cases the body is mentioned first and the head or face next. This order can be inverted only when the human face is mentioned, another indication that the status of the human being is the highest. 96

There are three cases when the local guardian spirits are alike with the difference being that in two of these cases the order in which the body and the face are mentioned is inverted: the first and second route of the Northern Mountains (N1: “human face–snake’s body” (renmian shehen); N2: “snake’s body–human face”), the second and the eighth routes of the Central Mountains (C2: “human face–bird’s body” (renmian niaoshen); C8: “bird’s body–human face”), and the first route of the Southern Mountains and the twelfth route of the Central Mountains (S1, C12: “dragon’s head–bird’s body” (longzhou niaoshen)). It is noteworthy that in each of these cases the similarity between guardian spirits occurs in neighboring routes.

These cases of “spirit duplication” provide a strong argument in favor of the proposed reconstruction of the spatial arrangement of the routes. Thus, the first and the second routes of the Northern Mountains are enumerated in the text one after the other, so that their neighboring location and the similarity of their spirits can be easily seen from their sequence in the text. The second and eighth routes of the Central Mountains, and the first route of the Southern Mountains and the twelfth route of the Central Mountains, on the contrary are not sequential in the enumeration of the routes, and their neighboring location emerges only in their spatial arrangement, thus serving as a confirmation that this arrangement is assembled in the correct way.

This spatial arrangement of routes also allows one to see a certain “regionality” in the consistency of describing the local guardian spirits as its consistency. By “consistency” here, I mean the appearance being given for every route, the single type of spirits in a route, and the description being limited to the “body–head/face” formula (or vice versa) without many other details.

The descriptions are remarkably consistent in the south, the east (ignoring the fourth route, for which the description of spirits is lost), and the southern part of the center. The north, the west, and the northern part of the center are, in contrast, rather inconsistent. Thus, the appearances are missing in the first and fourth routes of the Western Mountains (W1, W4) and in the first, third, fifth, and sixth routes of the northern part of the center (C1, C3, C5, C6), though the sacrifices to be performed to these spirits are provided. Different-looking spirits within a single route are found in the second route of the Western Mountains (W2: (a) ten spirits have “human face–horse’s body” (renmian mashen); (b) seven spirits have “human face–bovine’s body, four legs and one arm, rely on a stick for walking, are spirits of flying beasts” (renmian nisun, siyu yibi, cao zhang yi xing, shi wei feishou zhi shen); and in the third route of the Northern Mountains (N3: (a) twenty spirits have “horse’s body–human face” (mashen renmian); (b) fourteen spirits have “swine’s body, wear jade” (zhishen zaiyu); (c) ten spirits have “swine’s body, eight legs and snake’s tail” (zhishen bazu shewei), whereas two preceding routes of the Northern Mountains, as mentioned above, have, in contrast, similar-looking spirits. The just mentioned routes with different-looking spirits are
distinguished by many “nonstandard” details in the description of their appearance. At the same time, two groups of spirits in the third route of the Northern Mountains (N3b,c) do not have such basic characteristics as a head or a face. At the same time, in all the cases where this characteristic is given in the north, the northern part of the center, and the west, it is always a human face, whereas in the south, the southern part of the center, and the east heads of animals are also found.

A somewhat similar case with different-looking spirits is also found in the seventh route of the northern part of the center (C7), where three singled out mountains (Nos 4, 9, and 10) have spirits with “human face–three heads,” while the other sixteen spirits have “swine 2’s body–human face” (shishen renmian). In this case and in the second route of the Western Mountains, the given number of spirits corresponds to the total number of mountains. The context of the seventh route of the Central Mountains, as well as the descriptions of sacrifices, show clearly that, according to the SHJ, one mountain should have one spirit. The only discrepancy, found in the third route of the Northern Mountains (forty-four spirits – forty-seven mountains actually listed, forty-six given as the total), apparently results from a corruption of the text. In the C7 route spirits seem to be mixed, whereas in the W2 and N3 routes it seems more likely that there are parts of routes with differing spirits.

From the point of view of consistency in describing the appearances of spirits, there is a clear opposition between the north, the northern part of the center, and the west, on the one hand, and the south, the southern part of the center, and the east, on the other, which correlates somewhat with the asymmetry in the arrangement of routes discussed above. However, in the case of the spirits’ distribution, it is the south and the east which have a “perfect” look, and the north and the west “imperfect.” One of the possible explanations for this inversion is that structural “imperfectness” in this part of terrestrial space (a way to convey the natural imperfection of landscape) is compensated for by “perfectness” in the arrangement of its spirits.

To summarize, the appearances of local spirits correspond to the routes as follows:

1. In the majority of cases, a route is comprised of mountains that have spirits of the same appearance and similar sacrifices.
2. Spirits of the same appearance can occur in neighboring routes when these routes cannot be represented as a single line with a dominant direction, but sacrifices in these cases are different, indicating that the spirits are not completely identical.
3. A route can include different-looking spirits when certain mountains have peculiar spirits (C7), or when a route contains sections with different spirits (W2, N3). In other words, different-looking spirits can form a group under the condition that the mountains they refer to form a line going in the same direction.
MAPPING A “SPIRITUAL” LANDSCAPE

Table 2.3 Spirits of the cardinal directions in the “Outside the Seas”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appearance</th>
<th>East (Gou mang)</th>
<th>South (Zhu rong)</th>
<th>North (Yu qiang)</th>
<th>West (Ru shou)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human face (renmian)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird’s body (niaoshen)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beast’s body (shoushen)</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snakes in the ears (worn as earrings)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bears like in the left ear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earrings a pair of green/black/blue snakes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(er liang qing she)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stands on a pair of green/black/blue snakes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(jian liang qing she)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rides on a chariot with a pair of dragons</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(cheng liang long)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The system of local guardian spirits of the SJ is complemented by four guardian spirits of the cardinal directions described in the summaries of the corresponding cardinally-oriented chapters of “Outside the Seas.” The descriptions are similar to those of the spirits in the SJ, except that sacrifices are never in evidence, each of these spirits has a name, and each uses a certain vehicle (see Table 2.3).98

Conclusions

The derived cosmogram maps a dispersion of sacred powers over terrestrial space. A region submitting to a specific sacred power (group of spirits) is outlined by the delineation of its core by a route. A route, in its turn, is marked by a sequence of mountains. In this context it seems especially significant that the descriptions of the mountains focus on their supernatural attributes – strange-looking beings and things possessing magical properties. Seen from the perspective of the sacred nature of the system of routes, mountains are points in terrestrial space that have sacred importance. It then becomes clear why, according to the “résümé” to the SJ, only 447 mountains out of the total of 5,370 mountains of the world are enumerated. The listed mountains are a selection of sacred points. Since the spirits are defined with respect to the features of landscape, I propose to define the reconstructed representation of terrestrial space as a cosmogram of a spiritual landscape. This cosmogram is the core of the representation of terrestrial space in the SHJ.

It is necessary to stress here that the proposed definition only highlights the major attributes of this representation of space and is far from being exhaustive.
Indeed, the representation of terrestrial space, as derived from the SHJ, belongs to “totalistic” conceptions (as defined by S.J. Tambiah following M. Mauss). Such conceptions simultaneously embrace cosmological, religious, political, topographical, economic, and other dimensions which cannot be disaggregated, as being part of a single complexly interrelated whole. These dimensions are, however, differentiated rather sharply by Western analytical tradition. For this reason providing a comprehensive and adequate translation of them into analytical terms, as a researcher trained in this tradition is obliged to do, is extremely difficult.

Hypotheses for further exploration

A test for the derived scheme is whether it resembles any surviving schemes dating from about the same period of time. In this respect there is an excellent argument in favor of the proposed reconstruction.

It should be noted here that the SHJ is considered to have originated from the images (xiang) of beings and things (wu), primarily spirits, found on the Nine Tripods (Jiuding), as described in the Zuozhuan (“Zuo Narrative,” fourth century BCE?). The images, according to this text, were made after graphical representations (wu) of beings and things. Pictures accompanying the SHJ existed at the time of Guo Pu and are found in its later editions. If we now imagine pictures of spirits behind the descriptions of their appearance, the derived scheme immediately reminds us of the famous Chu Silk Manuscript (Chuboshu, c. fourth century BCE).

The manuscript contains pictures of twelve spirits. The pictures, accompanied by short textual passages elucidating on the depicted spirits, are placed at the borders of the manuscript. The spirits, being arranged into groups of three, form a square frame. The spirit to the left on each side is in charge of one of the four seasons. Since the seasons correlate with the cardinal points, the arrangement of spirits is then implicitly cardinally-oriented. The center of the manuscript is occupied by two relatively long textual passages placed upside down with respect to each other.

The manuscript is laid out in such a way that observing the pictures and reading the textual passages requires rotating the manuscript (clockwise) or a circular movement by its user. In this respect, as well as in the regular cardinally-oriented structure marked by the pictures of spirits the manuscript strongly resembles a rotating astronomical/astrological instrument known from the Former Han dynasty – the so-called cosmograph (shi). The cosmograph was an instrument for delineating cosmological patterns. The cosmograph-like form of the manuscript perfectly corresponds to its content, dealing with matters of astronomy and astrology, but the most interesting thing is that it literally shows the instrumental function of the manuscript – as being a tool for ideal tailoring of space.

The typological similarity between the reconstructed scheme and the Chu Silk Manuscript allows one to advance two hypotheses.
MAPPING A “SPIRITUAL” LANDSCAPE

First, the reconstructed scheme could have served as an instrument for determining the configuration of a spiritual landscape, used, for instance, for certain “space-ordering” practices. Several possibilities and their interrelationship should be explored here, such as shamanistic rituals and spirit quests, official “world-making” practices revived with the foundation of the empire, and the origins of geomancy.

Second, the SHJ could have originally existed as a similar spatial layout combining into a single whole graphical and textual elements, rather than being a text accompanied by pictures, as found in certain surviving editions, or by maps now lost, as suggested by some researchers. Indeed, according to the résumé to the SHJ, the total of its characters is 15,503, that is, about 5,500 less than in the extant version, which may have been the result of replacing pictures by text.

Moreover, in the titles of the chapters of the HJ, cardinal orientation refers to the textual parts rather than to terrestrial sections (see Table 2.1). In this respect it would be especially interesting to explore the designation of each textual part in the SHJ by the term jing (literally “warp,” in this chapter tentatively translated as “list”), in particular, its implications of an orderly structure both with respect to the textual body and the represented space. Testing these hypotheses would be the next step towards comprehending the representation of terrestrial space in the SHJ.

Notes and abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AM</th>
<th>Asia Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEFEO</td>
<td>Bulletin de l’Ecole Française d’Extrême Orient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMFEA</td>
<td>Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Early China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO–EO</td>
<td>Extrême-Orient–Extrême-Occident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Monumenta Serica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBBY</td>
<td>Sibu beiyao 四部備要</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TP</td>
<td>T’oung Pao</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 I am truly indebted to John Moffett for corrections to my English. Any mistakes found in this chapter are my own responsibility.

2 Some grounds for the proposed translation will be provided below.


6 With the exception of the initial mountain in the list.

7 The rivers here are independent landmarks, in contrast to the SJ, where they are mentioned only in relation to mountains.

8 Each list of landmarks in the SJ and the HJ is entitled jing (literally “warp”), so are chapters of the SJ, being sets of lists (see Table 2.1). The most common meaning of jing in texts’ titles – “class,” “canon,” “book” – does not fit well in this case. The proposed working translation of jing as “list/lists” in the titles of all textual sections of the SHJ and in its general title is aimed at highlighting the peculiarity of its textual structure. It is somewhat similar to the “Catalog of Mountains and Seas” by E.M. Yanshina (Katalog gor i morei), the “Records of Mountains and Seas” by Suh Kyung Ho (A study of “Shan-hai-ching”), and the “Kompendium der Berge und Seen” by Manfred W. Frohaufl, Die Königliche Mutter des Westens: Xiwangmu in alten Dokumenten Chinas (Bochum, 1999).


10 A good example of such a view of the SHJ can be found in a survey of it by J. Needham and Wang Ling, Science and Civilisation in China, Vol. III (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 503–6. Having pointed to its relation to “an ancient tradition, perhaps magical and ritualistic rather than geographical,” they then state that “it often mentions the existence of quite reasonable minerals, plants and animals.” Further they refer to the point of view of the historian of Chinese geography, Wang Yong, that “many of the topographical features mentioned in this book can be approximately identified,” and then criticize “naturalistic identifications” of peoples of far-away lands by G. Schlegel. A quite recent example of such an approach to the SHJ can be found in the translation of the SHJ by Anne Birrell referred to above, as pointed out in
11 Fracasso (“The Shanhai jing: A Bibliography”) distinguishes the following rubrics in interpretative studies of the SHJ: “Geography and Ethnology,” “Religion, Mythology and Divination” and “Natural Sciences and Medicine.” These rubrics have a clear stamp of the just mentioned distinction and, at the same time, immediately show its artificial character. Thus, it is not accidental that the author placed “Natural Sciences and Medicine” after “Religion, Mythology and Divination,” and not after “Geography and Ethnology” (although geography is one of the natural sciences). The reason is that many of the so-called “scientific and medical” issues have, as one can see from the listed titles, attributes of magical practices. Similar interpretative trends of the SHJ (geographical, shamanistic, and ethnological) are distinguished by Suh, *A Study of “Shan-hai-chung,”* pp. 81–90.

12 We shall return to the Yagang below. Here it is sufficient to quote J. Needham and Wang Ling (*Science and Civilization*, Vol. III, p. 503): “all Chinese geographers . . . tried unceasingly to reconstruct the topography which it contained.”


14 Especially significant in this respect are the commentaries to the SHJ by Bi Yuan (Shanhaijing xingnaoyi) and Lü Tiaoyang (Wuzang Shanjing zhaun and Haineijing fazhuan), and the study by Wu Chengzhi (Shanhaijing dili jishu). These Qing studies of the SHJ served as the basis for its discussion in the first history of Chinese geography by Wang Yong, *Zongguo dili xue shi* (Shanghai, 1998, repr. of 1938), pp. 1–21.

15 It is hardly accidental that the only “geographical” studies of the SHJ in Western sinology – a series of papers by G. Schlegel in *TP*, 3 (1892), 4 (1893), 5 (1894), and 6 (1895) who tried to identify the peoples enumerated in the HJ, and the only purely “geographical” interpretative title of the SHJ among its translations (*antique géographie* by de Rosny) appeared at the end of the nineteenth century when the diffusion of modern Western science in China became especially active.


19 A classic example of such a study is *Shan-hai-chung* by Wei Tingsheng and Hsu (Xu) Shengguo (Taipei, 1974). For more examples, see Fracasso, “The Shanhai jing: A Bibliography,” pp. 80–92; Fu Yongfa, *Zhongguo de ziyuan xue shi* (Shanghai, 1998), pp. 81–90. The study by Wu Chengzhi (Shanhaijing dili jishu) (1938), pp. 1–21, which is a classic example of such a study, is a survey of recent studies in the history of Chinese geography: Ju Jiwa, *Zongguo dili xue fazhuan shi* (Yangzhou, 1987), pp. 47–54.
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23 Possible identifications are enumerated in the notes to the translation of the SHJ by Yanshina (Katagor gory i morei) and Mathieu (Etude sur la mythologie).

24 See Wang Chengzu, Zhongguo dilixue, map on p. 19; reproduced in Yu Xixian, Zhongguo gudai dilixue shilue, p. 48 (Map 3); Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, “Conception of Terrestrial Organization,” p. 93 (Map 1).


26 The same approach with the same result is found in detailed maps by Wei and Hu (Xu), Shanqin dili tuans, reproduced in Mathieu, Etude sur la mythologie.


30 For the association of the SHJ with Yu, see Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, “Conception of Terrestrial Organization,” pp. 59–61.

Remarks on the Chinese Word T'u ‘Chart, Plan, Design.’” Orient, 32 (1990), 310–11. These authors also discuss the inaccuracy of local maps in premodern China. Especially important is the criticism of the overestimation of the accuracy and “modern” look of Qin and Han maps in early studies of them, and of overestimating the usage of uniform scale in Chinese cartography (see Yee, “Cartography in China,” pp. 53–70) by the majority of Chinese historians of cartography and in the survey of Chinese cartography by Needham and Wang Ling, Science and Civilisation, Vol. III, pp. 525–90, especially pp. 533–56.


For the analysis of these maps in Western languages, see the still seminal study by Edouard Chavannes, “Les deux plus anciens spécimens de la cartographie chinoise,” BEFEO, 3 (1903), 214–47 (large-scale transcriptions of the maps are folded between pp. 18 and 19); see also Needham and Wang Ling, Science and Civilisation, Vol. III, pp. 547–9 (here the transcriptions are reproduced with a considerable reduction, the Huayitu on p. 549 (Figure 225) and the Yujitu on plate 81 facing p. 549 (Figure 226); Yee, “Cartography in China,” pp. 46–8. The latter work provides photographs of the stone’s faces accompanied by their rubbings (the Huayitu — p. 47, Figure 3.13; the Yujitu — p. 48, Figure 3.14); the rubbing of a later (ad 1142), slightly different version of the Yujitu is shown on p. 49, Figure 3.15. Copies of rubbings of these maps are found in the majority of survey studies in the history of Chinese geography and cartography by Chinese scholars; see, e.g. Cao Wanru et al., Zhonggou gudai dituji (Beijing, 1999, repr. of 1990), the Yujitu — plates 54–6 (photograph of the stone, rubbing, and transcription, respectively), the ad 1142 version of the map — plates 57–9, the Huayitu — plates 60–2; Chen Feiya (ed.), Zhonggou gudai dixueshi (Beijing, 1984), large-scale copies of rubbings folded between pp. 310 and 311; Wang Yong, Zhonggou dixueshi (folded copies of rubbings at the beginning of the book); Wang Chengzu, Zhonggou dixueshi (folded copies of rubbings inserted between pages 84 and 85, Map 7 – the Huayitu, Map 8 – the Yujitu); Chen Zhengxiang (Chen Cheng-siang), Zhonggou dituji (Hong Kong, 1979), Maps 2 and 3 at the end of the book – rubbings of the Yujitu and the Huayitu, respectively; Yan Ping et al., China in Ancient and Modern Maps (London, 1998), rubbings of the Yujitu (p. 49), the Huayitu (p. 51), and the 1142 ad version of the Yujitu (p. 53) with its transcription (p. 52).


See Cao Wanru et al., Zhonggou gudai dituji, the rubbings of the maps are shown on plates 89–92, the stele on plate 93; for a study of these maps, see Wang Qianjin, “Shike ‘Liujingtu’ zongkao,” Zhongguo dilixue shi, 12: 1 (1993), 83–90, the copies of rubbings from the atlas by Cao Wanru et al. are reproduced on p. 88.


See Yee, “Cartography in China,” p. 228.

See Hsu Mei-ling, paper presented at the 5th International Conference on the History of Science in China (San Diego, USA, 1988).

See Smith, Chinese Maps, pp. 36–9, 41.
A complete cosmogram consists of the terrestrial level and its celestial counterpart, for the city planning, see the study by Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, a classic example of such a ritual is the royal audience given in the Mingtang. Two key patterns, a square and a nest of concentric squares, seem to originate from the most simple cruciform pattern symbolizing the “four cardinal directions” (sīfang) plus the “center” (zhōng), see Figure 2.3. All these patterns are characterized by the following structural principles: (1) the tailoring of terrestrial units according to the concept of symbolic quadrature of the terrestrial surface; (2) a cardinally-oriented reference frame of two core axes: vertical/lengthwise (south–north) and horizontal/crosswise (east–west); (3) symmetry and equilibrium of constituent elements with respect to one or both core axes; (4) completeness of structure; (5) primary prominence given to the center; and (6) demarcation of the center and peripheral layers (see Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, “Conception of Terrestrial Organization,” pp. 63–69; “Political Concept behind an Interplay of Spatial Positions,” EO–EO, 18 (1996), pp. 10–12; “Topographical Accuracy or Conceptual Organization of Space?” in Current Perspectives in the History of Science in East Asia, ed. Kim Yung-Sik and Francesca Bray (Seoul, 1999), pp. 168–172. E.g., the central position has a higher “value” than a peripheral one, the southern position has a higher “value” than the northern (see Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, “Political Concept,” especially pp. 11–12).

For the city planning, see the study by Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, Chinese Imperial City Planning (Honolulu, 1999, repr. of 1990) supplied with a comprehensive bibliography on this subject. For an overview of the late Shang tombs and a discussion of their regular structure, see Sarah Allan, The Shape of the Turtle Myth, Art and Cosmos in Early China (Albany, 1991), pp. 74–111.

A complete cosmogram consists of the terrestrial level and its celestial counterpart, see John B. Henderson, The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology (New York, 1984) and “Chinese Cosmographical Thought: The High Intellectual Tradition,” in Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies, ed. John B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago/London, 1994). Discussion of the celestial level of the world and correspondences between heaven and earth, are, however, beyond the scope of this chapter.

51 For global maps tailored with respect to correlative cosmology, see Smith, Chinese Maps, pp. 36–9; see also Henderson, “Chinese Cosmographical Thought.”

52 See Cao Wanru et al., Zhongguo gudu dituji, Map 90; Wang Qianjun, “Shike Lüojingtu,” p. 60, Map 2. For more examples of maps, see Cao Wanru et al., Zhongguo gudu dituji series; see also a critical remark with respect to the emphasis on topographically accurate maps in this collection by Yee, “Cartography in China,” p. 55; Chen Zhengxiang (Chen Cheng-siang); Yan Ping et al., China in Ancient and Modern Maps.

53 It is also noteworthy that checks with a side of 100 li found on the Yüjitu correspond to the administrative division into principalities, each having an area equal to the square of 100 li, attributed in the beginning of the Dibizhi (“Treatise on Terrestrial Organization”) of the Hanshu by Ban Gu (ca. 32–92) to the mythical emperor Huangdi; see Hanshu (Beijing, 1973), p. 1523.


55 The earliest occurrences of the term ditu are found in late Warring States–Early Han texts: the Zhanguoce (SBBY ed., 19/2b (§218); 31/3b & 6a (§440), the Guanzi which contains a special chapter (No. 27) concerned with this term (SBBY ed., 10/7a–8a), and the Zhoubi (for a commented list of its multiple occurrences here, see Needham and Wang Ling, Science and Civilisation, Vol. III, p. 534. As can be seen clearly from comparison with the other occurrences of the character tu in these texts, di is quite often omitted in similar constructions, and, therefore, facultative. At least, some of these early usages of ditu imply a cosmogram rather than refer to a map (see, e.g. citations from the Zhoubi by E. Chavannes, “Les deux plus anciens spécimens”, p. 237). Needham and Wang Ling, however, interpret all these early occurrences as "geographical maps."

56 Chinese maps and cosmograms are, however, more often than not analyzed separately and their relationship is rarely discussed. For instance, in the fundamental survey in the history of Chinese cartography edited by Harley and Woodward (Cartography in the Traditional East) the chapter on cosmograms is placed as a sort of Appendix loosely related to the main body of the survey, and this chapter and the survey are written by different authors (J.B. Henderson and C.D.K. Yee, respectively), although J.B. Henderson points to certain similarities between maps and schemes.

57 See Fracasso, “Teratoscopy,” scheme facing p. 660. Similar placement is provided by John W. Schifferer, “Chinese Folk Medicine: A Study of the Shan-hai Ching,” Asian Folklore Studies, 39: 2 (1980), 43–4, with the difference that he represents the center (apparently “Mountains”) as a square and all the other zones as a nest of concentric circles around it, John S. Major, Topography and Cosmology in Early Han Thought: Chapter Four of Huai-nan-tzu (Diss., Harvard Univ., 1973), pp. 99–100, following the sequence of the zones in the text places “Outside the Seas” closer to the center than “Inside the Seas.”
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58 For examples of “wheel maps,” see John B. Harley and David Woodward (eds), Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies (Chicago/London, 1994), colour plate 16, p. 257 (Figure 10.10), p. 258 (Figure 10.11), the latter map is superimposed by a network of “meridians” and “parallels”; the two latter maps are reproduced with a considerable reduction in Smith, Chinese Maps, p. 30 (Figure 3.4).

59 For indications of overlapping between Outside the Seas and The Great Wilderness (occurrences of the same landmarks), see Hwang, Ming–Tang, pp. 635–7, especially footnote 346.

60 For instance, in all the ancient Chinese sources prior to or contemporary with the SHJ “Inside the Seas” designates the central part of the world encompassed by the cardioidly-oriented seas associated with the basins of the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers; the respective arrangement of zones does not have a place for the additional chapter of “Inside the Seas” (the eighteenth juan). For more arguments see Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, “Conception of Terrestrial Organization,” pp. 81–6. I advanced this hypothesis independently from Suh, A Study of “Shan-hai-ching,” pp. 304–9, who came to the same conclusion, strengthening its plausibility.

61 A cruciform representation of “Mountains” is discussed by Allan, The Shape of the Turtle, pp. 74–111, in the context of other similar representations of space in ancient China. She considers the quinary cardinally-oriented cross as an image of the earth originating from the Shang dynasty (c. sixteenth–eleventh centuries BCE). For possible configuration of the global scheme, see Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, “Conception of Terrestrial Organization,” Figures 3–7.


64 The former term is used by Henderson (Development and Decline, “Chinese Cosmographical Thought”), the latter by Major (“The Five Phases”).


67 Suh, in his exploration of the worldview transmitted through the SHJ (A Study of “Shan-hai-ching”), focuses on the global scheme (especially pp. 285–343), which he defines as a “conception of cosmological history.” At the same time, as Appendices, he provides an account of all the individual landmarks enumerated in the text, but does not raise the question of how these landmarks relate to the global scheme.

68 Henderson, in his fundamental study of Chinese cosmology (Development and Decline), does not mention the SHJ at all.

69 E.g. the five major mountains of China are used as “markers” for the four cardinal directions and the center, whereas the real relative locations of the mountains correspond to the regular cruciform pattern in a rather loose way.

70 I argue that this is the case of the provinces in the Yugong, see Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, “Conception of Terrestrial Organization,” pp. 63–6.

71 Hwang, Ming–Tang, pp. 494–509 and 537–657, respectively. “The Great Wilderness,” “Outside the Seas,” and the other two sections of the SHJ (“Classic of Mountains” and “Inside the Seas”) are considered by the author to be separate and independent textual layers.

72 Hwang, Ming–Tang, pp. 505–6.

73 See a study of references to the mythical entity Xiwangmu in ancient Chinese texts by Riccardo Fracasso, “Holy Mothers of Ancient China (A New Approach to the Hsi-wang-mu Problem),” TP, 74 (1988), 1–46; for her occurrences in the SHJ, see pp. 8–19; for localizations, according to this text, see p. 12.
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74 See the recent study of references to the Xiwangmu in ancient Chinese texts by Manfred W. Fruthauf, *Die Königliche Mutter des Westens*; for her occurrences in the *SHJ*, see pp. 22–47; her localization within a particular sequence of mountains is mentioned on pp. 24–5.


76 E.g. Yuan Ke, *Zhongguo gudai shenhua* [Shanghai, 1951]; E.M. Yanshina, *Pobedite sveta i razvitie drevnekitaiskoy myzologii* (Moscow, 1984); Anne Birrell, *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction* (Baltimore/London, 1993) and *Chinese Myths* (Austin, 2000). It is noteworthy that each of these authors has made a translation of the *SHJ*. The deficiency of this approach is pointed out in the recent review of Anne Birrell’s translation of the *SHJ* by Robert F. Campany in the *Journal of Chinese Religions*, 28 (2000), 183–6. According to Campany, “for Anne Birrell, ‘mythology’ is a thing unto itself.”


78 Some elements of this approach can be traced in the study of some crucial landmarks, Kunlun mountain in particular, listed in the *Mu Tianzi zhuan* (“Narrative of the Son of Heaven, Mu”) by D. Porter (“The Literary Function of K‘un-Lun Mountain,” especially pp. 73–9).


80 The nine land routes are mentioned along with the nine river routes. Their account is appended to the description of the “Nine Provinces.”

81 In the *Yugong* a route is marked by two to four mountains, while in the *SJ* this number varies from five to forty-eight (see Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, “Conception of Terrestrial Organization,” Table 2).


83 For the pillars and nodes, see Stephen Field, “Cosmos, Cosmograph, and the Inquiring Poet: New Answers to the ‘Heaven Questions’,” *EC*, 17 (1992), 105 and 100 respectively.


85 Here the gap among the eight pillars in the southeast, the tilt of the earth to the southeast (caused by Kang Hui, interpreted by the commentarial tradition as another name for Gong Gong), and the closing and opening of heaven in the northwest are all mentioned in the *Chuci* (SBBY ed., 3/2b–3a, 3/5b–6a, and 3/6b–7a respectively.


For the foundation of Chengzhou/Luoyi as the new (or restored) center as described in the “Shaogao” and “Luogao” chapters of the Shangshu/Shu jing, see Legge, The Chinese Classics, Vol. 3.1, pp. 420–52; Karlgren, “The Book of Documents,” pp. 47–57. Both chapters are traditionally attributed to the reign of King Cheng (1042/35–1006 BCE). Even if dating from a considerably later time, they still seem to be the earliest references to this event found in classical texts. In its simplified version in the “Zhoubenji” chapter of the Shi ji (Shijing (Beijing, 1972), p. 133; Édouard Chavannes, Les Mémòires Historiques de Se-ma Ts’i’en, Vol. I (Paris, 1895), p. 247; Rudolf V. Vyatkin and Vsevolod S. Taskin, Syma T’yan’ – Istoričeskie Zapiski (“Shi ts’i’”), Vol. I (Moscow, 1972), pp. 190–1) Chengzhou/Luoyi is defined as the “Center of Underheaven” (Tiannü zhi zhong). In the Guoyu, in the opening section of the “Zhengyu” chapter (not earlier than 314 BCE), an account of Western Zhou principalities is provided (SBBY ed., 16/1a; Vsevolod S. Taskin, Go yu (Recht toarste) (Moscow, 1987), pp. 236–43 (§209)) which surround Chengzhou/Luoyi as the center.


The derived arrangement of the routes is also typologically similar to the above mentioned reconstructions of the arrangement of landmarks in “The Great Wilderness” and “Outside the Seas” by Hwang, Ming–Tang, p. 797 (Figure 6.13), and p. 798 (Figure 6.14), respectively.


For the place of the dragon in Chinese culture, see Jean-Pierre Diény, Le symbolisme du dragon dans la Chine Antique (Paris, 1987).

For differing designations of swine in ancient China, see Eduard Erckes, “Das Schwein im alten China,” MS, 7 (1942), 68–84.

There is one “non-standard” case when the human face is on the first position, and the head, apparently human, is on the second (“human face–three heads” (renmian sanshou), the seventh route of the Central Mountains, C7).

This point of view is expressed by Hao Yixing, see Shanhaijing jianshu, SBBY ed., 3/22a.

A certain complementarity between the SJ and “Outside the Seas” and their correspondence as, respectively, the center and periphery is pointed out by Meng Wentong, “Luetun Shanhaijing de xiezuo nianli ji qi chansheng diyu,” Zhonghua wenshi luntang,
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1 (1962), 43–70; and supported by Suh, A Study of “Shan-hai-chang,” pp. 99 and 302–9. The reconstructed system of routes and guardian spirits provides further evidence of this hypothesis.


100 The “totalistic” character of conceiving of terrestrial space is especially manifest in late Shang culture, see David N. Keightley, The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China (c. 1200–1045 BCE) (Berkeley, 2000).


108 In the bibliographical chapter of the Hanshu which relies on the lost bibliography Qiese compiled by Liu Xin, the editor of the SHJ, the latter is classified under the “Xingfa” (“Methods of forms”) section which seems to deal, first of all, with geomantic practices, see Hanshu (Beijing, 1975), pp. 1774–5.
The existence of maps originally appended to the SHJ has become almost taken for granted since first supposed by Bi Yuan in 1781, see Wang Yong, *Zhongguo dilixue shi*, pp. 17–21, most likely in the wake of the diffusion of Western natural sciences. M. Lackner (“Die ‘Verplanung’ des Denkens,” p. 139) further suggests that these maps may have been not simply of a purely geographical nature, but could also possess philosophical features in the sense of the attribution of corresponding “meanings” to certain “positions,” a characteristic of *tu* he focuses on in his paper.

Some relevant reflections on the formation process of the SHJ, especially Outside the Seas and The Great Wilderness, are found in Hwang, *Ming–Tang*, pp. 506–9.

**Bibliography**

For abbreviations see p. 61 above.


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Tan Qixiang 譚其驊. “Lun Wuzang Shanjing de diyu fanwei” 論五藏山經的地域範圍/ “The Areas Covered by Wu zang Shan jing (abstract),” in Explorations in the History of
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# MAPPING A “SPIRITUAL” LANDSCAPE

## GLOSSARY

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ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY
Northern nomads as Buddhist art patrons
during the period of Northern and
Southern dynasties

Dorothy C. Wong

Introduction
Beginning in the latter part of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), nomadic tribesmen originally from territories to the north and west of China started to advance inland. In one estimate, a total of ten million people from the steppes had settled in northern China between the fourth and the sixth centuries. The disruption caused by this large-scale ethnic migration ushered in a period of chaos and social fragmentation. Nomadic peoples set up numerous short-lived, petty kingdoms in the north, while displaced Chinese migrated south and established dynastic rule based at Jiankang (Nanjing).

Analyzing the sociological character of nomadic groups such as the Huns, the Tibetans, and the Xianbei, Wolfram Eberhard remarked how these great peoples created empires out of their sheer military strength, but that, with a few exceptions, they all disappeared from history once and for all when their empires disintegrated. These nomads either became Chinese (if they were in China) or retained their old ways of living and remained in association with other nomadic tribes. Either case meant the loss of ethnic independence for these peoples.

The interactions between the pastoral nomads and the agricultural Chinese involved confrontation and conflicts as well as mutual adaptation and transformation. It was also out of this melting pot that the unified Sui (589–618) and Tang (618–907) empires were created. For the nomads who became Chinese, however, it meant losing markers of their cultural identity such as language, customs, and lifestyles. The conquest, settlement, and eventual integration of millions of ethnic peoples into China, creating a single polity, is crucial to the formation of the so-called “Chinese” identity. In varying manners, this process was repeated later on, when a number of non-Chinese groups established the conquest dynasties of Liao (947–1125), Jin (1125–1234), Yuan (1279–1368), and Qing (1644–1911). In modern China, the roles of ethnic minorities in a
multiethnic nation-state remain a central concern. Given the current scholarly interest in ethnicity studies and in issues such as “Chineseness,” race, and ethnicity in late imperial and modern China, it is worth revisiting similar issues pertaining to the Northern and Southern dynasties (Nanbeichao, 386–581).5

The term “ethnicity” entered the English vocabulary fairly recently, and ethnicity studies began in earnest only after the 1960s.6 Focusing on the post-industrial, post-colonial world in the context of rising nationalism since the nineteenth century, many models and theories derived from ethnicity studies, while germane to conditions in modern China, are not necessarily applicable to the historical period.7 Ethnicity studies have, however, clarified how people construct their ethnicity and identity, a process that has gone on for ages, not just in modern times. Reiterating some of the key notions of current ethnicity studies can set the stage for a discussion that projects them into the historical dimension.

Richard Schermerhorn defines an ethnic group as:

a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features, or any combination of these.8

The symbolic elements that qualify membership in a particular group thus define the essence of ethnicity and ethnic identity.

An ethnic group is also a social group, defined in its relation to other groups or to society as a whole. In early Greek usages, the term *ethnos*, from which the word “ethnicity” is derived, designates groups of animals or warriors, groups of distant peoples, or foreign and barbarous nations. The historical roots of the term thus imply a distinction between self and other, the familiar and the unfamiliar. In modern usage, the term “ethnic group” refers to groups of peoples with common culture, origin, or language. It is often employed from the perspective of the “we-group” or the dominant group in order to make a distinction between “us” and “them.” Incorporated into the adjective “ethnic” are thus a cluster of binary concepts about boundaries and identity that include: self/other, dominant/subordinate, center/periphery, civilized/uncivilized, and so forth. Similar conceptions are certainly also found in China. Since ancient times, the Chinese people have been in contact with peoples dissimilar from themselves, whom they have called *yi* or *man*, translated as “barbarians.” In the Chinese worldview, China was the center of civilization and those who lived on the periphery were uncivilized.10

Ethnicity and identity are also subjective constructs. Individuals adhere to a variety of groups – social, political, cultural, religious, ethnic – for their identity. An individual’s alliance to any of these groups can change, however. Some of these groups may also vanish in the course of time. Thus, while groups of
peoples derive their collective identity by drawing boundaries between themselves and other groups, such boundaries are fluid and changeable. Individuals or groups of peoples can, if not always, make independent choices in aligning themselves with certain groups. Taking into account the factors of human agency and intentions, we thus have what Steven Harrell calls the “situational multiplicity of identity.”

Traditional scholarship on China emphasizes that ethnic groups have been absorbed into the larger Han Chinese population and uses the terms sinicization (hanhua), “Confucian universalism,” and “Confucian culturalism” to discuss the phenomenon. It has been assumed that the Chinese define themselves through elements in their culture, such as the Confucian principles of loyalty and filial piety. Holding the Chinese state and the family to be ideal forms of social organization, they expect outsiders to adopt Chinese ways. In this frame of mind, the Chinese people have taken on “civilizing projects” or “inclusivist expansionism,” conferring the benefits of their superior civilization to inferior peoples on their periphery, who become “acculturated” and “assimilated” as part of the Han Chinese group. Likewise it has been shown that the Chinese define themselves in terms of social kinship, describing the true Chinese as descendants of the mythical Yellow Emperor. In this model, those who possess a recognized Chinese surname can make claims to Chinese ancestry through a patrilineal relationship.

While many of these ideas pervade traditional scholarship on China, current ethnicity studies cast doubt on terms such as “acculturation,” “assimilation,” and “sinicization,” noting the assumption of cultural superiority and the ethnocentric perspective implicit in their use. For the purpose of this study, we will neither abandon traditional terms nor endeavor to coin new ones, but rather examine more closely the discourse of cultural changes and exchanges, seeking to illuminate the social and historical forces that shape the construction of ethnicity and identity in China.

In discussions of social, cultural, and military institutions of the Northern dynasties (Beichao, 386–581), historians use terms such as “sinicization” to denote the nomads’ adoption of Chinese-style institutions and customs. Vice versa, they describe the reverse process of sinicization – namely, the adoption of nomadic culture and customs by the Chinese – as “Xianbei-ization” or “Säri-ization,” with Xianbei referring to the nomadic group who founded the Northern Wei dynasty (Bei Wei, 386–534). In both processes, nomadic rulers played an active role in instituting specific cultural policies. Furthermore, if Confucian universalism was one cultural ideology that the nomads could have adopted, their sponsorship of Buddhism represents a counter-choice. Like Confucianism, Buddhism enabled groups of peoples to create a common identity that transcended their ethnic differences. This chapter focuses on aspects of the important intersections of Buddhism with nomadic and indigenous Chinese cultures.

Coeval with the phenomenon of nomadic migration was the firm establishment of Buddhism in China during the period of disunion. Buddhism began to infiltrate China beginning in the first few centuries of the common era, with
missionaries, travelers, and merchants serving as carriers of ideas and art forms. The spread of Buddhism was initially limited to the trade routes and to towns and cities along those routes. The collapse of the Han dynasty, however, created favorable conditions for the widespread reception of Buddhism in China. With that collapse came political chaos and an intellectual vacuum, resulting from the loss of faith in Confucianism and the social structure upon which it was built. Buddhism’s success in China also would not have been possible had not its doctrine been attractive and had not the Chinese, especially the educated, gentry class, endorsed it. Still, the crucial role played by the nomads in propagating the religion can hardly be underestimated.

Despite being cultural aliens, the nomads were aware of the superior literary and cultural tradition of the Chinese with whom they came into contact. Accepting the Confucian tradition and Chinese ways, however, would have meant subsuming their military superiority to and separateness from those they conquered. Instead, most nomadic rulers chose to adopt Buddhism as an alternative cultural policy. They also preferred to employ Buddhist priests of foreign origins as their trusted ministers and advisers. Among the nomads, the comprehensiveness of Buddhism helped to create a powerful and useful ideology that enabled the conquerors to bond with the conquered, thus serving to unify a divided society. Furthermore, the Buddhist notion of divine kingship fostered the development of state cults, especially under the Northern Wei.

The nomadic kingdoms’ support of Buddhism created new loci of Buddhism and Buddhist art. Unlike the early centers that naturally developed along trade routes and in cities, many of these new centers were created at or near political capitals: Ye in Hebei under the Later Zhao (Hou Zhao, 328–51) and later Eastern Wei (Dong Wei, 534–50) and Northern Qi (Bei Qi, 550–77); Chang’an under the Former Qin (Qian Qin, 351–94) and Later Qin (Hou Qin, 384–417), and Western Wei (Xi Wei, 535–51) and Northern Zhou (Bei Zhou, 561–81); Gansu under Northern Liang (Bei Liang, 397–460; annexed by Northern Wei in 439) and Western Qin (Xi Qin, 385–431); and Datong in Hebei and Luoyang in Henan under the Northern Wei. Many of these nomadic courts sponsored centers for translating and studying Buddhist texts, attracting foreign as well as Chinese monks to the capitals. Imperial cave-chapels were excavated near capitals, including Yungang at Datong, Longmen and Gongxian near Luoyang, and Xiangtangshan at Ye. Historical and literary records also describe the magnificent monasteries and other monuments built in capitals such as Luoyang.

By the sixth century, Buddhism was widespread in the north and the populace joined the rulers and the aristocracy in making donations and dedicating images. The vast quantity of Buddhist art works that has survived in the north attests to the pervasiveness of popular religious sentiments.

The main purpose of these pious acts was to gain religious merit, charity (dāna) being one of the key tenets of Buddhist teaching and an important precept in the conduct of piety. Buddhists of the Northern and Southern dynasties helped to finance monastic institutions and support the clergy. They made images, built
monuments, or had Buddhist sacred texts copied to express their piety and to broadcast the religion’s messages. They also underwrote the costs of ritual ceremonies and other festivities and made offerings of incense, flowers, and other votive dedications. Through material giving, devotees were promised spiritual gains in this world and the next. Imperial donors gave on behalf of the country in order to procure Buddhism’s supernatural protection of the state. Likewise, leaders of clans and other social and religious groups prayed and made offerings for the well-being of their communities. Individual donors could accrue spiritual merit for themselves or have the benefits transferred to deceased ancestors, relatives, and, altruistically, to all sentient beings. Commingling with local traditions of ancestor worship and funeral cults, making donations for deceased ancestors and relatives became one of the most significant driving forces for Buddhist image-making in China.

The amalgamation of different ethnic groups into a single polity and the “Buddhist conquest of China” (to use Erik Zürcher’s phrase) are two bilateral phenomena that overlaid interactive and transformational processes occurring at many levels: social, cultural, religious, political, and artistic. I do not propose, however, to touch upon most of these complex historical processes. Nor do I attempt to address nomadic patronage of Buddhist art in any comprehensive manner; such in-depth studies do exist, but many aspects still await further investigation. Instead, I will focus on the visual representation of donors in Buddhist art works, with the specific goal of investigating issues relating to the nomads’ construction of their ethnicity and identity.

Patronage activities involve acts of both wish fulfillment and self-announcement. The donors’ self-representation, along with records of their patronage activities, provide the most concrete evidence of how the donors saw themselves and how they wanted to be seen. At one level, these images and inscriptions convey explicitly the donors’ intentions and reflect a certain degree of social and historical reality. At another level, they also carry implicit messages that express deep-seated attitudes and reveal the structure of the social order and hierarchy of which the donors were a part.

Inscriptions on Buddhist art works give copious information. They record the image dedicated, donors, dates, and reasons for the donations. Information about donors includes their names, titles, and sometimes lineage, geographical origins, and the social and religious organizations to which they belonged. The historical value of these dedicatory inscriptions has long been recognized, first by antiquarian and epigraphic scholars and then by historians of art, religion, and social history. The rich evidence of donor imagery, however, remains largely untapped, despite a number of studies on the presence of foreigners and nomads in art works. The present study is a preliminary investigation of the hitherto neglected visual record relating to nomads as Buddhist art patrons.

The representation of donors on Chinese Buddhist art works initially follows conventions established in Indian Buddhist art. Donors are usually portrayed in diminutive size in relation to the hieratic, sacred images, and are shown on
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the pedestals; both size and position indicate the relatively low status of humans in the scheme of the Buddhist universe. Like their Indian prototypes, donor images on Chinese Buddhist art works are not portraits of real personages but general types. Through the depictions of costume, hairstyle, objects such as status symbols, and spatial organization, there is clear representation of a donor’s gender, ethnicity, kinship relations, vocation, and social status—all of which are key elements of identity constructs. Members of the clergy are shown wearing monastic robes and have clean-shaven heads. Secular donors and worshipers wear clothing unique to their social and ethnic backgrounds. Donors gave as individuals, as couples, families, or clans. They could also join monastic members or form social and religious organizations to express their piety collectively. Many of these associations are shown in the art works.

Although Indian prototypes provided initial models, Chinese Buddhist adaptations very soon developed to indicate the specific ethnic and social characteristics of local worshipers. Some of these modifications were derived from pre-Buddhist conventions that have long existed in China; others reflected decisions made by patrons, nomadic or Chinese. An overview charting these key changes over two centuries enables us to examine broadly some of the elements that constitute the construction of ethnicity and identity.

I will tentatively divide the Northern dynasties into two phases: (1) the fourth and fifth centuries; and (2) the sixth century. The first phase covers the initial period of Chinese Buddhist art as well as the first flowering of Northern Wei Buddhist art, with its locus at Yungang, in the second half of the fifth century. The second phase covers late Northern Wei Buddhist art, with its type-site at Longmen, and the period of divided Xianbei rule up until the unification under the Sui.

Fourth and fifth centuries

The fourth century and the first half of the fifth century encompass the initial phase of Chinese Buddhist art.26 Local production of Buddhist art works remained relatively scarce, with a general lack of uniformity in style. Nevertheless, by the early fifth century, three regions had already emerged as centers of Buddhism and Buddhist art in northern China: Hebei/Shanxi, Chang’an in the Guanzhong plain, and Liangzhou/Dunhuang in Gansu.27 All three centers received direct or indirect support from nomadic kingdoms in those regions: Later Zhao in Hebei, the Former and Later Qin in Chang’an, and Northern Liang and Western Qin in Gansu. By the second half of the fifth century, Shanxi under the Northern Wei emerged as yet a fourth major center.

The Chinese were first exposed to Buddhist art forms through portable images brought to China by foreign missionaries and travelers. Literary records document that the nomadic rulers often received Buddhist images from foreign missionaries and emissaries as tributes, which they in turn bestowed upon eminent monks as imperial favors.28 Gradually local workshops began to produce Buddhist images. The earliest images produced in China, fashioned after imported models,
retain strong foreign styles, both Indian and Central Asian. Freshly imported foreign influences continued to commingle with developing indigenous styles.

Donors are represented on both individual images and at cave-temple sites. Small bronze images were personal devotional objects that could be carried on the body of the devotee, sometimes functioning as amulets. Usually only a few centimeters high, small Buddhist bronzes tended not to represent donors because of their size. Many bore no inscriptions, while others carried brief inscriptions that identify the image, donors, date, and reason for the dedication. On bronze statues and stone sculptures of medium to large size, some of which might have originally been placed in temples, we begin to find the consistent representation of donors. Images of donors are also depicted in cave-temple sites in the northwest. The following examples will demonstrate the diverse representations of nomadic donors as well as some general patterns that were already established at this early date.

The first example is the well-known gilt bronze image of the seated Buddha, said to have come from Shijiazhuang in Hebei (Figures 3.1a and 3.1b).

Figure 3.1  (a) Monk donor on side of pedestal of seated Buddha with blazing shoulders, c. fourth century. Gilt bronze. H. 32 cm. (b) Secular donor on side of pedestal of seated Buddha image in Figure 3.1a.

sculpture portrays a flame-shouldered Buddha, dressed in a heavy robe with parallel, ring-like drapery folds. Stylistically and iconographically, it retains strong characteristics of Indian Gandharan and Central Asian Buddhist art of the first few centuries of the common era, which lead to uncertainty regarding whether the image was made in China after imported models or foreign-made and brought to China by missionaries or foreign travelers. The dating of the image is also unclear. It is generally thought to date from the fourth or early fifth century, although a second-century date has also been recently proposed. 31

Two male donors are portrayed on the sides of the pedestal of the sculpture, shown in three-quarter view with one foot placed in front as though each is walking forward. The figure on the Buddha’s proper left wears a thick, long coat. He has a mustache and his head is clean-shaven, suggesting that he is a monk. He holds offerings in both hands: a lamp in the shape of a cone of fire and an object that resembles a lotus bud. The figure on the Buddha’s right wears a shorter belted coat with a straight hemline at calf level. Shorter than the monk, he has short, cropped hair and appears to be wearing a pair of boots. He also holds offerings in his hands: a lotus stalk and a small object.

The belted coat and boots of the second figure are typical of the costume of nomads from the frontier steppe land. Furthermore, as Marylin Rhie notes, the tunic of the second figure, shown with the right side crossing over the left side, is characteristic of the dress of secular figures depicted in art works of Kushan Gandhāra (late first–third century CE) and other parts of western Central Asia. In China, the robe would have been worn with the left side placed over the right. 32 Both costume and hairstyle thus identify the secular donor as a non-Chinese, probably a nomad. Most likely both images of monk and secular donor represent foreigners, in fact, and this sculpture was probably made for and owned by foreigners in China. 33 The combination of monastic and secular donors seen here has precedents in Gandhāran Buddhist art, although the symmetrical arrangement of the two figures on the Buddha’s two sides is distinctive and noteworthy (see further discussion below). The larger size of the monk suggests that he holds a status higher than the secular worshiper.

The next examples of donor representation come from the cave-temple sites of Binglingsi and Dunhuang in Gansu, located on the path of east–west traffic where the spread of Buddhism naturally developed. This region supported an international community of foreigners (Indians and Central Asians), including ethnic nomads (Xiongnu, Xianbei, and the proto-Tibetan Di and Qiang) who had conquered or settled in the area, alongside the local Chinese. Donor images are found in the earliest cave-chapels that date from the early fifth century. They reflect the diverse ethnic backgrounds of Buddhist patrons in this time and place.

Several groups of donors, for example, are painted on the north wall of Binglingsi Cave 169. This is the earliest cave at the site, bearing an inscription dated 420, the first year of the Jianhong reign of Western Qin. 34 Both monastic and lay devotees are represented here, including, among the monk-worshippers who are identified, Tanwubhi, known as a foreign dhyāna master (chanshi; dhyāna or
Chan means meditation). According to the biography of the Chinese monk Xuangao, Tanwubi came to the Western Qin territory from western Gansu to preach meditation practices and gathered a large following. Xuangao, who also practiced meditation and was residing at Majishan (another cave-temple site in southern Gansu) at the time, led his disciples to study with Tanwubi. Later the foreign master returned west and Xuangao was honored as the guoshi (preceptor of state) at the Western Qin court. Records document both the vibrant Buddhist activities in the region and the nomadic court’s involvement in those activities.

Other figures painted here probably include Chinese priests. The lay devotees are shown in both nomadic and Chinese-style costumes. One group (Figure 3.2) shows a monk followed by three women on the proper right side of a Buddha triad (that is, the left side of the triad from the viewer’s perspective). The monk, shown with stubble on his face, wears a monastic robe that bares his right arm and covers a lower garment. He wears short boots, a hint that he might be of foreign origin. In his left hand he holds a lamp, in his right hand a small object.

Figure 3.2 Images of monk, two female donors, and attendant, Western Qin, c. 420. Binglingsi Cave 169, north wall. Wall mural.

Source: Gansu Province Cultural Relics Unit and Binglingsi Cultural Relics Conservation Institute, eds, Yongjing Binglingsi (Beijing, 1989), plate 38.
that looks like an alms bowl. Cursorily outlined in ink and painted with color, the three women are shown in descending size to indicate status (note that the first two female donors are larger than the monk). All three female figures are clasping their hands together as if worshiping. The first two wear short coats with loose sleeves over long pleated skirts. Their hair, perhaps braided, is tied into two knobs placed either to the side or on top of the head.37 They also have beauty marks on their faces and foreheads. The third figure, of smaller stature, is most likely an attendant. She wears a dark, short coat with tight sleeves over a pleated skirt. Dressed in fashionable garb, the two larger female figures are probably the principal donors, representing women of high status in Western Qin society. They wear a costume, short coats over long pleated skirts, that has become consistently associated with nomadic women.38 Unfortunately, they are not identified by name, as the cartouches next to them are either left blank or the characters are no longer legible.

Another section of the same wall shows several female donors in the traditional Chinese dress of long, flowing robes with loose sleeves and scarves (Figure 3.3). The trailing robes and scarves create a sense of movement, evoking the Chinese figural style established by masters of the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420) such as Gu Kaizhi (c. 345–c. 406). The coexistence in these wall paintings of donor figures wearing costume of different ethnic styles, along with both foreign and local priests attests to the international, multiethnic character of the Buddhist community of the region at that time.

The multiethnic character of patrons is also indicated at Dunhuang. On the west wall of Cave 268, which the Dunhuang Research Institute dates to the Northern Liang period or the first quarter of the fifth century, six donor images...
Figure 3.4 Donor images depicted below Maitreya Buddha image in recessed niche, Northern Liang, early fifth century. Dunhuang Cave 268, west wall. Wall mural with pigments.


are depicted below an image of Maitreya Buddha (Figure 3.4). The figures are arranged symmetrically: a monastic member precedes two lay worshipers on each side, with males on the viewer’s right and females on the left. The two male secular donors wear long robes with loose sleeves, dress associated with the Chinese gentry class and comparable to that seen on figures depicted in murals of Han and Jin tombs in the region. The woman on the far left also wears a long robe in the Chinese style. The figure next to her, however, wears nomadic dress: a short coat with tight sleeves over a long skirt (see Figure 3.1a). The monastic figures are both slightly shorter than the donors. The right figure wears a dark brown calf-length robe over an undergarment; the left figure wears a light-colored robe of slightly longer length. Their gender is not entirely clear, though it is possible that a monk is grouped with the male donors and a nun is grouped with their female counterparts.

At Binglingsi, donors wearing different costumes belonged to separate groups, so the mix of costume within the same group here is significant. Given that many
cave-chapels at Dunhuang are family chapels, one can assume that the secular donors belonged to the same family: perhaps two Chinese brothers and their spouses, one Chinese and one of nomadic origin. Such a representation, then, if it is any indication of social reality, suggests intermarriage among Chinese and nomadic peoples. However, one has to be cautious about assigning ethnicity based only on costume. As I will argue later on, under the influence of nomadic lifestyles, the Chinese could adopt nomadic dress and the nomads could adopt Chinese dress. In another early fifth-century cave-chapel, Cave 275, the lower section of the north wall depicts more than twenty male donors in a row. They are shown wearing short tunics and trousers, each with a piece of cloth tied around the hair knob. In general it is assumed that this is the *hu* or nomadic costume, but it is also possible that Chinese men in the area, exposed to nomadic lifestyle, could have adopted such attire (if they did not belong to the gentry class). Costume can thus refer to lifestyle or social status, and not necessarily ethnic origin. Sixth-century cave-chapels at Dunhuang continue to show donors wearing both Chinese and nomadic costume, and in a variety of styles.  

Individual donors or members of a single family dedicated many bronzes and stone sculptures. A fair number of images from the second half of the fifth century portray a couple as principal donors, wearing the standard nomadic costume. In this arrangement, the husband always stands on the Buddha’s proper left side, the wife on the right.  

A squarish stone pedestal in the collection of the Shodo hakubutsukan in Japan gives additional information about the nomadic origins of Buddhist patrons (Figure 3.5). Originally supporting a carving, the pedestal portrays the donor and his family, along with the inscription. The front side shows, in low relief, an Atlantean figure in the center, holding a censer as an offering, flanked by two kneeling figures and a pair of lions. Male and female donors are portrayed on both sides. The inscription is carved in Chinese on the back. It records that the donor, Bao San, dedicates a stone *futa* and a copy of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* for his father and deceased mother in the third year of the reign of Taiping Zhenjun (442) of the Northern Wei dynasty. Although *futa* can be a transcription for *stūpa* (or the relic mound that contains the Buddha’s ashes), it can also mean the Buddha himself. Based on a study of the prevalent use of the term in Northern dynasties’ inscriptions, the *futa* here probably refers to a cubical block, carved with recessed niches with Buddhist images on each of the four sides. In making this dedication, the donor prays for the well-being of the emperor and his father’s longevity, that his parents in their next life will encounter Maitreya Buddha, and that the dozen or so family members will all be blessed. The donor originated from Dingzhou Changshan (in Hebei) and served as *Yongchang wong changshi* (Attendant of the Establishment of Prince Yongchang), a post he held at the Northern Wei capital of Pingcheng. His father was chief of a county in Hebei. The donor’s surname, Bao, is the sinicized form of *Yilifa*, used by the Turkic group Rouran as a rank title; among the nomadic peoples, it was common to use rank titles as surnames. The Rouran were defeated by the Xianbei
Figure 3.5 Four sides of a stone pedestal, with the two sides (second and third panels) depicting male and female donors, Northern Wei, dated 442. Sandstone. H. 10 cm, W. 28.3 cm.
Source: Shodo Hakubutsukan, Tokyo.
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and many were absorbed into the Xianbei confederation of the Northern Wei, while others fled and were said to be the Avars who invaded Europe some time later. Thus the inscription informs us that the donor belonged to a nomadic group that had followed the Wei, and that he and his father had held administrative offices in the Hebei region, the power base of the Northern Wei. The facts that the donor bears a sinicized surname and that the inscription is written in Chinese attest to the degree to which the nomadic donors had adopted aspects of Chinese culture. Furthermore, one of the key features of the Northern Wei state was its adoption of Chinese-style administration. Listing the rank and title of the donor’s post conforms to the Chinese conventions of self-identification.

The images, however, retain the patrons’ ethnic identity. Eight male donors are shown on one side and eight female donors and an attendant are shown on the other side, portrayed as if walking forward. Both groups wear the standard nomadic costume, and the women have their hair arranged into several knobs on the head. Each donor holds a tree branch as offering—an object commonly held by donor figures in Indian Buddhist art but rarely found in later Chinese depictions.

Thus far we have looked at a range of examples that portray predominantly nomadic donors whose ethnicity is expressed primarily through costume. The pedestal from Hebei provides additional information beyond costume, such as surname and official rank. The donors are portrayed as participating in votive activities as individuals, as couples, or as families—the most basic units of social organization. They are sometimes joined by monastic members, who appear to act as intercessors in presenting the secular donors to the deities. Scale denotes status; prominent donors wear more elaborate dress and are accompanied by attendants. Buddhist priests hold positions that are either superior or subordinate to secular worshipers. Except for the first example, which portrays two male figures, donors are separated by gender and arranged symmetrically and consistently in the left–right order: male on the Buddha’s proper left side (viewer’s right) and female on the Buddha’s proper right (viewer’s left). These patterns are by and large followed in examples at Yungang—the site of the first flowering of Northern Wei Buddhist art.

The Yungang cave-temples at Datong epitomize the symbiotic relationship between religion and politics developed under the Northern Wei.49 The architect behind the grand project was Tanyao, a priest recruited from the Liangzhou area who was appointed shanmantong (the chief of monks).50 In his capacity as an adviser to the emperor, he promoted the Buddhist ideal of kingship, which rests on the notion of cakravartin (a universal monarch who sets the wheel in motion), a king who rules ethically and benevolently over the entire world. A Buddhist king also abides by the conduct of Buddhist piety, especially in his support of Buddhist institutions on behalf of the state, which in turn is promised supernatural protection.51 Drawing upon the parallels between temporal and spiritual rulership, Tanyao further equated secular rulers with Buddhas. At his suggestion, five colossal Buddha images were carved to commemorate the five founding rulers of the Northern Wei dynasty. It is generally accepted that Caves 16–20 correspond
to the five Tanyao caves. Furthermore, the Northern Wei established Buddhism as a state institution with a centralized administrative structure. As the head of both church and state, the emperor was deified and given divine status. Portrayed as a demigod, the ruler assumed a higher stature that transcended his ethnic origins, enhancing his authority and enabling him to consolidate the power of the state. Buddhist ideology thus lent itself to the development of state cults under the Northern Wei, serving both political and religious ends effectively.

In addition to the Tanyao five caves, the Tuoba Wei rulers sponsored other imperial cave-chapels, including Caves 7–8, 9–10, and 5–6. None of these imperial cave-chapels portrays royal donors as human personages, however, although one may argue that the colossal Buddha statues are to be identified with emperors. Beginning around the 480s, however, we find many donor images, secular and monastic, shown beneath niches and images, in Caves 11 and 13 and on facades outside the earlier imperial caves.

One of the many examples is a three-story pagoda carved in relief on the south wall of Cave 11 (Figure 3.6). The pagoda itself has recessed niches...
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embellished with images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Two banners are hung from the central spire while two large bodhisattvas, in low relief, flank the pagoda. The donors are portrayed on the pedestal, divided into two groups, flanking a censer in the middle. The male group, on the viewer’s right, consists of three priests followed by three lay worshipers; one more donor is shown on the short side. The female group consists of two women, on the far left, preceded by four monastic members. All the secular donors are attired in the customary nomadic dress: men in tunics and trousers, women in coats over long, pleated skirts. In addition, both men and women wear the tall headdresses and hoods associated with the Xianbei people, confirmed by clay figurines found in Northern Wei tombs. The presence of monastic members as donors is quite prominent at Yungang, although there is no visual cue that would allow us to distinguish their gender.

Group patronage predominates at Yungang. Visually, the configuration of male and female donors accompanied by monastic members is most common. There are also all-monastic groups and single-gender groups. Inscriptions are rare and seldom record names, but they do record, for instance, images dedicated by an all-nun group and by a devotional society of thirty-six women and eighteen men. These new groupings expand beyond family-based social units and suggest a new development in religious and social organizations through which members expressed their religious identity collectively. However, since all the donors are dressed in the same way and shown in equal size, there is no indication of the donors’ backgrounds or social distinctions. (In a few examples, monks are shown larger than secular donors to indicate their leadership status.) One can surmise that these donor images generically represent Northern Wei noblemen and noblewomen, or perhaps represent a variety of social and perhaps ethnic backgrounds, but that a visual convention to distinguish social stratification had not yet been developed. When it was, in the sixth century, the convention borrowed primarily from Chinese conventions. The lack of social differentiation among the donor images at Yungang may convey a message of Buddhist egalitarianism. Historians of the period have often remarked on the relatively high position of women in nomadic societies. The visual presence of women donors as equals of their male counterparts and the existence of all-female groups indicates the nomadic women’s freedom to participate in public religious activities. It is also noteworthy that among the most important patrons of Buddhism during the Northern Wei dynasty were two imperial women: Empress Dowager Wenming (Wenming taihou; 442–90) and Empress Dowager Ling (Ling taihou; d. 528).

The large number of donor images at Yungang in the last quarter of the fifth century represents a significant shift in patronage, from the imperial house to other sectors of society. In the inscriptions, the donors express their religious goals of enlightenment and rebirth in the Buddha’s realm. They also pray for the well-being of the emperor and the state. These images, portraying donors in pious attitudes, underscore a popular religious sentiment that attests to the
success of the state cult as a focal point through which the populace could express loyalty and patriotism and, at the same time, maintain the sacred connections linking the state to the realm of the gods.

The donor images from Yungang and elsewhere in northern China demonstrate a general pattern in organization: bilateral symmetry, gender separation, and a consistent left–right order for male and female donors. Donor images on Indian Buddhist art works portray different types of figures and groupings, but they combine freely and never seem to conform to any particular formula. By contrast, this relatively free approach seems to have become frozen into a formal arrangement in China, no matter whether the art works were commissioned by Chinese or by nomads. The same kind of hardening, formulaic treatment and rigid symmetry are also found in the local interpretations of Buddhist sculptural form, transforming whatever residual traits of naturalism might be found extant in Indian and Central Asian prototypes into simplified, flat patterns.

The consistent practice of representing men on the Buddha’s proper left side and women on the Buddha’s right, absent in Indian prototypes, must bear some cultural significance, suggesting a hierarchy and decorum in actual social space. In his forthcoming book, David Summers proposes that the distinction between left and right is a planar articulation of culturally specific significance that denotes a constructable relation. In the West, the right is preferred to the left primarily because of the association with dominance in human handedness. I would argue, however, that in China the left is preferred to the right because of alignment with cardinal directions. Since ancient times, the Chinese have constructed cities, palaces, and tombs in alignment with the north–south axis. Along with the development of the theory of yin yang and the five elements in Eastern Zhou (770–221 BCE) times, the four cardinal directions and the center became associated with the seasons, elements, colors, and symbolic animals. The south, associated with summer and symbolized by the red bird, is the most important of the four cardinal directions. The imperial palace and the emperor are always oriented towards the south. If the emperor is placed in the north, facing the south, then his proper left side becomes the east, associated with spring and life, and his proper right side the west, associated with autumn and death. The east is preferred to the west and thus is higher in hierarchical terms. In court ranks, the left minister precedes the right minister. Thus it seems apparent that the Buddhist icons in China have appropriated an orientation similar to that of Chinese rulers, placed in the north and facing an imaginary south. This logic would explain the consistent placement of men and women on the Buddha’s proper left and right sides, since men hold a position superior to women in both Chinese and nomadic societies.

The symbolism of the cardinal directions and left–right order is a well-established convention in China, articulating a constructed hierarchy of social relations and cultural significance. Buddhism’s adoption of a Chinese orientation can be seen as a result of interactions between Chinese and Indian Buddhist
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traditions that occur at a level deeper and more unconscious than any ethnic discourse. Nevertheless, the placement of donors in the proper social space also suggests aspects of the nomadic society that were different from the Chinese society, such as the prominence of women in the public domain and the relative lack of social differentiation (or perhaps the lack of representation of social groups other than the aristocracy). Some of these aspects, however, were to change drastically in the next century.

The sixth century

The sixth century saw marked changes in the representation of nomadic Buddhist patrons, which resulted from either cultural policies instituted by nomadic rulers or developments of Buddhism. Emperor Xiaowen’s (Xiaowen di; r. 471–99) relocation of the Northern Wei capital from Pingcheng to Luoyang in central China in 494 was a decisive event in the dynasty’s cultural changes. One year after the move, he issued an edict to institute a series of sinicizing reforms, including requiring the adoption of Chinese dress, language, costume, rituals, and institutions. The second phase of Northern Wei rule, based at Luoyang and lasting from 494 to 534, thus characterized a period of strong sinicizing trends. Closer contact with traditional Chinese culture also led to a resurgence of indigenous practices.

The Northern Wei’s sinicizing measures, however, were largely revoked by the more militaristic Western Wei and Northern Zhou rulers, resulting in the so-called “Xianbei-ization” or “Sarbi-ization” process. Nomadic names were bestowed on Chinese – a practice which, as Albert Dien observes, served to recruit Chinese into the army. The zigzag pattern of the nomadic rulers’ cultural policies directly influenced the artistic portrayal of nomadic patrons, since both dress and surnames were interchangeable and not necessarily aligned with ethnicity. Having adopted Chinese dress, nomadic donors were now portrayed in elegant Chinese robes and, along with them, the paraphernalia of Chinese status symbols. Art works also show a greater reliance on name, title, kinship relations, and ancestry to indicate the donor’s identity and social status. Furthermore, the prominence of military figures as donors can be seen as a general militarization of the society under nomadic rule.

By the sixth century, Buddhism had spread to the countryside in northern China and was widely accepted by both Han Chinese as well as their nomadic rulers. An important phenomenon was the development of Buddhist devotional societies called yi or yiyi, which first emerged toward the end of the fifth century as the main social and religious organizations through which the general populace expressed their devotions and identity. Such organizations were modeled after the pre-Buddhist Chinese social and religious organization called she, which focused on earth-worship in local communities. With close ties to Buddhist temples (now centrally administered under the state), these lay Buddhist organizations drew members from towns and rural communities and developed
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a structure that mirrored local administration and social stratification. Buddhist devotional societies also preferred to use the stele, a type of symbolic monument that had developed in the Han dynasty, to commemorate their patronage activities. The large number of still extant Buddhist steles from northern China attests to the important roles these devotional societies played in local religious and social life. For example, the prominence of nomadic settlers in the Guanzhong plain has been documented by a collection of steles from that region. In the following discussion, I will use a few examples to illustrate how some of these developments relate to changes in the nomads’ perceptions of their identity and ethnicity.

Soon after Emperor Xiaowen relocated the Northern Wei capital to Luoyang, the excavation of cave-chapels began at the Longmen site, south of the new capital.64 At the Guyang Cave, where most early images are concentrated, the representation of donors – including the way they are identified – differs drastically, even from the examples at Yungang. First, detailed inscriptions, executed in fine calligraphic style, identify most of the donors by name and list all their official and honorific titles. Some of these inscriptions are beautifully engraved on traditional Chinese steles called bei, which are carved in relief on the wall surface. Most of the individual images in the top rows of the north and south walls date from the 490s up to about the 510s. They were dedicated primarily by members of the Northern Wei imperial house and ruling elite.65 Many male donors appear to have been close aides of Emperor Xiaowen or top-level military commanders who had accompanied the emperor on his southern expedition and had fought with him in other battles. Surnames such as Yuan (the sinicized name for Tuoba), Qiumu, and Helan indicate that they came from the “eight royal clans” of the Xianbei tribe. Other nomadic groups are represented as well, as in the example of an image of the Sakyamuni Buddha, dedicated by Yang Dayen for Emperor Xiaowen, dated c. 500–3 (Figure 3.7).66 Yang held the title fuguo jiangjun zhige jiangjun Liangzhou dazhong Anrongxian kaiguozi (Bulwark General of the State, Commander of Palace Guards, Grand Protector of Liangzhou [in Sichuan], Dynasty-founding Viscount of Anrong District [in Qinghai?]). He came from Qiuchi in Gansu; the Yang of Qiuchi was a prominent clan of the Tibetan Di people who had settled in Gansu since Han times and adopted many aspects of Chinese culture early on, including Chinese surnames.68 Yang’s dedicatory inscription is beautifully engraved on a Chinese stele, carved on the wall next to the image. Like other inscriptions from the same group, it overtly states the donor’s loyalty to the state and the emperor, thus setting the patriotic tone of his patronage activities and reiterating the role of Buddhism in serving the state. Other donors from this group of Northern Wei aristocrats included several imperial women, who primarily dedicated images for their deceased husbands and sons, many of whom were warriors. Monastic donors also served the imperial house.

These detailed inscriptions thus provide us not only with information that supplements dynastic records, but also offer a glimpse at a historical moment
when the Northern Wei noblemen rallied around the emperor, expressing their support for his political moves and cultural policies through their religious activities. With fine Chinese calligraphy, literary composition, and the appropriation of the Chinese stele form, these Buddhist inscriptions hark back to the traditional Chinese practice of commemorating illustrious scholar-officials, military officers, and local elites on steles during Han times. The state bureaucracy was created after the Chinese model, with those serving the state classified into nine ranks, with corresponding salaries. The Northern Wei noble donors recorded in this cave mostly belonged to the top ranks, and the inscriptions list their honorific titles, rank titles, prestige offices, and titles of nobility as well as their actual posts. The emphasis on ranks and status certainly had Chinese parallels, and the manner of recording may have derived from Chinese practices (an early example has already been seen on the Hebei pedestal).
The social order reflected in these steles contains features unique to the nomadic aristocracy. First, the military role of the noblemen, as well as the identification of nobility status through surname is distinctive to nomadic society. In his analysis of the ruling elites of Chinese and nomadic societies, Denis Twitchett notes that many nomadic groups distinguished their nobility primarily on the basis of family, such as the eight royal clans of the Tuoba Wei.70 Thus, surnames became an all-important clue to social identity. The Chinese also have had a long tradition of distinguishing status through surnames and lineages, such as the system of *jiupin* (nine ranks). After the Tuoba Wei gained control of the Central plain, the customs of emphasizing surnames and lineages to gauge relative family standing became rigidly institutionalized into a strict status hierarchy.

Second, among this early group of images at the Guyang Cave, donor images are not always shown, and when they are, the donors are portrayed wearing the Chinese dress of long, flowing robes and headdresses. The change in costume results from Emperor Xiaowen’s edict to adopt Chinese dress. A particularly beautiful example is the panel of images beneath a Buddha image for Emperor Xiaowen (d. 499), dedicated by the priest Fasheng, the Prince of Beihai (Beihai wang), and his mother in 503 (Figure 3.8).71 The Prince of Beihai, Yuan Xiang,
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held the titles of shizhong hujun jiangjun (Princely Attendant, Protector General). He was a member of the Tuoba royal clan and had fought with Emperor Xiaowen in his southern campaigns. Yuan Xiang and his mother, both devout Buddhists, were associated with at least three other images in the Guyang Cave. On this Buddha image, dedicated by Fasheng, the donor images are divided into two groups, flanking the inscriptive panel in the center. Three monastic members precede each group. The right panel shows a prominent male donor, wearing the Chinese robe and tall cap of a Chinese official, probably representing the deceased Emperor Xiaowen. A group of attendants and the status symbols of a round fan and an umbrella accompany him. The left panel depicts two prominent donors and their attendants. The first figure is slightly larger and is accompanied by both an umbrella and a fan, while the second figure has only an umbrella. Judging from the scale and status symbols, they probably represent the mother of the Prince of Beihai, followed by the prince. The placement of Emperor Xiaowen on the Buddha’s proper left, the preferred side, conforms to the hierarchy of left–right order established in previous examples.

In contrast to the robust sculptural relief of donor images at Yungang, the style of these reflects a fluent, linear execution that evokes courtly elegance and the aesthetic taste of the Chinese gentry class. In choosing to adopt Chinese dress, the nomadic rulers transformed themselves into members of the Chinese elite, equipped with proper status symbols. In the following decades, the portrayal of Northern Wei royal donors developed into much grander schemes, including the famous panels from Binyang Cave (Binyang dong) at Longmen, dedicated by Emperor Xuanwu (Xuanwu di; r. 500–15) for his parents, Emperor Xiaowen and Empress Wenzhao (Wenzhao huanghou; d. 497), and the panels at Gongxian Cave 1, for Emperor Xuanwu and his consort, Empress Dowager Ling (Figure 3.9).72

Third, in the Guyang Cave, alongside images dedicated by members of the Northern Wei aristocracy, are other images, dedicated by devotional societies of local Han Chinese. Some of these had more than two hundred members, headed by local community or administrative leaders and joined by local clergy. The chiefs held official posts, mostly middle to low-level ranks in local governments or military units. As I have discussed in another study, the coexistence of Northern Wei nobles and Han Chinese as Buddhist patrons within the same cave was politically significant.73 It signified the local Chinese support of the Northern Wei government and projected an image of solidarity among the nomadic and Chinese groups. Viewed in this light, the Northern Wei’s cultural policies achieved their political goals on two fronts. On the one hand, the adoption of Chinese dress, language, and administrative structure, as well as the appropriation of Chinese status symbols, presented the nomadic rulers as legitimate and acceptable to the Chinese, especially the Chinese gentry and local administrators or commanders. The promotion of Buddhism, on the other hand, provided a common religious identity for both the conquerors and the conquered. The universal ideologies of both Chinese culture and Buddhism were used by the
state to unify a fragmented society, but they led to different outcomes. Ultimately, Buddhism proved to be a more cohesive force in cementing the society. As for Chinese culturalism, the nomads who adopted Chinese language, dress, and other customs began to lose their ethnic identity, but not without the interruptions of the revolt of the garrison soldiers from the frontier regions, leading to a reversal of some of the sinicizing reforms under Western Wei and Northern Zhou.

For the final phase of divided Xianbei rule from 534 to 581, I will focus on Chang’an, the Guangzhong plain, and their neighboring regions, primarily because the nomadic ethnicity of Buddhist patrons was strongly felt in these regions in the period preceding and during Western Wei and Northern Zhou rule. Crucial to the stability of the ancient capital of Chang’an, the Guanzhong plain – the vast territory surrounding Chang’an on the east, north, and west sides, marked by the Wei River to the south and the Tongguan Pass to the east – was one of the most bitterly contested areas among different ethnic groups.
during the Northern dynasties. After Chang’an fell to the Xiongnu in 317, other nomadic peoples began to move into the area and occupied strategic locations. The Tibetan Di and Qiang groups established short-lived kingdoms of the Former Qin and Later Qin, both based at Chang’an. Under their sponsorship, Chang’an flourished as a major Buddhist center from the late fourth to the early fifth century, and a number of early Chinese Buddhist images were associated with that region. In 418, the Daxia kingdom (407–31), founded by a Xiongnu tribe, sacked Chang’an, which led to the dispersal of the Buddhist community in the capital; many priests went north to Pingcheng or joined other Buddhist centers. The persecution of 446 was another setback for Buddhism in the region.

By the late fifth to early sixth century, however, there is evidence that Buddhism had become widespread in the region—a phenomenon that was common in other parts of northern China from Shanxi, Henan, Hebei to Gansu, vast territories that were under direct Northern Wei administration. Close to two hundred steles and individual sculptures have been recovered from the Guanzhong region, most of them coming from territories to the north of Chang’an and dating from the late fifth through the sixth century. A significant number of steles are mixed Buddhist and Daoist or Daoist in content, although in form they are not distinguishable from the Buddhist ones.

By the sixth century, the Di people had primarily settled to the northwest of Chang’an, the Qiang to the north, and the Xiongnu in pockets throughout the area. These nomadic peoples coexisted with the Han Chinese, and some mixing began to occur over the course of the sixth century. Their presence and social interactions as Buddhist or Daoist patrons with the Han Chinese are documented in this group of Shaanxi steles. Most of these steles were dedicated by devotional societies, which drew members from local villages or communities. Like those from other areas, the steles record the names of the leaders and members of these societies. In his study of the inscriptions of this group of Shaanxi steles, the Chinese scholar Ma Changshou observes that members of these groups could have come from a single kin group, Han or non-Han. Sometimes all the members of the group shared the same surname; at other times, they bore different surnames but came from the same tribe. The Qiang people were most prominently represented and some of the most common Qiang surnames included Yao, Qi, Fumeng, Lei, Tongti, Lüei, Qian’er, and Dang.

An example is a Daoist stele, dated 521, dedicated by Qi Maren and some 120 members of the Qi clan (Figure 3.10). Surrounding the Daoist image at the top, the donors are shown in three-quarter views, facing towards the center. They are also arranged in rows, with those holding titles given the preferred positions at the top. Surmounted by pairs of dragons, the stele is virtually indistinguishable from its Buddhist counterparts in format; iconographic features and other details identify its Daoist content. The stele comes from a village north of Fuping district, in Beidi commandery, to the north of Chang’an. Gradually the
mixing of names, such as women of Han Chinese surnames shown alongside a predominantly ethnic group, also indicates cohabitation or intermarriages among the Han Chinese and the nomadic groups – a process of social and ethnic integration facilitated by Buddhism (and sometimes Daoism) as a unifying agent. Made in rural areas far from any metropolitan centers, most of these Shaanxi steles are crudely fashioned and yet retain an unpretentious, rustic charm.

The establishment of Chang’an as the capital of the Western Wei also brought the Tuoba Xianbei and other northern nomadic groups to the Guanzhong plain. Thereafter these groups also made their presence felt as Buddhist donors. Ma Changshou records a four-sided stele that indicates an interesting mix of ethnic groups, but an image of the stele, unfortunately, is not available. Originating from the Weinan area to the north of Chang’an, the stele dates to the second year of the Wucheng reign (560) of the Northern Zhou. More than a hundred members of a devotional society dedicated a Śākyamuni image, and
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their names are identifiable on the stele. Those holding religious or official titles are shown in the top tiers and accompanied by images, while ordinary members are only listed below by name. The religious titles of this group indicate an elaborate organization, but what is perhaps more interesting are the names of donors and their official titles. Some twenty-six ethnic surnames are recorded. Most prominently represented are Xianbei surnames: Tuoba, Yuwen, Helan, Fuyan, Yifu, Poluohan, and so forth. Xiongnu, Di, other nomadic tribes, and Han Chinese, as well as a few Central Asian names, are also recorded. Military titles include high-ranking commander-general (tongjun), inspector of provinces, and several commanders (dudu) of local districts, some conferred with aristocratic titles such as dynasty-founding viscount or baron (kaiguozi, kaiguonan). These military officers were all stationed in the Weinan, Huayin, Sanyuan, and Pingyang regions to the west and northwest of Chang’an. In examining these names and the official titles and ranks listed, what comes across most strongly is the diverse ethnic mix of the group and its military character. Ma also records that the male donors are shown wearing the hu costume – tunics, trousers, and boots – while the women wear long skirts. The Western Wei and Northern Zhou rulers, reacting against the Northern Wei’s sinicizing reforms, reinstated a strong military tradition in their states. In order to incorporate Chinese and other ethnic peoples into the military units, they were given Xianbei surnames.78 Some of the Xianbei names recorded on this Northern Zhou stele therefore could have been bestowed as names denoting military service rather than the individuals’ actual ethnic affinities. Ma points out that neither Xiaowen’s reform to change the polysyllabic nomadic names to monosyllabic Chinese names nor the bestowal of Xianbei names by Western Wei and Northern Zhou rulers were extensively carried out, especially not the latter. Thus he concludes that the nomadic names recorded on this stele by and large reflect accurately the mix of nomadic groups in a region strategic to the stability of Chang’an.79 Albert Dien, however, thinks that the Western Wei/Northern Zhou policy was more widely carried out than Ma would accept.80 The religious, historical, and ethnological information on the large group of Shaanxi steles still awaits further research, but this particular stele could not have been a better example for illustrating some of the cultural changes that occurred under Western Wei–Northern Zhou rule.

The last example of a Buddhist stele illustrates well the synthesis of nomadic and Chinese cultures in visual terms (Figures 3.11a and 3.11b). Recovered from Gansu, the stele measures 113 centimeters high and 39–42 centimeters wide. It dates to the second year of the Jiande reign (573) of the Northern Zhou.81 Shaped as a rectangular slab, it is surmounted by pairs of intertwined dragons in the traditional Chinese style. Both the obverse and reverse of the stele bear Buddhist images in recessed niches. The main inscription is engraved on the bottom of the obverse and the two short sides, while the donor images are portrayed, in low relief, in the lower half of the reverse side. The main inscription records that the main donor, Wang Lingwei, dedicates the stone slab and the images for his two deceased sons and parents, wishing that they will be
reborn in the pure land of the Buddhas and that they will be able to attend the three assemblies (of Maitreya Buddha). He also prays that his family and all sentient beings will be protected from disasters and suffering. Inscriptions identifying the donors are also engraved next to the images.

The main donors are shown being drawn in oxcarts or as equestrian figures and are portrayed in profile, a manner that is markedly different from earlier examples that portray donors standing in two symmetrically arranged groups, shown frontally and angling slightly toward the center. The earlier mode is a modification of Indian prototypes, as discussed earlier. Here the use of oxcarts for women, horses for men as well as attendants, and umbrellas as status symbols, as well as the profile representation of processional images, represent a mode derived from the earlier Han art tradition of China. In mural paintings

Figure 3.11 (a) Buddhist stele dedicated by Wang Lingwei and his family, Northern Zhou, dated 573. Stone. H. 90 cm, W. 39 cm. Gansu Provincial Museum. (b) Reverse side of Wang Lingwei stele in Figure 3.11a, with images of donors shown in lower half. Source: Zhongguo meishu quanji: Wei Jin nanbeichao diaosu (Beijing, 1988), plate 142.
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or stone reliefs of Han tombs and shrines, human figures, horses, and chariots are typically depicted in profile, proceeding in one direction on an imaginary ground line. Therefore, both the use of the Chinese stele form and the manner of representing donors in this example suggest a strong degree of Buddhist adaptation of and synthesis with indigenous Chinese artistic forms and styles.

Specific details of the donors, however, hint at their cultural, if not ethnic, identity. The equestrian figures are portrayed wearing round hats with a rim, trousers, and boots, and they seem to have braided hair—all characteristics of nomadic gear and customs. The inscribed names identify them as Wang’s two deceased sons: Yanqing above and Yanming below. The names next to the oxcarts identify the donors inside as Wang’s deceased daughters. The names of his deceased parents are also given at the bottom. Presented as the main donors, Wang’s deceased relatives become the principal recipients of the merit gained from this charitable act. The main inscription records that Wang bore the title baozhu (chief of a fortress). During the Northern dynasties, it was common for local towns and villages to build fortresses and muster their own militia groups for self-defense. Wang’s other son, Songqing, held the titles: kuangli jiangjun dianzhong sima beijiang (General of Vast Territories, Adjunct Commandant of Palace Cavalry). The stele also records the names of the women who married into the family; they have surnames such as Liang, Zhang, and Huangfu. Although Wang is a common sinicized surname adopted by the Qiang and other nomadic groups, without further evidence it is no longer possible to ascertain the donors’ ethnic origins. Nonetheless, the costume of the equestrian figures and the military posts of the donors attest to the influence of nomadic culture on Chinese society as a whole.

Conclusion

In this overview of the visual representation of nomadic patrons of Buddhist art, the broad range of examples has demonstrated how the donors constructed and advertised their ethnicity and identity through a number of elements: costume, name, rank, social status, geographical locality, and the social and religious groupings (such as families, clans, or devotional societies) to which they belonged. Identity signifiers such as costume and name were manipulable and thus rhetorical. The coexistence or juxtaposition of nomadic and Chinese cultural elements and human groupings also denoted social and sometimes political significance. To the nomads, adopting Chinese dress implied accepting Chinese ways and culture. Possessing a Chinese name meant proclaiming a kinship relation to the larger Chinese group. Both measures were initially taken to make the nomadic conquerors more acceptable to the conquered Chinese and thus diminish their differences, but those measures also contributed towards the nomads’ eventual loss of their own ethnic characteristics.

The nomads certainly did appropriate Chinese orientations, status symbols, language, administrative structures, and visual styles of representation. Their emphasis on the military, the rigid status hierarchy, and, initially, a greater
public role for women were distinctive features that left indelible marks on Chinese society, and those features characterized their roles as Buddhist art patrons. The cultural elements that the nomads appropriated were primarily those that would enhance their prestige and status in the eyes of the Chinese, advancing their group identity as a ruling elite separate from those under their rule.83 The nomads’ appropriation of Chinese culturalism was not a smooth path, and it may have contributed to the apparent loss of their ethnic identity. But as many historians have pointed out, it would not be possible to understand the formation of Sui and Tang without understanding the incorporation of nomadic cultural elements in the process. The nomadic rulers initially supported Buddhism, both to create for themselves a cultural identity separate from the Chinese they conquered and to consolidate the power of the state. As Buddhism spread to the general populace, however, the religion proved more effective as a cohesive force in building a society that transcended cultural, ethnic, as well as social differences. A discussion of how Buddhism interacted with both nomadic and Chinese cultures is, therefore, crucial to understanding the larger, more expansive notion of Chinese identity that developed in early medieval China.

Notes
1 An early version of this project was presented at the faculty seminar of the McIntire Department of Art, University of Virginia. I would like to thank my art historian colleagues, in particular Paul Barolksy and David Summers, for their astute observations and questions, which helped shape the current chapter. I am also grateful to Albert Dien and John Shepherd for their comments and suggestions of references. Special thanks are also due to the two editors of the book project, Don Wyatt and Nicola Di Cosmo, for their meticulous reading of the manuscript.
2 Tamura Jitsuzo, Chūgoku shijō no muncoku yōki (Tokyo, 1985). For discussions of China’s relations to nomadic groups see Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian frontiers of China (London and New York, 1940); Wolfram Eberhard, Conquerors and rulers: social forces in medieval China (Leiden, 1965); Thomas J. Barfield, The perilous frontier: nomadic empires and China, 221 bc to ad 1757 (Cambridge, Mass., 1989).
5 Studies of ethnicity and race issues in late imperial and modern China include: Evelyn Rawski, The last emperors: a social history of Qing imperial institutions (Berkeley, 1998); Pamela Crossley, “Thinking about ethnicity in early modern China,” Late Imperial China 1 (1990), 1–55; idem, A translucent mirror: history and identity in Qing imperial ideology (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1999); Frank Dikötter, The discourse of race in modern China (London, 1992); Melissa J. Brown, ed., Negotiating ethnicities in China and Taiwan (Berkeley, 1996); Steven Harrell, ed., Cultural encounters on China’s ethnic frontiers (Seattle and London, 1995).
6 For an overview of the key concepts and theories of ethnicity by major writers, see the anthology Ethnicity, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford and New York, 1996).
7 Rawski, The last emperors, pp. 2–8; Crossley, “Thinking about ethnicity in early modern China,” pp. 4–5.
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14 Taking a Marxist perspective, Susana B.C. Devalle equates the cultural-assimilationist approach in general with the attitude of colonial expansionism, in her *Discourses of ethnicity: culture and protest in Jharkhand* (New Delhi, 1992), pp. 25–46. For critiques of such approaches in Chinese studies, see Crosley and Rawski (n. 7) and John R. Shepherd’s response (n. 12).
19 The Kushan rulers of India of the first to third centuries CE, also nomadic conquerors, exploited the concept of Buddhist kingship to promote royal cults; see John M. Rosenfield, *The dynastic arts of the Kushans* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 202–14.
Although also supported by Chinese rulers, the domestication of Buddhism in the south took a different path. See Arthur Wright, “Buddhism and Chinese culture: phases of interaction,” pp. 11–15.

For studies of patronage activities in India see Barbara Stoler Miller, ed., The power of art: patronage in Indian culture (Delhi, 1992).

Buddhist inscriptions were first collected and studied in antiquarian and epigraphic works such as Wang Chang, Jinshi cuibian, 160 juan (1805; Beijing edition, 1905) and Ye Changchi, Tushi, 10 juan (1909; Taipei edition, 1956). The Japanese scholar Ōmura Seigai wrote the first comprehensive history of Chinese sculpture, utilizing these inscriptions in conjunction with illustrations in China bijutsushi: chōdoen, 2 vols (Tokyo, 1916), which influenced Alexander C. Soper’s Literary evidence for early Buddhist art in China (Ascona, 1959). Analyzing dedicatory inscriptions (both Buddhist and Daoist) from the Shaanxi region, the social historian Ma Changshou reconstructed the political, ethnic, and social history of the Guanzhong area in Beiming suojian qian Qin zhi Sui chu de Guangzhong buzu (Beijing, 1985).


For Kushan figures and donors in Indian Buddhist sculpture, see Rosenfield, The dynastic arts of the Kushans, pp. 215–29.

Buddhist images found in southern China date as early as the second century. See He Yunao, Fojiao chuchuan nanfang zhilu (Beijing, 1993); Marylin Rhie, Early Buddhist art of China and Central Asia (Leiden, 1999).


Fu Jian (r. 357–85) of the Former Qin presented to the Chinese monk Daoan gifts that included the following: a foreign icon seated with legs pendent, seven feet tall and covered with gold; a seated gilt image; a Maitreya image made of strung pearls; an icon embroidered in gold; and a woven image; recorded in Huijiao, comp. Gaosengzhuan (hereafter GSZ; Taishō, vol. 50, no. 2059), juan 5, p. 352; Yao Xing (r. 399–416) of Later Qin sent images of foreign origin to Huiyuan (333–416), Daoan’s disciple, at Lu Shan; GSZ, juan 6, p. 360; see also discussions in Soper, Literary evidence, pp. 15–16, 33.


The sculpture is now in the Arthur M. Sackler Museum at Harvard University; a detailed discussion as well as a review of previous scholarship on the sculpture is in Marylin M. Rhie, Early Buddhist art of China and Central Asia, pp. 71–94; figs 1.44, 45, 61, 64, 65–8, 71, 76, 77.

Ibid. Japanese scholars such as Mizuno Seiichi assign a fourth-century date for the sculpture while Marylin Rhie proposes a Han date.

Ibid., p. 87.

Rhie believes that the image probably belonged to foreigners, possibly a monk, in China (ibid., p. 91). In my opinion, this observation weakens her proposition that the bronze image was made in second-century Luoyang rather than fourth-century Hebei, where there would have been a much larger community of Buddhists, including many foreigners and nomads.


Yongjing Binglingsi, pl. 25.
It is known that nomadic women had the custom of braiding their hair; see Zhang (1986), 52ff.; see also Ji Yuanzhi, “Zhuanguo zaoqi fojiadu gonyangren shibu,” in Dunhuang yanjiu 1 (1995), 135–45.

It is possible that more donor figures are portrayed in the bottom row, but they are no longer legible.

Dunhuang research institute, ed., Dunhuang Mogao ku, vol. 1, _SI (Beijing, 1981), pl. 12; it is interesting to note that the row of male donors is matched by a row of bodhisattvas, not female donors, on the south wall.


The pedestal is published in Matsubara Saburō, Chūgoku bakkyō chūkōkushi kenkyū (Tokyo, 1961), p. 232, pl. 10. The sculpture was formerly in the collection of the Qing official Duan Fang, who published the transcription and annotations (one by the scholar Yang Shoujing of the inscription in his Taishōutsu an (Tokyo, 1961), no. 6). The phrase qian Xing Xing ling can be read as chief of a place formerly known as Xing; since Eastern Zhou times, Xing has been associated with present-day Xingtai. Changshan is located to the northeast of Shijiazhuang. See Wang Zhongguo, Beizhou dì lǐ zhī (Beijing, 1980), vol. 2, p. 991. Both Yang Shoujing and Duan Fang concurred that the inscription suggested the donor served his post at the capital, see n. 43.

Seminal works on the Yungang cave-temples include Mizuno Seiichi and Nagahiro Toshio, Unkoku sekutsu, 16 vols (Kyoto, 1951–6), and Yungang cave-temples cultural relics institute, ed., Yungang shika, 2 vols, _SI (Beijing, 1991); see also Su Bai, Zhuanguo shikai yanjiu (Beijing, 1996), and James Caswell, Written and unwritten: a new history of the Buddhist caves at Yungang (Vancouver, 1988).


The Svamabhūtamsūti (The Golden Light Sūtra) is particularly important in the promotion of state Buddhism; the text was translated into Chinese by Dharmakṣema in the early fifth century (Taishō, no. 663) and by Yi-ching (635–713; Taishō, no. 665). R.E. Emmerick translated Yi-ching’s version into English, The Sūtra of Golden Light (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970). See also William K. Mahony,

52 *Yungang shiku*, vol. 2, pl. 94.


56 The two imperial women’s patronage activities are discussed in Dorothy C. Wong, “Women as Buddhist art patrons during the Northern and Southern Dynasties (386–581).”


59 David Summers, *Real Spaces: world art history and the rise of Western modernism* (London, 2003), ch. 5.

60 Akiyama Terukazu argues convincingly that a similar adjustment of orientation also occurs in the Buddhist cave-temples at Dunhuang, where most of the murals of the Western Pure Land, one of the most popular subjects, are depicted on the south walls of cave-chapels. Because of the orientation of the rock cliff of the Dunhuang site, all the cave-chapels have entrances on the eastern side. However, since a temple requires a southern entrance, a reorientation means the eastern entrance becomes the imaginary south, and the actual south wall (the left side upon entering) becomes the imaginary west, appropriate for portraying the subject of Western Pure Land; see *Arts of China*, trans. Alexander Soper, vol. 2 (Tokyo and Palo Alto, Calif., 1968), p. 214.

61 See Albert Dien, “Elite lineages and the T’o-pa accommodation: a study of the edict of 495.”


65 A study of the Northern Wei inscriptions and Buddhist patronage activities at Longmen is in Tsukamoto Zenryû, *Shina bakkôshi kenkyû: Hoka-Ge hen* (Tokyo, 1942).

66 Ibid., pp. 458–61; *ZS, Longmen shiku*, vol. 1, pl. 159.


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72 The panel with male royal donors from the Binyang Cave is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the one with female royal donors is in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City. The Gongxian panels of royal donors are published in Henan provincial cultural relics research institute, ed., Gongxian shikusi, ZS (Beijing, 1989), pls 41, 42.


74 See note 28.

75 The mixed Buddho-Daist and Daoist trends in the region are a localized phenomenon. There is also indication that the Qiang and Di peoples patronized Daoism; see Zhang Yan, Beichao fudo zaoxiangbei jingxuan (Tianjin, 1996). There are also more than half a dozen archaeological reports on the Shaanxi steles. See Dorothy C. Wong, “The Beginnings of the Buddhist stele tradition in China,” pp. 8–9, n. 2.

76 The stele is published in Yao Sheng, “Yaoxian shike wenzi lüezhi,” Kaogu 3 (1965), 130, pl. 3.

77 An image of the stele or its rubbing is not available, but a transcription and discussion of the stele inscription is in Ma Changshou, Beiming suojian qian Qin zhi Sui chu de Guanzhong buzu, pp. 55–68.

78 Albert Dien, “The bestowal of surnames under the Western Wei–Northern Chou: a case of counter-acculturation.”

79 Ma Changshou, p. 60.

80 Personal correspondence.


82 A beautiful example of the use of oxcart and horse as status symbols for Chinese gentry donors is shown on a pedestal dated 524. The pedestal is now in the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, and is published in Osvald Sirén, Chinese sculpture from the fifth to the fourteenth centuries (London, 1925), pls 150, 151.

83 Note John Shepherd’s observation that “Students of acculturation have long been aware that adoption of foreign cultural elements is not just borrowing; it involves complex decisions regarding the prestige ranking, selection, reinterpretation, replacement, and incorporation of cultural elements”; Statecraft and the political economy on the Taiwan frontier, 1600–1800, p. 521, n. 5.

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GLOSSARY

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In 1997, a polling firm asked a focus group of Shanghai youth to select during which era they would most like to be alive. A plurality of the students chose the Tang dynasty (618–907), explaining that it was the period of “great China.” These results reflect a widely held belief that the Tang era was a unique historical conjuncture of Chinese cosmopolitanism and power. Perhaps even more so than today, Tang society was remarkably receptive to foreign influences in nearly every cultural practice, from music to literature, food to clothes, and religion to medicine. Moreover, the Tang empire was the dominant power in East Asia and had the most powerful economy in the world, further elevating its reputation in the eyes of Chinese today.

The best known symbols of this worldliness are the surviving artistic representations of persons variously identified as “foreign,” “non-Han,” “non-Chinese,” or “barbarian.” They appear in funerary and Buddhist statuary and murals, court and popular paintings, and in decorative art on such quotidian items as clothing and utensils. Among these representations, mortuary figurines and murals possess the greatest variety and vividness. They complement textual descriptions of non-Han physical appearance, which tend to be terse and reliant on a narrow range of stereotypical characteristics. The mortuary evidence not only embellishes these conventions but adds new ones that are seemingly less confined by literati conventions than are their textual counterparts.

Specialists in Tang art history have used the faces and attire depicted in images of non-Han peoples to determine individuals’ foreign homelands, often with the goal of elucidating the process of the transmission and adoption of foreign culture in China. While this approach is valid, these images also need to be understood as a vital part of an internal discourse on ethnic difference and barbarism that intersected and transcended issues of material culture and geographical origins. Within this discourse, figurines and murals played a key role in constructing the barbarian body for Tang audiences.
The significance of barbarian images in mortuary art is further magnified because these images contribute to the challenging of the common assumption that tomb art primarily replicated scenes of domesticity in the afterlife. In fact, many common types of images had no counterparts in the world of the living. Other types, including almost exclusively barbarian categories like merchants and camel riders, would have served little purpose within a domestic setting.

To be sure, a large number of mortuary images did play domestic roles and popular literature confirms that tomb figurines were imagined to come to life in the tomb. However, each item of mortuary art was created within a particular social, ritual, and cosmological context. Images did things that were socially and religiously significant, and were able to do these things both because of their representative or symbolic value and because they harnessed cosmic power. Therefore, Tang families commissioned tomb figurines and murals with representations of barbarians in large part because of the particular potencies associated with the human “originals” of these representations. Likewise, the distinctive physiognomic features that marked images as barbarian were present precisely because of their associations with certain powers that either contributed to or entirely constituted the potency of the images as a whole.

However, these features and their associated potencies neither emerged from thin air nor were they arbitrarily constructed. They drew their meaning and significance from ongoing discourses on ethnic difference and barbarism. Ultimately, they reflected concerns about ethnic difference and tensions over ethnic identity that manifested themselves in social action, of which funerary ritual is only one example. Tang elites viewed barbarians within the empire as both despicable and yet useful. Earlier scholars have acknowledged the latter perception but have contextualized it within a narrative of inclusion and assimilation. However, the appearance of barbarian images in Tang art, particularly mortuary art, is an important corrective to this view, for it indicates, as we shall see below, that non-Han were believed to possess certain qualities and abilities that within certain contexts made them valued commodities within Tang society as long as they remained barbarians.

The form and function of the tomb and its contents

Chinese artisans had fashioned tomb figurines, known as mingqi, long before the Tang. Using various materials, they created replicas of people, animals, household objects, houses, and other structures, such as animal pens and watchtowers. References to such objects appear before 1000 BCE and the earliest extant figures, made from wood and clay, have been found in tombs dating from the Eastern Zhou (770–256 BCE). During the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), human figures comprised a relatively small percentage of the total mingqi inventory and were rather uniform with a few highly abstracted features. Within this subgroup, tiny differences in hairstyle, headgear, and dress distinguish gender and class. However, some figures, identified as dancers and other entertainers, display
exaggerated gestures and facial features, perhaps serving as precedents for later depictions of barbarians. The earliest representations of non-Han appear in Han tombs on elaborately carved stone lintels, gates, walls, and sarcophagi. The earliest representations of non-Han appear in Han tombs on elaborately carved stone lintels, gates, walls, and sarcophagi.7

Human figures became the dominant form in mortuary statuary during the Northern and Southern dynasties (317–589 CE). In comparison to the Han, figurines from this subsequent period are more varied and display regional and class variation, which may reflect sociocultural and even ethnic differences. The most striking regional difference is the much greater number of figurines of soldiers appearing in northern tombs, reflecting the more militarized state of northern society, which at that time was politically dominated by non-Han elites who had originally been Inner Asian nomads.8 An elaborate visual vocabulary of facial features, clothing, and hairstyles developed up through the first half of the Tang, which found its fullest expression only in the tombs of wealthy elites. The Tang saw the simultaneous flowering of mingqi, notably humans and horses, and tomb murals depicting a wide variety of subjects.

Tang figurines display a greater attention to details of clothing, features, and expression than their predecessors, and, in the most artistically accomplished examples, give an impression of individuality and genuine human emotion undetectable in earlier mingqi. Although most scholars still view the mingqi as stereotyped representations, recent re-evaluations of Chinese portraiture have argued that while social function, rather than concerns with individual likeness, primarily determined the look of mingqi, inscribed names on the bases of some figurines suggest that they were in some cases simultaneously stylized types and real individuals.9 Nevertheless, their relationship to actual features and individuals seems to have been virtually identical to that of the terracotta warriors from the late third century BCE tomb of the first Qin emperor:

Tang barbarian figurines are extreme examples of this pattern, as they exhibit a high degree of individuality (unlike most other mingqi) and a marked use of stereotyped gestures and features.

While mortuary art underwent a gradual evolution, elite tomb architecture maintained a standard shape from the Eastern Han (25–220 CE) to the end of the Tang. It consisted of a long downward-sloping passageway terminating in a square tomb chamber below ground level, broken from the seventh century on by one or more slightly wider sections (known as tianjing or “sky wells”) containing vertical shafts for light and air, terminating in a square tomb chamber.
completely below ground. 11 This configuration allowed the family to perform the burial rites inside the tomb and to bury spouses together, even if one predeceased the other by decades. Therefore, the spaciousness of the tomb, its decoration, and the easy access to the tomb chamber were meant to accommodate (and impress) family members, mourners, and officiants and also to allow repeated entries, sometimes separated by decades, to inter the previously widowed spouse.

Most scholars, using statements made by Confucius (c. 551–c. 479 BCE) and Xunzi (c. 335–c. 238 BCE), argue that mingqi were intended to serve the deceased in the afterlife, thereby replacing the human and animal sacrifices used in earlier periods. 12 Literary works from the Eastern Han on confirm that this conception was indeed popular throughout the medieval period. Stories describe mingqi maids attending the deceased at parties in the tomb and even depict mingqi servants rising in rebellion against their ghostly masters. 13

However, recent scholarship persuasively argues for a more comprehensive understanding of the role of mingqi and other mortuary art. 14 A significant portion of mingqi and graphic art, such as the frequent depictions of mythological beasts and the animals of the zodiac, could not have played a significant role in providing the deceased with the creature comforts he or she had been accustomed to when alive. I group these mortuary works into three overlapping categories that could also incorporate objects that play domestic roles. First, items of cosmological significance, including representations of the signs of the zodiac, the four directions, and constellations, 15 situated the tomb in space and time and created a microcosmic nexus of power. Second, items of ritual significance, such as depictions of the funeral procession and funerary feasts, emphasized adherence to orthodoxy and asserted claims to social and political rank. Third, items of apotropaic significance, such as representations of supernatural and human guardians, protected the tomb and its inhabitants from human, animal, and supernatural tomb desecrators. 16 Of the works in these three categories, those from the second and, to an even greater degree, from the third category often have stereotypically barbarian features or other non-Han associations.

There is also a fourth category, that of objects and images that held imperial significance by expressing the political and cultural power of the Tang empire and Chinese civilization. Some images of barbarians in Tang mortuary art, particularly the well-documented statues of non-Han kings and chieftains at Emperors Taizong (r. 626–49) and Gaozong’s (r. 649–83) tomb complexes, displayed the geographical extent of the Tang realm and its emperor’s subjugation of foreign rulers. 17 These statues had precedents in both Chinese and Inner Asian imperial practice. The first emperor of Qin erected twelve giant bronze statues allegedly wearing “barbarian clothing” at his tomb site. Likewise, Inner Asian rulers commonly erected around their tombs balbals, statues which in some cases represented vanquished rivals and in other cases the deceased and his vassals. 18 The best known early extant example in China is a stone statue of a horse trampling a Xiongnu soldier at the tomb of the Western Han (202 BCE–9 CE) general Huo Qubing (d. 116 BCE). 19 A rare textual reference to statues in a
Western Han palace suggests that images of barbarians in monumental architecture were intended to symbolize imperial power and the subjugation of foreign peoples, yet such images were placed in an overall array of auspicious symbols, including animals and spirits, indicating that their role was at least as much cosmological and apotropaic as it was political. However, the position that all representations of foreigners in Chinese art were expressions of Tang power is simplistic, as it assumes that Tang elites were primarily concerned with national issues rather than the personal and familial dimensions of burial and the afterlife.

The categories of mortuary art just described indicate that beyond serving as a home for the deceased, the tomb also had ritual, cosmological, and social purposes. This last aim was of particular significance. Families used displays of mingqi to make explicit or implicit claims of social status and political office legitimate. The social pressure to do so is evident from the frequent calls by the state, its officials, and private citizens to limit the extravagant consumption associated with funerals, and from state attempts to closely regulate the quantity and quality of mingqi among other funeral expenses. As we shall see, consumers of mortuary images interpreted representations of barbarians in a variety of ways that redounded to the social credit of the deceased and his family.

The distinctive appearance of the barbarian

What features in Tang art allow us to distinguish culturally Chinese (hua) and in most cases implicitly ethnically Han persons from “barbarian” ones? The Tang construction of the “barbarian” did not establish clear divisions correlating physical types with ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious differences in all cases. Tomb murals displaying rows of attendants and officials often show a wide range of physical features without implying ethnic difference. Jokes and insults in the Tang were often directed at persons who, although they had real or alleged ethnically Han ancestry and were culturally Chinese, looked “barbarian” because of mustaches, beards, or noses. This phenomenon shows that physical characteristics were not in themselves absolute markers of ethnicity. Although ancestry was often the decisive factor in determining ethnic identity, individuals and families of non-Han ancestry, including the Tang imperial family itself, were able to “pass” as Han by both assimilating to Chinese culture and claiming Han forebears. Conversely, individuals of indisputably Han ancestry could be labelled “barbarian” due to the adoption of dissimilar cultural traits, deviations from moral norms, or even the possession of certain unusual physical features. Intermarriage and assimilation often confounded efforts to clearly distinguish Chinese from barbarian lineages after families had resided for several generations in China, and, most of the time, Tang people were not interested in making the effort.

Much of the official rhetoric, particularly in the expansionist first half of the dynasty, stressed ethnic tolerance. In 647, Emperor Taizong explained his success in the following way: “Since antiquity, all have honored the [Chinese] Hua and despised the barbarians; only I have loved them both as one.” Given these
factors, the artists or artisans who depicted barbarians did so consciously and used a particular visual vocabulary in order to mark them as indisputably barbarian. Modern scholars of tomb art most frequently refer to facial features, and, to a lesser extent, hairstyles when identifying particular individuals as barbarians. In doing so, these scholars follow classic literary descriptions from the Tang and earlier eras of the typical “barbarian” physiognomy. Yet, it is apparent from the features that were singled out – round eyes, a large nose, curly facial hair – as well as from the geographical origins (Central Asia) and types of people (dancers, entertainers, grooms, and merchants) who are most often cited in texts as having a “barbarian” appearance, that Inner Asians and, in particular, Eastern Iranians (Sogdians and Persians), simultaneously provided and were ascribed the epitomes of this look. This followed a recurring pattern in Tang and earlier ethnic discourse that collapsed taxonomies of ethnic difference, distinguishing multiple ethnic groups into a Sino-barbarian dichotomy that seized upon particular traits as representative of all non-Han. An early Tang anti-Buddhist polemic by the Daoists contrasted the idealized physiognomy of Chinese sages with “the curly hair and green pupils, which are the fundamental appearance of the barbarian [yi], and the high nose and deep eyes, which are the constant form of the barbarian [hu].”

The most common phrase used to describe non-Han physiognomy, “deep eyes and high noses” (shenmu gaobi), was attributed to the inhabitants of virtually all the countries of the Western Regions – primarily Iranian Inner Asia – and, pari passu, to all “barbarians.” Tang writers elaborated upon this phrase, including one poet who presented a poem to a young non-Han woman describing her as having “eyes deeper than the Xiang and Yangtze rivers, a nose higher than the Hua and Yue mountains.”

A curly or thick beard was an important distinguishing characteristic for barbarian men. In figurines, this beard was sometimes highly stylized with sharp edges and ridges, indicating that such a beard must have been carefully coiffured and stiffened with materials such as wax in the Persian style. In contrast, the typical barbarian beard in paintings is simply extremely bushy and thick. Both forms, however, were indeed different from the typical beard and mustache favored by ethnically Han men in this and earlier periods. Today we tend to think of Han men as clean-shaven, but in the Tang thin long beards and mustaches were a sign of gravitas and wisdom. Moreover, with the rising number and power of eunuchs, facial hair became a crucial marker of masculinity. The expectation that men grew facial hair was so universal that one man in the late sixth century was called a “natural eunuch” (tianyan) because he had no whiskers. Even soldiers on the Tang periphery were used to distinguishing eunuchs from other officials by the absence of a beard.

Unusually colored features figure prominently in written descriptions of non-Han, most notably red or purplish hair and green eyes. The poet Cen Shen (c. 715–760), best known for his baroque depictions of the Sino-Inner Asian frontier, writes in a typical example: “You are oblivious to the profound melancholy
of the sounds of the barbarian [hu] flute, played by a purple-whiskered green-eyed barbarian." However, the vast majority of images with stereotypically barbarian features lack any distinguishing coloration. It is likely that, as red hair and green eyes were iconographically characteristic of demons, they were not used in depictions of outlandish, though still human, barbarians. Rather, they were reserved for supernatural creatures, that, as we shall see, could take on other stereotypically barbarian features.

The major exception to the pattern of reducing the complexity and variety of non-Han physical features to those stereotypically possessed by Eastern Iranians was skin coloration. Tang popular and elite perceptions associated dark skin with both ugliness and ethnic otherness. However, the epitome of the dark-skinned barbarian was not the hu — either in the narrow sense of a Sogdian or Iranian or in the broad sense of a generic barbarian — but people from Kunlun, exotic figures resembling contemporary Sub-Saharan Africans who mostly originated from Southeast Asia and whom Tang writers described as having curly or frizzy hair and black bodies. Paradoxically, while Tang people frequently singled out Han and generic non-Han with dark complexions for ridicule and scorn, even accusing the former of foreign ancestry and maligning their alleged barbarian traits, genuine Southeast Asians, who mostly appear as servants referred to as "Kunlun slaves," were highly valued for their magical powers and skill with oxen and other valuable animals.

Hairstyle was a significant marker of the barbarian figure in texts and images. The postface to the Tang law code loosely taxonomizes foreign rulers by describing their hairstyles, indicating that hair could metonymically represent ethnic identity and difference. From adolescence, all Han men covered their hair, either with the cap of an official — often an elaborate contraption of stiffened boards and brocade — or, more commonly, a cloth head covering that wrapped smoothly around the forehead and bound the hair into a forward leaning knot at the top of the head, the so-called futou (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Indeed, by the Tang the capping ceremony had already been the chief male rite of passage between childhood and adulthood in China for over one thousand years. Thus, regularly leaving one’s hair uncovered, such as many non-Han peoples practiced, was a mark of cultural barbarism that had the force of an ethnic marker. Common variants included braided plaits parted in the center, a style typical of many nomadic groups from the steppe, or the short bowl cut typical of the young barbarian men, often referred to as "barbarian boys" (hu'er), who were favored by Tang elites as dancers, singers, and attendants. Han men only exposed their hair during liminal states of existence such as when in mourning, getting drunk, or in situations of extreme informality with friends. Important exceptions included monks and nuns, who shaved their heads, and some popular religious figures who displayed their charisma and disdain for social conventions by growing extremely long hair.

Hairstyles and head coverings had additional significance in that they were viewed both in Inner Asia and China as markers of political allegiance and thus
played a vital role in the constant negotiation between political and ethnic identities. Emperor Taizong unsuccessfully tried to popularize a new type of hat to replace the futou, arguing that the latter emblemized the militarism of the reign of Emperor Wudi of the Northern Zhou (r. 561–79). Both Empress Wu (r. 690–705) and Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–56) presented turbans or topknot covers to their officials, with the empress stating at a banquet that they represented the Wu family style of dress, implying that they symbolized the wearers’ allegiance to her new dynasty. In Inner Asia, hairstyles served as uniforms to identify the allegiances of various tribal confederations – often misidentified as ethnic groups – and were often imposed on subject populations as badges of their new political status, the most famous instance being the Qing imposition of the Manchu queue on its Han subjects. Closer to the Tang, during the Northern and Southern dynasties, southerners referred to all northerners derogatorily as “pigtail heads” (suotou) because it was the custom of the Xianbei and other Inner Asians, as well as an unknown number of Han under their rule.
in north China, to braid their hair (bianfa). The reverse also occurred: during the Tang, surrendering Turks undid their queues, as did the inhabitants of Gaochang (modern Turfan) during the Sui, in order to signal their allegiance to a Chinese emperor.

Scholars have often cited particular clothes as signaling non-Han ethnicity, sometimes correlating facial features with clothing in order to determine exact ethnic origins. This effort is, to a significant extent, misguided. During the Tang, differences in clothing were mainly understood in terms of class and status rather than ethnicity per se. The common phrases “short robes” (duanyi) and “robe and cap” (yiguan) referred to the lower classes and gentry respectively, and the state’s sumptuary regulations were predicated on distinctions of social and official rank. Although clothing could serve as a metaphor for ethnic and cultural identity in elite ethnic discourse, clothing in daily life and mortuary art was rarely understood in these terms. The vogue for so-called “barbarian clothing,” hufu, which peaked in the eighth and early ninth centuries, was condemned by conservatives.
precisely because it transcended ethnic boundaries and threatened the existence of the class and gender distinctions that they found so precious. Ensuring the propriety of elite women was a particular concern. Already in the seventh century, the adoption of less restrictive head coverings based on Inner Asian models by gentry women when out riding was condemned by imperial decree as “excessively rash” and “lacking in propriety.” A century later, palace women wore even more revealing hats and heavy make-up. According to contemporary sources, not only did women of both the gentry and common classes imitate palace women, but some gentry women even wore men’s clothes, from tunics to boots, leading to the improper fusion of the “inner and outer,” i.e. the feminine/private and masculine/public spheres of family life. There are numerous figurines and murals of maids, female polo players, and palace women wearing hufu: long sleeved coats with turned out lapels and tight-fitting sleeves, belts at the waist, trousers, and soft shoes. By the early 740s, hufu had been adopted by both gentry and commoners.

Physiognomy and the construction of the barbarian

A characteristic of artistic and textual depictions of barbarians that has not previously been studied is deportment and overall physical appearance. Tang craftsmen and their audience were intensely conscious of physical appearance, due largely to the popularity of the practice of physiognomy (xiang), that is, the analysis of people’s character and future based on physical features, carriage, speech, demeanor, and other bodily attributes. The literati studied texts on physiognomy and there was a near-universal acceptance of the validity of its basic principles and techniques at all levels of Tang society. The popularity of physiognomy was directly related to high rates of social mobility. Possibilities of sudden and spectacular advancement through patronage and the civil service examinations, combined with the insecurity of public office, fed the desire to know one’s own personal and professional fate and the fates of one’s family and associates.

Physiognomy, practiced by semi-professionals, clerics, and ordinary people, thus played a major role in social and political relations. Fathers used physiognomy to select sons-in-law and the emperor and his officials used it as grounds for promotion, demotion, and the establishment or dissolution of ties of patronage. Future emperors were even singled out from the constellation of royal princes based on their physiognomy. One story, illustrating the Tang belief in the degree of “scientific” certainty ascribed to the workings of fate as revealed in physiognomy, relates how Emperor Taizong resisted appointing a close friend to high office because he did not have “an eminent appearance” (guixiang). The emperor was finally persuaded to promote the man, at which point the new minister immediately expired!

Literati elites also used criteria of appearance and deportment in social interactions. The resulting discrimination against those members of the
elite who were judged to be in some way ugly or gauche did not rise to the “scientific” level or deterministic quality of physiognomy, though the informal and pseudo-scientific modes of judging physical appearance and behavior were mutually reinforcing. The former type of “lookism,” though frowned upon by Confucian literature, was most prevalent and virulent in the southern courts during the Northern and Southern dynasties and has been a common feature of elite societies with highly aestheticized court environments that maintain exclusivist codes of cultural distinction. It was expressed with personal jokes and insults or in anonymous popular assessments and was often linked to regional and ethnic prejudices as well as political rivalries and social snobbery. One’s appearance was thus a significant factor in one’s rise to and continued occupation of high social and political positions, though other factors could override its importance. For example, elites initially subjected Lu Xie (d. 881) to abuse and humiliation because of his ugliness, unfashionable manners, and clumsy speech, but he was ultimately successful in his official career due to his literary talent.60

What were the specific tenets of physiognomic thought, and how did they relate to the construction of ethnic difference and the image of the barbarian? Tang ideals of deportment and posture generally followed centuries-old rules on etiquette based on Confucian precepts and subsumed under the category of *li*. Variously translated as ritual, etiquette, and politeness, *li* was more broadly the set of norms that regulated the interaction of civilized human beings according to cosmic patterns. In theory, all of one’s ritualized actions and relations, both secular and sacred, were to accord with *li*. During the Northern and Southern dynasties, literati elites, particularly those in the south, fetishized *li* and established it as one of the crucial distinguishing marks of the gentry class. Although political and social power came under the control of an increasingly diverse population during the Tang, *li* remained an important touchstone for status. Its importance might be questioned and diminished, but it retained a central role in education, court life, and social intercourse.

Elites and those aspiring to elite status emulated ideals of physical deportment, which was one important aspect of *li*. Those ideals were moderation and balance as realized in a straight, though not rigid, posture and a composed expression, which can be seen in a range of images from tomb figurines to imperial portraits. Additional signs of the desired equilibrium, as evidenced in the surviving visual material, include a slight parting of the legs and the pressing together of the hands. In contrast, barbarians are frequently seen in a crooked posture, whether gyrating as part of a performance, hunched under a burden, or poised in a posture of menace or control. Furthermore, whereas the facial features and expressions of Han figures are almost invariably nondescript and often highly abbreviated, those of barbarians are frequently caricatured or exaggerated. Their heads are often disproportionately large or small, their mouths grimace or shout, and their stereotypical features, such as the high nose and deep eyes, are highly exaggerated. We see
eyes which are either bulging (Figure 4.1), or drawn very large with a heavy outline and large staring pupils (Figure 4.2). The latter type of eye, which was either patterned after the eyes of birds or vice versa, invoked the wealth of associations between barbarism and bestiality. Du Fu (712–770) recognized this in his poem on a painting of a hawk: “Body strains, its thoughts on the cunning hare/its eyes turn sidelong like a barbarian in despair.” Finally, it is not uncommon for their mouths to grimace or shout. These details are significant. Not only do they stress barbarian lack of li, a common theme in texts, but they draw attention to facial features that were the focus of evaluations of character in physiognomic texts.

According to some of these treatises, the eyes were the residence of the spirit (shen) and the reflection of one’s humaneness (ren). Pure white eyes with black irises were the ideal. In contrast, Tang texts often describe non-Han peoples with colored irises, such as the yellow irises attributed to a second-generation Indian resident or the green irises of the Inner Asian Kirghiz. The area around the eyebrows was a key predictor of literary ability, the foundation for gaining civil office and membership in the cultured elite. However, like the irises, physiognomists constructed this and other physiognomically significant areas as non-normative for non-Han, “deep eyes” being the best example. “High noses” were also an important site of deviation, for physiognomic thought made the nose the seat of righteousness (yi). Beyond the hairstyles discussed above, various physical attributes of hair also distinguished barbarian from Han. Barbarian hair was curly, coarse, multi-hued, and often foul-smelling due to the application of animal or vegetable products, while ideal (i.e. normative Han) hair was thin, glossy, black, and fragrant.

Physiognomic thought, by asserting that animal-like features reflected animalistic natures, contributed to one of the dominant modes of ethnic discourse, the construction of the barbarian as bestial. The seminal Hemp-Robed Master’s Methods of Physiognomy (Mayi xiangfa) states that people who look like animals will have corresponding characters and fates, using pigs and tigers as examples. A variety of sources confirm that this understanding was widespread. Although bestializing was not limited to those designated barbarians, they, more than members of any other subset of Tang society, were its targets, particularly when the association was derogatory. One account describes a palace woman as having eyes like a pig, revealing her lascivious nature and the threat she posed to the smooth functioning of the palace. Illustrating the Tang conception of in vino veritas, one anecdote describes An Lushan (703–57), the infamous Tang general of mixed Turkic and Iranian ancestry, as resembling a black boar with a dragon’s head when in his cups, indicating respectively his evil character and his imperial ambitions.

However, the assertion of a resemblance to animals, while condescending and stereotyping, was not always entirely negative. Thus, Yuan Tiangang (fl. 600–30), a famous professional physiognomist, interpreted one individual’s resemblance to a large animal (da shou) as a sign of his loyal nature and his suitability as
a military official. Likewise, many non-Han were valued members of the Tang military and were appreciated for their steadfast loyalty to the throne.

The ideal male body form in the Tang, exemplified in portraits of past emperors (Figure 4.3), stone statues of exemplary ministers at imperial mausolea (Figure 4.4), and tomb figurines of officials, possessed the following features. First, a tall and solid, but not fat, figure which impressed with its sheer physical presence and symmetry and thus suited the dictates of li. Second, a large head and square face, often with a thin mustache and sometimes a long flowing beard. These images are paralleled by passages attributing similar features to former rulers and idealized types. One Tang text describes a mid-sixth century emperor as tall with a beautiful flowing beard and whiskers, long hair down to the ground, and arms of such length that his hands hung below the knees. A square face
predicted success as a military man or ruler, while large ears were indicative of martial qualities, rulership, or sagehood.82

However, we can see when comparing matching pairs of civil and military officials (appearing in paintings, tomb murals, and figurines) that there were actually two variations on this ideal, one possessed by military officers and soldiers and exemplifying martial virtue, or wu, and another, possessed by civil officials and emperors, displaying civil virtue, or wen. In the case of one pair of tomb figurines, the martial figure’s deportment is distinguished by its outthrust chest and spread legs, while its physical type differs from the civil figure with its bulging eyes.83 This last feature was a commonly recognized symbol of fierceness and courage that often transcended ethnic identity.

It is significant that, during the early part of the Tang, when civil and military virtues were celebrated equally and official careers frequently demanded abilities and accomplishments in both arenas, the massive stone sculptures of exemplary officials outside the imperial mausolea of that period lack any civil–military
DEEP EYES AND HIGH NOSES

distinction; they all carry swords and wear identical robes, as well as having identical physionomies. However, from about 700 on, as civil careers and skills were increasingly lauded and martial abilities given relatively less prestige, sculptures of civil officials, marked by their possession of official tallies, stand in the place of honor to the east, while military officials with swords were relegated to the west. Nevertheless, their physical shapes and facial features continued to be identical. Even though identifiably Han figures, generally individuals of low status, sometimes diverged from these ideals, they mostly did so incrementally. This picture contrasts sharply with that given to us by our literati-centered texts, in which military men, particularly those from the northern and western frontiers, are frequently accused of lacking li. The discrepancy in these two visions reflects the difference between an imperial vision that stressed inclusion and a balance between the literati and military elite, and the exclusivist vision of members of the literati elite themselves who wished to assert and legitimize their political, social, and cultural dominance through the mastery of cultural forms of literacy and ritual. Non-Han identified as barbarians were frequently associated with the military and thus, in addition to their other failings, were even more likely, in the literati view of the world, to fail to rise to the standards of li.

Barbarian martiality, both praised and feared by Tang elites, was presented by Tang artists as, at best, a barbarized version of Han martiality. This is made abundantly clear when we examine the six surviving portraits from the Song copy of a Tang scroll entitled “The Eight Noble Officials” (ba gong xiang) (Figure 4.5). Although the identifying inscriptions on the painting are controversial, both because they may date to as late as the Southern Song and because they do not all correspond to the historical “eight noble officials” (ministers from the Northern Wei), there are three types of figures: martial figures with stereotypically barbarian features and accoutrements (i.e. deep eyes and prominent noses, large beards, colorful armor and weaponry), figures with Han features that balance martial and civil aspects (i.e. civilian robes with bow cases), and figures with Han features and purely civilian appearance (i.e. hiding the hands in the sleeves rather than revealing them as the other figures do). Despite these differences, they share a deportment that conforms with li and bears out the Tang imperial vision of a multiethnic empire built on both civil and martial virtue. The painting thus conveys the message that a fraction of barbarians could conform to Chinese norms while retaining a non-Han ethnic identity either by harnessing their martial skills to the service of the Chinese state or by engaging in ritualized acts of submission. In so doing, though their physical features retained “barbarian” characteristics, their changed postures and normative deportment indicated their acculturation and confirmed the transformative power of a virtuous emperor. In this category are included murals from the tomb of Crown Prince Zhanghuai depicting foreign envoys at the prince’s funeral, as well as a few extant paintings recording Tang emperors receiving foreign ambassadors at an audience to mark the acceptance of their tribute. In all these
Figure 4.5 Attributed to Chen Hong (active Kaiyuan period (713–42) – after 756), *Eight Noble Officials* (*Ba gong xiang*).

cases, the envoys’ deportment is within normative boundaries, yet the presence of Chinese officials and the emperor not only presents contrasts in clothing and physiognomy, to the detriment of the barbarians, but also indicates that the barbarians were escorted in order to avoid violations of li.

Furthermore, depictions of male barbarians diverged from the ideal Han body type in a number of ways that strongly suggested abnormality and impropriety. Some, such as the dancers who performed the “barbarian stomp” (huteng) and were sometimes referred to as “barbarian boys,” were thin and lithe, resembling the clowns and acrobats from Han tombs (Figure 4.6).90 They appear frequently in poetry in a subtly erotic form.91 Others possessed a paunch, suggesting wealth gained dishonorably through commerce, as in the case of some mingqi that have been identified as Arab or Persian traders, or other figurines depicting bearded figures holding wineskins. The originals for the latter type of object were probably non-Han tavern keepers who were ubiquitous in Chang’an and popularly referred to as “barbarian winesellers” (hujiu) (Figure 4.7).92 The image of the fat barbarian acquired extremely negative associations after the middle of the eighth century, as the Turco-Iranian rebel An Lushan was legendarily obese.93 Still other depictions show highly muscled non-Han, often to the point of grotesqueness (Figure 4.8).94 This body-builder’s physique, while implying strength and martiality, was also associated, via Buddhist iconography, with demonic creatures.

Figure 4.7 Tomb figurine of a barbarian holding a wineskin, dated c. 700–50. T.T. Tsui Galleries of Chinese Art, Royal Ontario Museum (#918.21.7).

Figure 4.8 Figurine of a barbarian horseman. From the tomb of a princess (no further information given in Gascoigne), dated 706. Palace Museum, Beijing.
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These three types of deviations—litheness, obesity, and muscularity—from the ideal body type were interpreted in an explicitly negative way by the physiognomic texts of the time. According to the Hemp-Robed Master’s Methods of Physiognomy, men with thin feminine waists will never become rich. Obesity and muscularity were seen in a negative light because of the belief that one must balance the universal opposing forces of yang, the positive and masculine principle, and yin, the negative and feminine principle. Within the body, the bones were a repository of yang while fat held yin. The bone structure of the face and the relationship of bones to fat throughout the body were thus important markers in determining the harmony of the individual and the degree to which life force, qi, circulated properly. Obesity, where fat conceals the bones, limited one’s qi and ultimately decreased one’s longevity, a prediction that was born out in the case of An Lushan, murdered a few years after launching his rebellion. Conversely, an overly muscled body showed an excess of bone and yang.

One exception to the rule that barbarian bodies deviated from Chinese norms in a negative fashion was body height. Texts and images from well before the Tang link giants and non-Han peoples, ranging from giant statues cast by Qin Shihuang and the nomadic Xiongnu to descriptions of the Buddha and statues of local deities. Indeed, archaeological evidence from Xinjiang demonstrates that the natives of that region during the first millennium BCE, the so-called Tocharians, were quite literally giants, many well-preserved corpses being over six feet tall. Tang descriptions of non-Han individuals, particularly military figures, often note their exceptional height. However, artisans did not depict a barbarian height superiority in mortuary art due to the convention of using height to display social and political hierarchies, with servants and social inferiors being made smaller than their betters.

Whereas there was little correlation between clothing and ethnic identity, an exposed body, just as in the case of exposed hair, was a clear sign of barbarity. Nudity not only violated basic codes of behavior and—prior to the introduction of Buddhist art—barely existed in the Chinese self-consciousness, but it was explicitly associated with distant peoples. Closer to home, nudity was a deplored feature of popular festivals such as the Cold Food Festival, believed to be inspired by foreign religious practices and instigated by non-Han living in the Tang empire. Mingqi that are nude from the waist up invariably possess stereotypically barbarian features, deportment, and roles (such as horsemen or grooms). Nude images outside of tombs are almost exclusively supernatural or barbarian representations in Buddhist art. Indeed, the non-Han group considered in many respects the most alien, that from Kunlun, is almost invariably depicted shirtless.

The bestiality of the barbarian

The long association between barbarians and animals in Chinese culture should come as no surprise. Most peoples throughout history have defined themselves as
uniquely human, often selecting for themselves an ethnonym which literally meant “the human beings,” and have consequently viewed the cultural and ethnic other as somehow less than human. It became natural to use metaphors of bestiality when describing the other’s appearance, customs, character, or language. While the Chinese usually recognized barbarians’ fundamental humanity, elites in particular deeply despised them for their departure from behavioral norms. One Tang writer noted that gorillas resembled people except for leaving their hair unbound (also a barbarian feature, as described above) and running quickly, thus, he continues, if humans lack li then they are no different from gorillas. A common Tang phrase describes barbarians as having “faces of men but hearts of beasts,” while the Analects (Lunyu) distinguished animal filiality from human filiality with the learned cultural value of reverence (jing): “These days, looking after [one’s parents] is called filiality. However, even dogs and horses have some ability to support [their parents]. Without [applying the concept of] reverence, how can one distinguish [these forms of support]? The negative connotations of animality in physiognomic thought have been explored above, but the association of barbarians with animals, which pervaded ethnic discourse at all levels of Tang society, was not simply derogatory and, in fact, it is crucial for an understanding of the role of representations of barbarians in Tang art, especially mortuary art. Although the exotic animals presented as tribute by foreign envoys reinforced sinocentric forms of orientalism, their celebration by Tang writers and painters and their collection by emperors reflected a belief in the mutually reinforcing potency of strangers and animals from afar. Images of lions and hippopotami had already appeared in pre-Qin art “as precious objects, whose dimly understood connections with the borderlands added to their mystery and perhaps to their supposed auspicious associations.” Court artists made numerous paintings of these animals which served both as a prosaic record of the event, stressing the political power of the Tang state over the tributary state, and as a charged object that captured some of the beast’s potency and revealed the Tang taste for the exotic. The notion that the possession of certain prestigious animals or their images transferred their power to their new owner was a commonplace in many premodern societies, particularly in the institution of the royal hunt and related court-sponsored literary works, both of which are very much in evidence for the Tang.

The highly developed relationship between barbarians and animals in Tang ethnic discourse implied two corollaries that strongly influenced perceptions of barbarians and their roles in Tang society and cosmology. The first corollary was that barbarians had a profound understanding of animals, particularly animals from their homelands. Tang society considered barbarians from the Inner Asian steppe to be superior horsemen and herders. Such stereotypes were manifested in mortuary art, as most grooms of horses and camels and virtually all camel riders, whether appearing as figurines or in murals, are of barbarian
appearance. Camels were outlandish, carried derogatory connotations of foreignness, and were largely associated with non-Han traders and soldiers. Or, they could function in a subordinate role with associations of privilege and leisure – like their non-Han attendants – as shown in tomb mural depictions where they carry supplies for royal hunts. Tang artisans highlighted the camel’s exotic character by increasing the size of the camel relative to its burden and even having camels carry entire entourages of merchants or musicians, often non-Han, on their backs. Foreigners also served as trainers of exotic hunting animals, such as cheetahs and falcons, and figurines and murals of these animals accompanied by their trainers appear in tombs. In contrast, only some horse riders were marked as indisputably non-Han, as fine horses signalled high status and could be ridden by elite men and women.

Scholars have typically interpreted the images of animals and their trainers or riders as symbols of the deceased’s status and manifestations of the belief that the persons and animals represented would serve the deceased in the afterlife. I would like to suggest an additional reading, namely, that such images invoked barbarians’ superior knowledge of animals as part of a tradition of discerning excellence in a variety of subjects – ranging from horses to gems and, ultimately, to people – that spoke to the virtues of the deceased. This tradition extended back to the legendary horse connoisseur Bole who became, in an essay by the Tang literatus Han Yu (768–824), a metaphor for the wise ruler who is able to select worthy men to serve him. Barbarians in the Tang were not only expert judges of horseflesh, but were believed to be similarly knowledgeable about other objects whose value might not be immediately evident, such as jewels. Persians were particularly renowned for their love of precious stones, and they are often described as paying enormous prices for them or even cutting open their own flesh in order to carry them in secret. A number of Tang tales make an explicit connection between the discernment of jewels and the selection of talented men, with barbarian merchants bestowing rare or supernatural gems on obscure individuals who then rise to high office.

Moreover, a subdiscourse on appearance, which contradicted popular understandings, reveals an additional basis for the positive interpretation of the barbarian form. Confucian texts on ethics and statecraft had long argued against relying on external appearance to judge internal nature, contradicting the basic premise of physiognomy and attacking elite prejudices against ugliness and awkwardness, though to little effect in society at large. The revered Tang minister...
Wei Zheng (580–643) presented a concise formulation of this position thus: “The appearance [mao] of the gentleman and the petty man may be the same, but their minds [xin] are different.”\textsuperscript{115} Tang discourse constructed related oppositions between outer (wai) and inner (nei), form (xing) and substance (ben, zhi), and, in the most relevant case, physical appearance (mao) and heart/mind (xin). Therefore, it was indeed possible, and sometimes even expected, that the nature of the barbarians belied their physical appearance. This notion served extremely pragmatic ends, such as in the employment of non-Han servants, and justified idealized visions of imperial harmony and universal humanity such as those of Emperor Taizong quoted above.

The second corollary to the equation of barbarians and animals was the belief that barbarians had the same capacities and powers as animals, particularly the exotic animals with which they were most notably associated. Tang poetry used metaphors to express this perception, such as the term huchu, “barbarian birdies,” referring to the lilting melodies of non-Han flautists.\textsuperscript{114} In an expressly physiognomic context, the fierceness displayed by non-Han soldiers (as well as their Han counterparts who served on the frontier and were part of the same cultural and social milieu as their non-Han counterparts) was compared to that of tigers and their appearance was thus termed “tiger-like.”\textsuperscript{115}

Even more significant in the popular context was the frequent conflation of barbarians, animals, supernatural creatures, and magical powers, already featured in Eastern Han funerary statuary.\textsuperscript{116} This conflation often took the form, in the popular and influential genre of anomaly (zhiguai) literature, of hybrid beings “that by attribute, origin, gender, or in other ways mix and conjoin classes of beings usually distinguished within a given taxonomic system [and] straddle (or, more accurately, are deemed to straddle) the boundaries constructed by cultures” or of beings “that cross boundaries not by having any special physical feature but by behaving in ways seen as characteristic of members of a category not their own.”\textsuperscript{117} The most prominent example in Tang literature was the fox, whose name (hu) is homophonous with the most popular term for barbarian (hu).

Many tales show fox spirits disguised as humans pursuing occupations commonly associated with barbarians (such as alchemy and business), posing as barbarians, taking barbarian surnames, and acting out narratives of alienation and attempted assimilation paralleling the experience of non-Han in the Tang empire.\textsuperscript{118} In a typical story, a young man from the gentry class is tricked into marrying a fox who poses as the daughter of a rich merchant or powerful general.\textsuperscript{119} This theme, I would argue, reflects conservative anxieties over the regular phenomenon of Han bluebloods contracting marriage alliances with social climbers, often of non-Han ethnicity, for financial or political reasons.

However, fox spirits were generally dangerous figures who violated the natural order by attempting to marry humans, so they naturally do not appear in tombs. Images in tombs were meant to create a domestic environment, glorify the deceased, and ensure the well-being of the deceased and the family by harnessing
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Cosmic powers that harmonized the tomb with the universe and protected it from harmful influences. Images of barbarians clearly met the first two concerns. Barbarian attendants were the mark of a wealthy and powerful family. Foreign envoys indicated the high rank of the deceased and celebrated the deceased’s virtue, which attracted and ideally transformed the barbarians. Here, however, I would like to discuss the extent to which images of barbarians were constitutive of cosmic power.

All Tang tombs possessed guardian figurines, the requisite protectors against evil influences. One type, referred to by scholars as “tomb guardian animals” (zhenmushou), usually appeared as a single pair with identical lion-like bodies, one with a human face, the other with the face of a fantastic creature. A second type, called “tomb guardian figures” (zhenmuyong), appeared as an identical pair of imposing soldiers or military officials. Their posture and appearance were similar to regular official and attendant mingqi, though larger and made of finer materials. In many tombs, we notice two significant features. First, the zhenmushou with the human face has a face identical to those of the same tomb’s zhenmuyong. Second, this face—which is shared by three of the four guardian figures—often has deep-set eyes, a prominent nose, and other features matching the established formula for barbarian physiognomy.

Barbarian tomb guardians have a long history in China. A Han dynasty “door guard”—equivalent to the Tang zhenmuyong—carved on a stone slab from a Henan tomb has unremarkable features but is identified in an accompanying inscription as a “barbarian door servant” (hunumen). Caricatured and often grotesque features on apotropaic sculpture date back to at least the Western Jin (265–317) and feature prominently in northern Chinese mortuary art. In the half century prior to the Tang, though barbarian features are evident in both tomb guardian warriors and animals, the faces are composed and lack stereotypical barbarian features with the exception of the staring or bulging eyes that had a non-ethnic significance, denoting a level of martiality appropriate for guarding the tomb.

Quite different guardian animals emerge by the early eighth century. Their faces are almost identical to the typical exaggerated barbarian faces of tomb figurines; they have deep eyes, high noses and curly beards, as well as grimacing mouths and staring bulging eyes (Figure 4.9). In a parallel development, beginning in the seventh century, the zhenmuyong were gradually replaced by Buddhist protective deities known in Sanskrit as lokapalas and in Chinese as the Four Great Heavenly Kings (si da tianwang). They display even more exaggerated features and postures while retaining the “deep eyes and high noses” of barbarian images (Figure 4.10). Like their counterparts in Buddhist temples, they often appear standing on a demonic animal or dwarf and thus display their powers to avert evil in a much more dramatic and powerful fashion than the staid guardian warrior figurines. The trend in the first half of the eighth century towards the fantastic reflected changing elite tastes, the growing awareness of the abilities of non-Han developed through their ubiquity and service, and the desire to
increase the protection for one’s tomb—a sort of postmortem arms race. This trend also manifested itself in the vogue—particularly marked in the relatively “barbarized” north—for hybrid mortuary figurines representing the zodiac with human bodies in official robes and animal heads, which replaced figures that had been either entirely human or entirely animal. 127

The appearance of typically barbarian features on super-human and supernatural animal guardian figures was not a simple transposal of faces or masks, though we do know that traditional beliefs dating back to the Han considered mask-like figures or masks capable of expelling demons and keeping the spirit of the deceased safely within the tomb. 128 Rather, it reflected a dialogue between three mutually reinforcing categories—supernatural, animal, and barbarian—within the Tang discourse on ethnic difference. For example, the bulging eyes of guardian figures, even those that were not marked as barbarian in appearance, simultaneously invoked the supernatural potency, moral ambiguity, and cultural
deviancy associated with exotic animals, barbarian skills, and martial virtues. Similarly, the identifications of tigers with martiality, fierceness, and non-Han soldiers contributed to the posting of tiger-head paintings on house gates as apotropaic icons.129

Non-Han themselves, particularly those associated with the quintessential foreign religion, Buddhism, were believed to possess extraordinary powers to ward off supernatural and natural dangers. Tang writers frequently depict barbarian monks exorcising evil spirits, ending droughts, and curing illness. Some, like the Indian Tantric monk Amoghavajra (705–74), were able to achieve high positions at the Tang court thanks in part to their claimed ability to protect the dynasty itself. Buddhist iconography possessed a rich fund of images illustrating the connection between bararians and supernatural power. The protective deities or lokapalas at Dunhuang seem to possess increasingly exaggerated barbarian physical features in a development similar to that of
I believe this evolution was not only the result of the rising vogue for things foreign in the first half of the Tang and the near total acceptance of Buddhism’s extra-Chinese origins and exotic iconography, but also came from a growing consciousness of the power (and dangers) associated with fluid ethnic boundaries and the figure of the barbarian.

In addition to Buddhism, there were other traditions linking barbarians and cosmic or protective power that contributed to the perceived efficacy of guardian figures with barbarian features. The Chinese had long associated the West, the homeland of most of the barbarians who were celebrated for their apotropaic efficacy, with extraordinary powers, particularly the power of immortality. The legendary Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu), dating back to pre-imperial times, bestowed immortality and ruled over a paradise. The marvelous Ferghana horses of Central Asia were sought after by the Han emperor Wudi.
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Figure 4.12 Statue of a lokapala. Dunhuang Cave 46, first half of eighth century. Dunhuang Institute for Cultural Relics.

Source: Dunhuang Institute for Cultural Relics, The art treasures of Dunhuang (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1981), plate 44.

(r. 140–87 BCE) as much for their associations with immortality as for their superior physiques. Non-Han also played an important role in popular festivals of the day that incorporated apotropaic aspects, particularly the Cold Food Festival. The dance of “Sprinkling the Barbarian with Water as He Begs in the Cold” was performed every winter solstice until it was banned in 714. In it, naked youths, both Han and non-Han, danced in masks and sprinkled each other and passersby with water.

Finally, we should not overlook the close association between barbarians and military protection. Non-Han troops, mostly with Inner Asian ethnic origins, were a mainstay of the Tang armies, and non-Han generals occupied the highest levels of the military. Though conservatives feared their influence on the stability and cultural integrity of the empire, it seems logical that images of protective deities would take on features of their mortal equivalents, and vice versa.
The important role that barbarian images played in enhancing the efficacy of the tomb as a dwelling, status symbol, and node of power contrasts with the ambiguity, if not sheer negativity, of the overall image of non-Han peoples during the Tang. As noted earlier, all strata of Tang society constructed the barbarian, the idealized ethnic other, as an antipode to accepted norms such as proper deportment. The equation of foreigners with animals, given its dehumanizing aspect, created a host of negative stereotypes – stupidity, simplicity, cruelty – that rivaled and in most cases outweighed the positive stereotypes that found their purest expression in mortuary art. Furthermore, each barbarian potency existed in a dialectical relationship with dangerous and abhorred qualities. Non-Han horse dealers and jewel merchants were not only admired for their skills but were despised for their un-Confucian devotion to profit. Barbarian religious specialists sometimes offered their protection but could just as frequently disrupt social order or purvey black magic. It was precisely the barbarians’ ambiguity and their transgressive nature as crossers of frontiers and violators of boundaries that made them potent sources of power and prestige in the Tang.

Postcript: the barbarian body in contemporary China

The confluence of ethnic and physiognomic discourse persists even in contemporary China. Since the late 1980s, the authorities have loosened restrictions on displaying the nude female body in the case of depictions of southwestern non-Han minorities in murals, paintings, and films, while buxom blonde Western women with fat babies are a ubiquitous presence on calendars. The average Chinese views these images with condescension, incomprehension, and prurient interest consistent with a pattern of “internal orientalization,” the construction of non-Han peoples in China as an exotic other. Their Tang “barbarian” predecessors probably met with a similar reaction, except that this reaction was complicated by all the positive valuations associated with barbarians and their images during the Tang that hardly exist today at the popular level, despite official attempts to stress ethnic minority contributions to the Chinese state.

In recent years, the Chinese fascination with the body of the ethnic other has taken a new twist. Plastic surgery is rapidly increasing in popularity, as both men and women seek to enhance their beauty by making themselves look exotic and their features more expressive. The most popular operations are slicing the eyelids to “make the eyes seem deeper-set” and nose jobs to make their noses “a little higher.” Whereas their Tang forebears were content to employ barbarians and their images in order to appropriate their skills and powers, the Han of today have the ability to remake themselves as simulacra of barbarians, complete with “deep eyes and high noses,” and a growing number are pursuing this goal blissfully unaware of the historical ironies.
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Notes and abbreviations

ALSJ An Lushan shiji
BMST Beimeng suoyan
CXJ Chu xue ji
CYQZ Chaoye qianzai
DTXY Da Tang xin yu
JTS Jiu Tang shu
THY Tang hai yao
TPGJ Taiping guang ji
TYL Tang yu lin
YYZZ Youyang zazu
ZZTJ Zizhi tongjian

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3 Of these four terms, which scholars have often used in an unreflective manner, I have chosen to use “non-Han” and “barbarian” in this chapter. “Non-Han” specifically denotes ethnic difference, while “barbarian” refers to the melange of cultural, ethnic, and social differences and associated individuals and peoples that were used in the Tang sources to conceptualize a non-normative other and thus define a normative self. In fact, the term “barbarian” is imprecise because it does not correspond to a single Chinese equivalent but rather lumps together various terms in use during the Tang – hu, fan, yi, and man and, less commonly, di and rong – which carried loose geographic and cultural connotations dating back centuries. For example, hu and man connoted western and southern origins respectively, while fan was associated with the distant periphery. I am also aware of the pejorative and slightly anachronistic connotations of the word “barbarian,” but the Chinese terms listed above usually invoked precisely those connotations in the minds of Tang contemporaries, probably to a greater degree than “barbarian” does for the contemporary Westerner given the much fainter resonance today of Herodotus’ Persians and Ammianus Marcellinus’ Huns than that of Han dynasty historian Sima Qian’s Xiongnu during the Tang.

4 Compared to the literary evidence, however, Tang mortuary artifacts containing representations of barbarians are limited by chronology and gender. The vast majority of figurines date from before 750, following which they were largely replaced as grave goods by domestic utensils. Moreover, images of barbarian women from mortuary and other types of artifacts from the Tang are rare and their identification controversial. Therefore, I will mostly confine my remarks on physiognomy to the male form and will caveat my arguments which rely on the mortuary evidence to note that they may only be valid for the first half of the Tang dynasty.

5 For the evolution of mingqi, see Ann Paludan, Chinese tomb figurines (Hong Kong, 1994); and Janet Baker, Seeking immortality: Chinese tomb sculpture from the Schloss Collection (Santa Ana, California, 1996), pp. 13–20.

6 Baker, Seeking immortality, p. 13.

7 For Han tombs, see Wu Hung, The Wu Liang shrine: the ideology of early Chinese pictorial art (Stanford, 1989); Martin Powers, Art and political expression in early China
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10 Ladislav Kesner, “Likeness of no one: (re)presenting the First Emperor’s army,” Art Bulletin 77.1 (1995), p. 120.

11 Baker, Seeking immortality, pp. 17–18.

12 Baker, Seeking immortality, p. 6; Shaanxi Sheng Wenwu Guanli Weiuyuanhui, eds, Shaanxi sheng huchu Tang yang suan yi (Beijing, 1958), p. 5; Ningxia Bowuguan, “Pengyang xinji,” p. 41. For the statements attributed to Confucius and Xunzi, see, respectively, Li jí 9, p. 216; and Burton Watson, tr., Basic writings of Mo Tzu, Hsün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu (New York, 1967), p. 104.


14 For a trenchant critique of the traditional understanding of the representational nature of mingqi, see Kasner, “Likeness of no one.”


16 Guardian figures, as well as layers of magical defenses and boobytraps, were expected to guard against grave robbers (11.22 13.521–2, pp. 124–5; 13.527, p. 126). In one story, purple-robed guards assisted by bronze geese attack tomb robbers and then denounce them to the county magistrate (“Nuguy zhong,” TPGJ 390, p. 3112). There were also supernatural and animal threats, such as creatures that devoured corpses’ brains (11.22 13.512, p. 123).


21 This position is argued most forcefully in Joachim Häfnerbrand, Das Ausländerbild in der Kunst Chinas als Spiegel kultureller Beziehungen (Hun–Tang) (Stuttgart, 1987).

22 Significant numbers of people viewed the mingqi while they were on display during the funeral procession, in the Tang as today an elaborate exhibition of wealth and
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prestige (Kesner, “Likeness of no one,” p. 119, n. 22). Moreover, a number of participants descended into the tomb at the burial and subsequent ritual occasions, at which time the tomb murals were seen.

23 Tang da zhaoling ji 80, pp. 418–19; Tang hui yao 38, pp. 810–17 passim; YYZZ 13.519, p. 124. According to contemporaries, these decrees and regulations were largely ineffective and numerous extant figurines that exceed the allowed height attest to this fact (THY 38, p. 813; and Jane Gaston Mahler, The Westerners among the figurines of the T’ang dynasty of China (Roma, 1959), p. 131).

24 The Tang sources are often imprecise in their usage of the term hua, which mainly signified Chinese culture and civilization but often denoted geography, ancestry, and ethnic identity. Its broad scope and cultural resonance made it the Tang writer’s term of choice when discussing the generic opposition between Chinese and “barbarian,” the latter usually referred to in such situations as hu or yi. There were other terms which were more precisely referred to Chinese ancestry and ethnicity (han) and geography (zhongguo), but even these terms could substitute for one another. The general lack of precision, in my view, indicates that the primary use of ethnic discourse was to define a broad Chinese–barbarian opposition extending across modern categories of ethnic identity, although Tang writers were capable of distinguishing between ancestry, geography, culture, and identity when the situation called for such precision.


26 After coming to this conclusion, I found that this point had also been affirmed for some of the rare (in comparison to the Tang) Han dynasty artistic depictions of non-Han (Zheng, “Barbarian images,” p. 59).

27 This approach is best exemplified by Mahler, The Westerners among the figurines, and Ezekiel Schloss, Foreigners in ancient Chinese art (New York, 1969).

28 Guang hong meng ji 13, p. 186c.

29 Tong dian 192, p. 5225.


31 We can see such a beard on a tomb figure of a cameleer (Han Baoquan, ed., Tong Jinxiang xianzhu mu caihui taoyong (Xi’an, 1997), pl. 19).

32 A good example is the groom in the eighth-century painting “Muma tu” (Jin Weinuo et al., eds, Zhongguo meishu quanji: huihua bian 2–Sui-Tang Wudai huihua (Beijing, 1984), no. 27).

33 See, e.g. Jiu Tang shu 99, p. 3093 (a description of the official Xiao Song as having “a beautiful mustache and beard” along with a majestic deportment and handsome appearance); YYZZ 1.2, p. 1 (a description of Emperor Taizong’s beard and mustache).

34YYZZ Xu 4.87, p. 232.

35 When the rebel leader Shi Siming established his state in the northeast he created a court modeled after the Tang court with its various officials, including one titled huangmen shilang. One day, one of these officials walked by a group of soldiers who, when they were informed of his title, asked, “How is it that a eunuch [huangmen] has a beard?” (An Lushan shiji 3, p. 43).

36 The Kirghiz are described as having yellow hair, green eyes, and red mustaches and beards (YYZZ 4.175, p. 45).

37 “Hujiaige song Yan Zhenqing fu Helong” (Gen Shen shi ji, p. 148).

38 Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan 1, p. 17; JTS 197, p. 5270. An introduction to the Chinese traditional valuation of light over dark skin is provided in Frank Dikötter, The discourse of race in modern China (Stanford, 1992), pp. 10–13.

39 The story “Mo Junhe” illustrates the high value placed on Kunlun slaves by Tang elites and the popular low regard for dark-skinned “ugly” individuals (TPGJ 192, pp. 1442–3). The specific connection with oxen is made clear by the story “Zhang liao,” where a Kunlun slave with magical powers first appears riding an ox (TPGJ 16,
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pp. 112–14), and a tomb mural depicting a man with an African physiognomy andracelets around his hands and feet leading an ox (Jing Zengli and Wang Xiaomeng,
murals and figurines show non-Han persons, usually young boys, leading an
ox-drawn cart which was probably the “soul carriage” (*hunche*) that carried the deceased
in the funeral procession. It is likely that Tang elites viewed barbarian servants as
effective psychopomps and underworld grooms because of their long-acknowledged
expertise with oxen. Han dynasty tombs contain depictions of non-Han slaves castrating oxen (Zheng,
“Barbarian images,” p. 57). The Kunlun Mountains were
associated with immortality and Laozi traditionally rode an ox, further supporting
the use of images of Kunlun slaves in tombs as symbols of the soul’s immortality.

40 *Tang lü shuyi*, p. 578.
41 Zhou Xibao, *Zhongguo gudai fushi shi* (Beijing, 1984), pp. 181–93; Huang Nengfu and
42 Howard S. Levy, tr. and annot., *Translations from Po Chü-I’s Collected Works, Volume IV:
The Later Years (833–846)* (San Francisco, 1978), pp. 549–51, 576, 619, 688–9; *TPGJ*
240, p. 1855.
43 The leader of a popular Buddhist cult around 710 was given the epithet “long haired” (*Chaoye qianzai*
5, p. 64). Confucians criticized the Buddhist clerical practice
of shaving one’s head as disrespectful to one’s ancestors and even the symbolic
equivalent of suicide (*THI* 41, p. 872; *Yiwen leiju* 17, pp. 319–20). Shaving the hair
also humiliated someone or reduced them to a debased status. Although it is unclear
if this was a universal practice, some Tang slaves and convicts had shaved heads;
in one case soldiers shaved a corrupt official’s head prior to demoting him (*JTS* 117,
p. 3404).

44 *THI* 31, p. 675.
45 *THI* 31, p. 675.
46 Shiratori Kurakichi, “The queue among the peoples of north Asia,” *Memoirs of the
research department of the Toyo Bunko* 4 (1929); Frederic Wakeman, Jr, *The great enterprise: the
Manchu reconstruction of imperial order in seventeenth-century China* (Berkeley, 1985), passim.
50 *DTXY* 10, p. 404.
51 Zhang Hongxiu, *Tang mu bihuajijin* (Xi’an, 1991), pl. 51; Robert E. Harrist, Jr, *Power
and virtue: the horse in Chinese art* (New York, 1997), pp. 75, 77. The camelier in
Figure 4.1 is wearing the typical *hufu* ensemble.
52 *Minghuang zalu Jiyi* 81, p. 66.
53 Weng Najian, *Zhongguo gudai xiangshu zong pipan* (Wuhan, 1993), pp. 79–92, especially
pp. 91–2. For pre-Tang physiognomy, see Zhu Pingyi, *Handai de xiangrenshu* (Taipei,
1990).
54 For Daoist and Buddhist monks practicing physiognomy, see *TPGJ* 224.
55 For the activities of the most famous physiognomists of the Tang, see Chen Xingren,
*Shenmi de xiangshu* (Nanning, 1993), pp. 68–76. The significance of physiognomy in
gaining patronage and career advancement is perhaps best illustrated by the early
career of An Lushan. Caught while stealing sheep, the young An was about to be
beaten to death, but he made a bravura speech attesting to his fighting abilities
against the local tribes, and the local military commander, impressed by his speech
and appearance, released him and appointed him as a scout (*ALSSJ* 1, p. 1; Robert
des Rotours, tr., *Histoire de Ngan Lou-chan* (Ngan Lou-chan che tsu) (Paris,
1962), pp. 13–14, n. 4). Soon after, the commander discovered that An possessed
auspicious black moles on his feet and was so impressed that he adopted An (*Tang yu
lin* 3.377, p. 251). More typical was the case of Yuan Qianyue, promoted to chief
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minister because his demeanor resembled that of a respected previous minister (TPGJ 202, p. 1521; TIL 5.663, p. 455). Conversely, an unfavorable appearance could hurt one’s social advancement, particularly the arrangement of a favorable marriage. An official who wished to marry his daughter to a talented scholar was opposed by his wife who was upset that her potential son-in-law was extremely thin and tall and looked like a crane (Minghuang zalu 1.5, p. 13).

Emperor Xuanzong is alleged to have singled out the future Daizong as a child because of his “exceptional physiognomy” (yi xiang) (Duyang zabian 1, p. 17). Physiognomists also claimed to be able to predict which woman would give birth to the next emperor (TIL 6.824, p. 574).

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57 TPGJ 146, p. 1049.

58 Individuals who were disparaged by fellow literati because they were considered ugly included a late Tang chief minister (Beimeng suoyan 19.308, p. 146), a newly minted member of the Sui official class (CYQZ 4, p. 45), and the grandson of a Tang chief minister (JTS 135, p. 3713).

Perhaps the crucial difference between general prejudice against appearance and behavior that did not match elite standards and the practice of physiognomy was that the latter was believed to have “objective” validity which reflected the inexorable workings of the universe. Thus, in one story (“Tang shizi”), a man for whom a physiognomist has predicted a brilliant career is condemned to death. In the resulting confrontation between the power of man, as represented by state functionaries, and the power of fate, the latter is triumphant as repeated execution attempts fail and the man goes on to become an official (TPGJ 376, pp. 2992–3; cf. Dudbridge, Religious experience, p. 206, no. 165).

59 Perhaps the crucial difference between general prejudice against appearance and behavior that did not match elite standards and the practice of physiognomy was that the latter was believed to have “objective” validity which reflected the inexorable workings of the universe. Thus, in one story (“Tang shizi”), a man for whom a physiognomist has predicted a brilliant career is condemned to death. In the resulting confrontation between the power of man, as represented by state functionaries, and the power of fate, the latter is triumphant as repeated execution attempts fail and the man goes on to become an official (TPGJ 376, pp. 2992–3; cf. Dudbridge, Religious experience, p. 206, no. 165).

60 BMSY 5.76, p. 35.

61 Modern philosophers have interpreted li as a “rational standard of value for individuals” and Chinese Marxists have seen it as an ideology of the ruling classes, while recent postmodernist scholars have focused on its performative and ritual aspects, understanding it as “ finely differentiated practices that created a network of relationships within which situated subjectivities came into being” (see Angela Zito, “Silk and skin: significant boundaries,” in Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow, eds, Body, subject and power in China (Chicago, 1994), especially pp. 101–7). While all these understandings have validity, they tend to overlook the influence of li on elite interaction with non-Han peoples. My own use of li, though fairly simple, reflects a fairly close adherence to the surface meaning of the texts.

62 Charles W. Holcombe, In the shadow of the Han (Honolulu, 1994), pp. 81–3.

63 China Cultural Relics Promotion Center, ed., Treasures: 300 best excavated antiques from China (Beijing, 1992), pl. 89; Han, Tang Jinxian, plates 65, 66; Masterpieces of Chinese portrait painting in the National Palace Museum (Taipei, 1971), no. 14.

64 See, e.g. Zhang, Tang mu bohua, pl. 188.

65 See, e.g. Mahler, The Westerners among the figurines, pl. 17b.

66 These postures and expressions are extremely common among barbarian riders and grooms (e.g. Han, Tang Jinxian, pls 34–5).

67 Han Wei et al., Yūkōkan teki tōshīhānen ken “Tōdai hekiga ten” (Fukuoka, 1993), pl. 42; Han, Tang Jinxian, pls 18–20, 36–7, 81–3.

68 See Han, Tang Jinxian, pls 34–5, 77–8, 93–4.

69 “Hua ying,” Du shi xiangzhu 1, p. 19; tr. Stephen Owen, An anthology of Chinese literature: beginnings to 1911 (New York, 1996), p. 428. The comparison of a hawk to a “barbarian in despair” had been made in two earlier fu that would have been well known to Du Fu’s audience (Chu xue ji 30, p. 731), while a noted poem by the Sui emperor Yangdi describes hawks as having deep eyes (shenmu) (CXJ 30, p. 732).

70 Zhang Mingxi, Xiêu de tâng (Hong Kong, 1990), pp. 102–3.

71 TPGJ 87, pp. 567–8; YIL 3.175, p. 45.
72. Zhang, Xielu de tianji, p. 86.
73. Zhang, Xielu de tianji, p. 104.
75. Mayi xiangfa 107, p. 37.
76. Weng, Zhongguo gudai xiangshu, p. 83.
77. ALSSJ 1, pp. 5–6.
78. JTS 191, p. 5092.
79. See the scroll entitled “Former Emperors” attributed to Yan Liben (fl. 640–70; d. 673) (Jin et al., Zhongguo meishu quanji, no. 4).
81. Weng, Zhongguo gudai xiangshu, p. 73.
82. Nan shi 46, p. 1147; Zhang, Xielu de tianji, p. 266; Xuexin leiju 17, p. 315.
85. JTS 122, p. 3508; JTS 131, p. 3633.
86. Attributed to Chen Hong (active beginning between 713 and 742 and continuing until after 756) (Eight dynasties of Chinese painting (Cleveland, 1980), no. 5).
87. These two figures are identified as Zhangsun Song and Luo Jie. Both were tribal leaders, generals, and holders of civil office who were “men of Dai”, that is, of Turco-Mongol ethnicity from northern Shanxi (Wei shu 25, pp. 643–5; Wei shu 32, pp. 987–8).
88. For a recent assessment of these murals, see Wang Weikun, “Tang Zhanghuai taizi mubihua’ keshi tu” bianxi,” Kaogu, 1996.1.
89. E.g. the Northern Song copy of a painting that depicts Emperor Taizong receiving a Tibetan envoy (Jin et al., Zhongguo meishu quanji, no. 2).
90. This physical type is portrayed with remarkable consistency in murals (e.g. Zhang, Tang mu bihua, pl. 188; Su et al., Zhongguo meishu quanji, no. 130) and figurines (e.g. T.T. Tsiu Galleries of Chinese Art, Royal Ontario Museum: The T.T. Tsiu Galleries of Chinese Art (Toronto, 1996), pl. 62).
91. See, e.g. Li Duan, “Hu teng er” (Quan Tang shi 284, p. 3238).
92. Mahler, Westerners among the figurines, pls 3a–e; T.T. Tsiu Galleries of Chinese Art, Royal Ontario, pl. 76.
93. An Lushan allegedly was unable to walk after middle age without support and his weight caused numerous postal horses to collapse and die (ALSSJ 1, pp. 5–6).
95. Mayi xiangfa 174, p. 56.
96. Bones and obesity in physiognomy are discussed in Zhang, Xielu de tianji, pp. 84–6.
98. See, e.g. Dongguan zongzi 1.5, p. 86 (a non-Han functionary); TPGJ 87, p. 567 (non-Han generals from the Sixteen Kingdoms); TPGJ 234, p. 1796 (a Northern dynasties monk of Iranian heritage); TPGJ 270, p. 2117 (a southern female chieftain).
99. For the conception (and absence) of the nude in Chinese art and culture, see John Hay, “The body invisible in Chinese art?” in Body, subject and power in China, eds Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow (Chicago, 1994).
100. For official decrees condemning the festival, see THY 34, pp. 733–4.
101. CXJ 26, p. 721.
102. Luayu 3, p. 83.
104. The quintessential exotic tribute animal whose powers were believed to be extensive and founded on its associations with foreign lands was the lion. Statues of lions...
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appear along the spirit roads or outside the gates of most imperial tombs (Paludan, *Chinese spirit road*, pls 126, 149–54) and also defended the frontier against foreign invaders (*CYQZ* 5, p. 67). Paintings of lions in tombs undoubtedly had an apotropaic role, for similar images in houses were believed to guard against supernatural threats like disease-bearing demons (*TPGJ* 210, p. 1609).

105 Tom Allsen, oral communication.

Horses also occupied a prominent place in Chinese literature and folklore and often symbolized the literati and their virtues in Tang literature (Suzanne E. Cahill, “Reflections, disputes, and warnings: three medieval Chinese poems about paintings of the eight horses of King Mu,” *T'ang studies*, 5 (1987); Madeline K. Spring, “Fabulous horses and worthy scholars in ninth-century China,” *T'oung pao*, 74 (1988)).

111 See, e.g. “Li Zhangwu zhuan” (*TPGJ* 340, p. 2701).
112 “Qiuran ke” (*TPGJ* 193, pp. 1445–8; *TTL* 5.618, pp. 424–7.
113 *JTS* 71, p. 2556.
114 See Li Bo’s “Shang yun yue” (*Li Taibo quanji* 3, p. 205).
115 See descriptions of the Han general Wang Jun (*TPGJ* 301, p. 2392; *JTS* 93, p. 2989) and the non-Han general Li Keyong (*BMSY* 17.269, p. 132). The use of bestial metaphors was not limited to non-Han (*CYQZ* 5, p. 70).
116 Zheng, “Barbarian images.”
118 Stories presented foxes as clever long-lived animals who bewitched people, were ridden by ghosts, and had a great fear of dogs (*CXJ* 26, p. 717).
119 For a typology of Tang tales about foxes, see Birthe Blauth, *Altchinesische Geschichten über Fuchsdämonen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996).
120 Tomb guardian figures date back to at least the third century BCE, and the lion had served as a traditional tomb guardian since the Eastern Han, shortly after the animal was introduced to China as a tribute item from the west. The iconography of the tomb guardian animal became fully established in the seventh century with the composite beast having the body of a lion, the horns and feet of a deer, and the wings of a supernatural creature to denote immortality and supernatural power (Mary H. Fong, “Tomb-guardian figures: their evolution and iconography,” in *Ancient mortuary traditions of China*, ed. George Kuwayama (Los Angeles, 1991), pp. 86–93).
121 Zheng “Barbarian images,” pp. 56–7. These lowly barbarian slaves probably merged gradually with more fantastic guardian figures such as door gods, to result in the *Tang* *Zhenmuyong*.
124 Thorp, *Son of heaven*, pl. 130.
125 Fong, “Tomb-guardian figures,” p. 100.
126 Li Xiaohong, *Zhongguo Xiyu minzu fushi yanjiu* (Urumqi, 1995), pl. 376.
127 Ho, “The twelve calendrical animals,” p. 72.
130 See, e.g. contrasting lokapalas from seventh- and eighth-century Dunhuang (Duan Wenjie et al., eds, Zhongguo meishu guanji: diaosu bian 7–Dunhuang caisu (Beijing, 1987), pls 91–2, 128–9).
131 Wu, The Wu Liang shrine, pp. 108–41. The far west was also the location of the country of Da (Great) Qin, roughly corresponding to the Eastern Roman Empire, but constructed in Han and Wei texts as a paradisical civilized society along Confucian lines (Shiratori Kurakichi, “Chinese ideas reflected in the Ta-ch’ in accounts,” Memoirs of the research department of the Toyo Bunko, 15 (1956)). Recent scholars have interpreted stone reliefs in Han tombs depicting battles between Han and barbarians as symbolizing the passage of the deceased into the afterlife, with barbarians representing underworld guardians who hinder the progress of the deceased (Lydia D. Thompson, “The Yi’nan tomb: narrative and ritual in pictorial art of the Eastern Han (25–220 ce),” (New York University, 1998)).
132 Suzanne E. Cahill, Transcendence and divine passion: the Queen Mother of the West in medieval China (Stanford, 1993).
133 Quan Tang wen 223, pp. 996a–b; THY 34, p. 734.

Bibliography

For abbreviations see p. 147 above.

An Lushan shiji. See Yao Runeng.
Beimeng suoyan. See Sun Guangxian.
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Chaoye qianzai. See Zhang Zhuo.


Chu xue ji. See Xu Jian.

Du shi xiangzhu. See Qiu Zhao’ao.


Duan Chengshi 段成式. YYZZ 中華書局, 1981.


Duyang zabian. See Su E.


Guang hong ming ji. See Daoxuan.


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Jiu Tang shu 舊唐書. See Liu Xu. *JTS*


Li Tuobo quanji. See Wang Qi.


Mayi xiangfa. See Anonymous.

Minghuang zalu. See Zheng Chuhui.

*Nan shi*. See Li Yanshou.

Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan. See Yijing.


Quan Tang shi 眾唐史. See Cao Yin.

Quan Tang wen 眾唐文. See Dong Gao.


Taiping guang ji. See Li Fang.

Tang da zhaoling ji. See Song Minqiu.

Tang hui yao. See Wang Fu.

Tang li shui. See Zhangun Wuji.

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Tong dian. See Du You.


Wei shu. See Wei Shou.


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Zizhi tongjian. See Sima Guang.

GLOSSARY

| An Lushan | 安禄山 | li | 櫻
| hu        | 胡 | Mayi xiangfa | 麻衣相法
| hu        | 胡 | mingqi | 明器
| hua       | 华 | Taizong | 太宗
| hu'er     | 胡兒 | xiang | 相
| hufu      | 胡服 | Xiongnu | 匈奴
| huteng    | 胡騰 | zhenmushou | 鎮墓獸
| Kunlunnu  | 崑崙奴 | zhenmuyong | 鎮墓俑 |
Raiding is perhaps the most characteristic form of the interaction between nomadic and sedentary peoples on the China–Inner Asia frontier, and historians have taken nomadic predation on neighboring farmers to exemplify the radical opposition between steppe and sown. As Lattimore famously noted, the Inner Asian margins of North China are an ecological transition zone, allowing for both pastoral and agricultural exploitation, but since Chinese states normally encouraged agricultural rather than pastoral production, it has been easy to assume a basic economic distinction following the recognized borderline of any particular period. At certain times there may indeed have been such a polarization between nomadic and sedentary ways of life on this frontier, and raids may well have occurred with greater frequency from the nomadic side. However, the case of the Five Dynasties (Wudai, 907–60) suggests that in certain circumstances the economic exploitation of the frontier zone was not so clearly defined by the borderline. Accordingly, if we are to understand frontier interactions better, we need to adopt a different framework within which to consider them.

This chapter begins by re-evaluating the widespread historians’ assumption that raiding is a nomadic phenomenon. The terminology of the primary sources indicates that contemporaries did not believe that raiding was restricted to nomads, and that view is reinforced by military theory, both Chinese and Western, allowing us to produce a working definition of raiding. A survey of raids in the Five Dynasties then confirms that all groups, regardless of economic orientation, participated in raiding as both perpetrators and victims. We then turn to the subset of relations between the North China regimes and their nomadic neighbors, who in this period were chiefly the Khitan (Qidan), whose newly established state of Liao (907–1125) controlled a small but strategic part of North China.
The raiding relationship between these two parties had economic and diplomatic dimensions as well as military ones. These, taken together, suggest that the borderlands were home to a frontier society in which groups nominally on different sides of the borderline, who are routinely categorized as either pastoralists or farmers, but not both, had more in common with each other than has been conventionally considered appropriate. This frontier society became increasingly dichotomized as centralized power grew at both Five Dynasties and Liao courts and the borderline was increasingly sharply drawn, with a corresponding increase in antagonism. Viewing this as an evolution from a frontier society rather than as an expression of irreconcilable differences enables us to consider the possibility that military aggression across this frontier could just as easily come from China as from the steppe.⁵
**Polarization and stereotypes**

The peoples of the steppe and the peoples of the sedentary world are almost always sharply polarized. The two groups are held to have social, economic, and political structures so widely divergent as to be regarded, by some authors, as mutually exclusive and fundamentally in opposition to one another. Hence Lattimore, although making the important point that the frontier zone is an area of mixed culture, assumes that the mixture is between “irreconcilable” cultures characterized by a perpetual antagonism, which demanded a decisive choice of every people and state that in the course of history overlapped the Great Wall Frontier, whether its founders were Chinese or non-Chinese—the choice between agriculture of a notably intensive form and nomadism of an especially dispersed form.

This remains the prevailing view. The economic cleavage is reflected in clothing, dwellings, lifestyle, attitudes, and, of course, in the raid, which is the phenomenon that, above all, exemplifies the relationship between the opposing parties: nomads raid; farmers suffer.

The cultural-economic polarization thus produces a powerful stereotype. Chinese historians have routinely portrayed China’s northern nomadic neighbors as uncivilized and rapacious raiders seeking by way of conquest the permanent possession of China’s riches, while the peoples of the sedentary world are seen as cultured farmers, helpless victims of the nomad incursions. Such images have deeply influenced the historical literature in both China and the Euroamerican worlds, so that much present-day scholarship speaks, for instance, of “the menace of raiding nomad cavalry,” wars for plunder as “a barbarian specialty,” and the “long-pending threat of nomadic conquest.” Even writers more sympathetic to the nomadic point of view still presume that nomads are inevitably raiders. Reasons for this run the gamut from sheer rapaciousness through climate change, political necessity, closure of border markets, and back to a nomadic sense of superiority over China. However, most recent scholarship agrees that raiding is in fact inherent in the economic circumstances of nomads. While pastoralism of various kinds is the most effective way to exploit certain ecological zones in a premodern setting, still the zones inhabited by nomads are, by definition, marginal, and thus cannot always supply all the resources needed or desired. Raiding is the nomads’ way of making up the shortfall, and raids are thus typically regarded as a characteristically nomadic phenomenon. Although the explanations may vary, the effect is the same: the fact that nomads sometimes carry out raids is taken to mean that raiders are bound to be nomads: “raiders” and “nomads” have become near-synonyms. Raids thus go in only one direction, from the steppe to the sedentary world.
Terminology in the Chinese sources

This stereotype – that nomads raid but farmers do not – is not supported by the evidence, for there are many examples, in both primary and secondary literature, of the sedentary, agricultural Chinese practicing raids against their nomadic, pastoral neighbors. However, in the secondary materials the parties are clearly distinguished. Steppe peoples “raid,” “plunder,” “attack,” or “invade,” whereas the Chinese are on the defensive, conducting “punitive expeditions” and “pacifications.” The implication is clear that the Chinese actions are justified responses to aggression, while the steppe peoples are making unprovoked attacks.

By contrast, in the primary sources for our period, a distinction is certainly drawn between aggressors and defenders, but it is by no means assumed that the Chinese are always hapless victims of nomadic raids. In the Jiu Wudai shi annals the most popular terms for raids and plunder of all kinds are kou, lue, qin, and jie, while in the Liao shi annals we find lue, lue, qin, and xun. Those who do these things are typically referred to as zei (robber, bandit, rebel) or kou (enemy, bandits). “Bandits,” however, do not have to be nomads. As we shall see below, the term could just as readily refer to groups within the Chinese cultural area, whether enemies or internal rebels. The key factor is that “bandits” are people whom the North China regimes regarded as enemies.

Those who are fighting against “bandits” only rarely resort to the explicit raiding described by kou or lue. In both sources (particularly the Liao shi), they much prefer to do things like “start a punitive campaign” (zheng), “pacify” (tao), or “make a surprise attack” (xi). Historians have been right to note the different wording for opposing parties in a raiding relationship, but mistaken in assuming that economic orientation determines who takes which role. The two sides are indeed clearly distinguished, but the raider does not have to be nomadic and the victim does not have to be sedentary. The terminological distinction is not between nomads and farmers, but between what raiders do, and what their victims do in response.

Defining a raid

If raids are not simply “nomad military tactics,” then how should we understand them? According to Western military theorists summarized by Archer Jones, raiding tactics often confer military superiority because they involve retreat: the point of a raid is to strike at the enemy and then to get away. Retreating forces have the initiative and so are stronger than their pursuers. This advantage is magnified if the raiders are – as they often were – light cavalry, since this troop-type is more maneuverable than infantry and heavy cavalry. This explanation of the superiority of raiders has nothing to do with the weapons used or the troops’ level of riding skill, and certainly nothing to do with whether or not they are nomads. It is the tactic itself that gives an advantage, not the culture of the raiders.
In addition, raids were relatively quick, cheap, and easy to organize, and if successful they produced immediate rewards for minimal losses. Raids were thus an appealing tactic not just for attackers but also for defenders. A raiding defense had all the tactical and logistical advantages of a raiding attack, and could be particularly attractive in a volatile political situation, when the need for quick responses often precluded longer-term methods such as fortifications and garrisons. Raiding as a defensive strategy could readily produce a series of raid and counterraid with no clear sense of which side made the first strike.

Modern military theory thus sees raids as not the sole province of either defender or attacker, nor of one particular troop-type, and much less of any particular economic organization. This was already understood by the authors of Chinese military manuals such as the *One hundred unorthodox strategies*, compiled in the late Song period from earlier works, which gives much attention to raiding, both in terms of how to defend against it and how to carry it out, making many of the same points as its modern Western counterparts. According to this handbook, when raiding, one should maintain ambiguity about the objective for as long as possible, then send elite cavalry to silently advance and plunder livestock, while setting ambushes to deal with any enemy approach. Raiders should live off the land, and try to draw the defender to battle by building defenses. If you are the defender, you are advised not to engage raiders, but instead to pursue their withdrawal. You should not be provoked to battle but should wear down the invader by staying within your defenses and waiting for the attackers to run out of supplies.

Taking these theories together, a working definition of a raid would be as follows: raids have limited and flexible objectives, raiders avoid battle, and above all, they go away. This definition involves no cultural assumptions and no economic imperative: anybody could conduct raids for any number of reasons. During the Five Dynasties, the two main contexts for raiding were war and the predatory plundering expeditions that constitute the classic case of so-called “normal” raiding for economic purposes, but again it must be emphasized that nomads had no monopoly on either kind of raid. Raids could be ordered centrally, by a court or a regional ruler, and to this extent can be regarded as “official”; or they could be local actions of a more or less spontaneous nature, governed not by any central “policy” but by immediate circumstances, and hence “unofficial.”

**A brief survey of raiding in the Five Dynasties**

Throughout the Five Dynasties period, the northern frontier lands where agricultural lifestyles shaded into nomadic ones were the site of frequent and regular raids in all directions. My data on raiding come chiefly from the annals of the *Jiu Wucai shi* and *Liao shi*, where reports of raids – ordered and suffered – are recorded alongside other court concerns such as envoy missions and official appointments. Raids can be identified by terminology, but this is not the only
criterion, since the terms referring specifically to raids and raiding (see above) are not always used. An entry might simply say that so-and-so “destroyed” (po) “foreign bandits” or “the Khitan”, and many “punitive expeditions” had the hit-and-run character typical of raids. Furthermore, certain words are sometimes connected with raiding and sometimes not, including xian (capture a city or person), gong (attack), and huo (seize). Raids ordered by the court are described as the military expeditions they were, and are identified as raids by the fact that there is no attempt to hold onto territory. By comparing the two sets of records, from Liao as well as the Five Dynasties regimes, it is possible to identify raids that are experienced by one side but not ordered by the other court; these are deemed “unofficial” raids.

The Liao shi can appear to reinforce the notion of raiding as a nomadic specialty. It records at least 110 raids, of which nearly ninety are “official” actions ordered by the Liao court. Of these, over a third are directed at neighboring nomadic peoples, while the rest strike south. But it is the Jiu Wudai shi annals which provide a clearer sense of how widespread raiding was. Out of approximately 150 raids readily identifiable, just under half are raids by northern groups on the peoples of North China, compared with only about a dozen heading north towards China’s neighbors. However, this changes if we consider the frontier regimes in their entirety. Raids between China and nomads are not the only types of raiding we can see. As in the Liao shi record, there are raids between northern peoples which do not involve any “Chinese” players at all, but there are also raids between the North China regimes and Chinese competitors to the south, and raids that occur wholly within North China, involving neither nomads nor southern Chinese. Considering the total of raids where there is a nomadic aggressor, and comparing that with the total of raids where there is a China-based aggressor, we find that the two figures come out even at about seventy-five each. Furthermore, after raids by non-Chinese heading south, the second largest category is the fifty raids by one North China power on another. In addition, there are some entries which observe that such-and-such a nomadic people raided annually, but they may be balanced by entries observing that such-and-such a frontier governor made annual raids north.

One potential problem is that three of the Five Dynasties were led by families of Shatuo Turk extraction. Given that the Shatuo were originally a nomadic people, we might suspect that their regimes raid more than “native Chinese” ones, and that therefore raiding remains essentially a nomadic activity, perpetuated even after the Shatuo have settled down and become identified as participants in the Chinese cultural and political sphere, and to this extent “Chinese.” However, this is belied by the fact that it is the Later Tang (923–36) – which was Shatuo-led – that suffers more from recorded raids than any other Five Dynasties regime except, perhaps, Youzhou (755–913). Furthermore, it is the Later Zhou (950–60) – a Chinese-led regime – that bans its own people from raiding north, making clear that cross-border raiding is not the prerogative of nomads or their descendants. Once again, we see that raiding is not ethnic- or economy-specific.
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Raiding in the late Tang and Later Liang, c. 875–923

We begin in the last years of the Tang dynasty, acknowledging the continuity in military and political leadership and situations across the end of the Tang and the first half of the Five Dynasties. This was a period of general chaos, with wars involving not just two but several parties, and many raids, some twenty of which are recorded in the Jiu Wudai shi annals, chiefly in the Later Tang section. Although one might expect to see an emphasis on the conflict between Li Keyong (856–908) of the Taiyuan Jin and Zhu Wen (852–912) of Henan (Bianzhou in the sources) for control of North China and succession to the empire, in fact the raiding pattern reveals a much more complex picture.

The earliest raids in the annals come from the account of Li Keyong’s family (Shatuo Turks) and show northern nomadic peoples conducting raids against each other. Keyong and his father are seen in 878 simultaneously “pacifying” Tangut (Dangxiang) neighbors, fighting off Tuhun attacks, and themselves raiding in central Hedong. By 885 Zhu Wen of Bianzhou was facing attacks by the “bandits” of Caizhou, while Li Keyong, now very much part of the late Tang world, variously found himself involved in raids from or against Youzhou, Zhenzhou, Xingzhou, the Tuhun, Weizhou, and even sometimes Bianzhou, in alliance with or on behalf of Dingzhou, Liaozhou, WeiBo, and of course, his own regime. From 896 raids are increasingly between explicit proxies of the Taiyuan Jin and Bianzhou.

We see here a good deal of localized strife within the North China sector of the old Tang realm, with raids not restricted to nomads. Instead they are common to all groups in the region, being initiated not just at a provincial but also at a prefectural level. The North China powers of Taiyuan and Bianzhou are fighting a war in which raids feature largely since neither side can procure a decisive advantage against the other. Northern peoples not directly competing for succession to the Tang Mandate scarcely appear except in background information showing that they raided each other (but not North China), and as extra allies sometimes enlisted by North China leaders. The Khitan appear just once in this section of the Jiu Wudai shi, as an excuse offered to Li Keyong by Liu Rengong (r. 895–913) of Youzhou in 896, who claimed a Khitan raid as reason to delay complying with a request for troops. It is curious that the Jiu Wudai shi does not note regular Khitan raids for this period, since the Liao shi lists several “attacks” and “raids” on Hedong and Youzhou. These are recorded as being ordered by the Liao leadership, and they may be responses to North China actions, since when Rengong became governor in 895 he initiated either one major expedition or annual raids north against the Khitan. Whoever struck the first blow, it is clear that the Youzhou situation involved mutual, not one-way, raiding.

Once the Tang formally ended (907), the main conflict among North China regimes continued to involve many raids. Over twenty are recorded, of which half are straightforwardly between Liang (907–23) and Taiyuan forces or their
proxies. Despite the clear opposition between two main sides within North China, raiding remained a multi-party matter, at least on the Taiyuan side. Hence we see raiders coming from Binzhou and Qizhou (Fengxiang) to hit first Yongxi near Chang’an, and then Lingzhou. As to the two major players, there were some half a dozen centrally ordered raiding operations involving Taiyuan armies, and the Liang side was just as likely to use raids to prosecute its war aims, but here the accounts speak only of “generals” rather than governors, perhaps implying a greater degree of central control. 29

The Liang were not just fighting the Taiyuan Jin, but also groups in the south. “Bandit” forces from Huainan raided extensively in the southern border districts of Liang during 908, even putting Yuezhou to the torch. These attacks prompted naval raids in response, a far cry from nomads on horses. The northern regimes also faced local challenges involving raids. One was from the new imperial regime of Yan, established at Youzhou in 911, from which raiders struck at the neighboring autonomous province of Yiwu. 30 Others involved Khitan forces. Two of the three Khitan raids recorded for the Liang were clearly in concert with — indeed, incited by — Five Dynasties subjects from the frontier regions. In 917 a frontier general at Xinzhou killed his governor and gave his allegiance to the Khitan, before leading a Khitan raid which took control of his old prefecture and plundered Youzhou into the bargain. Then in 921, Wang Yu, a disaffected son of the Yiwu governor, “enticed the Khitan Abaoji (872–926) to raid Youzhou, and so led an army to Zhuozhou, and captured it.” 31 These Khitan forces were essentially mercenaries, and they departed when their job was done.

In these incidents the Khitan are being sucked into North China politics for their military value, which was the prerequisite for political power and prestige in the militarized society of the Five Dynasties. The third Khitan raid appears to have been an opportunistic seizure of an unexpectedly weakly defended city, which by itself does not give a strong impression of regular Khitan raiding. 32 Curiously, we have to turn to the Liao shi for evidence that Khitan raiding for plunder, under central auspices, was in fact commonplace. There, raids unrelated to North China power struggles are recorded for 911 and then annually from 915 to 918, and 920 to 926. 33

**Raiding in the Later Tang, 923–36**

After 926 the routine, centrally directed raids recorded in the Liao shi suddenly dry up, save for isolated cases in 930 and 931. This is conventionally attributed to the appointment as governor of Youzhou of Zhao Dejun (d. 937), who is credited with restoring order to the region such that the people were “able to till and herd.” 34 However, in the Jiu Wudai shi a good half of the forty-five raids recorded for the Later Tang are unequivocal Khitan raids heading south. The vast majority of the raids seem to be of a classic predatory type, and occur through the whole dynasty, from 923 to 935, and run at a usual rate of between one and four times a year, with ten in 924. 35 Until about 926, the Khitan raided
Hebei, Youzhou, and neighboring prefectures. From about 929 their raids hit the region of Yunzhou in Hedong, and evidently ran at such a level that it prompted the appointment in 932 of Shi Jingtang as governor of four westerly frontier provinces, charged with securing the livelihoods of those under Later Tang administration. The absence of so many and such worrisome raids from the Liao shi suggests strongly that the new Liao emperor Deguang (r. 926–47) was following a different policy from that of his father and that the recorded raids were unofficial activities conducted by local Khitan groups in the border regions.

Curiously, the sources agree that there were apparently no raids at all in 927, Deguang’s second year on the throne, and at the end of that year the prefect of Jizhou reported that: “Shanbei is very peaceful, the various foreigners do not engage in mutual harassment with us. North of Yanmen, for several thousand li to east and west a dou of grain does not exceed ten cash.” The Khitan repeatedly sought peaceful relations throughout that year, and Khitan envoy missions became quite a feature of the Later Tang, totaling around fifteen for the whole dynasty, and at least two return missions are recorded. Zhao Dejun, governor of Youzhou, also exchanged envoys with Liao in the early 930s. These are the first of many indications that raiding cannot be isolated from diplomacy.

This emphasis on stereotypical, if unofficial, Khitan raids on North China should not blind us to the fact that other types of raid continued unabated. We saw in the Liang that Khitan raids were sometimes at the behest of North China leaders, and there are three such cases in the Later Tang. In 928 the recalcitrant governor of Yiwu, Wang Du, summoned official Khitan and Xi reinforcements to help him resist a Later Tang punitive expedition, and in 934 the former Liao heir apparent, now self-exiled at the Later Tang court, requested a punitive mission against the last Later Tang ruler, which was never sent. The third occasion was of course the rebellion of Shi Jingtang of Taiyuan (r. 936–42) against the dynasty, in which the main Khitan assault appears to have been supplemented by smaller Khitan raids on military positions. All three cases involved central forces acting (or being requested to act) in a state of war, and so stand in contrast to the plundering raids noted above.

North China regimes could strike north, too, so in 932 a Later Tang raid hit the Tangut, which perhaps prompted the Tangut raid of a few months later. Li Siyuan “defeated the Khitan in battle” in 925, which may represent either a defensive or an offensive action, and a major raid went from Hebei to make a “surprise attack” on the Khitan just before Shi Jingtang sought his Khitan alliance.

Aside from raids between what were now the two main parties, Five Dynasties and Khitan, there were other raiding relationships as well. The Khitan raided the Bohai and the Jurchen (Nüzhen) in 926, but were themselves raided in the two years before that. In 925 the Tatars (Dada) attacked a Khitan group returning north from their summer pastures, prompting the group’s submission to the
Later Tang prefect of Yunzhou, and in 924 an alliance of Jürchen, Uighur (Huigu), and Huangtou Shiwei joined forces to raid the Khitan. Although the evidence is rather thin, these incidents, clustered in the early part of the Later Tang, when unofficial Khitan raids on North China were at their height, may suggest a general instability among the pastoral peoples north of China. Resistance to Later Tang rule also expressed itself as raids in 923, while within Five Dynasties territory the regime of martial law in Jingnan was ended with orders to plunder the inhabitants.

**Raiding in the Later Jin, 936–47**

Since the Later Jin was founded under Khitan tutelage, it is no surprise that envoy missions were frequently exchanged between the two. However, whereas under the Later Tang envoy exchanges had accompanied unofficial raiding, the alliance seems to have found ways of preventing such incursions; at least none are recorded in the annals of either party. Raiding was now confined to internal affairs, namely resistance to Shi Jingtang’s rule conducted through raids and, in the Liao shi, a couple of Khitan raids on other Inner Asians.

Liao–Jin relations began to deteriorate following Jingtang’s death in 942:6, but some people on the frontier already felt significant antagonism towards the neighbors and anticipated having to fight them. Hence An Chongrong in 941 reported his belief that Khitan “greed . . . would exhaust the Middle Kingdom,” and that he was making military preparations against the coming battle. Such views notwithstanding, envoys continued to go back and forth between the courts until the end of 943, chiefly for the purposes of paying Liao respects to the deceased Jin emperor. When war became inevitable, military appointments in preparation for the impending Khitan attack were accompanied by a final attempt to send a mission, foiled when the envoys found that “the enemy had already breached the frontiers.”

The Khitan attack of early 944 apparently involved 50,000 cavalry. The Jin responded with an army of 40,000. Armies of this size continued to be deployed by both sides throughout the war, but alongside accounts of battles and sieges, we continue to find reports of Khitan raids, for instance on Dingzhou and Cangzhou in 946, with the same wording as earlier references to “normal” predatory raiding. It may be most likely that these raids were a conscious part of the Liao war effort. Still, in wartime it is extremely hard to distinguish “normal” raids from those for war purposes and we should consider the possibility that local groups of nomads might have been impelled to conduct “normal” raids for economic reasons even—or especially—in time of war. If nomads raid “normally” due to temporary and localized crises, then wartime is extremely likely to produce this type of raid due to the destruction of field and pasture by passing armies, and the disruption of normal exchange networks for political or military reasons. Although they are not recorded, we may be able to assume that the same circumstances surely led some farmers to take up raiding too.
The Later Han dynasty (947–50) lasted just long enough to recover control of former Jin territory and begin dealing with internal challengers before falling to Guo Wei (Zhou Taizu, r. 951–4), founder of the Later Zhou. Most of the resistance to Later Han came from southern “bandits” and “pirates,” but the Khitan also raided extensively in 949 and 950, having apparently discussed joint attacks with the Southern Tang (Nan Tang, 937–75), who periodically entertained ambitions for expanding north. 50

The Zhou opened with a series of envoy exchanges between the Khitan and North China courts which routinely established the relationship between the Liao and the new regime to its south. These are, however, the only envoy exchanges recorded in the Jiu Wudai shi for the Zhou, even though we know from the Liao shi that Zhou sent two further sets of envoys in 957. 51

Most of the raiding recorded in the Jiu Wudai shi for this period is related to the war between Zhou and the remnants of the Later Han dynasty, now based at Taiyuan and known as the Northern Han (951–79). By the end of 951 the Northern Han, with Khitan assistance, began to raid in Zhou territory as part of a war strategy. 52 The following autumn the Khitan and the Yeji tribe of the northwest conducted raids. While the Khitan raid is likely to be the official venture that the Liao shi records as led by Gao Mohan, the Yeji incursion, which took merchants and booty, looks like a “normal” predatory raid. 53

Meanwhile, the Liao shi annals for the Zhou period contain at least nine reports that “the Zhou raided Han” and usually that the Han asked for Khitan help. 54 From other sources we know that these reports sometimes refer to attacks directed by the Zhou court, but at least some might have been more local efforts because at the beginning of 952 Zhou Taizu issued a revealing edict banning the people of his border districts from conducting their own plundering raids northwards. 55 Clearly such raids had been – and still were – a routine feature of life in the border districts under Five Dynasties authority.

Khitan attacks recommenced in the spring and continued into the summer, such that by 953:7 the northern border situation was reported to be urgent. While these actions may have been intended to prosecute the war as part of the alliance with Northern Han, they remain raids rather than attempts to occupy territory, since the Khitan forces withdrew in the face of any concerted opposition. There was also a curious case of a Liao official conducting an out-and-out livestock raid on Youzhou without any apparent strategic goal. 56

The war continued through 953 and 954 with court-organized attacks in both directions. These sought a more decisive outcome, and culminated in full-scale battles at Gaoping and Taiyuan, producing a lull. 57 Meanwhile, regular Khitan raiding continued in southern Hebei, since in 955 there is an account of building fortifications and posting a garrison there. 58 Thereafter the only unequivocal record of Khitan raiding is in 958, when the Zhou sent a governor to deal with border raids. Two other incidents, involving Zhou defeats of
small bands of Khitan, could represent either Khitan raids or aggression from Zhou.\(^59\)

In addition to the war in the north, Zhou Taizu appears to have faced a minimal number of internal, southern enemies who indulged in raiding, since the only recorded incident is that of the Guangzhou “bandits” who “invaded deeply” (shenru) in 953 for the purposes of plunder, provoking a response apparently numbering some 50,000 by land and water. The people of Zhou were clearly not blameless in this region, however, since several months before the Guangzhou attack Yingzhou had raided Huainan and taken livestock, suggesting that such raiding was fairly routine and most certainly two-way.\(^60\) Once again it is clear that, even in the Zhou, when raiding happened it was an equal opportunity activity.

**Irreconcilable opposites or frontier society?**

Raids, then, are not only conducted by the Khitan and other northern peoples heading south, but also by one set of northern peoples against another, by the inhabitants of North China heading north or elsewhere, or between southern “barbarians” and North China regimes. They can be directed by rulers, or arise from local initiatives. Having set specifically nomadic actions in this wider context of generalized and indiscriminate raiding, for the rest of the chapter we will focus chiefly on relations between nomads – predominantly the Khitan – and the populations of the North China regimes.

We have established that both these parties raided each other, but are these raids for the same purposes? Similar phenomena can arise for different reasons. If we are dealing with societies fundamentally divided by their predominant economic activity, might it not be the case that nomadic raids are conducted for economic purposes whereas Chinese raids have a defensive goal? The fundamentally economic purpose of nomadic raids is emphasized by Jagchid, who sees raids as an alternative to trade, and by Barfield, who regards them as a means of extracting economic advantage from China in the form of subsidies.\(^61\) However, the data on raiding in the Five Dynasties do not support such a clear-cut distinction. As we shall see, North China raiding also had an economic purpose, and the nomads also had to defend themselves against North China aggression. Perhaps, then, these societies were not so antithetical as we have been led to believe?

**Economic relations**

The data on raiding show us what was economically important to both sides of the relationship. They make it quite clear that Five Dynasties subjects in the frontier region were not purely agriculturalists. The records often do not specify exactly what raiders took, but from the cases when details are given, it is apparent that groups of all ethnic stripes make off with livestock, whether it be the
Taiyuan Jin taking a thousand horses from the people of Zhenzhou in 885, Yunzhou stealing 10,000 head of livestock from the Khitan in 930, Yingzhou looting Huainan livestock in 952, or even Khitan plundering 7,000 head from Youzhou in 953. Of the cases cited here, all but the Yunzhou raid happened during time of war, but it seems from the particulars given that only the 885 raid is unequivocally a product of war, since in that case the horses are taken after a victory in battle which also yielded 10,000 heads. The Yingzhou raid appears to have had central sanction since the report notes that “they had . . . been authorized to take them back to their own lands,” but it is evident from this statement that the chief concern of the locals was not the strategic value of their actions but the material value of the loot. Similarly, the account of the Khitan raid of 953 names a Liao official who “used troops from his own army and householders of his officials’ families” to take the livestock, and clearly implies that the booty is for the official’s own enrichment. The Yunzhou case is one of several straightforward cases of raid or counterraid, described as a “surprise attack” in the report.

Reports of such raids show that the Khitan and their nomadic neighbors were not the only groups to whom pasturing animals was important. The fact that the Khitan were able to take “uncountable camels, horses, cattle, and sheep” from Hedong shows that the North China frontier population clearly had pastoral livestock to be stolen; these are not merely farm animals. Furthermore, a trope on the effectiveness of frontier policies measures their success by the fact that the border population was able to return to tilling and herding (de gengmu). Pastoral livestock are an integral part of this economy. Meanwhile, the jiù Wùdài shì examples cited above show that Five Dynasties subjects were themselves active stock thieves, and the looting of Huainan herds south of the Yellow River shows that this is not simply a question of Shatuo Turks retaining their former nomadic ways.

Further evidence may be adduced from raids linked with the pasturing of animals, such as in 896, when an undisciplined Taiyuan army damaged pasturage in Weizhou, and in 908, when “the Taiyuan army came south through the Yindi pass to pasture their animals” but ended up plundering as well. The latter was evidently a deliberate exercise linked to the Liang-Taiyuan war, but the first case was a costly mistake, since it pushed Weizhou from neutrality to enmity. What both cases show is that there was worthwhile pastureland to be had south of the passes, in lands normally regarded as agricultural. There is also evidence for widespread pasturing of livestock even further south, in the heart of the Central Plains. During the Liao occupation of 947 the Khitan provided for their army by “smashing the pasture and grain,” an incident horrifying to southerners. According to the Zizhi tongjian, the Khitan destroyed pasturage because they considered it valuable, and “from the east and west suburbs of the capital as far as Zheng(zhou), Huai(zhou), Cao(zhou), and Pu(zhou), in a vicinity of several hundred li, property and livestock were almost completely destroyed and lost.” Hence there was a significant amount of pasture in the vicinity of Bianzhou:
RAIDING AND FRONTIER SOCIETY

enough to provide forage for a Liao army of invasion, and, according to Sima Guang, enough to be worth denying to the enemy.

Although the North China populations knew something about livestock, it is notable that mere Khitan encampments sometimes created fear. While residents of North China must surely have known from long experience that Khitan camps did not necessarily herald an attack, sometimes there is still a concern that they may not share the land. We know, for instance, that the Khitan used pasture within the borders of Youzhou before 895, and pastured their livestock in Pingzhou on a regular basis when Zhou Dewei was governor (913–18), but concern could arise if the Khitan did not depart according to their usual pattern.68 There may have been some justification for concern in such circumstances, since in 924 there is a report from the summer that the Khitan are “about to raid” Heshuo, then that they are encamped southeast of Youzhou city, and then, in the autumn, that they repeatedly raided various places in the province.69 This, however, is an exceptional year for Khitan raids – ten are reported despite the presence in the district of a large imperial army intended to deal with them. Perhaps the fact that certain northern officials could predict such predatory raiding suggests that at least some of the locals knew what conditions were likely to produce it.

On the other hand, the unspoken agreements suggested by routine Khitan grazing on lands under Five Dynasties jurisdiction could be overturned at a moment’s notice. When Liu Rengong became governor of Youzhou in 895, he complained of Khitan raids and sent an expedition “to burn the pasturelands within the frontier in order to make difficulties for them,” with the result that they begged to buy pastureland (shi mudi) from him.70 But perhaps these “raids” were in fact just the local Khitan routinely moving south and pasturing their herds, which were interpreted as attacks when it was convenient to do so. Rengong may well have benefited financially and in reputation from his robust “defense.”

The evidence from raiding shows that for communities on both sides of the nominal borderline, livestock were an important part of their economic structure. Raiding also shows us something about the importance of agriculture in the frontier economy, as the pairing of tilling and herding suggests. Curiously, although raiders sometimes deliberately targeted grain supplies, there are no accounts in the Jiu Wudai shi or Liao shi annals of grain being taken as booty. It is “ruined” in Yanzhou and Yunzhou, “mown down” near Chang’an (both cases where one North China power is fighting another), and “smashed” around Bianzhou, but not actually stolen.71 Grain was clearly important for North China groups, but we should also remember that the Khitan used North China populations to establish agricultural communities out in the Mongolian steppe, notably around their Supreme Capital, Shangjing.72 We would expect this region to be classic pasture (as it is today), and we must wonder about the productivity of farming so far from ecologically appropriate areas.73 In any case, we can see the Khitan recognition of the value of agriculture in 946, when a call to arms
against the Later Jin is accompanied by an order that crops were to be protected by military law.\textsuperscript{74}

The presence of North China farmers in Khitan territory raises the important question of plundering of people, which also seems to have been common between the whole range of ethnic groups. There are, of course, numerous and oft-cited accounts of Khitan seizures of North China and other populations in the \textit{Liao shi}, but in the \textit{Jiu Wudai shi} annals such activities are noted only in 949 and 952.\textsuperscript{75} The former, recorded in very general terms, is part of a major Liao raiding spree aimed at the Later Han, while the latter may well be associated with the Liao–Zhou war, but may equally be a case of localized raiding, since the account is rather specific about who was taken (several hundred able-bodied men) and where from (Jizhou).

However, taking people is not a Khitan prerogative. The earliest account of such plunder in the \textit{Jiu Wudai shi} annals is from the Zhenyuan reign era (785–805), when the Tibetans (Tufan) moved 7,000 captured “tents” of the Shatuo to Ganzhou. Subsequently Taiyuan Jin forces engaged in plundering for people – Chinese and Tangut – on various occasions in the late Tang and Later Tang.\textsuperscript{76} The North China frontier governor An Chongrong of Zhenzhou also plundered people from southern Youzhou in 941 and relocated them in his own territory, providing an interesting case, since these people lived in the Sixteen Prefectures – Liao possessions – and so presumably were of largely North China descent.\textsuperscript{77} Chongrong, whose antagonism to the Khitan is noted above, evidently made a habit of obtaining people from them, since he was also instrumental in persuading some Tuhun groups to try to escape “the cruelty of the Khitan” and move into Later Jin territory.\textsuperscript{78}

Exchange of goods via envoy missions also indicates elements of shared culture. Khitan envoy missions often brought horses of various kinds as part of their “tribute,” in numbers ranging from two hundred down to a single animal.\textsuperscript{79} The Five Dynasties regimes always needed them, particularly for military purposes, and are usually held to have been largely supplied by the nomads.\textsuperscript{80} There was also exchange of manufactures of various kinds. Exchange via “gifts” borne by envoys included silver objects and cloth sent from Later Tang to the Khitan in 932, but what is recorded indicates that it was chiefly the Khitan who had access to manufactures attractive to North China courts, rather than the other way round. These goods included bows and arrows, other weapons (951), saddles or saddle ornaments in jade and in gold chased with silver (940, 951), as well as less obvious items such as wooden bowls (937), fine and heavy silks (942), and books (927). Weapons and horse furniture would probably have been made by Khitan artisans, while books and other goods might have been produced by conquered sedentary populations, whether Chinese or Bohai.\textsuperscript{81}

Further south, just as Liu Zhiyuan (r. 947–8) was taking control of North China from the Khitan invaders and the previous dynasty in 947, an edict banned the making of Khitan-style saddles and bridles, equipment, and clothes. This indicates that these items were made in North China, and that the inhabitants
there used such things themselves or made them for the Khitan market. Either way what we see is a two-way relationship. There must have been North China craftworkers who made some or even much of their living from producing these things, and whose livelihood therefore may well have depended at least partly on good trading relations with their northern neighbors. How such artisans reacted to the ban is unknown, but smuggling may well have been a natural response, since it was rife in the frontier region not just in the Five Dynasties, but into the Song as well.

Envoy relations

Some forty-seven envoy missions are recorded in the *Jiu Wudai shi* annals, while the *Liao shi* annals include several hundred, comprising a significant proportion of the contents. These missions indicate extensive and usually ongoing contacts between neighbors and adversaries throughout the entire Five Dynasties, thereby demonstrating a widespread familiarity with Tang protocols, and providing communication between regimes within North China, between steppe groups, between North China and steppe groups, and of course elsewhere as well. The greatest intensity of envoy relations between North China and the Khitan is to be found during the Liao–Jin alliance of 936–43, which supplies nearly half the recorded missions in the *Jiu Wudai shi* and some seventy of the *Liao shi* total.

However, alliances are by no means the only occasions when envoys were important. The Later Tang period, when Khitan raids were at their recorded height, provides another seventeen of the recorded envoy missions in the *Jiu Wudai shi* and some thirty of those in the *Liao shi*. We recall that 927 was the one year of Later Tang in which no Khitan raids are recorded by either side. That autumn, during the raiding season, the Khitan sent four missions offering tribute, and requesting trade, a stone tablet for Abaoji’s tomb, and peace. In the winter (928) Khitan reportedly “took” Pingzhou and the Liao court immediately sent tribute to the Later Tang, receiving a pledge of goodwill in return, and in the early summer of 928 sent another request, this time asking for musical instruments. It was in 928:5 that an official Khitan force came to the assistance of the rebel Wang Du in Dingzhou, but that same autumn the Liao once again sent tribute to the Later Tang court. When unofficial regular raiding resumed it was now interspersed with a plethora of envoy missions to and from the Later Tang court and certain Later Tang frontier officials. At least one of the Khitan missions of the early 930s involved an attempt to retrieve the leaders of the 928 campaigns from Tang captivity, but usually no specific request is recorded.

It is clear from this sequence that unofficial raiding by nomadic groups did not preclude formal relations between the two courts and selected regional authorities. On the contrary, envoy missions appear to have been a significant component in the complex business of keeping the peace in the frontier region, especially in the face of raiding that lacked central sanction. By contrast, the sources show that, as we might expect, in time of war normal envoy missions ceased and only
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peace negotiations were possible. That war prevented routine diplomacy while raiding continued simultaneously with envoy contacts indicates an understanding of the difference between routine raiding and serious warfare that is not reflected in the terminology used by the historians even though it is apparent in the practices of which they write. Such an understanding suggests that these tenth-century rulers, whatever their ethnicity, not only shared diplomatic protocols but were part of the same political world.

Military relations

Since nomads are often credited with automatic military superiority, the Chinese – so often regarded as the converse of the nomads – are often assumed to be militarily inferior. On this basis Rudi Lintner has argued that the military strength of a nomadic tribe was diluted once sedentary farmers were allowed to join. We have noted, however, that the inhabitants of North China were not, despite the innocent image peddled by the secondary materials, in the habit of sitting around helplessly waiting for the next nomad raid. On the contrary, they were pretty active raiders themselves. In periodically raiding their neighbors they would have gained military experience that may have been as valuable as their booty. In cases where a good proportion of economic activity included herding animals and thus presumably gaining experience as horsemen, and where farmer/herders were also – and perhaps not infrequently – raiders, might not we consider the possibility that their military effectiveness was comparable to that of the nomads?

If we have here an ongoing scenario of mutual raiding between various inhabitants of the borderlands, then which is the raid and which is the counterraider? There are numerous reports of raiders provoking a North China response, whether from the court or, more successfully, from local forces. Hence in 909 Liang Taizu sent regional forces against the Qi raiders of Lingzhou, and in 921 Li Cunxu led his Taiyuan cavalry to defend against Khitan raids in support of Wang Yu. The Later Han court sent troops to patrol the northern borders in 949, and in 952 a Zhou imperial army pursued the Khitan raiders of Ji Zhou. At a local level, in 932 Lingwu troops defeated in battle 700 Tangut raiders, capturing fifty and chasing the rest away, and in 953 Zhenzhou forces pursued Khitan raiders.

Curiously, though, the Liao shi records that in 953 Khitan forces drove Zhenzhou troops from Liao Yizhou, whose walls had just been strengthened, and back in 921, when Li Cunxu had supported Wang Yu against Khitan raids, the Khitan had themselves repelled a “secret attack” by the people of Youzhou. Evidently the Khitan also felt the need for defense against predatory neighbors, since in 908 they built a “long wall” (changcheng) reaching the sea at Zhendong, and in 931 the walls of one or more capitals were repaired, indicating that the North China regimes were not the only groups using fixed defenses. As noted above, the Khitan have a long record of supplying military help to ambitious
North China leaders at request, among them not only Shi Jingtang and the Northern Han, but also Li Keyong and the Yiwu governor Wang Du, who was sent Xi reinforcements in 928. Such responses to requests for help are more than a little reminiscent of the central forces sent to the aid of North China provincial governors.

The “surprise attacks” conducted by North China frontier officials are surely raids by any other name, as when Yunzhou took 10,000 head of livestock from the Khitan and two Later Tang generals attacked a Khitan camp. Indeed, the *Jiu Wudai shi* is often unembarrassed about the fact, using qin and lüe not only for raiding between North China groups but also for North China raids heading north, like An Chongrong’s raid on Liao southern Youzhou in 941 or the raids that were banned in 952. Nevertheless, it is easy to assume that any North China attack is a defensive response to Khitan aggression. When in 925 Li Siyuan defeated the Khitan in battle in Zhuozhou and captured thirty of their leaders, he might well have been retaliating for the Khitan raid on Youzhou the previous month, but they might equally be two separate incidents. And when Lingwu reported “that they had killed 2,000 foreign bandits,” we may assume that these were raiders, but in reality we have no way of knowing whether Lingwu was defending or attacking. The problem is magnified in time of war. When, in 946, Taiyuan reported the killing of 7,000 Liao people, and Zhang Yanze reported that he had destroyed foreign bandits on the Dingzhou border with the taking of over 2,000 heads and the capture of four generals, are we right to assume automatically that these were responses to Khitan attacks? Might we not consider the possibility, at least, that these were North China assaults? In assuming that the Khitan are always the aggressors, are we not simply falling into the polarizing trap that paints the Chinese as perpetual victims, innocently suffering from “barbarian” predation when what they really want to do is live peacefully? Obviously in 946 the Khitan were hardly of a peaceloving disposition, and routine Khitan raiding happened all the time, but this does not mean that the Chinese were incapable of aggression.

That the Chinese in general were not necessarily blameless of aggressive behavior has been suggested by a number of recent works, including Ralph Sawyer’s translation of the *One hundred unorthodox strategies* and Alastair Johnston’s *Cultural realism*. Johnston provides a fascinating discussion of “strategic culture” in China, and especially the Ming, which posits that far from being uniquely pacificist, as is often claimed, the Chinese were just as willing to conduct war from a position of strength as the next major power, and that this was their preferred method of dealing with their northern neighbors. Hence the best foreign policy was one which would go and “pacify” the nomads properly with large-scale expeditions after the manner of Han Wudi or the Tang expansionist emperors, and would not have to resort to petty little raids which were recognized as the recourse of those lacking decisive power. Archer Jones has the same view of raids in general, and argues that, at least in a European context, full-scale battle was always regarded as the best way to deal with raiders, if they
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could but be pinned down or sufficient resources marshaled against them. Both Jones’s theory and Johnston’s interpretation of Ming attitudes hold that counterraids are the method of a party too weak (politically as well as militarily) to assemble overwhelming force and will be dispensed with as the state grows stronger and thus increases its military capacity. Jones also describes an intermediate stage, in which the state is able and willing to commit the resources to enforce permanent occupation of frontier territory, using fortifications and garrisons, to reduce or control the access and escape routes of raiders. This is more effective than counterraids in the long term, but tends to provoke fewer but bigger attacks, for which the state must be prepared.

Accordingly, raids going north during the Five Dynasties are an indication of military weakness and should have been replaced by more major campaigns as the North China regimes grew stronger and their armies more effective. This seems to be borne out by the events. When North China regimes were weak, they resorted to raiding as a second-best strategy, but when they became stronger they were more able to enforce territorial control, as in the Later Tang. When they became stronger still, as in the Zhou (and later the Song), they began to contemplate mobilizing decisive force against their northern (and southern) targets. Hence we saw above that official Zhou forces rarely raid their enemies in the classic sense that we see earlier in the century, and it is Zhou which launches a full-scale assault to gain territory in the Sixteen Prefectures in 959, having already conquered the Huainan region from Southern Tang.

It is also in the 950s, when Zhou power is rising, that we see orders to end northbound raids at a local level. This suggests that the Zhou central authorities now feel able to try to assert their will on their own frontier communities, and have some confidence that the task of defending the frontier can be fulfilled by a stronger, centrally controlled army in place of the local communities that used to defend themselves. In denying to the frontier populations the right to define their own boundaries through defending themselves and attacking their neighbors, Zhou Taizu was taking upon himself the right and duty of defending them, with all that implied about his authority and the relationship between court and border districts.

A similar situation among the Khitan reminds us that this is a period of parallel state formation in both north and south. We noted, during the Later Tang, the near cessation of centrally directed Khitan raids, and their replacement by extensive envoy contacts that continued alongside unofficial raids. In switching from raiding to diplomacy, was the Khitan leader Deguang indicating a desire to consolidate his position as a Chinese-style ruler (at least in his relations with other Chinese-style rulers)? We should recall that in 916 Deguang’s father Abaoji had declared himself emperor and begun to establish state institutions with the help of North China frontier-crossers such as Han Yanhui, and in 926 the Liao conquered the sedentary state of Bohai, significantly increasing the Liao state’s sedentary population. While the Liao emperors now might have had sufficient resources from taxation to support the institutions of a state.
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without recourse to raiding, the rash of unofficial raids suggests localized economic disruption of nomadic groups in the frontier zone, perhaps because of the sudden end to opportunities to participate in the major plundering expeditions that marked Abari’s rise to power.

Subsequently, the Liao mounted not one but two major campaigns against Five Dynasties regimes: the enthronement of Shi Jingtang in 936 and the punishment of his successors in the Liao–Jin war (943–7). These campaigns are comparable to the wars of the Zhou, since both indicate the increasing strength of centralizing states. In this, as in so many other ways, the two states, north and south, exhibit significant similarities. However, these two military ventures of the Liao state may also illustrate a remaining difference between north and south, because on both occasions the Khitan went away. The presence of armies of invasion in the Central Plains did not translate into major territorial gains for the Liao empire, perhaps because the Khitan rulers were more interested in ruling effectively than extensively. By contrast, the Zhou campaigns aimed at permanent conquest. Further research is needed to establish if, rather than a situation of nomad raids and North China defenses, we should instead see nomad raids and Five Dynasties expansionism.

Conclusions

In the borderlands of Five Dynasties North China, there was, in significant regards, little meaningful distinction between “steppe” and “sedentary.” All participated in raiding and other activities and in so doing found themselves part of a single community. Attempting to explain raiding by drawing a sharp line between “raiders” and “farmers” does not help us to see what was really going on. Rather than the classical opposition between civilization and barbarism, we have instead a much more complex picture of local leaders and ordinary people in a time of upheaval trying to find ways to get what they need and defend what they have, using whatever means come to hand. Superior authorities are simultaneously attempting to define their frontiers as an expression of their own power, and as they get stronger so they are more able to extend their authority over the frontier zone.

Once we recognize that everybody raids, we can see that the reasons for raiding are many and varied. There is no one explanation that will satisfactorily account for everything from hit-and-run military operations with chiefly military goals, through major plundering expeditions with a significant political aspect, to local thieving forays either when normal patterns and relations were disrupted or as themselves a normal form of relations. Raids are not solely expressions of nomadic economic needs, nor do they constitute a nomadic strategy of conquest, but neither can they be viewed merely as part of Chinese “frontier policy.” The only way to make sense of Five Dynasties raiding in all its variety is to see it in the context of a frontier society. It then becomes apparent that raiding is not dictated by cultural antagonism or economic structure, but rather is
NAOMI STANDENGoverned by the immediate politics, needs, and circumstances of the border-lands. Raiding is a contingent activity, and as such is a choice available to all. This case, then, suggests that the distinction between nomad and sedentarist has been drawn too sharply, while breaking down the presumed link between nomadism and raiding may also suggest a need to look again at this phenomenon in other periods that currently appear less obviously problematical. If we cease to see raiding as a nomadic phenomenon, our picture of China may have to change.

Notes
1 Research for this chapter was conducted at the University of Wisconsin-Superior and in the first half of 2000 at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. My thanks go to members of the Chinese Military History Group for useful leads, and to Reuven Amitai, Michal Biran, Pamela Crossley, Peter Jackson, Peter Lorge, David Morgan, Yuri Pines, Gideon Shelach, and the editors of this volume for their helpful suggestions, as well as to the History Department Research Seminar at the University of Newcastle for giving the chapter an audience in its final stages.
4 The use of “Chinese” and “non-Chinese” to define the groups involved in these interactions tends to presuppose a clear distinction of the kind this chapter is arguing against. In an effort to allow for varied genetic and ethnic origins within any one group on the “Chinese” side, I have attempted to use “North China,” or sometimes “Five Dynasties,” as an adjective in preference to “Chinese.” Rather unsatisfactorily, I have retained “Khitan” for the other party, although on the understanding that “Khitan” groups might also contain individuals of diverse origins. The regime led by the Khitan used different designations at different times. For the sake of clarity, I will use “Liao” throughout.
6 This is often part of an “ideological opposition of civilization versus barbarism or savagery.” R. Brian Ferguson and Neil L. Whitehead, eds, War in the tribal zone: expanding states and indigenous warfare (Santa Fe, 1992), p. 16.
7 Lattimore, Inner Asian frontiers, pp. 38–9.
8 See, e.g., Claude Lefèbure, “Introduction: the specificity of nomadic pastoral societies,” in Pastoral production and society, ed. L’Equipe écologie et anthropologie des sociétés pastorales (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 1–14. For Frederick Mote, Imperial China, 300–1800 (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), cultural distinctiveness is a recurrent theme, seen, for instance, in Aboajj’s “integrity in remaining a true man of the steppe,” p. 32. For a contrasting position, currently still in the minority, see e.g. the work of Pamela Crossley, most recently A translucent mirror: history and identity in Qing imperial ideology (Berkeley, 1999).
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11. Xiao Qiqing provides a general survey in “Beiya youmu minzu nan qin gezhong yuanyin de jiantao,” Shihuo yuekan, 1: 12 (1972), pp. 609–19. Joseph Fletcher argued the importance of supplying booty in “Turco-Mongolian monarchic tradition in the Ottoman Empire,” Harvard Ukrainian Studies, 3/4 (1979–80), pp. 236–51, repr. in Studies on Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia, ed. Beatrice Forbes Manz (Aldershot, 1995), and Sechin Jagchid stressed that of border markets (Sechin Jagchid and Jay Van Symons, Peace, war, and trade along the Great Wall (Bloomington, 1989)). Creel suggests that nomads are raiders because they have cavalry horses (“Role of the horse,” p. 179), and Denis Sinor reasons that war is the only alternative if a surplus of horses cannot be exported, “Horse and pasture in Inner Asian history,” AHR, 51 (1972), p. 180.


14. Crude frequency counts can be obtained from the Dynastic Histories Database. Jiu Wudai shi (JWDS) annals: kuo 139; lü 56, qin 51, ju 26; Liao shi (LS) annals to 960: lü 15, lü 12, qin 5, xu 5.

15. Yuan sources also use these terms for both Chinese (Yuan) and nomadic military activity. Michal Biran, personal communication.

16. The contrast is with “persisting” tactics, which involve the permanent occupation and defense of territory. Archer Jones, The art of war in the western world (New York, 1997), pp. 55–7. Raiders did not have to be light cavalry, however. The mere fact that the tactic was the raid conferred military superiority all by itself. Hence the English successfully raided the French during the Hundred Years’ War even though the English side was slow-moving and was laden with booty; ibid., p. 676.

17. Cf. Creel, “Role of the horse”; Sinor, “Horse and pasture.” On the other hand, there is little doubt that superior weaponry and riding skill could further enhance an already highly effective tactic.


The idea of “normal” raiding comes from Peter Golden, “Nomads and neighbors,” p. 58 and passim.

The *Liao shi* also records about a dozen raids coming from North China. Compare the *JWDS* rate of approximately 1.5 nomadic raids a year across the whole border to the much lower rate implied by the seven incursions into the border province of Youzhou in the ninety years of 763–850. David A. Graff, “Regional and spatial aspects of frontier defense in late T’ang China: the case of the Lu-long army,” unpublished paper given at the ICAS conference, Leiden, 1998, p. 9.

The *Liao shi* records about a dozen raids occurring entirely between North China powers.


*JWDS*, 26, p. 354.

*JWDS*, 137, p. 1827 strongly implies a single attack, but Ouyang Xiu, *Xin Wudai shi* [1073] (*XWDS*) (Beijing, 1974), 72, p. 886 alters the account to read, “... each year...”.


*JWDS*, 28, p. 388; 29, pp. 399–400.


*LS*, 3, pp. 31, 33; *JWDS*, 72, p. 892.


*JWDS*, 43, p. 596.

Or possibly “... do not harass each other.” *JWDS*, 38, p. 530.


See my “What nomads want.”

*LS*, 3, pp. 28, 36; *JWDS*, 48, pp. 663–4, 666; 76, p. 994.


Among many others, see the sequence in 938–9: *JWDS*, 77, pp. 1017, 1018, 1020; 78, p. 1027.

*JWDS*, 78, p. 1033; 79, pp. 1037, 1040; 80, p. 1058; *LS*, 4, pp. 43, 45, 48.
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46 JWDS, 79, p. 1048.
47 JWDS, 82, pp. 1084, 1085.
48 JWDS, 82, p. 1084.
49 JWDS, 84, pp. 1113, 1115, 1116.
51 JWDS, 110, p. 1462; 111, pp. 1468, 1471, 1472, 1474; LS, 6, p. 70.
52 JWDS, 112, pp. 1484, 1489.
53 JWDS, 115, p. 1527.
54 At least once a year except for 956 and 957. LS, 5, p. 66; 6, pp. 70, 71, 72, 73, 75.
55 JWDS, 115, p. 1527.
56 JWDS, 118, p. 1572; 119, p. 1581; 120, p. 1591.
57 For more detail on this campaign and its significance, see Peter Lorge, “Zhou Shizong I,” forthcoming as part of his published dissertation, “War and the creation of the Northern Song state” (University of Pennsylvania, 1996).
58 JWDS, 115, p. 1527.
59 JWDS, 118, p. 1572; 119, p. 1581; 120, p. 1591.
60 JWDS, 112, pp. 1484, 1489.
61 Jagchid and Symons, Peace, war, and trade; Barfield, Perilous frontier. For Barfield, the subsidies support steppe empires without whose central direction nomadic raids would not be dangerous enough to coerce China into paying up.
63 There are several surprise attacks on Khitan or Tangut groups towards the end of Later Tang. A report of 935 specifies that a “camp” was attacked, and another from 932 claims the seizure of several thousand head of livestock, JWDS, 47, p. 648; 43, p. 588.
64 LS, 1, pp. 2, 11. This is not unique to any one period. Credel, for instance, notes that the Han general Ma Yuan was a horse herder in the northern border area, “Role of the horse,” p. 173. Jagchid and Symons, Peace, war, and trade, p. 119 cites Ban Gu, who notes that peace along the northern border in the Former Han was indicated by the presence of herds of cattle and horses which “fully covered the wilderness.” Ban Gu, Han shu [92] (Beijing, 1962), 94B, p. 3826. Cf. Jacques Gernet, Buddhism in Chinese society: an economic history from the fifth to the tenth centuries (New York, 1995), pp. 124–6, where the numbers of horses owned by monasteries in Dunhuang and other places in the northwest of the extended Tang empire are rather small, amounting to dozens rather than hundreds or thousands.
65 Zhao Dejun (XWDS, 72, p. 892), among others. Zhou Shizong turned the method into a central policy in 955 (JWDS, 115, p. 1527).
66 JWDS, 26, p. 533; 4, p. 64.
67 ZZZTJ, 286, pp. 9334–5, 9342–3, where this incident is seen as contributing to the growing Chinese resistance to the Khitan. See also Zhao Guangyuan, “Luclun Khitan jundui zai Zhongyuan ‘da caoyu’,” Zongguo shenhua kexueyuan yanjiuhui yuan xuexiao (1986: 6), pp. 67–71. This far south it is, prima facie, unlikely that such animals were being kept in the extensive nomadic style, but this question has, to my knowledge, never been examined. Wang Lihua’s article “Zhonggu shiqi beifang diqu chumuye de biandong,” Lishi yanjiu (2001: 4), pp. 33–47, was not available to me at the time of writing but provides a broad summary of changes in the extent of animal husbandry within the territories of the Five Dynasties regimes and references to the general Chinese literature on the arable/animal husbandry mix.
68 JWDS, 137, p. 1827; ZZZTJ, 269, pp. 8812–13. The Khitan are periodically reported to have “taken” Pingzhou, for example in 928, JWDS, 39, pp. 533–4. The situation is apparently contradictory and deserves further study.


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92 LS, 2, p. 17; 6, p. 71.
93 LS, 1, p. 3; 3, p. 33.
94 LS, 1, p. 2 (Li Keyong); 3, p. 28 (Wang Du). Also: LS, 1, pp. 4, 5, 12 (assisting Liu Shouwen against Liu Shouguang).
95 JWDS, 41, p. 563; 47, p. 648.
97 JWDS, 32, p. 445; 41, p. 560.
98 JWDS, 84, pp. 1118, 1117.
100 Jones, Art of war, pp. 677–9.
101 Ibid., pp. 667–8, 679.
104 The two Liao invasions are the subject of my forthcoming paper, “What nomads want.”

Bibliography

Texts


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Irene S. Leung

The preface to the subject category *fanzu* (barbarian tribes) in the *Xuanhe huapu* (*Imperial Catalog of Paintings in the Xuanhe Era, 1120*) begins with a laudatory explanation of “barbarian” paintings:

They unfasten the silk cap-strings [on their armor], submit and pay respects [to the emperor]; they put away their weapons, and receive the calendar. Trekking through mountains and sailing through oceans, they bow [to the emperor] to be recognized as subjects. Their desire to become subjects is so strong that they even send their disciples to come study. They happily bear tribute and they come in a hurry. Although these guests of ours are from different regions faraway, despite the differences in customs and manners, the esteemed and virtuous emperors of ancient times never rejected them. For this reason, there is a tradition of painting *fan* tribes. But the painters usually depict their bows and arrows, their daggers at their waists, and their engagement in hunting expeditions with horses and hounds. What the painters have taken to depict is limited. These paintings simplify the customs of the Man people and the Yi people while honoring the trust and generosity of the civilizing culture of the Hua Xia.

The *Xuanhe huapu* is generally believed to have been composed by different editors in Emperor Huizong’s (r. 1101–25) court. On a literal level, this passage illustrates the traditional assumption of the Chinese “tribute system” — convinced of their own cultural superiority, the Chinese believed themselves to be surrounded by “barbarian” tribes. But, in the act of creating an orderly society, the virtue of
the Chinese ruler would win the barbarians’ confidence through kindness (huairou). By coming to receive the Chinese calendar, these barbarians are civilized and transformed (laihua). This image of tribute-bearing foreigners draws on classic imperial rhetoric that is as old as the Chunqiu (Spring and Autumn Annals), dating to the fifth century BCE. The imperial catalog of paintings states that painters depicted these guests because they were received by the emperor as Chinese subjects. By depicting their native clothing and customs, the paintings make them look base, thereby correspondingly elevating the virtues of Chinese culture.

Seven years after this Xuanhe huapu passage was written, forces of the Jin dynasty (1115–1234), led by the Nüzhèn (or Jurchen) people of northeast China, invaded the Song capital of Kaifeng and captured the emperor and the imperial family, hastening the end of the Northern Song dynasty. Therefore, it is tempting to read the fanzu preface as yet another demonstration of the dichotomy of “rhetoric” versus “reality” – despite the reality of its weakened position in East Asia, the Song court remained convinced of its cultural superiority, affirming and reinforcing its belief in the “tribute system.” However, as recent scholarship on Song foreign relations and revised interpretations of the tribute system demonstrate, this opposition of hollow “rhetoric” to historical “reality” is just as misguided and simplistic as the image of the Chinese as a group of “civilizing, poetry-loving, and war-hating literati.”

The Song was in fact, to use the words of Ruth Dunnell, “an active agent in the production of war and conquest.” Since its beginning in 960, it had attempted to gain control over disputed territories with the Liao dynasty (907–1125) in North China, and at the same time, repeatedly attempted to establish hegemonic control over western trade routes.10 Not until 1005 did the Liao and the Song finally reach an agreement in the form of “oath letters” (mengshu), known as the Treaty of Shanyuan (Chanyuan zhimeng). This treaty stipulated friendly familial relations between the two states, demarcation of borders, and annual compensation to the Liao from the Song court.11

During the eleventh century, Liao and Song did not always keep the peace. Particularly during the 1040s, and again in the 1070s, border disputes between the two states called for extensive renegotiations and renewed oaths.12 While some scholars have recently reassessed the realities of Song military strength, others have re-evaluated the attitudes that the Song court expressed toward non-Chinese states. For example, Wang Gungwu argues that, in responding to the vestiges of Five Dynasties (907–60) geopolitics, and by maintaining a vision of itself as inheritor of Tang (618–907) imperial tradition, the Song court and its officials utilized a wide range of rhetorical strategies that he calls a “rhetoric of a lesser empire.” This concept is characterized by five basic features: (1) language that was largely moral and cosmological and expressed inclusiveness; (2) rhetoric dealing specifically with tribute; (3) derogatory language justifying the use of force; (4) routine communications stressing realism and flexibility; and (5) the rhetoric of contractual relations. The languages of both inclusiveness
and exclusiveness, as well as of the tribute system, were strategically employed to retain the initiative of empire at all times. Using this paradigm, we can bring the Xuanhe huapu’s adoption of the first and second strategies into much sharper focus.

This chapter argues that Xuanhe huapu’s use of tribute language should not be understood as empty “rhetoric.” On the contrary, Emperor Huizong’s court actively interpreted and circumscribed both the content and the form of fanzu paintings to its own advantage. Instead of simply translating the term fanzu as “barbarian tribes,” I will show how this term operates as a category within the imperial painting catalog and also consider its uses and meanings in the literati discourse outside the court. While it is obvious that the language of the preface should not be taken at face value, a recognition of representation as “the creation and manipulation of signs” enables us to see that these paintings do not transparently reflect the so-called barbarian lifestyles. Also, noting that the subject depicted is only from the northern frontier, the editors of the Xuanhe huapu narrowly defined these paintings in a discourse of “ethnographic truths.” These “partial truths” also blur the distinction between the “real” and the “imaginary.” By defining the peoples of the northern frontier as the antithesis of Han Chinese, this discourse renders the ethnic other as knowable, definable, and above all, constant.

Shifting the category of fanzu paintings

In the history of art, Xuanhe huapu’s preface to fanzu paintings marks an important shift in the taxonomy of foreignness. The emergence of a separate subject category of fanzu in painting came after more than seven centuries of representing non-Chinese peoples. Chinese painters had indicated foreignness pictorially by showing differences in topography, climate, physiology, costume, and lifestyle, and by delineating environmental, cultural, and ethnic boundaries between what are considered han or hua (the sedentary, Central Plain) and fan or hu (the nomadic, foreign, “barbarian”). Contrary to what the imperial preface would lead one to believe, the tradition of painting foreigners had not followed a linear chronology that progressed from tribute bearers to fan tribes. Instead, the editors selected, reclassified, and prioritized from a large group of Tang and Five Dynasties painters in order to create this new subject category.

Although it is no longer extant, the earliest recorded painting of foreigners was a product of the Three Kingdoms period (220–65) and was commissioned by the famous military strategist Zhuge Liang (181–234). Writing centuries later in the Tang, the critic Zhang Yanyuan (c. 815–?) explains: “The customs of the Southern Yi (Nan Yi) people are difficult to influence (nanhua). Subsequently, [Zhuge Liang] had a Picture of the Yi People (Yi tu) painted, and bestowed it on them. They treasured it enormously.” Without other contextual materials relating to the Picture of the Yi People, the causal relationship between the Yi’s native customs and the alleged painting remains unclear. Did Zhuge Liang intend the painting to
transform them? Or was he honoring their differences from the Chinese? We are not likely ever to know what Zhuge Liang’s intentions were, but, from this Tang record, it seems that the first depiction of a non-Han people was intended to be shown to its subject, and that the Chinese thought that they cherished it.

In Zhang Yanyuan’s and other Tang and earlier writings on art, one finds frequent uses of terms such as Yi Xia and waiguo, suggesting that by the Six Dynasties period (420–589), there were already well-developed visual codes for distinguishing Han Chinese from non-Han peoples. For example, in the Jin dynasty (265–420), Dai Kui (d. 395) painted Foreigners Presenting Beasts (Huren xianshou). In the Northern Qi dynasty (550–78), Cao Zongda painted Foreign Buddha (Waiguo foxiang). The Buddhist monk Jiafotuo, who came to China from India during the Later Wei dynasty (535–57), painted People from the Fulin Country (Fulinguo renwu), and Foreign Beasts (Waiguo zashou). In the Liang dynasty (549–57), Zhang Sengyou was famous for painting Buddhist figures and foreign peoples. Xiao Yi, posthumously known as Emperor Yuan of Liang (r. 553–55), painted Foreign Guests Coming to Court (Fanke ruchao), and was most famous for painting, and writing a preface to a Tribute Bearers (Zhigong tu), which will be discussed later in this chapter.

By the Tang dynasty, paintings depicting foreigners may be grouped into four main types. The first category consisted of paintings of tribute bearers, and fan and Han costumes (Fan Han yifu). The second category consisted of depictions of foreign Buddhist figures (waiguo foxiang). The Buddhist subject matter of these paintings suggests that the foreigners depicted represent Central Asians and Indians. The third category depicted regional people particularly from the Yue or Yi regions. The fourth category portrayed tribal groups and foreign peoples (buluo, fanluo, fanren, waifan) and fan horses (fanma). Since none of the paintings from this period has survived, the ethnic groups that were depicted in these so-called fanluo scenes are unclear. But based on the evidence that those painters who specialized in depicting fan horses also tended to be good at hunting scenes, one could conclude that these scenes were most likely nomadic or pastoral scenes of the west and northwest. Li Jian, Li Zhonghe, Li Heng, Qi Min, Tian Shen, and Zhou Xingtong are all artists who were known for painting fanluo subjects between the seventh and the ninth centuries. In sum, the Tang and pre-Tang paintings of foreigners represented tribute bearers, Buddhist figures, Yue and Yi peoples, or nomadic scenes. All of the subjects in this four-part classification might be considered non-Chinese. But rather than embracing the entire corpus, the Xuanhe huapu only defined certain nomadic scenes as fanzy paintings.

Documenting the manipulation of previously existing subject categories is a precarious task because many Song and pre-Song painting texts were not organized solely according to subject matter. Fanzy paintings, however, did not appear as a separate and distinct category in a similarly organized catalog written just fifty years before the compilation of the Xuanhe huapu. Prior to the twelfth century, painters of nomadic themes were often placed in the category of painters of wild or domestic animals (zoushou, chushou). It seems that these painters
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were noted more for their talents of representing foreign horses than for their ability to depict tribal peoples, and that by the early twelfth century a new category was necessary when the paradigm shifted in order to showcase portrayals of northern tribes. Further evidence of the imperial catalog’s manipulation of categories lies in the tenuous documentation of a connection between the aforementioned Tang nomadic painters and the catalog’s *fanzu* painters. For example, Li Jian, who was regarded as an excellent painter of *fan* subjects in Guo Ruoxu’s *An Account of My Experiences in Painting* (*Tuhua jianwen zhi*, c. 1080), is listed only as an animal painter in the *Xuanhe huapu*. This is somewhat puzzling, as Guo Ruoxu’s text was a major source of reference for the imperial catalog. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that the imperial catalog used Qidan people as the main organizing principle in its new *fanzu* category. Painters of Qidan scenes, in other words, were redefined as *fanzu* painters while painters of tribal peoples and other foreigners were relegated to other subject categories. The art historical category of *fanzu*, as a result, became associated solely with one specific ethnic designation.

From the Tang through the Five Dynasties, fourteen painters can be identified as having painted foreign horses and nomadic scenes. Of these, the *Xuanhe huapu* selected five. Only the first three, all from the Liao state, are said to have been worthy of emulation. The first and second painters, Hu Gui (fl. 907–60) and his son Hu Qian, were probably ethnically Qidan. They lived in Fanyang (Hebei province, near modern-day Beijing) which was ceded to Liao control after 938 by the Later Jin (936–44). The third painter, known as King of Dongdan (Dongdan wang), was the eldest son of Liao emperor Taizu (r. 907–26) and was therefore certainly Qidan. In his official biography in the *History of the Liao*, he is also known as Yelu Tuyu (or Yelu Bei, 899–936). This biography is framed by the classic Chinese imperial rhetoric of inclusiveness. Due to a succession struggle, Yelu Tuyu fled to the Later Tang (924–36) where he was welcomed by Emperor Mingzong (r. 926–33). While he retained his former title as King of Dongdan, Emperor Mingzong bestowed upon him the name Dongdan Muhua (Dongdan who admires the Chinese). Later, he was given the surname of the Tang royal house, and became known as Li Zanhua (Li who praises the Chinese). The biography also states that he was well versed in Han culture and that he was good at painting people from his own country.

Among these three Qidan painters, the *Xuanhe huapu* establishes HuGui as the standard-bearer of the *fanzu* genre. It lists sixty-five of his paintings and forty-four of his son’s. These are paintings with titles such as *Nomads Resting* (*Zhouxie tu*), *Pasturing Horses* (*Muma tu*), *Barbarian Tribes Hunting on Horseback* (*Fanzu liesheqi tu*), etc. The catalog also lists fifteen pictures by Li Zanhua, with titles such as *Hunting on Horseback* (*Lieqi tu*), and *Riders in Snow* (*Xueqi tu*). Again, these are all paintings of nomadic subjects.

All three painters are praised for their skills in having captured the details and the essence of nomadic life. Verisimilitude is often mentioned as a positive value in their biographies. *Xuanhe huapu*’s *fanzu* preface refers to Li Zanhua’s ethnic origin as his claim to authenticity. It writes:
“FELT YURTS NEATLY ARRAYED”

Since [Li] Zanhua was of Qidan origin, known as King of Dongdan, he did not paint costumes of the Central Plain, but rather detailed native customs of people from all directions. Although the vessels and utensils are of different measurements, and the clothing are of different fit, one can still distinguish [one from the other] through the pictures. Likewise, the court editors were explicit about the fact that it was the ethnographic details that they valued in Hu Gui’s paintings. The catalog states: “[His depictions of] yurts and tents, utensils and objects, hunting weapons, and tribal people are meticulously detailed and thorough. Whenever he paints camels and horses, he always uses a brush made of wolf’s hair in order to capture their liveliness.” The imperial catalog’s long list of 124 paintings by these Qidan painters, Hu Gui, Hu Qian, and Li Zanhua, seems to give the collection a stamp of authority — a claim to owning an ethnography of the Qidan. In other words, these paintings show how the Qidan people lived because they are made by the Qidan themselves.

As for the remaining two Chinese painters in the fanzu category, the fourth painter, Wang Renshou, was better known as a mural painter of Buddhist and secular figures. One element that may have been crucial to this selection, although it is not mentioned in his Xuanhe huapu biography, is that Wang was among a large group of people captured at the Later Jin capital (Kaifeng) by the Qidan in one of their counter-offensives in 947. He was released after Emperor Taizu of the Song ascended the throne in 960. The Xuanhe huapu could only claim one painting by him entitled Tuo (Camel or Camels). The fifth and last painter in this category was Fang Congzhen, a native of Chengdu (in modern-day Sichuan province). To justify including Fang in this category, the imperial catalog compared him to another painter, Zhang Kan, whose fan horses paintings were highly praised in Guo Ruoxu’s An Account of My Experiences in Painting. The Xuanhe huapu states that the only reason Zhang Kan’s paintings were so skilled in details was because he lived on the northern frontier. But since Fang was from the southwest, the fact that he could paint fan horses and tribal yurts that he had not seen proved his unusual skill. The catalog seems to suggest that even though both Wang Renshou and Fang Congzhen were not Qidan, nor, in the case of the latter, had probably ever even seen a Qidan person, they were nonetheless skillful in depicting Qidan nomadic scenes. In this way, the imperial catalog constructed a genealogy of fanzu painters by ranking these five individuals in a descending order that could only work to the Song painting academy’s advantage. Its argument could be construed as follows: after Hu Gui and Li Zanhua of the Five Dynasties, the only worthy painters of fanzu scenes were Han Chinese, who were as accurate and authentic as if they had been Qidan themselves.

In addition to this puzzling insertion of Chinese painters in the fanzu section, there is a conspicuous absence of tribute-bearer paintings in the Xuanhe huapu — even though the preface is replete with tribute rhetoric. Since the depiction of
tribute bearers was an established pictorial tradition, dating back as early as the fifth century, the absence of these paintings is at first sight odd. Including them in this section and being able to draw attention to them would seem to have demonstrated the court’s prestige. But on closer examination, it seems that the court substantiated the claim of laihua – of the barbarians’ willingness to come and be transformed – through subtler means. Paintings of tribute bearers as opposed to those of northern nomads (which the catalog lists) represented two divergent modes of engagement with foreigners. While the former was overt, the latter one was more ambiguous. Tribute-bearer paintings constructed an immediate political hierarchy between the viewer and the subject depicted, expressing a formal political relationship. On the other hand, paintings showing Qidan as steppe nomads not only acknowledge the ethnic differences of the Qidan, but also present these differences in a stylistically stable and concrete way.

The earliest surviving example of the first tradition can be found in the Northern Song copy of a painting that is in fact called the Tribute Bearers (Zhigong tu). It is a very close copy of the original painted by Emperor Yuan of Liang dynasty (Figure 6.1). In this handscroll, the foreign envoys are shown against a plain background. Each figure has a caption that records the name, distance, native customs, and local products of his respective country. Each one, moreover, is removed out of the context of his environment, as if he were a specimen on display. The figures each vary in terms of their skin color, body type, facial features, clothing, headdress, and even facial hair. Yet all of them are shown to assume the same pose, placing their hands in front of them in a gesture of respect, as if they were standing in a court audience. Since the identification of these foreign envoys is impossible to make without the captions, the significance of the Tribute Bearers lies not only in the specific inventory of each country, but also in the multiplicity of countries. Although the countries are located at varying geographic distances from China, their political relationships to China are represented to be identical in the sense that they all occupy the status of tribute countries.

The tribute-bearer tradition also took another form in which the artist depicted groups of foreigners bringing exotic animals or strange treasures from afar. Often, the figures share the same directional approach, presumably that of hurrying to the Chinese capital. A short handscroll entitled Nomads with a Tribute Horse (Fanqi tu) shows six riders leading a white riderless horse, the tribute horse (Figure 6.2). It was painted some time between the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. The first six horses have long necks that are set high, a characteristic of Central Asian horses, whereas the tribute horse has a shorter and thicker neck, more commonly seen in Mongolian breeds. The faces of all of the riders are delicately painted, and the horse trappings and weaponry are beautifully rendered in all their exotic splendor. The rider at the center of the composition is adorned in a richly brocaded robe, and wears an ornate metal crown and earrings. This particular rider and the one coming last in the procession have deep eyes and high noses that are stereotypical depictions of Central
Figure 6.1 Detail of Tribute Bearers, c. 1077. Anonymous. Copy of original painted by Emperor Yuan of Liang Dynasty (r. 532-5). Handscroll; ink and color on silk; 25 × 206.8 cm. Source: Museum of Chinese National History, Beijing, People’s Republic of China.
Asian people. Abstracted from their own native environment, the foreigners are portrayed as dignified ambassadors. These two conventions are classic examples of *Tribute Bearers*. Their foreignness is contained and the political relationship with the Chinese empire clearly recognizable.

**A new ethnography of the Qidan**

In contrast to tribute-bearer paintings, however, *fanzu* paintings as categorized in the *Xuanhe huapu* express a subtler form of objectification of the foreign other. These paintings rely on the rhetoric of ethnographic truths by placing the nomads in their native environment. This new visual vocabulary, as it was
“FELT YURTS NEATLY ARRANGED”

pioneered by painters such as Hu Gui, shows an ethnically specific people with moon-shaped faces, shaved heads, goatees, and two queues. Based on textual records of titles and surviving paintings, these Qidan nomads are often shown in level-distance landscapes with a background of low rolling hills. They are portrayed with hunting falcons and hounds or in the act of shooting arrows on horseback. Their costumes and saddles often have elaborate nomadic trappings, and their metal fittings are often painted in gold. To suggest the nomads’ constant movements, the paintings frequently portray them resting during their journeys. Sometimes they are shown sitting by their encampments with their horses unsaddled; at other times they are represented dancing to music.

An excellent example of this visual convention is the handscroll entitled Nomads Resting (Zhouxie tu) (Figure 6.3). The scroll begins with riders unloading the horses; two of the horses still have the day’s hunt – white swans – strapped on their saddles. While the grooms are busy taking care of the horses, the other servants have prepared food and drinks for the master and mistress. In front of them, a few musicians and a dancer have already begun the entertainment. Behind them stretch barren low hills, indicated by dry ink brushstrokes. The same dry hills can also be seen in the background of an album leaf entitled Going to the Hunt (Chulie tu) (Figure 6.4). Finely executed, this painting is amongst the best surviving examples of the genre. In this painting, the different body parts of the riders, horses, and birds of prey fit like a jigsaw puzzle, intricately locked together in a tight composition. Also present is the suggestion of steppe wind – implied by the treatment of slightly brownish grasses, which seem to sway gently towards one side or another, and the horses’ manes and tails, delicately painted with a fine brush, which also seem to sway slightly. While some of the figures have stereotypical Qidan facial features, some others have darker skin and fuller beards, marking them as people from Central Asia.

Although the paintings Nomads Resting and Going to the Hunt probably date from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, these remarkable compositions hint at the level of artistic excellence in the genre of fan tribes achieved by Hu Gui – who lived during the first half of the tenth century. More importantly, textual sources indicate that these stereotypical renderings acquired an economy of ethnographic details – showing the Qidan hunting and traveling, stereotypical of nomadic life. In this context, by using tribute language, the Xuanhe huapu incorporates the ethnography of northern nomads into its imperial rhetoric of laihua without having to show the Qidan paying tribute. The court’s motivation for the reclassification was manifold. Since the beginning of the Song dynasty, paintings of the northern frontier by Qidan painters such as Hu Gui were praised and collected. As will be pointed out in the following section, it seems that these paintings were circulated amongst prominent scholar-officials who came to define artistic taste in the late eleventh century. Emperor Huizong’s court incorporated literati taste in its appraisal of fan paintings. Outwardly, it could be seen as an ideological maneuver with an eye toward the Liao – by imposing an ethnic discourse on its northern enemy.
Figure 6.3 Nomads Resting. Attributed to Hu Gui (fl. 907–60), Handscroll; ink and color on silk; 33 × 256 cm.
Source: Palace Museum, Beijing, People’s Republic of China
Convergence of discourses

As Susan Bush has pointed out, the *Xuanhe huapu* is a compilation of literati ideas and opinions from an earlier generation that flourished in the late eleventh century. It incorporates artistic ideas previously espoused by literati such as Su Shi (1037–1101) and Li Gonglin (c. 1041–1106). It is not surprising, then, that the imperial catalog quotes a poem by Mei Yaochen (1002–60) in its biography of Hu Gui. For Mei was a scholar-poet highly regarded by Su Shi and his associates. The quote could be seen as an attempt to increase Hu’s prestige and, by association, also increase the court’s. The original poem – written on the occasion of Liu Jin showing Mei Yaochen a painting entitled *Nomads Resting on their Journey* (*Huren xiacheng tu*) by Hu Gui – is as follows:

![Image of Going to the Hunt](image.png)

*Figure 6.4* Detail of *Going to the Hunt*. Attributed to Hu Gui (fl. 907–60). Album leaf; ink and colors on silk; 34.2 × 46.9 cm. *Source:* National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China.
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Following the hunt, the chieftain reclines on a crimson brocade;
Unfastening the saddle, he rests his horse on the desolate prairie.
Grey, brown, and white horses – numbering sixty,
In shaded valley or sunlit slope, they fan their tails and manes.
Nine camels, five oxen, and many more sheep,
On sandy grass they flock, while chilly winds arise in the evening.

Noble and base, old and young, five hundred – you can count;
Their manners and poses are all unique.
Two falcons rest on a trainer’s arm and two on a perch.
How could the swift hounds not compete for the catch?
Felt yurts neatly arrayed, large tents huddle close;
Drums and horns have not yet sounded to startle the border geese.

High upon the earthen hills they set their blazing beacon;
In the fur pouches, they rest their knives and arrows.
From a spring beside the camp, they draw water;
While the long river silently flows on and on, its flow never-ending.

How skillful the brush that painted on six sheets of plain, white silk;
So superb was Hu Gui’s skill, who could ever fathom it?
In the capital these days are many connoisseurs;
Those connoisseurs affirm the taste of Liu Yuzhong [Jin].

Mei Yaochen begins his poem with a close-up of the shanyu (a generic title of a Xiongnu chieftain), then the panorama expands to incorporate the landscape and the grazing animals. The view closes in again on the details of the hunting falcons and hounds. Without pause, it pans out again to the felt yurts, then to the flying geese, and down to the blazing beacons on the hills. Once again, the view narrows to focus on the details of their hunting weaponry. It is not until the seventeenth line that the illusion of real frontier scenery is broken. Mei signals that he is describing a composition by Hu Gui by pointing to vivid shapes, sounds, movements, texture, and colors. Both the painting and the poem end with a representation of a long river that flows endlessly, a suggestion of timelessness. The ethnographic gaze evoked by both word and image stretches as far as the eye can see, creating a serene, and even idyllic view of the nomadic other.

What is characteristic about Mei Yaochen’s poem is the extent to which it has captured Hu Gui’s depiction of the details of the so-called frontier. It contains all the standard tropes for the steppes: the shanyu, camels, sandy grass, chilly winds, falcons, hunting hounds, felt yurts, border geese, fur pouches, knives and arrows, and an encampment by a river. The ethnographic imaginary carries the effect of invention in the full use of the word, not as fake depiction, but as an extreme form of representation and projection. The actual frontier – the territories, the peoples, and the battles – indeed existed, but the poetic and pictorial genres do not give direct access to it. Instead, they are iconic representations. They resemble and
mimic the real thing, referring to the tropes of nomad life on the cold, dry, and windy steppes. For the Song dynasty viewer, these paintings carry with them what could be called the “prestige of denotation.” The appearance of neutrality in *fanzu* representations calls attention to the things they signified because they create “the illusion that the objects presented actually occurred in nature.”

Mei Yaochen wrote another poem praising a different Hu Gui painting that is simply titled *Horses (Huama tu)*. It depicts over a hundred foreign horses (*huma*) and shows nomads (*huren*) aiming and shooting arrows while chasing their prey. Again, the Hu Gui painting and the Mei Yaochen poem converge in the realm of an ethnographic imaginary. The poet praises a painting by a master painter who lived over a century earlier. This interest in a panoramic view of the northern frontier can be found in other literati writings of the time. For example, in Liu Daochun’s commentary in *A Supplement on the Famous Painters of the Five Dynasties* (*Wudai minghua buyi*, preface 1059), he writes:

[Hu Gui depicts] yurts and tribal settlements, tents and banners, curved saddles, or [shows the nomads] following water and grass to pasture [horses], or chasing after their hunt [with arrows with strings attached to them]. Also, [in his depiction of] the frigid nomad sky [and of] level distanced sand dunes, he sings the charm of the frontier in its every single detail.

Commentaries such as this one indicate that these paintings of Qidan nomads were touted as accurate, precise, and comprehensive. It is in the context of commentaries such as Liu Daochun’s and Mei Yaochen’s that the *Xuanhe huapu*’s incorporation of these paintings in the *fanzu* genre, more than half a century later, should be understood. By the middle of the eleventh century, Hu Gui’s paintings had been established as the archetypal representation of frontier scenery by educated Chinese scholar-officials. *Xuanhe huapu*’s quotation of Mei’s poetic lines, “Felt yurts neatly arrayed, large tents huddle close; drums and horns have not yet sounded to startle the border geese,” in Hu Gui’s biography only confirms Huizong’s court’s interest in incorporating literati taste. By reclassifying ethnographic portrayals such as Hu Gui’s paintings as the sole representative of its *fanzu* category while casting aside tribute-bearer paintings, the Song court was also creating an ideology of what it considered to be Liao ethnicity and culture.

**Imaginaries and realities of the frontier**

The political significance of the *fanzu* as a visual discourse needs to be examined alongside other historical factors such as the changing face of power relations, and the transformations in ethnic and cultural identities in the tenth and the eleventh centuries. The Qidan, who ruled over the Liao and established themselves as a political entity over fifty years before the founding of the Song, began
as vassals of the Later Liang (907–23) during the Five Dynasties. Later, the Liao state maintained equal status with the Later Tang, and even became an overlord of the Later Jin. Confronting Song efforts to unify territories in the Central Plain in the tenth century, the Liao became a force to be reckoned with militarily. Politically, peace was maintained between the two states because of contractual agreements such as the Treaty of Shanyuan. Underlying the balance of power, something important but less tangible seems to have been at stake also, but this can only be uncovered by working through the contradictions and distortions in extant textual and visual documents.

Despite what the visual and poetic portrayals would lead us to believe, North China was not occupied by a vast nomadic empire in diametric opposition to the sedentary Chinese in the south. For the Liao people did not live exclusively pastoral lifestyles. Rather, many lived by means of farming, cattle raising, and trade. Even before their conquests, the Qidan engaged in agriculture and maintained permanent settlements that intertwined with Chinese artisans and Chinese and Uighur traders. Moreover, the Liao was not occupied solely by Qidan people. It was a Qidan-led federation under which existed a combination of Turkic tribes, the Xi, and the Uighurs, among other groups. It was polyethnic and multilingual. Furthermore, many Han Chinese became officials in the Liao government, even reaching the highest offices. Particularly in the south, the administration of the Liao state was almost entirely staffed by Han Chinese. Many of the Qidan nobility also embraced Chinese culture alongside their own.

This reality was not overlooked by the observant eyes of the Song court and officials. Northern Song documents such as embassy accounts (yulu), maps, and encyclopedias indicate familiarity with contemporary Liao geography, demography, cities, history, and culture. There was also no lack of firsthand knowledge, especially between the years 1005 and 1122, when the Song and Liao had regular diplomatic contact. The modern historian Fu Loh-huan estimates that the number of Song envoys who had traveled north could not be less than 800 during this period. This number does not include the extended personnel in the escort. A traveling embassy averaged about one hundred individuals, consisting of administrative officials, soldiers, horse grooms, and carrier coolies. Sometimes, the retinue of an official envoy could include as many as two hundred people. Considering only the annual formal embassies during the New Year and birthday celebrations, the number of individuals who traveled to the Liao capital probably reached well over 20,000 during the 117-year period of normalized interaction. These envoy missions were probably coveted assignments. We can discern that these trips were popular by the court’s repeated efforts to control the number of individuals allowed on each embassy.

As for the information gathered in embassy reports, their geographic descriptions show great attention to topographical and ethnographic details. For example, upon passing Youzhou (near modern-day Beijing), the envoy Lu Zhen (957–1014) describes how the residents “are all accustomed to wearing Chinese
clothing, [but] there are among them those who wear barbarian clothing; in all probability there are Qidan and Bohai women intermingled [among them].”

Not only does he notice the mixture of ethnic groups and clothing in the border towns, but at the Liao capital Zhongjing, Lu describes city walls and gates with empirical detail. He writes:

The outer city wall of the Qidan kingdom is a zhang (approximately ten feet) or more in height. There are corridors running from east to west. Its circumference is thirty li. To the south is Zhuxia Gate. There are three gates, and each has a gate tower. We entered the Zhuxia Gate. The streets are as wide as one hundred steps. In the east and west there are residences numbering about three hundred.

Lu also describes how the Liao emperor wore “Chinese clothing, with a yellow gauze robe, a jade sash, and boots with leather laces.” He sat “on a square chair on stacks of cushions.” In addition, present in the audience were both ethnic Chinese and Qidan officials.

While embassy accounts tend to concentrate on the observation of terrain and peoples, Song officials show a realistic and up-to-date understanding of the military and political circumstances of the Liao in documents such as encyclopedias. As Wang Gungwu points out, although the encyclopedia Cefu yuanqi (begun 1005, completed 1013) reaffirms the imperial rhetoric of jini (control by “loose reins”) and huairou, it also contains data that contradict these strategies, even showing alternative policies such as bribes, assimilation, pacification, annihilation, and strategic defense. Likewise, Su Song’s (1020–1101) Hua Rong Lu Wei xinlu, which is a manual that concentrates on Song–Liao relations after the Treaty of Shanyuan, shows the unprecedented and extensive compartmentalization of diplomatic mechanisms. The manual covers topics ranging from rituals observed when receiving Qidan envoys, to oath letters, annual payments, missives, diplomatic personnel, hostels, Qidan missives, border markets, Hedong borders, border defenses, Qidan genealogy, customs, officialdom, and political geography. These documents show that Song officials were able to assess the military and political situation of the Liao through careful examinations of the enemy.

Song China also recognized that the Liao was the most sophisticated of its neighbors. Han Qi (1008–75) pointed out that the Qidan had “adopted Chinese culture and considered themselves superior to all foreign states of the past,” and that they had “subdued Koryo and had competed with Chinese dynasties for hegemony for more than a hundred years. Therefore, they had even come to believe that they were superior to the Song.” Fu Bi (1004–83) cautioned that the Qidan should not be regarded the same way as the “barbarians of ancient times,” for they had learned much from the Chinese in matters ranging from government organization (including the employment of Chinese officials) to architecture, language, and literature.
In light of a multiethnic, multilingual, part-Chinese and part-Qidian empire like the Liao, to say that there was a crisis in culture and ethnicity within the Song may be overstating the case. However, one cannot overlook the inherent contradiction between the ideals of *laihua* – of transforming the “barbarians” by the virtue of Chinese culture – and the realization that the Qidan had already adopted certain forms of lifestyle previously considered exclusively Chinese. The fact that the Liao was still not part of the Chinese political orbit was apparent, and yet it was able to incorporate and maintain both Chinese and Qidan cultural traditions. Since before the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), the Chinese had rhetorically defined themselves vis-à-vis the “barbarians.” In other words, instead of being diametric opposites as the Chinese had historically regarded foreigners, these “barbarians” were now familiar and foreign at the same time. Once the Chinese cultural self could no longer rely on the classical imperial paradigm of distance and separateness, this vacuum undoubtedly created a certain anxiety over boundaries and definitions.

It is within this context of cultural anxiety that representations of the northern frontier became politically significant. Song frontier poems – drawing from a well-spring of Tang frontier poems – responded to the new situations of officials who were sent on diplomatic missions to the Liao. Existing in the realm of socialized exchanges between the scholar-officials, these poems became iconic representations of the real – mimicking selective geographic realities of the frontier and at the same time, relying on established poetic tropes. Mei Yaochen, who never served as an envoy, nonetheless wrote over fifty poems with frontier themes. Many of these were written on occasions of sending off or welcoming scholar-officials who traveled to the north. There is no question that his poetic references do not match the reality of the envoys’ travels. Mei was not the only poet who insisted on using antiquated terminologies such as *shanyu* and *Xiongnu* to refer to the Liao emperor and the Liao dynasty. These terminologies recall the antiquity (i.e. Han dynasty) when the lines between the Han and the Xiongnu were clearly drawn. The poetic tropes Mei Yaochen used remained very much the shared idiom of the social milieu of the literati. Even the poems written by officials who actually served as envoys, the so-called ambassadorial poems (*chushi shi*) did not reflect the kind of empirical detail observed in embassy accounts, but instead insisted on Tang conventions. In some instances, actual experiences intermingled with poetic and pictorial tropes. The poem “On watching a hunting expedition in the north” (*Guan beiren weilie*) by Su Song – which is one of a series that commemorate his actual envoy missions – illustrates this phenomenon. He writes:

Thick is the cold grassland, dust blows when the night descends,
Fluttering about, the Rong riders’ small encirclement splits up.
Pulling their bows up and down, they fire their arrows,
Through thickets of grass, the beasts scattered left and right.
Painters of horses of today are not comparable to Hu [Gui],
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The hunter of eagles is particularly afraid of Li [Guang].
The mountains and rivers have always been hunting grounds,
In one sweep of the eye, the wild prairie extends as far as the evening clouds.88

Not only has Su conjured familiar tropes of Rong riders (Rong qi), wild prairie, evening sky, the famous Han dynasty general Li Guang (?–110 BCE), he has also compared the scenery in front of him with a painting by Hu Gui. Perhaps Su indeed observed a Qidan hunt, but the vocabularies and images he utilizes blur any presumed separation between stock images and the “real thing.”

Deconstructing the “discipline of looking”

It is precisely because there was extensive contact between the peoples of the Song and the Liao that the Chinese insistence on an ecological and ethnic divide – seeing the north as eternally pastoral and archaic, framed inside a picturesque landscape – constructs a mythology of the Qidan. The poets and the painters looked for signs of clear difference rather than exposing complexities and ambiguities, such as those described in embassy accounts and encyclopedias. They avoided contradictions such as images of the Liao emperor in Chinese costumes or walled cities with Qidan occupants, seeking to illustrate pure exoticism that provides the comforts of stability. To some extent, the mythology probably succeeded in veiling any Chinese anxiety over cultural self-definition.

The portrayal of an enticing and immutable ethnic and “national” essence, when considered in relation to momentous changes in history, is not a unique historical phenomenon. One of its many parallels can be found in the Hudson River School paintings from the nineteenth century in America.89 The seemingly natural and sublime paintings of the new American wilderness stood not just for “a quality of landscape” but also for a “discipline of pleasurable looking.”90 The majestic views pitted the visual quality of nature against an artificial and conventional quality of representation and, at the same time, served as preparations for discovering aesthetic categories in the actual scenery. Consequently, “a complex reciprocal relationship developed between actual landscapes and their literary and visual representations.”91 Su Song’s poem on watching a hunting expedition in the north reveals just such a reciprocal relationship between the poem and the event. As long as the artificiality of these artistic creations was masked behind a screen of ethnic, cultural, and topographical authenticity, the illusion was maintained, and the discourse of otherness was perpetuated. Also, based on surviving visual evidence, Song fanza paintings actually employed a painting style that accentuated the visible differences between the Central Plain and the northern frontier.92 While eleventh-century monumental landscape and genre paintings developed naturalistic painting styles, the frontier world was rendered stylistically static in the tenth century – just as the Qidan continued to be referred to as the Xiongnu in the poems. The visual differences construct a mythology of the
steppes as culturally and ethnically fixed, and thus familiar and less threatening. This aestheticization of huddling tents and neatly arrayed felt yurts therefore succeeded in maintaining the chasm between the north and the south, keeping them forever irreconcilable. Moreover, there was a marked absence of contradictory points of view in the attitudes presented by the court and the literati. Both parties seemed to be participating in the same project of ethnographic production. The silences speak compellingly to the pervasiveness of this discourse.

In conclusion, it may be too simplistic to regard representations of Qidan as nomads living in a picturesque landscape as merely a way of demeaning one’s enemy. The Liao must have seemed fascinating; otherwise, the envoy missions would not have been coveted assignments, nor would the officials’ memorials show pragmatic understanding and respect for the Liao. Treatment of the frontier varies according to the conventions and restrictions of each genre. In oath letters, for example, the language would adhere to an image of stability of territoriality. In other genres such as poetry and paintings, the two worlds drew on different artistic traditions. These discrepancies between the genres do not need to be resolved. The *Xuanhe huapu*’s reclassification of *fanzu* paintings and its uses of tribute language therefore should not be understood as wishful propaganda that was out of touch with political and military realities. The early twelfth century saw Huizong’s court anxious to change the status quo of power relations in China and Central Asia, as could be seen in the intensified political discussions over aligning themselves with the Jin to defeat the Liao. The court was also eager to incorporate the literati ideas pioneered by Su Shi and his associates. The *Xuanhe huapu* was only one of many avenues for the court to assert its hegemony. It actively engaged in truth production, constructing an idealization of the Qidan as the ethnic other. The ethnographic portrayals of the Qidan, originally pioneered by Liao painters, became the dominant mode of seeing and describing the actual north by the eleventh century. In it, what seems on the surface to be an ethnographic interest in the frontier is in fact the formation of an aesthetically backward frontier – not only do these pictorializations illustrate the “traditional” Qidan lifestyle, but their pictorial style refers to the past. The next step for scholars of art history is to sort out the attributions of surviving paintings of the Chinese northern frontier, identifying and separating those painted by the Song court, by Liao painters, and by Jin painters. Only then will we be able to see how Huizong’s court painters appropriated and transformed this genre.

**Notes and abbreviations**

FSLJ Zhao Yongchun, *Fengshi Liao jin xingcheng lu*
HHPL Yan Cong, *Hou hua pinglu*
LDMHJ Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai minghua ji*
MHLJL Zhang Yanyuan, *Minghua liejing lu*
SCMHP Liu Daochun, *Shengchao minghua ping*

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I want to thank Jonathan Hay and Michael Siu for their extensive comments. This chapter was first presented as a conference paper for the International Conference of Asia Scholars in 1998. An early draft of the paper benefited from comments by Ruth Dunnell, Philip Forêt, Freda Murck, Christian De Pee, and Martin Powers.


3 It was probably finished in 1123. See Soper, Kuo Jo-hsiu’s Experiences, p. 111, n. 10.


5 The term Man Yi literally refers to the foreigners from the south and from the east. The usage here is rhetorical, and probably refers generally to people living beyond the Chinese border.

6 The phrase Hua Xia could be rendered as referring to “Chinese culture” in general. However, the translation would be anachronistic and pre-empts a nationalistic interpretation. “Classical antiquity” is probably closer to the original usage of Hua Xia.


9 A critique of this binary opposition between rhetoric and reality is most forcefully argued in James L. Hevia’s Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793 (Durham, 1995). David C. Wright also points out that this binary has no heuristic value in his doctoral dissertation, Sung–Liao Diplomatic Practices (Princeton University, 1993). The stereotype of Song as weak has been critiqued by military historians and historians alike. Ruth Dunnell points out the fallacy of essentializing “the Inner Asian/nomad as a latent Chinggis Qan in the saddle, in rigid contrast to the equally essentialized Chinese: a civilizing, poetry-loving, and war-hating literati.” See her state-of-the-field essay, “Significant Peripheries: Inner Asian Perspectives on Song Studies,” Journal of Sung–Yuan Studies, 24 (1994), p. 333.

16 The section on fanzu paintings in the Xuanhe huapu has not been fully analyzed for many reasons. First, we are still in the process of understanding Emperor Huizong’s political uses of art and his painting academy. Second, not many paintings have survived from this period that can be linked to the paintings in the imperial catalog. Third, the language of the fanzu preface is so steeped in classical conventions that the tensions and contradictions embedded within the text have not been fully examined.

17 Harrist made similar observations in “The Horse in Chinese Painting.” My current study is indebted to his, but our conclusions are different.

18 Subject matters probably developed out of grouping them into categories of professional specialties because they were referred to as men, ye, ke. In considering issues of subject matter, genre, and category, it is important to note that many extant painting texts are not organized by subject matter, but in either one or a combination of the following: (1) social class, (2) accomplishment/merit, (3) subject categories. Furthermore, many of these texts discuss paintings that have survived, rather than as a catalog of what were painted. Further discussions on this topic can be found in Lothar Ledderose, “Subject Matter in Early Chinese Painting Criticism,” Oriental Art, n.s., 19, no. 1 (spring 1973), pp. 69–83; and Charles Lachman, Evaluations of Sung Dynasty Painters of Renown: Liu Tao-ch’iu’s Sung-ch’ao ming-hua ping (Leiden, 1989).

19 Listed in LDMHJ, juan 4; and translated by William Acker in Some Tang and Pre-Tang Texts on Chinese Painting (Leiden, 1954), pp. 21–2; also listed in MHLJL, p. 134.

20 These categories could be found in writings by Yao Zui (fl. c. 550), Yan Cong (fl. 627–50), and Zhu Jingxuan (fl. c. 806–40). See Ledderose, “Subject Matter,” pp. 74–5.

21 Recorded in ZGSHS, p. 12.

22 Recorded in XHPL, p. 3.

23 Fulin is a general term referring to the area near the Eastern Roman Empire and Asia Minor, which borders the Mediterranean Sea. The term is used in Emperor Yuan of Liang dynasty’s Tribute Beamer scroll, and in the Xiyun ji.

24 His biography is in MHLJL, p. 42; ZGSHS, p. 20; LDMHJ. Zhang Yanyuan writes that: “yet [because] the Huu and the Yi have different styles (shutu), there is nothing to base our judgement on whether his paintings are good or bad” (MHLJL, p. 142). This is one of a handful of statements in which the critic acknowledges that the painter’s foreign origin and his manner of representation may require different aesthetic standards. A similar statement was made regarding Yuchi Yiseng of the Tang dynasty.

25 His biography exists in many texts, including LDMHJ, XHPL, Taiping guangji (ce 5, juan 211, p. 1614), XIHMP. Yao Zui writes that: “In regards to strange forms and unusual faces, foreign places, whether Yi or Xia, each has its own marvels” (XHPL, p. 6).

26 His biography is recorded in LDMHJ, juan 7, translated in Acker, Some Tang and Pre-Tang Texts, pp. 169–70.

27 This practice of painting regional people from the east was also extended to the south. One interesting anecdote involves the painter Mou Gu at Emperor Taijong’s court. He was sent to accompany envoys going to Cochim (Annam) to secretly “sketch portraits of the Annam prince Li Huan (941–1005) and his various ministers.” Unfortunately, what happened to these sketches is not known. See Lachman’s translation, Evaluations of Sung Dynasty Painters, p. 46.

28 The term “fan horses” may have been a generic designation for all foreign breeds, or it may refer to a specific breed of horse known as nanfan. Lachman suggests that the term, which he translates as “Tartar horses,” is a generic designation for horses of foreign breeds (Evaluations of Sung Dynasty Painters, p. 22). Nanfan horses, sometimes called beifan, are mentioned in Xie Chengxia, Zhangwu de yangma ye (Horse raising in
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China) (Shanghai, 1952), pp. 41–7. According to Sui and Tang sources, it was a crossbreed of local horses and ones from Afghan and Iranian regions. The nanfan horses were raised in the border area of Qinghai, Sichuan, and Gansu provinces.

29 LDMHJ, MHLJ, p. 156; THWZ, XHH (juan 13).
30 These three are all listed as specialists in fan horses, Rong Yi, buluo. See TCMHL, p. 33.
31 TCMHL, p. 11.
32 He was said to have a full beard, and was famous for the so-called “bearded Zhou’s fan horses” (Zhou hu fanma) which were said to be of subtle (miao) quality. His known paintings include Capturing Horses (duoma), and Shooting Eagles (Shediao tu). See his biography in YZML, pp. 40–1.
33 It was inserted in fourth place: after Buddhist and Daoist subjects; figures; palaces, and before dragons and fishes; landscapes; wild and domestic animals; flowers and birds; ink bamboo; and fruits and vegetables.
34 Liu Daochun’s SCMHP, completed c. 1059, is divided into six categories: human figures; landscape; domestic and wild animals; birds and flowers; demons and spirits; architecture. In the supplement, WDMHB, which also has a preface dating to 1059, the seven categories are: human figures; landscape; wild animals; flowers, bamboo, and birds and animals; domestic architecture; molded sculpture; carvings on wood.
35 For example, Li Zanhua and Hu Gui were placed in the category of zoushou painters in the WDMHB, and Zhao Guangfu was placed in the category of chushou painters in the SCMHP.
39 Robert Rorex seems to have been the first modern-day scholar to point this out, see his “Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute: The Story of Ts’ai Wen-chi,” (Princeton University, 1975) p. 142; also see Harrist, “The Horse in Chinese Painting,” pp. 33, 36.
40 The term beilu, literally the “northern caitiffs,” is a common reference to the Qidan people in eleventh-century documents.
41 The term used here is zhonghua.
42 The term used here is wufang zhi min, literally people from five directions: east, south, west, north, center. In the context of the passage and in the context of his official biography, it seems contradictory that being Qidan, he is good at painting people from everywhere. Perhaps it plainly refers to the non-Chinese, and northerners in particular.
43 XHH (juan 8), p. 223.
44 XHH (juan 8), p. 225. A slightly different translation is offered by Tsao, “From Appropriation to Possession,” p. 147.
45 The WDMHB and THWZ write that he was good at Buddhist figures, demons, and horses. They do not mention fan horses and riders.
46 I thank Jonathan Hay for pointing this out to me as a possible explanation for the XHH’s selection. The Liao raid and captivity is discussed in Soper, Kuo Jo-hsi’s Experiences, p. 37; Tsao, “From Appropriation to Possession,” pp. 114–15.
47 Soper, Kuo Jo-hsi’s Experiences, p. 68.
49 Jin Weinuo, “Zhigong tu de shidai yu zuozhe (The Author and Date of the Tribute Bearers),” Wenwu, no. 7 (1960), pp. 14–17. Jin believes it is a very close copy dated
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around 1077 because Su Song (1020–1101) wrote a very short colophon on the painting, now lost.

Jin Weinuo points out that the text matches and even supplements Liang shu’s chapter of various barbarians (Zhuyi zhuan) (“Zhigong tu de shidai yu zhuzhe,” p. 14).

Interestingly, Wang Su proposes that there is a hierarchy embedded in the order – each of them is arranged according to how friendly they were to the Chinese court, as opposed to their geographical locations, or to the time they brought tributes to the court. See his “Liang Yuandi Zhigong tu xintan (New Studies on Emperor Yuan of Liang’s Tribute Bearers),” Wenwu, no. 2 (1992), p. 77.

Wu, Tales from the Land of Dragons, pp. 136–7; Tsao dates the painting to as early as the tenth century, and no later than the twelfth (“From Appropriation to Possession,” p. 190).

I thank Nicola Di Cosmo for pointing this out to me. Although the two types are distinguished by their necks, it seems that the painter gave them similar robust bodies and shorter legs that are typical of Mongolian horses. This is, after all, a painting of horses, not the horses themselves. Nonetheless, the idea that the riders are bringing a breed of Mongolian horses while riding on a Central Asian breed is intriguing.

Based on differences in hairstyles, Yu Hui proposes that many paintings which have previously been identified as depicting the Qidan, in fact depict Nüzhen people. See his “Jindai renma hua kaolüe ji qita (Investigation on Figure-and-Horse Painting in Jin Dynasty),” Meisha yanyu, no. 4 (1990), pp. 30–41.

Tsao proposes that the painting illustrates a ritual hunt, and it was probably painted around 1080 by a Song court artist (“From Appropriation to Possession,” p. 212); Yu Hui, on the other hand, believes that it portrays Nüzhen people, and dates to the twelfth century or later. See his “Zhuxue tu juan kaolüe (Textual Research on Zhuxue tu),” Meisha, no. 2 (1990), p. 72.

Yu Hui, however, believes that this figure is a male. See his “Zhuxue tu juan kaolüe,” p. 71. Judging from the way the female and male servants are divided between the two main figures, it would be hard to justify why the right figure should be a man. See also Tsao, pp. 197–212. The same division of male and female servants can be found in the third scene of the Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute album leaves (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), and in a slightly later hanging scroll illustrating the same story attributed to Chen Juzhong (National Palace Museum, Taipei).

There is another album leaf of a similar composition, and probably by the same artist, entitled Returning from the Hunt (Huilie tu), is also in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Perhaps this is a deliberate attempt to portray the variety of ethnic people in the northern plains. This can also be seen in the eighth scene of the handscroll Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), and a later painting, Kublai Khan Hunting (National Palace Museum, Taipei).

See Bush’s discussion on the Xuanhe huapu in Chinese Literati on Painting, pp. 74–82.

Liu Jin (courtesy name Yuanzhong), was a member of the Hanlin academy. His biography is listed in Songren zhuanji ziliao suoyin (Index to biographical materials of Song figures), ed. Chang Pi-te et al. (Taipei, 1974), p. 3896.

Mei Yaochen, Wanling xiansheng wenji (1224 ed.; repr. Shanghai, 1940), juan 50, p. 10b.

Iconic representation is the first of three types of signs as outlined by Charles Sanders Peirce in his work on semiotics. The icon relies on resemblance, mimesis, and imitation (Mitchell, “Representation,” p. 14). In pointing out the politics and poetics of ethnography, Clifford points out that “the maker of ethnographic texts cannot avoid expressive tropes, figures, and allegories that select and impose meaning as they translate it. . . . Ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial – committed and incomplete” (“Introduction: Partial Truths,” p. 7).
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64 Lutz and Collins quote Roland Barthes in their Reading National Geographic, p. 28.
65 Mei, Wuling xiansheng wenji, juan 14, p.11a. It is entitled “Guan Shi shi huama tu (On viewing Shi’s Horse).”
66 WDMHB, pp. 28a–b.
67 Hu Gui was praised by Guo Ruoxu (Super, Kuo Jo-hsu’s Experiences, pp. 25–6). In Liu Daochun’s WDMHB, Hu Gui and Li Zanhua are the only two painters classified in the shenpin (inspired class), the highest rank, in the specialty of zoushou.
71 Called xingcheng lu, fengshi lu, shibei ji, or yulu, embassy accounts were reports written by officials who were sent to the Liao court each year to carry diplomatic missives. After each mission, the envoys were required to submit a report on the Liao reception, with observations appended on the places and the local customs they encountered en route. David C. Wright notes that the information included “troop encampments, distances between specific points, the locations and features of mountain passes, areas of predominantly non-Khitan population, and places where the Liao emperor was known to have traveled or wintered.” Many of these have been translated and discussed at length. See esp. Fu Loh-huan, “Songren shi Liao yulu xingcheng kao (An Investigation into the Traveling Routes of Song Embassy to Liao as seen from their Journals),” Guoxue jikan 5, no. 4 (1935), pp. 165–93; Herbert Franke, “Sung Embassies: Some General Observations,” in China Among Equals, pp. 116–48; Wright, “Sung–Liao Diplomatic Practices,” chs 2 and 4. For the latest reprint of these extant embassy accounts, see Zhao Yongchun, ed., Fengshi Liao Jin xingcheng lu (Record of Embassies to the Liao and Jin) (Jilin, 1995).
72 Wang Min-hsin, “Songchao shiqi liucun de Qidan dili ziliao (Information on Qidan geography surviving from the Song dynasty),” Shumu jikan, 8, no. 1 (June 1974), pp. 29–37. This essay was reprinted, with more information on maps by the same author, in Shen Gua Xining shi Lu tuchao jianzheng (Taipei, 1976).
79 I do not mean to suggest that these textual documents are somehow more “truthful” than the pictorial ones. While recognizing these texts have their own generic constraints, by juxtaposing the textual with the pictorial traditions, I wish to foreground the discrepancies between the genres rather than privileging one over the other.
81 Both Tao Jing-shen and Wang Gungwu argue this point in their respective essays in China Among Equals.
83 Tao, Two Sons of Heaven, ch. 3.
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84 Tao, “Cong Songshi kan Song Liao guanxi (Song–Liao relations from the point of view of Song poetry),” in Song Liao guanxi shi yanjiu (Studies in the History of Song–Liao Relations) (Taipei, 1984), pp. 184–5.

85 Song frontier poetic conventions continue and modify Tang frontier poetry. Although they share similarities in using references to Chinese generals and Xiongnu chieftains from the Han dynasty, the function and the context in which they are invoked differ greatly, and need to be analyzed as such.

86 Tao, “Cong Songshi kan Song Liao guanxi,” pp. 183–4; see also Two Sons of Heaven, pp. 21–3.

87 Su Song wrote a total of fifty-eight poems relating to his envoy missions in 1068 and 1077. Su Weigong wenji (Beijing, 1988), juan 13, pp. 160–79.

88 Su Song, Su Weigong wenji, juan 13, p. 173.


92 In the album leaves Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Jan Fontein and Wu Tung noted that a markedly different brushwork is used in portraying a Chinese city and the nomadic scenes. See the catalog entry in their Unearthing China’s Past (Boston, 1975), pp. 221–5. For a detailed analysis of the style of frontier paintings, see my doctoral dissertation, “The Frontier Imaginary in the Song Dynasty: Revisiting Cai Yan’s ‘Barbarian Captivity’ and Return,” (University of Michigan, 2001).

93 Tao, Two Sons of Heaven, ch. 8.

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For abbreviations see pp. 210–11 above.


“FELT YURTS NEATLY ARRAYED”


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GLOSSARY

Chanyuan zhimeng 潦潦之盟 Huizong 徽宗
Chulie tu 出霤圖 lanhua 來化
chushi shi 出使詩 Li Zanhua 李贄華
Dongdan wang 東丹王 Liang Renshou 梁仁壽
Fang Congzhen 房從真 Yuandi 元帝
Fanqi tu 蕃騎圖 yulu 驚錄
fanzu 蕃族 Zhang Kan 張韓
Hu Gui 胡㖨 Zhigong tu 季工圖
huairou 懷柔 Zhuxie tu 卓歇圖
While their principally accepted form is temporal, historical boundaries can nonetheless manifest themselves in numerous other ways. In fact, when we consider them in apposition to demarcations that are spatial, ethnic, linguistic (including terminological), or intellectual in their parameters, purely temporal boundaries can sometimes appear wholly indeterminate and even deceptive in nature. In the present chapter, by bringing the influence of this host of alternative historical demarcations to bear on the subject, I attempt to expose the fundamental indeterminacy of a particular temporal boundary, one that is so widely acknowledged as to be taken for granted. My chief focus of concern is with the emergence of the early or Northern Song (Bei Song) dynasty (960–1126). As is already at this early stage implied, I am far less concerned with the well-documented establishment of this dynasty as a political entity than I am with its largely unexplored emergence as a fixture of political consciousness. Hence, given the potentially ethereal nature of this goal, some of my observations may themselves occupy the uncertain ground between the verifiably expressed and the merely subtly intimated. Nevertheless, I hope to show that, at least in its inception, the so-called “Northern” Song was every bit as much of a construction of a peculiar conclave of individual minds as it was a simple matter of a failed strategy of appeasement at court and capitulation on the battlefield.

The early or Northern Song dynasty was by no means the first Chinese pre-imperial or imperial regime to be forced – by a group that it considered alien and barbarous – to relocate and reconstitute itself. Nevertheless, the constriction and eventual displacement of the Song by the Nüzhen (Jurchen) Jin dynasty (1115–1234), climaxing in the loss of Kaifeng in 1126, manifests a number of distinctive and perhaps unique traits. The demise of the Song resulted, for the first time, in the complete forfeiture of the Chinese “North” – the region long venerated by Chinese as the original cradle of civilization. This same event also resulted in a total reversal of tribute relations between China and certain of her non-Chinese neighbors, leading to the undeniable precedent of a China curiously marginalized in terms of politico-cultural prestige from the center of its
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own originally Sinic world. Finally, we can observe that the Song, in a manner unlike that of the much earlier Zhou (in 770 BCE), Han (in 25 CE), and Jin (in 317 CE) dynasties, established its new capital at Lin’an (modern Hangzhou) in the south as an expressly “temporary” capital. While it functioned, for all practical purposes, as a conventional capital, in Song semiofficial literature, Lin’an is persistently referred to as the “imperial abode while in transit” (xingzai). We should therefore be better prepared and inclined than in the Zhou and Han cases to regard this site as the Song itself did – that is, as a place destined for abandonment once the seized northern territories had been reclaimed.

These facts notwithstanding, this chapter arises from mild consternation. I have always found the unfaltering confidence with which my sinological contemporaries refer to the period from the dynastic founding by Zhao Kuangyin (Song Taizu) in 960 until the first complete year of the reign of Emperor Qinzong (r. 1125–7) as the Northern Song to be perplexing. As a group, following in the wake of untold previous generations of scholars, we have – without significant reflection or deliberation on the matter and almost purely by dint of the existence of the corresponding term that denotes it – assumed the existence of the Northern Song. Moreover, we have thereby become unwitting but active participants in an almost potentially graver act of ascription only by imputation. We have – with even less caution and examination than we have come to subscribe to the notion ourselves – evolved to speak of the Northern Song as if it were as real to and accepted by those living during its span as it has become for us. But, in addition to its seeming to spring from nowhere, such a designation as Northern Song belies the fact that the Chinese citizenry of that era would neither plausibly nor willingly have ever referred to the reigning dynasty during their own time by that name. Despite considerable external pressures to do so, no individual of that time is likely to have ever overtly considered the dynasty under which he or she lived “northern,” for the designation Northern Song can only have arisen after the sudden and involuntary creation of the Southern Song (Nan Song). Moreover, even the Chinese of this subsequent and, at least in geographical terms, more legitimately termed Southern Song period persisted in regarding their displaced dynasty as the uninterrupted continuation of the original Song – with no thought, at least at first, to construing it as the beginning of a new epoch. They no doubt clung tenaciously to this view until it became both practically and psychologically unproductive to do so.

Nevertheless, there is also a strong sense in which the act of prefixing the first part of this specific bisection of the Song era with the attribute Northern is entirely natural and defensible. Although the remaining southern Chinese states were quickly targeted for incorporation into the unified empire following Song Taizu’s accession, this process required nearly two decades before its proclaimed completion in 979. From the outset, the Song enjoyed no comparable success in the north. Instead, the encroachments of the two principal Song enemies of that time – the Qidan Liao (907–1125) and the Tanggute (Tangut) Western Xia (1038–1227) dynasties – were escalating and relentless and coveted territory was
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forfeited to them at various junctures. The most notable among these appropriations was the Qidan seizure of the sixteen Song prefectures south of the Great Wall in 926. Pursuant to the Treaty of Chanyuan, which was concluded in late 1004 (or, by Western reckoning, between 13 and 18 January 1005), these prefectures were eventually ceded to the Liao outright and incorporated as Qidan territories.

These circumstances, under which a struggle to maintain territorial sovereignty at all costs was waged, arguably led to a justifiable political fixation with North China, its endemic instability, and its receding borders. Consequently, even if it was not a view widely or explicitly expressed, we cannot deny the possibility that, even at some point well before the disastrous year of 1126, a profound mental shift in thinking and outlook had transpired. Considerably before the actual dénouement, in the minds of the era’s more insightful individuals, the idea of the Song dynasty as a continuous and indivisible entity might well have already become a fiction. As the late Benjamin Schwartz once so eloquently stated, “The history of an idea may be more than the history of the term with which the idea ultimately comes to be identified.” This is a principle that might be aptly applied in the matter of justifying the validity of the appellation Northern Song.

However, regardless of the position one takes on its appropriateness, beyond dispute would seem to be the fact that – as a term – the designation Northern Song exists only as a constructed entity. That is to say, while it does not necessarily constitute a fabrication, it is, nonetheless, fabricated. I have in fact become convinced that it represents an almost classic instance of such a construction, and this conviction has, in turn, impelled me to ponder how as well as when this entity was constructed, why it was constructed, and by whom. My findings are framed in the several sets of reflections that follow. Additionally, to varying extents, I have grappled below with all of the following questions: When, if ever, did Song intellectuals first recognize and acknowledge the idea of their dynasty as a discontinuous entity? If these intellectuals ever did acknowledge the idea of a Northern Song, then to what types of factors – external, domestic, or both – did they attribute its emergence? To what extent did these intellectuals accept the “end” of the Song as a historical reality, and what forms did their responses to such a catastrophic cultural loss take?

**Born from indistinctness**

While we cannot afford to restrict ourselves to philological evidence in our quest for the sources of the Northern Song, we would be remiss in the extreme not to make it our starting place. From a strictly philological standpoint, the term Northern Song is far more elusive than its companion designation Southern Song – with the origins of the latter being fairly well documented. Southern Song is a term that first emerged out of Song–Liao diplomatic discourse of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. It was, ironically, first used by the Qidan to denote
what we now conceive of as the Northern Song, and born from the mutual desire to distinguish the Song from their own empire, which itself was often described in Song diplomatic correspondence as the “northern dynasty” (beichao).\(^6\) However, in attributing the term Northern Song to any definite source, we must search more widely and haphazardly.

Hence, when does the term Northern Song first appear in Chinese writings, and what are we to discern from this appearance? The normally reliable Morohashi Tetsuji-edited Great Chinese–Japanese Dictionary (Dai Kan–Wa jiten) – which is renowned for providing the locus classicus for any given Chinese term – yields some surprising results in response to these questions. Upon turning to this resource, my original premonition that Northern Song would be a late-appearing term was much overshadowed by my astonishment at how late. According to Morohashi, the first instance of Northern Song appears in the writings of the late Qing and early Republican period classical scholar and political conservative Ye Dehui (1864–1927).\(^7\)

Although he gained fame primarily as a bibliographer and editor, Ye was also an ardent collector of books, which led to the writing and publication in 1910 of what is perhaps his best known work – the Pure Conversations of the Book Forest (Shulin qinghua). In his own explanatory foreword (xu) to the book, Ye, at the very outset, makes the point that books of all kinds have increasingly proliferated since the advent of printing during the Tang dynasty (618–907). He immediately thereafter states that:

People of the Southern Song valued the editions of books from the Northern (Bei) Song. People of the Yuan and Ming valued [both Northern and Southern] Song editions. The collectors of our present dynasty, following suit, value Yuan and Ming editions. [The principle is that] the rarer those of older engraving become, the more prized then become those editions of more recent engraving.\(^8\)

Much of the intrigue we are inclined to associate with Ye Dehui’s signal reference to a Northern Song period or dynasty lies simply in the astounding lateness of its emergence as a designation. However, beyond this fact, we need also to account for and assess the paradoxically conspicuous and yet unremarkable context of its presentation. On the unremarkable side, the setting for this “first” appearance of the term – that of the preface of an unassuming book on the history of printing and the collection of books – is doubtless among the most prosaic and mundane we might ever imagine. But, nonetheless, highly conspicuous and provocative is the fact that Ye – an arch-classicist – displays no particular self-awareness or apprehensiveness that suggests that he is coining a new term. Thus, we can use Ye Dehui’s seeming invention of this crucial term, without any qualifying or contextualizing remarks to justify it, as evidence for formulating two completely antipodal and mutually exclusive conclusions. On the one hand, the singularity of the term Northern Song – Morohashi offers no
other citations—does nothing more than confirm the foregoing disclosure of the extremely late juncture in history at which it formally arose. Strongly suggested here is that Chinese scholars themselves adopted this term as accepted parlance for denoting the first century and two-thirds of the Song era only as late as the first decade of the twentieth century. But, on the other hand, the casual and almost offhand manner in which Ye Dehui, without any hint of self-consciousness or qualification, supplies us with the term also quite clearly implies the existence of some much earlier precedent for it. The historical circumstances leading to the actual creation of the *Northern Song*—in which the Nüzhen tribes wrenched away and occupied the most cherished territory of China—must certainly have originally made the term extremely pejorative and stigmatizing to ethnic Han Chinese. However, Ye Dehui offers us *Northern Song* in a way that is totally innocuous, one that suggests that whatever distasteful associations the term had once had now no longer applied. This latter situation compels us at least to entertain a second and wholly incompatible conclusion—namely, the prospect that Ye’s usage of the term does not really mark its first appearance in Chinese writings after all. Nevertheless, if they do exist to be found, then where are these earlier references?

It is perhaps only appropriate that we should turn to the official dynastic histories for at least one potential cache of Chinese references to a *Northern Song* period that antedates the single one ascribed to Ye Dehui. But, in doing so, we find that the number of references to the *Northern Song* incorporated in the main texts of official histories totals only six—with the first instance appearing in the *Ming History* (Mingshi) and the five subsequent ones being contained in the *Provisional Qing History* (Qingshi gao).9 Aside from the notational references that have since the 1970s formed part of the contemporary commentary on the newly revised and punctuated versions of the histories, no references to a *Northern Song* exist in any of the histories prior to that of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644).10 However, we should be cautious about taking these references alone as incontrovertible and conclusive regarding the startling “recentness” of the term *Northern Song*. Proceeding with some trepidation is in order because what we again find is really at stake is the whole question of the degree to which we ought to assume and demand that the appearance of a term be necessarily coterminal with the emergence of its corresponding idea. In the particular case of the *Northern Song*, I am contending and hoping to demonstrate that the idea of an occurrence can both precede and achieve a palpable reality all its own—much in advance (if not independently) of its formal designation.

In this connection and toward this purpose, we should also note that the mere evidence of terminological frequency neither exhausts the value of the official histories nor depletes the insights that we can draw from them. We can also procure much information from an analysis of the internal peculiarities of their compositional structure. One such overt but seldom-commented-upon structural curiosity is why the authors of the *Song History* (Songsī)—who were, for the most part, Mongol editors and collators—chose not to model it after the bifurcated
THE INVENTION OF THE NORTHERN SONG

example of the earlier official histories of Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). The history of this important preceding and comparably bisected period is of course divided chronologically into the Han History (Hanshu) and the Later Han History (Hou Hanshu). Thus, the situation of the Song would seem to have presented the writers of its official history with many Han analogues (with the bisection of their duration and the relocation of the capitals of each dynasty being merely among the most obvious). From our standpoint, there is at least as much justification for formulating a divided history of the Song as there was for constructing the original version in the case of the Han. 11 Nevertheless, the authors of the Song History chose instead not to follow this available precedent of a dichotomized model, and their decision naturally invites the question why. Could it be that even they – just as most of the personages actually depicted within their historical account staunchly and invariantly had – chose to see the Song dynastic continuum as undisrupted and indivisible? Does their decision to maintain the history of the Song as undivided not also imply that they accepted – as had most of the figures populating their history – the view that the political and ritual premises upon which the dynasty had been originally founded remained viable and intact? Or does it simply signify their recognition and acknowledgment that, at least during Song times, the idea of a Northern Song was never quite the fully articulated reality that it eventually became?

Even while questions such as these elicit the larger question of who more effectively imputed their values to whom, we are not likely ever to find definitive answers to them. Nor is finding answers to them ultimately crucial, for it is not among the subscribers to the foregoing views of continuity that the mental origins of the Northern Song are to be found. Instead, our only hope of uncovering whether the Northern Song – whether so named or not – represented reality or fiction depends on those who were forced by the painful events endured to entertain its existence as such. Let us turn to ponder the terms by which and in which some cogent – if not altogether representative – voices contemporary with that time reflected on the tragedy and meaning of losing the Chinese North. Anything approximating firm answers depends on and is greatly informed by the collective testimony of these kinds of “outsiders.”

Bereft of the “vigor that pacifies”

One of the extremely unfortunate misconceptions about the early twelfth-century confrontation between the Jin and the Song dynasties is that all Chinese regarded the event with equal measures of shock, dismay, and indignation. The numerous firsthand or near-firsthand accounts of the Nüzhèn conquest of the Song capital of Kaifeng in 1126 that we are fortunate enough to have in our possession help to dispel this fallacy. Many of these records are easily identifiable by the prominent inclusion in their titles of the Chinese characters “pacifying vigor” (jingkang). It is a term that, to this day, continues to comment wryly and
ironically on the eviscerated nature of the ill-fated two-year reign period from 1126 to 1127 during which the Song dénouement took place. But even a cursory perusal of these records makes it clear that not all ethnic Han Chinese reacted to this debacle in the same way. There were those who deplored the cowardice, indecision, and unresponsiveness to events of the Song court as much as they lamented the colossal humiliation of the Jin takeover itself. These same individuals construed moral bankruptcy to be an even greater Song failing than its cowardly leadership and inept military defenses.

What follows is essentially a compendium of the opinions on the defense mounted by the Song, drawn from three Chinese intellectuals representing this loyalist and yet distinctly disaffected minority. As we might expect, the testimonial of such a collection of Chinese intellectuals are all colored and linked by the recurrent and inevitable theme of irrecoverable loss. Perhaps less apparent, however, are the two factors that make these reports so noteworthy and especially useful in the search for the intellectual origins of the Northern Song. First, the testimony of each of these men dramatically reveals the extent to which the defense of the Song was not waged merely in military terms—that is, in terms of border battles waged and mostly lost. On the contrary, the defense was also, in every sense, an internal one—one conducted on cultural symbolic grounds. Second, while, in their estimation, the Song defense failed for various reasons, all three men ultimately attributed this failure foremost to a single fundamental cause—that is, namely, what the late James F.C. Liu described as "the common denominator" of "a lack of morality." But, while they are univocal in what they saw as the primary cause of failure, as observers differently situated by their own unique perspectives on and dissimilar experiences of events, the three men each—understandably—construed, defined, and interpreted this moral impoverishment and debasement of the Song somewhat differently.

Li Gang, the cynical official

One individual who actually witnessed the fall of Kaifeng but almost exclusively with a surprisingly cynical disgust for the Song itself as victim was the prominent official Li Gang (1083–1140). Li, who served in the Ministry of Rites at the time of the abdication of Emperor Huizong (r. 1100–25), became the first chief minister of Emperor Gaozong (r. 1127–62) immediately following the reconstitution of Song government in the south. Thus, Li was always well positioned throughout the critical turning-point years of the crisis. This vantage point of intimate proximity to all of the major events enabled him to record his observations in the revealing Transmitted Record of the Jingkang Period (Jingkang chuanxin lu). Li’s Transmitted Record, which he completed and published in 1128, commences in the twelfth lunar month of 1125, with the total Jin breaching of the treaty concluded with the Song just three years earlier in 1122.

For almost the entire span of the siege of the imperial city, which began at the end of 1125 and concluded in the eleventh lunar month of 1126, Li Gang served
in various military capacities in Kaifeng’s defense, which we of course know failed. Thus, to be sure, through the *Transmitted Record of the Jingkang Period*, Li is intent on absolving himself of blame and fixing that blame to others he saw as far less competent than he was. In this sense, it is largely a document of rationalization, and its highly moralizing flavor reveals it to be precisely that. Yet, even while its composition was at least partially inspired by Li’s selfish motives of fashioning and preserving a positive legacy for himself, *Transmitted Record of the Jingkang Period* nevertheless succeeds in transporting its reader within the very walls of the capital at the height of profound crisis. In his “Self-Preface” (*zixu*) to the work, Li is quick to describe his own “selfless willingness” to rush and sacrifice himself in the defense of the Song. But he also points out, with equal passion and possibly greater veracity, the human frailty and error that he sees as the real root causes precipitating the looming catastrophe:

At this time, the Jin invaders again attacked the imperial city and the siege of the capital had not been lifted for more than half a year. In every direction, robbers and thieves arose like bees. Having received the lavish favor of two courts and with the country treading into difficulty, I did not dare to be concerned about myself. I assumed the leadership of the righteous militia to aid the imperial house in expelling [the enemy]. Reflecting upon it, from the winter of *yisi* [1125] until now [1127] has hardly been more than a year. Jumbled together are my own promotions and demotions, honor and disgrace, with the safety and danger, advantage and detriment of the empire. How is this not really a dream? Yet, within a single year, we have twice suffered the great foe. Although this is said to be owing to the calculations of Heaven, it is also due to human affairs.

As for our suffering the invaders last spring, the source of this sickness lay in our military administration not being repaired since the Chong[ning and Da]guan periods [1102–7; 1107–11] and our not raising a frontier defense at Yanshan. As for our suffering the invaders last winter, the source of this sickness lay in our losing sight of the objectives of last spring’s peace as well as our losing sight of the reasons for waging war.15

Thus, despite succumbing to the popular tendency to attribute its occurrence, on some level, to cosmological agency, Li Gang believed that the Jin onslaught upon China was even more owing to human fallibility and miscalculation. In a strikingly modern way, he supports this opinion by further elaborating on and developing the metaphor of sickness. Li resorts to a description of China as “sick man,” stating, “We can be compared to one who is sick – from the symptoms it is obvious that we require toxic medicine and yet we do not take it. Although it may temporarily subside, the illness will necessarily recur. This is an inevitable principle.”16
Also evident in Li Gang’s “Self-Preface” is the unquestionable depth of his loyalty and commitment to the Song defense. But even intermixed among the exhortations of his patriotic call-to-arms are strains of righteous indignation that the existing situation had come about in the first place. In Li’s view, the deplorable set of current circumstances had been clearly avoidable:

We should regard the past year in terms of [the circumstances prevailing] today. Cannot the disparity between the people’s commitment and the country’s power be said to differ by [a factor of] ten or a hundred? The morality of officials must become aroused and, without hesitation, we must be willing to die in this national emergency. Our success will depend on Heaven. [But] thereafter, if it is neither the case that the court is greatly chastened and renewed nor the habits of scholars greatly changed and transformed, then unless – within and without, large and small – we labor with identical intent to uphold the support of ancestral shrines and to secure the total protection of homes and dwellings; to sweep away the practices of graft, laziness, and callousness and the customs of jealousy, envy, slander, and accusation, though we will have caused the invaders to retreat, how long will we endure? 17

The main text of Transmitted Record of the Jingkang Period is a straightforward, unadorned, and highly detailed chronicle of the siege of Kaifeng – beginning with the winter assault of 1125 – from the remarkably critical perspective of its author.18 Li Gang describes the Song imperial court, upon its first receipt of the border reports of the Jin offensive, as “convulsed with fear” and “not returning to any discussion of whether to fight or defend” and only secretly laying “a plan to flee from the northern barbarians.”19 However, interwoven throughout his meticulous narrative of events are also excoriating moral pronouncements. By far the most unforgiving of these diatribes appears near the end of his record, in which, in the aftermath of his censure and demotion, Li openly declares – in no uncertain terms – whom he holds responsible for the imminent Nüzhen catastrophe:

Being used and discarded, advanced and demoted is common to [all] scholars, so much so that it deserves no comment. But when the nation was endangered and ancestral shrines imperiled, I rushed to support all of the might of the empire in turning exigency into peace. It is a pity that we almost succeeded and yet were undone by those [on our own side] who are mediocre, weak, vile, and slanderous. I fear that this is a time when neither Heaven will spare us disaster nor will there be any rest for the soul. The movement of fate is naturally predetermined. If not, how else could circumstances be like this? 20

Li Gang’s obvious bitterness about his own situation does not diminish the authenticity of his pressing concern about the future of the Song state. Interestingly,
his reference to “the movement of fate” as “predetermined” was to prove prescient. A mere two months after he was cashiered for having “exclusively promoted the rhetoric of war” and having “brought losses upon the army and squandered resources,” Kaifeng fell.21

Chen Gui, the professional soldier

Li Gang may well represent an extreme in terms of the sardonic directness and the undisguised repugnance with which he indict the Song itself. But, among the many reports contemporary with that time, his basic characterization of the leadership of the fading dynasty as weak and ineffectual was hardly anomalous. Other intellectuals – despite being quite differently talented and quite differently positioned with respect to the crisis – shared his assessment and decried the unforgivable lows to which the Song had fallen. One such individual was Chen Gui (1072–1141).22 Chen was a minor civilian official who, like Li Gang, was especially familiar with and deft in military matters. Also like Li Gang, Chen was in office – serving as prefect of De’an (modern Anlu county in Hubei) – precisely at the time of the Nüzhen onslaught. But entirely unlike Li Gang as well as most of his other counterparts, Chen was actually successful in defending the strategic prefecture of which he was in charge against the initial Nüzhen attack.

Within the larger collection bearing the title Treatises on Defending Towns (Shoucheng lu) is included a short work in onejuan by Chen Gui called “Postface to the Complete Sayings of the Court and the People” (“Chaoye qianyan houxu”).23 In it, Chen Gui criticizes essentially every aspect of the handling of the defense of Kaifeng, finding the measures taken there not only to have been grossly deficient but, most of all, tardy. In addition to his being at some spatial distance from the fatal situation in Kaifeng, Chen was also in a more favorable position than Li Gang had been temporally. Writing some fifteen years after the actual occurrence, he surely enjoyed the benefit of a greater degree of historical hindsight.

After beginning his postface with a rather flat and unemotional summary of Kaifeng’s siege and fall, Chen Gui subsequently adopts an approach that is quite dissimilar from that which Li Gang employed. Chen presents an itemized critique that is highly specialized and technical in its detail – a feature that greatly enhances the historical value of this short text. Chen uses the calculatingly dispassionate opening lines of the military classic Sunzi’s Art of War (Sunzi bingfa) as the touchstone for his initial remarks. But, despite providing us with the essentials of his personal philosophy of warfare, Chen’s testimony nevertheless echoes that of Li Gang in its description of the boundless ineptitude of those specifically charged with defending against the enemy onslaught:

The ancients considered the success of strategy [to be primary]. Now what it means to defend towns is always to see if the enemy is planning an attack with armaments and to constantly strategize to defend against such an attack beforehand. I, Gui, once heard that Sunzi [fl. 510 BCE]
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said: “Warfare is a great affair of state. Being the ground on which life or death is decided and the road that leads to survival or ruin, it must be investigated [with care].” [The ancients] also considered cunning on the part of the armies [to be crucial]. One employs a manner of deception that is diversionary. Therefore, what was capable turns out, upon exposure, to have been incapable and what was useful turns out, once exposed, not to have been useful. What was near turns out, upon exposure, to have been far off and what was far off turns out, once exposed, to have been near. As for aggression, if it is not thoroughly prepared for, it will be unexpected.

This is the transmission of the militarist concerning victory that cannot be communicated in advance. And yet, in order to impart it to families so that they may distance themselves [from danger], in order to possess advantage and avoid harm, and in order to secure [safety] and avoid loss, this transmission must be communicated in advance. [But] alas, in 1126, the people of the Jin [dynasty], employing trifling armaments, attacked our towns and the commanders were suddenly at a loss for a plan. Consequently, the towns were captured. Up until that moment, they still had time [to prepare] and the Jin still did not think the time auspicious for achieving victory. Still, resorting to arrogance, [our defenders merely] insulted one another.24

Even well after the fact, Chen Gui is intent upon castigating those who were in command for their shortcomings and he next offers his own achievement at De’an as a tangible justification of the cautious philosophy of advance preparedness that they should have pursued. Yet, even as he does so, Chen supplies his legitimating experience not so much with an aim toward justifying his actions or advancing his own reputation as with the goal of pointing out both the tragedy and the finality of an opportunity lost:

Not knowing the Jin would attack the towns, I, Gui, had [nonetheless] prepared catapults in advance. When all the people that I saw cried out that the Jin were attacking, then the enemy confronted towers with great catapults. [But] how can force ever be a match for the rule of eminent words? While this may be of little consolation, it is indisputable. As for reason when it is expressed through the words of the masses, this is also something that we should not dare to discount. Now since we already know its particulars, how can we not exhaust ourselves in analyzing that which [this reason] perceives and expresses? If whoever employs the way of warfare to perfect things and to use surprise to counter surprise proves incapable of tiring, then he will be like Heaven and Earth in their inexhaustibility, like the thousand changes and ten-thousand transformations of the rivers and seas. How can anyone deplete him?
[But] now, based on the Jin attack on the towns, a defense strategy is being complacently prepared and vaguely drawn up to arrive at methods of completely and thoroughly killing off the enemy. Even as I stand now undaunted before the intricacies, I still possess the strategy for preparation in advance that we can [only] say was not really presented to the people. Moreover, although I wish to communicate it [to them], how much the more is it now a situation of their neither being able to receive nor disseminate it further? It is only a method whereby those who defend towns diligently apply their thought and respond to changes before the enemy has arrived. It is nothing more than preparations made in advance. [Being a piece] of scant importance that I have arbitrarily affixed as an explanatory text at the end of the Complete Sayings, [this is] the preface of Chen Gui, [written] on the [first] day of the fifth month of the [lunar] year 1140.  

Less the overt moralist than Li Gang, Chen Gui concentrates on the technical and criticizes the lax and dilatory aspects of the Song defense. Also, in contrast to Li, Chen’s hindsight arguments for eternal vigilance underscore all the more his personal view that it was nothing other than the human factor and not that of divine agency that betrayed the Song. Approaching rational (and yet not particularly Confucian) humanistic philosophical heights by his failure to assign a role either to Heaven or fate, Chen Gui laments the fact that the Jin was able to make its fatal encroachments upon the Song simply because of a completely avoidable lapse of readiness. Yet we cannot completely deny that Chen Gui, like Li Gang himself, construed this failure as, in large part, a moral failing, too.

**Zhu Bian, the captive diplomat**  
The interesting reflections of Li Gang and Chen Gui assuredly enhance our awareness of the internal tension between loyalism and disaffection that was operative in the thought of numerous intellectuals in the immediate aftermath of the Nüzhēn vanquishing of the Song. Their confessional strongly suggest that the Song conflict with the Jin marked not only a watershed in historical terms but also in the existential realm of consciousness—a fundamental alteration in how the vital and loyal participants in a regime perceived it. But, to my mind, no human story of that time better informs our awareness while it simultaneously advances our search for the mental contours that define and delineate the Northern Song than that of Zhu Bian (d. 1144)  

Although not a direct witness to the fall of Kaifeng, Zhu Bian, who incidentally was a paternal uncle of the great Neo-Confucianist philosopher Zhu Xi (1130–1200), was irreversibly affected by it. If for no other reason, geographical proximity made the import of this epic event inescapable for Zhu Bian. The chaos attending it dislodged him from the comfort of his residence in nearby Xinzheng (modern northern Xinzheng county, between the Bian and Luo rivers
in Henan) – a location at a distance of less than eighty kilometers to the southwest of the doomed capital. From there, he fled south. Thus, despite the central nature of his original view on events, with his initial displacement and flight south, Zhu Bian attained an altered perspective on subsequent events that was wholly different from those of either Li Gang or Chen Gui. Moreover, his was destined to be a perspective from almost entirely beyond the borders of the conflict and, ironically, it was not to be a view from the south but from the north.

In 1128, less than two years after his flight into exile, Zhu Bian volunteered to be part of an embassy being dispatched to visit the two captive emperors, Huizong and Qinzong, in Yunzhong (modern Datong county in Shanxi). Upon arriving at Yunzhong as a vice-commissioner for the communication of requests (tongwen fushi) in 1130, Zhu met with the Jin field marshal, Zhan Han (1079–1139). According to Zhu Bian’s biography in the official Song History, Zhu made refined and persuasive requests [for the release of the two emperors but] Zhan Han would not hear of it and had him escorted to a compound, where he was kept under guard by soldiers. Zhu thereupon wrote letters [to Zhan Han], wherein he employed both the discourse of warfare and that of practicality most exhaustively.

But, most significantly, this initial confinement was only the beginning of Zhu Bian’s travails, for as his biography further records:

In 1132, the Jin forces – saying that it might be possible to arrive at a treaty – suddenly dispatched [the Song negotiator] Yuwen Xuzhong [1079–1146] [to Yunzhong]. However, it was demanded that someone [from the embassy] be sent to the Jin Military Command to receive a letter with which to return [to the Song court]. [Yuwen] Xuzhong wished for [Zhu] Bian and the principal commissioner Wang Lun [1084–1144] to decide between themselves who should go and who should remain behind [in Yunzhong]. [Zhu] Bian said: “If I come forth, I will surely have determined my own death. So why should I covet today’s good fortune of being the first to return south? I want you, Principal Commissioner [Wang], to receive this letter and return to report to the [Gaozong] emperor of the accord between the two states [Jin and Song]. If – by remaining here – I am able to extend some sustenance from what lies between the Four Seas to the two emperors [Huizong and Qinzong], then even if my bones bleach beneath the sun in this foreign state, these will still be the years for which I was given birth.”

When [Wang] Lun was about to return [to the Song court], [Zhu] Bian requested of him the following: “It was the case that ancient envoys carried with them sections of bamboo that served to symbolize their trustworthiness. Today, we lack these bamboo sections but
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[instead] carry these seals, which also symbolize trust. I ask that you leave behind [our] seal [with me], such that when I die here, my death will not be a disgrace." Lun, freeing it from his belt, gave the seal to Bian. Bian, receiving it, clutched it to his bosom and, whether sleeping or awake, [thereafter] had it with him.32

By his decision to remain behind, Zhu Bian subverted his fears of being killed and – whether founded or not – they never materialized. However, more than confirmed were his forlorn imaginings of seemingly interminable captivity. He was detained, essentially as a prisoner, in the Nüzhén-occupied north for another eleven years.33 Only as late as 1143, upon the conclusion of an agreement between the Jin and Song courts that permitted the return of the embassy, was he finally released. By that time, Zhu had been a Jin captive for a total of fifteen years and had but one year left to live.

To his credit and to our benefit, however, during the years of languishing in the north, Zhu Bian was not idle. Among his Nüzhén captors and perhaps even under their watchful eyes, Zhu composed his Heard of Old at Quwei (Quwei jiwen) – Quwei being an old alternate name for his adopted home area of Xinzheng. In fact, the title of the work is more than merely coincidental because it aptly suggests the retrogressive quality of much of its contents. Heard of Old at Quwei seems, for the most part, to have been inspired out of homesickness and the longing for a former life. Consequently, we should not be surprised at the fact that the work is largely a discursive compilation of anecdotes and opinions on the history, politics, and literature of the Tang, Five Dynasties (907–60), early Song, and occasionally other earlier eras. Perhaps using them for the soothing purpose of diversion, Zhu discusses topics that are largely uncontroversial and times that are significantly earlier – and, thus, less personal – than the ones in which he himself lived.

However, in Heard of Old at Quwei, Zhu Bian does directly address some exceptional subjects and the most salient among these are the causes behind the rise and the fall of the Song. Initially, he furnishes us with a preponderance of the material that all concentrates on the positive forces behind the Song’s rise. Zhu cites with pride the perspicacity of the founding emperors of the early Song, all of whom – prior to what he deems as the disastrous rule of Shenzong (r. 1067–85) – had nurtured the flourishing of the empire.34 He also comments on and commends the dynasty’s accepted lineage of able ministers, all of whom – prior to the notorious (in his view) exceptions of Wang Anshi (1021–86) and especially Cai Jing (1046–1126) – had placed the interests of the empire before the pursuit of their own personal agendas.35

But far more subtle, complex, and germane to our purposes are the reasons Zhu Bian offers for the Song’s fall. In explicating these particular reasons, Zhu often does touch on concerns and conditions of the current moment. Interestingly, despite his years of captivity, he does not target the Nüzhén menace and in fact tends to treat it as virtually an epilogue and thus a non-factor in the actual
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calculus of Song decline. Zhu Bian, much like Li Gang and Chen Gui, instead believed the forces of dynastic destruction to be internal centrifugal ones that lay well within the borders of the state itself and, most conspicuously, within its most trusted servants:

Since the establishment of our present [Song] dynasty, officials and functionaries at the prefectural and county level have generally not inquired into the great as well as the small, and this has become accepted in our present era. [But] we must develop and stimulate [an atmosphere conducive to] the mutual expression of thanks.

It seems that it is during the days of employment and promotion that selfishness becomes manifest. All involved, losing sight of the sources for official service, avoid the rites that lead to the dispersal of this mutual expression of thanks. This is the reason.

For Zhu Bian, however, this desperate situation is not merely remediable. The “new government” of his time had in fact already curbed its detrimental progression, brought it in check:

With the initial promulgation of the new government (xinzheng), great ministers have come to fear that the sentiments of the people are not addressed. Thus, we [now] really have a situation in which one cannot, relying on excuses, abscond as an official or reduce one’s accountability. This [situation] has given rise to regulations, and those accepting the charge of being officials who transgress against these regulations are deemed criminals. Although one may have already been pardoned and allowed to resign as an official, you must [now] seek to acquire a special verdict of severance. On this basis, how can the favors dispensed in return for obligation be an empty display? Moreover, among the high public ministers and scholar-gentlemen, there is no one who feels the need to improve upon these circumstances.

While it is vaguely apparent, exactly what Zhu Bian means by “new government” is still not precisely clear. In Heard of Old at Quwei, Zhu once refers to the extremely disruptive and contentious Yuanyou period (1086–94) under the reign of Emperor Zhezong (r. 1085–1100) as a time “when the initiative for further extending new government was not rooted in the sentiments of the people.” In another instance, Zhu Bian distinguishes the Jingkang period itself from the earlier Chongning period (1102–7) as an era in which “new government” arose. The latter observation especially suggests that he interpreted this otherwise bleak period as perhaps more of a new beginning than the epochal closure that we today ascribe as the thinking of survivors of that era. Moreover, not every reference Zhu makes to “new government” – and there are only five in his relatively short book – is vested or laced with deep meaning. Writing of the
Xining (1068–77) and the Yuanfeng (1078–85) periods, respectively, Zhu describes the “new government” of those times in mundane terms. In the former instance, “new government” is merely something which one brother, while “adducing much in its behalf,” could not prevail upon another to understand or to embrace. In the latter, it is simply something with which a certain group of scholars was once listed on a tablet as being “in disagreement.” But, these instances notwithstanding, surely what Zhu Bian seems most likely to have meant by the sole unspecified reference to the “new government” cited above is nothing other than the current one – that of the future Emperor Gaozong harbored in the south. This, after all, was the same government that had selected him to serve as one of its emissaries to the Nüzhen-held north and the one under which he thereafter served (albeit, in Jin captivity) at the time that he wrote his book.

Zhu Bian of course stops short of referring to this “new government” as a new “dynasty,” and any expectation on our part that he might have done so is patently unfair. Such a declaration, in addition to being wholly unjustified by convention, would have been seditious in the extreme. Nevertheless, Zhu’s regard for the era of “new government” as a profoundly spiritual point of departure, as a qualitatively different time of renewal is also incontrovertibly clear. This new age had already – upon its very inception – reversed the dangerously demoralizing trends in malfeasance among officials that had ravaged the immediately preceding Song reign periods. On the basis of this achievement, this era of “new government” had, at least in Zhu Bian’s mind, already attained “boundary” status – namely, a demarcating age, a true watershed. Under its aegis, the negative tendencies that had heretofore entrenched themselves as normative were discontinued, and this transformation alone distinguished it from all other previous and more typical Song transitions in either emperor or reign period.

Can we really contend with certainty that Zhu Bian did not believe this “new government” to be also capable of such redemptive feats as driving away the hated Nüzhen? Can we really doubt that throngs of other intellectuals both like and unlike Zhu himself might not have held this same belief? Can we say, without equivocation, that these individuals did not – however subliminally and furtively – think of the previous age as something discrete, terminated, and gone for ever?

Of those here presented, Zhu Bian’s testimony is doubtless the most revealing of the three; this is the case for at least two reasons. First, in contrast to the accounts of Li Gang and Chen Gui, Zhu’s description certainly evinces the least degree of self-interest; as an author, Zhu is the least concerned of the three with preserving his own personal reputation and, thereby, ensuring a favorable legacy for himself as an individual. Writing only of the fall of the Song generally, Zhu Bian nowhere addresses the climactic siege and defense of Kaifeng in particular because, having played no role in the event, he could not stand to profit by doing so. But there is a second and related reason for why Zhu Bian’s reflections surpass those by Li Gang and Chen Gui in their revelatory quality. Objectivity seems hardly to have even been a conscious goal of either Li or Chen, with the
former concluding his “Self-Preface” with the impassioned claim, “So I have made this record, to set down the truth of things and conceal nothing. May later readers be moved by this composition.” But it is Zhu Bian’s statements rather than Li Gang’s that indisputably attain to a higher order of objectivity. Ironically, this achievement also probably stems most directly from his fortuitous condition of having been a southern refugee, well removed from Kaifeng and much beyond the fray at precisely the time when the struggle for the capital was most heated and most contested.

Whether considered jointly or separately, the records of Li Gang, Chen Gui, and Zhu Bian conform to and, thereby, confirm the standard depictions of Song resistance in the face of Jin incursions into North China. Witnesses to the events took the lack of preparedness of the Song military organization to be the result of complacency and its unwillingness to engage the enemy determinedly to be the result of fright. Thus, in their combined view, total Song ineptitude in anticipating – not to mention, meeting – the threat of invasion contributed as much as any other factor to the Nuzhen achieving the infamous milestone of being “the first steppe or pastoral–nomadic nationality in Chinese history to cross the Yangtze.” But what is most compelling and arresting about the collective testimony of Li Gang, Chen Gui, and Zhu Bian is the way in which it registers the depth of their profound dissent. Spawned by moral outrage, it stands today as a scathing and cohesive indictment of the timorous leadership of their day for its dearth of moral courage. Thus, through their separate but coordinated protestations, three Song intellectuals with markedly dissimilar experiences have framed the inherent tension between intense loyalism and frank disaffection that was equally experienced by so many of their contemporaries. The loyalty of men like Li Gang, Chen Gui, and Zhu Bian to the Song and to its continuation was unassailable. But, at the same time, they regarded the failure of Song leadership to make either a vigorous military or a concerted moral stand with abject and unavoidable abhorrence. Theirs was a disgust so deep that no doubt must have caused them to question – even if only subliminally – the viability of the dynasty as a present or future historical reality. Whether real or imagined, the futility of their dilemma was mirrored in the minds of legions of other onlookers – contemporaries as hapless as they themselves were. Herein, as surely as in any other factor, lay the real impetus that forced all those who were conscious of living through its myriad uncertainties to concede the undeniable emergence of the Northern Song.

**Beyond periodization**

Inasmuch as I had entertained any preconceptions prior to conducting the research for this chapter, I had expected to find that the Northern Song was almost entirely the invention of our twentieth-century consciousness. But the preliminary evidence has already proven this hardly to be the case. As we have seen, despite their differing perspectives, each of the three individuals discussed – Li Gang, Chen Gui, and Zhu Bian – deemed the bifurcation of their dynasty...
ascribed to the aggression of the Jin to be more attributable to the moral destitution, if not moral bankruptcy, of the Song itself. The picture that emerges from their words is that of a dynasty that, by the first quarter of the twelfth century, had lost both its inner capacity and its moral resolve for survival. To the extent that they saw this to be the case, Li Gang, Chen Gui, and Zhu Bian each also viewed the Song as somehow colluding in its own ordeal of subversion. This uniform response integrates their distinct voices and serves as the thread of commonality that transcends their otherwise highly disparate backgrounds, status, talents, and experiences of the same defining event.

But, to return briefly to where we began, the evidence—especially that of a philological nature—also demonstrates the folly of thinking of the invention of the Northern Song as an exclusively twelfth-century question. I have become convinced that the Northern Song arose not so much in the year 1126 as it did at whatever moment the idea of the original Song could no longer be intellectually sustained as a consequence of its having become intellectually indefensible. To be sure, there remained a loyalist coterie of individuals who staunchly insisted that the dynasty as constituted at Hangzhou was nothing other than a perpetuation of the one once situated at Kaifeng. But even such unremitting supporters as these eventually had to confront their own individual moments of recognition that the Chinese state in the south—no matter how sovereign and no matter how faithful in its replication of the one of old—was categorically unlike what had come before it.

Thus, on the basis of the foregoing illustrative but hardly exhaustive accounts, I contend that the Northern Song was first and foremost a mental (if not entirely psychological) product, and one that apparently preceded the term used to define it by centuries. In the minds of a critical mass of members of the political elite, military ineptitude and defeat was somehow less of a factor in the emerging recognition of a bifurcated Song dynasty than was the emergence of an aversion to being made culpable for it. These individuals no doubt developed an inward intellectual dissociation in response to the trauma, one that was troubling to them in the extreme but far from paralyzing; it made them unwilling to assume responsibility for the Song’s demise. They could bring themselves neither to conspire in dynastic dissolution, on the one hand, nor to share in the blame for it, on the other. Even while it might defy periodization, these were nonetheless the conditions under which the dire and unpalatable prospect of a Northern Song first arose as a mental fixture in the collective consciousness of the broadest array of Song intellectuals. Oftentimes, a new order, such as the Southern Song, arises only when enough people of influence finally and simply give up on trying to justify or preserve the old one.

In the end, answering exactly when this time of emergence was remains nearly as difficult now as when we began. As we have learned, designating a time before or after the fateful year 1126 is as plausible as restrictively defining it as an event only of that year. This conundrum summons to mind various analogies, such as the proverbial paradox of where exactly the man was—both spatially and
temporally – when he jumped off the bridge. To say, “He was poised on the railing” can easily be challenged with, “That was before he jumped”; to say, “He was airborne” can, with equal ease, be countered with, “That was after he jumped.” Yet, despite this element of irresolution, it appears that Schwartz was indeed right in observing that the history of an idea can be (and perhaps must be) immensely larger and longer than its identifying term. Furthermore, once this principle is acknowledged, then its application to a construct like the Northern Song should be – in every sense – transporting for us. If we pause to contemplate fully the pejorative and emotionally charged conditions that gave birth to the term as a term, we can instantly apprehend – with undiminished force – how fully the very idea of the Northern Song once denoted nothing less than the single greatest fear of an entire culture.

Notes

1 Interestingly, the term lin’an, by which the ancient city of Hangzhou was renamed and elevated to fu (superior prefecture) status, literally means “temporary peace or refuge.” Thus, the resolve and intentions of the displaced Song leadership are immediately conveyed through the very name it selected in renaming the city. On this basis, we need not doubt that those who chose Hangzhou as a site of respite regarded it as little more than a way station to be occupied briefly before returning to normalcy in the north. This dispensable attitude toward the city as capital being the case on their part, we can safely surmise that Hangzhou ultimately became the successor capital to Kaifeng only by default. Moreover, the evidence suggests that even this seemingly nominal act of renaming the city was itself a concession made with some reluctance – Hangzhou did not become Lin’an until 1129, two years after the Song court had firmly ensconced itself there. See the “Introduction” of Hoyt Cleveland Tillman and Stephen H. West, eds, China under Jurchen Rule: Essays in Chin Intellectual and Cultural History (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 3.


3 The Liao dynasty is also often dated as spanning from 947 to 1125. For more on the rationale and reasons behind this discrepancy, see F.W. Mote, Imperial China, 900–1800 (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 40.

4 For more detailed information on these encroachments and particularly the circumstances that precipitated the hostilities of 1004–5 that resulted in the Chanyun treaty, see David C. Wright, “The Sung–Khitans War of A.D. 1004–1005 and the Treaty of Shanyuan,” Journal of Asian History 32.1 (1998): 3–48. See also Mote, Imperial China, pp. 70–1.


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10 These notational references are restricted entirely to the footnotes of the standard punctuated editions of the pre-Ming histories and, of course, are all the products of modern editors. There are six such references in the Song History (Songshi) and three in the Jin History (Jinshi). See Songshi, ed. Toghto et al. (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 11: 3601, 14: 4850, 26: 9219, 37: 12903, 38: 13314. See also Jinshi, ed. Toghto et al. (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 6: 2082, 8: 2728. The real significance of the first and exclusive reference to the Northern Song in the main text of the Ming History lies in the often-observed fact that no dynasty in China ever enjoyed the luxury of writing its own history. Although initiated in 1645, the first edition of the Mingshi was not published until 1739 and the directorship of the completed project is nominally ascribed to the ethnic Han scholar Zhang Tingyu (1672–1755). Nevertheless, to be sure, the insecure Qing dynasty regime doubtless employed its own Manchu editors and compilers as inspectors and censors on all aspects of all work relating to the highly sensitive Ming History. Thus, there is little reason for accepting the single appearance of the Chinese characters for “Northern Song” within this text as anything more than an anachronistic imputation on their part. Viewed in this way, this discovery serves not only as further evidence that Northern Song is a contrived term arrived at only fairly recently, even as it proves it to be substantially older – by nearly two centuries – than Ye Dehui’s usage. It also strongly suggests that the term was originally a Manchu (or at least Manchu-sanctioned) rather than an ethnic Han innovation of the seventeenth or possibly the eighteenth century. For more information on Zhang Tingyu, see Fang Chao-ying, “Chang T’ing-yü” in Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period (1644–1912), ed. Arthur W. Hummel (Washington, US Government Printing Office, 1943–4), 1: 54–6.

11 Another Han–Song parallel concerns the well-known interregnum of Wang Mang (45 BCE–23 CE) and the much less well-known interregnum of Zhang Bangchang (1081–1127). Wang Mang usurped power and ruled for the fifteen-year interval (8–23 CE) between the dissolution and the re-establishment of the Han dynasty. While colluding with the enemy Jin empire (by some accounts, he was installed as a puppet), Zhang Bangchang insinuated himself into the position of nominal preserver of the Chinese state for a brief two-month period. His interregnum began after the Nüzhen kidnapping of emperors Qinzong and Huizong in the first lunar month of 1127 and ended prior to the restoration to power of the Zhao imperial family under Gaozong on the first day of the fifth month. Both men founded new dynasties (Wang, the Xin; Zhang, the Chu) but whereas Wang Mang’s power was genuine, that of Zhang Bangchang, as a pretender to the throne, was only marginally titular, at best. Zhang Bangchang is briefly discussed in John W. Chaffee, Branches of Heaven: A History of the Imperial Clan of Sung China (Cambridge, Mass. and London, Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), pp. 127, 134.


13 Sinologists and Western historians of China first became aware of the importance of Li Gang primarily through the pioneering scholarship of John W. Haeger. For more on Li’s life and career, see Haeger’s “1126–27: Political Crisis” in Crisis and Prosperity in Sung China, ed. John W. Haeger (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1975), pp. 143–61. See also the brief synopsis and assessment of Li Gang’s importance and activities in Mote, Imperial China, pp. 292–3.

14 Ibid., p. 144.
As intriguing as it is, Li Gang’s chronicle is hardly a unique document. On the contrary, it is a part of a substantial body of confessional records authored by officials of that time and later who were in the throes of military and cultural subjugation by a conquering regime. Until recently, modern scholars have given this corpus only scant and incidental attention and treatment. One outstanding exception is Hok-lam Chan, *The Fall of Jurchen Chin: Wang E’s Memoir on Ts’ai-chou Under the Mongol Siege, 1233–1234* (Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993). As its title indicates, this work is an eyewitness account of the Mongol assault on the Nuzhen, as told by a Jin Confucian-minded literatus. Interestingly, this campaign—which occurred only slightly more than a century after the Jin incursions against the Song—was one in which Kaifeng yet again served as the principal battleground.

Much unlike Li Gang, Chen Gui—despite his prominence in the defense against the Jin, and his authorship of at least two significant short treatises on military defense resulting from his personal experiences—is a figure about whom virtually nothing substantive is known. For the few surviving details, see Herbert Franke, “Shou-ch’eng lu, 4 ch. (ca. 1225)” in *A Sung Bibliography (Bibliographie des Sung)*, ed. Étienne Balazs and Yves Hervouet (Hong Kong, The Chinese University Press, 1978), p. 237.

Whether it was written by Chen Gui or not, the work *Chaoye qianyan*—to which his postface was originally appended—appears to have been lost.

Chen Gui, “Chaoye qianyan houxu,” *Shoucheng lu*, 1.10b. For Chen Gui’s quotation of the *Sunzi*, see *Sunzi bingfa*, 1.1.

Zhu Bian was a native of Wuyuan in Huizhou, a locale in extreme southeastern modern Anhui province. His official biography begins juan 373 of the *Songshi*.

Zhu Xi was the most prominent—by far—of the Neo-Confucianist philosophers, regardless of era. More than any other single individual, he is responsible for the establishment and entrenchment of Confucian thought as a cultural staple of the later imperial period of Chinese history. In modern times, he has become the focus of intense research and the subject of numerous books and countless articles in Western as well as in Chinese and Japanese languages. For a general account of his place in Chinese cultural tradition, see Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi’s Ascendancy* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1992).

Although there is no information on his early life and exceedingly little on his career prior to 1128, Zhu Bian himself informs us that he did attend the National University (taixue). Also, throughout the *Quwei jiuwen*, Zhu also displays an excellent knowledge of the civil service examination system as well as an intimate familiarity—whether derived in an official capacity or not—with Chengdu (in Sichuan) and its environs, where he visited or perhaps resided between the years 1111 and 1118. See Zhu Bian, *Quwei jiuwen*, 1.7, 3.22, 3.23.

Zhan Han (a name sinicized from the original Zhan Meihe) or Wanyan Zonghan was the eldest son of Che Gai (d. 1121), a counselor-delegate (guoxiang) over the soon-to-be vanquished Qidan Liao state. Being, like his father, a close associate of the founding Jin emperor, Zhan Han was highly instrumental in the Jin conquest of Song and seemingly ubiquitous in nearly every major strategic aspect of the conflict between the two states. See his biography in *Jinshi*, 5.1693–1700.
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32 Ibid., 11551–2. Yuwen Xuzhong, who was a native of Chengdu, received his *jinshi* or doctoral degree in 1106. While his initial government posts involved work as an editor and compiler, Yuwen attracted notice for having composed a memorial that was extremely critical of Song military operations, with the result that he became an active and influential negotiator with the Jin. See the biography of Yuwen Xuzhong in *Songshi*, 33: 11526–9. Wang Lun was a native of Xin county (in extreme western modern Shandong) and descended from the great early Song grand councilor Wang Dan (957–1017), who was the reputed original architect of the long-term policy of appeasement toward the Liao and Xi Xia dynasties. Wang Lun himself was very much a man in the same expedient mold as his manipulative ancestor. His biography in the *Song History* reports that upon his release from detention by Zhan Han in 1132 in order to return to the Song court with the proposal for a treaty: “[Wang] Lun arrived at Lin’an in the autumn but, upon entering the capital, he [himself] opposed the accord. He said that the intentions of the Nüzhen were utterly false in the extreme, whereupon the emperor lavishly rewarded him.” See *Songshi*, 33: 11523.

33 In 1143, Zhu Bian authored a famous stele inscription on the history and repair of a major Buddhist monastery, the Shanhuasi or Transformation toward Goodness Monastery (located in Yunzhong, which subsequently – by Ming times – became the walled city of Datong). This document, which – in its stone version – is inexplicably dated 1176, provides important corroborative evidence on the duration of his captivity. See the brief discussion of its significance in Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1997), pp. 142–3.

34 On the whole, throughout the *Quwei jiuwen*, Zhu Bian is severely critical of Shenzong as well as his principal ministers. In this way, Zhu shows himself to be allied with and sympathetic toward the views of the conservative anti-reform elite resistance that opposed the policies endorsed by the emperor in his own time.

35 Wang Anshi and, subsequently, Cai Jing were the chief champions of reform. Wang, in particular, who was the mastermind behind the radical program of sweeping New Policies (*xinfa*), has been the subject of much scholarly attention. Cai Jing, as the most durable of Huizong’s chief ministers (holding the office from 1102 to 1105 and again from 1107 to 1125), essentially tried to resurrect Wang’s policies in the subsequent era. For a discussion of the commanding influence of his reform effort and particularly its decisive bearing upon the interests of imperial clan, see Chaffee, *Branches of Heaven*, pp. 76, 95–102.

36 We may choose to regard this fact as either expected or astonishing, depending on whether Zhu Bian’s Nüzhen captors monitored his composition of *Quwei jiuwen* or not. Just what the actual situation was is unknown but there are clues suggesting that such monitoring was indeed the case. For example, Zhu rarely refers to the 1126 Nüzhen assault upon Kaifeng and even these scant references are all elliptical. In one instance, he almost euphemistically states that: “With the advent of the Jingkang era, the national capital fell into enemy hands.” See Zhu Bian, *Quwei jiuwen*, 6.46.

37 Zhu Bian, *Quwei jiuwen*, 2.15.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., 6.43.

40 Ibid., 6.45.

41 Ibid., 6.47, 2.12. Despite the terrene quality of these references, probably worth noting are the facts that the disputing brothers were none other than Wang Anshi and Wang Anguo (1028–74) and at the head of this tablet’s list of discontents was the name of the illustrious Su Shi (1036–1101). Incidentally, the convention of prescribing both the living and the deceased by listing their names on tablets was especially common during certain periods of the highly factious Song dynasty. Probably the most notorious example was the erection of the so-called “Traitors’ Tablet” (*jianpai*) during the reign of Huizong in late 1102. It was inscribed with the names of some
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120 officials who had been opposed to Wang Anshi’s New Policies program and a replica of the tablet was ordered to be erected in each county throughout the empire. In a sudden reversal by the same emperor that was also typical of the times, the tablets were all ordered destroyed in early 1106. See H.R. Williamson, *Wang An Shih: A Chinese Statesman and Educationalist of the Sung Dynasty* (London, Arthur Probsthain, 1935), 2: 402. See also Chaffee, *Branches of Heaven*, pp. 96–7.

42 Similarly, scholars of the period now recognized as Eastern or Later Han (ca. 25–220) certainly did not regard it as such in its time. Only upon scrutiny by much later Period of Division (220–589) and Tang interpreters did this distinction (Western or Former versus Eastern or Later) between the two Hans emerge and then become formalized and accepted. See Zhu Bian’s deployment of this distinction in *Quwei jiwen*, 10.76, 10.79–80.

43 Li Gang, “Zhixu,” 2.


Bibliography


THE INVENTION OF THE NORTHERN SONG


Sunzi 孫子. *Sunzi bingfa 孫子兵法* (*Sunzi's Art of War*).


GLOSSARY

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Han officials and soldiers take great delight in treating the people of Qian [Guizhou] in a brutal manner. When Miao and Zhongjia villagers present food as tax payment to officials, they do so with the utmost courtesy. Our officials, however, never fail to take advantage of this situation. They raise the tax payment by calculating the grain in such a way that the Miao and Zhongjia are forced to offer more grain as tax. When the Miao and Zhongjia object to this practice, they are beaten unmercifully. . . . Before the bandits [She Chongming and An Bangyan] rebelled, our officials (in Sichuan and Guizhou) had long supported attempts to confiscate their lands. Our [Ming official’s] past behavior has created the present situation (rebellion). Weaker 
tusi (native officials) who are more filial and respectful to our officials are the ones who suffer the most, and nine out of ten officials allow their subordinates to exploit these weaker 
tusi. Although weaker 
tusi only show their dismay when treated unfairly, stronger 
tusi will fight back. The present situation is a case in point.1

Introduction

Liu Xixuan, a low-ranking education official in the remote southwestern province of Guizhou hastily wrote the above passage in 1621 in an attempt to explain to his superiors in Beijing the reasons behind the sudden outbreak of anti-Ming dynasty hostilities in Sichuan and Guizhou. By the time the anti-Ming violence in Sichuan and Guizhou was brought under control in 1629, the name Liu Xixuan was synonymous with heroism, and the anti-Ming uprising he described and endured was popularly known as the She–An Rebellion, 1621–9. The two characters, She and An, stand for the surnames of the two 
tusi (native officials) and leaders of the anti-Ming rebellion: She Chongming, the Yongning pacification commissioner (xuanfu shi), and An Bangyan, the uncle and regent of the infant Guizhou pacification commissioner (xuanwei shi), An Wei.2 In 1621, She
Chongming led his troops north from Yongning toward the important commercial city of Chongqing. Along the way, his large and well-equipped army laid waste virtually everything in its path: according to one intrepid traveler through the region, “any semblance to human activity is gone.”4 Following a short siege of Chongqing, She set his sights on a much bigger prize, the city of Chengdu – the center of Ming political and military authority in Sichuan. She’s siege of Chengdu lasted for 102 days, but impenetrable fortifications and stiff resistance proved decisive in turning him away. She’s force, now approximately 200,000-strong, pillaged its way back toward Yongning, where, for the next six years it was able to turn back several Ming armies sent to pacify that area.

As She Chongming attacked the Sichuan cities of Chongqing and Chengdu, his brother-in-law An Bangyan mobilized forces in the Shuixi region of northwest Guizhou to attack Chinese settlements and Ming installations in western and central Guizhou. Early in 1622, Shuixi’s cavalry of several thousand horses and elephants marched alongside approximately 250,000 foot soldiers toward Guiyang, the provincial capital of Guizhou. An’s Shuixi force laid siege to the city for 296 days, but in the end Liu Xixuan and some two hundred civilians were able to withstand An’s relentless assaults against the city.5 The extraordinary circumstances under which Liu and a handful of civilians were able to survive the relentless siege became legendary. And in Chinese texts, if not the popular consciousness of the time, it was the heroism of Liu and the other survivors that became the story within the story of the rebellion. For the most part historians in the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1636–1912) dynasties accepted Liu’s “authoritative” explanation that a rapacious and oppressive Ming officialdom had forced the barbarians (man) into open rebellion; however, in recent years Nasu and Chinese historians have unearthed new information, consisting of historical texts written in Nasu and Chinese, about the history of the Nasu people in Shuixi and their relations with an expanding Chinese state that demands that we rethink not only the origins of the She–An Rebellion itself, but also the place of the Nasu people in the history of China’s southwest frontier.6

This chapter examines the origins of the She–An Rebellion of 1621–9 by offering a diachronic study of the history of the Nasu people in Shuixi. The chapter begins with a brief description of the historical background of the Nasu people in Shuixi and includes: the migration of the Azhe patriclan from the Wumeng Mountains in northeast Yunnan into the Shuixi region of northwest Guizhou beginning in the third century CE; the Azhe patriclan’s creation of the Mu’ege kingdom in Shuixi and the subsequent expansion of Azhe control over much of Guizhou province; and an analysis of the historical relationship between the Azhe patriclan and the Tang and Song states. Next, I examine the Mongol conquest of Shuixi and defeat of the Mu’ege kingdom in the 1290s, and the gradual closing of the Guizhou frontier during the Ming dynasty. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the underlying structural causes to the
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She-An Rebellion. My objective in the conclusion and throughout the chapter is to show that a changing indigenous political economy in Shuixi, the Azhe patriclan’s desire to reclaim ancestral territory seized by Chinese settlers and the Ming state, as well as a corrupt Ming bureaucracy (Liu Xixuan’s own argument), all played a role in escalating tensions in Guizhou during the third decade of the seventeenth century.

Historical background: the Nasu of Shuixi

Based on several recently published Nasu (Cuan or Yi) language texts, Nasu people presently living in the Shuixi region of northwest Guizhou now trace their ancestry back nearly one hundred generations to an individual named Dumuwu. In this foundation myth, Dumuwu lived with his three wives among the Luyang Mountains in northeast Yunnan. It was here that Dumuwu’s three wives, often referred to in Nasu historical texts as the three celestial spirits (sanxian), bore him six sons. These six sons, known to the Nasu as the six ancestors (liuzu), each became the founding ancestor of a patrilineal descent group that eventually left the Luyang Mountains to settle other less inhabited parts of the southwest. The descendants of these six ancestors were eventually distinguished by six surnames, which have been transliterated into Chinese as Wu, Zha, Nuo, Heng, Bu, and Mo.

At some point during the fourth and third centuries BCE, the foundation myth informs us that the Heng, Bu, and Mo patriclans began moving east across the Wumeng Mountain range. The Heng patriclan quickly divided into two branches with the first branch, known as the Wumeng, settling along the western slope of the Wumeng Mountain range. The Wumeng eventually extended their control as far west as the present-day city of Zhaotong, which, not surprisingly, was called Wumeng until the mid-eighteenth century. The other branch of the Heng patriclan, the Chele, moved along the eastern slope of the Wumeng Mountain range and eventually settled to the north of the Chishui River. By the beginning of the Tang dynasty (618–907), the Chele branch occupied the entire area from Xuyong in southern Sichuan to the city of Bijie in northwest Guizhou.

As elements of the Heng patriclan migrated in a northeasterly direction from the Luyang Mountains, the Bu patriclan fragmented into four branches with the Bole branch moving east as far as the city of Anshun, in central Guizhou. Prior to the Mongol invasion of the southwest in 1253, the city of Anshun and much of central Guizhou was referred to simply as Bole. The Wusa branch settled the area encompassing the present-day city of Weining, which prior to the mid-eighteenth century was called Wusa; the Azouchi branch settled in the Zhanyi area of Yunnan, between the cities of Weining to the north and Qujing to the south; and the Gukuge branch remained near Dumuwu’s original home territory in the Huize–Xuanwei–Dongchuan area of northeast Yunnan. For the history of the Nasu settlement of Shuixi, however, the clan divisions and migratory patterns of the Mo patriclan are particularly important.
The origins of the Mo patriclan begin with Dumuwu’s sixth son, Mujiji. Mujiji’s direct descendants evidently continued to reside in the Dongchuan area of northeast Yunnan for several generations before acquiring the surname Mo. Specifically, Mujiji’s tenth generation descendant was a man named Shaoyamo who, because it was the custom for the son to adopt as his first name his father’s second name (fuzi lianning, or father and son linked names), gave the name “mo” to his eldest son, Moyade. It was also the custom among Mujiji’s descendants to divide the patriclan every tenth generation, thus Moyade became the head of a new patriclan called the Mo. Nine generations later, custom again demanded that the three sons of Mujiji’s nineteenth generation descendant, Bi’ewu, form three new clans. Bi’ewu’s eldest son Wualou led his clan, known as the Awangren, into the heart of the former Yelang kingdom. The Awangren settled the Panxian–Puan area of southwest Guizhou and formed what Chinese texts call the Ziqi kingdom. The Bei Pan River, formerly the heart of the ancient Yelang kingdom and the Zangge commandery during the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE), acted as the natural border separating the Awangren to the west and the Bole to the east. Wuake, Bi’ewu’s second son, founded the Ayuxi branch and relocated his followers in an area near Ma’an Mountain, to the south of the city of Huize in northeast Yunnan. Wuana, the youngest of Bi’ewu’s three sons, led his family a short distance across the Wumeng Mountain range to the Geluo area of present-day Hezhang county where he established his new home.10

The Geluo area continued to serve as the headquarters of Wuana’s descendants for at least another four generations, or until Shaoayatu’s (Mujiji’s twenty-fourth generation descendant) two sons, Tuomangbu and Tuoazhe, defied custom and split the patriclan, possibly due to the presence of Zhuge Liang’s (181–234) Shu Han (221–63) army. As a result of the separation Tuomangbu led his followers a short distance north along the eastern slope of the Wumeng Mountain range toward the present-day city of Zhenxiong, where his descendants established the Mangbu branch of the Mo patriclan. For his part Tuoazhe, also known as Huoju or Jihuo in Chinese texts, seized control of the important commercial city of Luogen, located along the strategically important Southern Barbarian Route. It was in Luogen, in 225 CE, that Zhuge Liang enlisted Tuoazhe’s support in the Shu Han campaign against rebels in Yunnan. Tuoazhe supplied Zhuge Liang’s army with much needed provisions and sent his own troops as scouts in advance of the main body of Shu Han troops. As a reward for his timely service, Zhuge Liang bestowed on Tuoazhe the hereditary title Lord of Luodian (Luodian junzhang), and because of the custom of father and son linked names, Tuoazhe’s descendants became known as the Azhe patriclan.11

As one might expect, Tuoazhe and his descendants utilized their new political relationship with the Shu Han state to eliminate local enemies and expand their domain, and within three generations the Azhe patriclan had extended its jurisdiction over much of the Shuixi region of northwest Guizhou. By 300 CE, the Lord of Luodian, a man named Mowang, moved the political center east to the city of Mugebaizhage, the modern city of Dafang, where he proclaimed the
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The founding of the Mu’ege kingdom. For the next five centuries the political scope of the Mu’ege kingdom continued to expand throughout Guizhou, ultimately expanding as far south and east as the city of Duyun. In short, by the beginning of the Tang dynasty, the Mu’ege kingdom controlled about half of present-day Guizhou province, and its dominance over this territory placed it in a strategically important location between Tang China and the expanding Nanzhao kingdom (762–902).

Following the unexpected Nanzhao attack on Chengdu in 829, Tang officials met with the political-religious head or “spirit master” (guizhu) of the Mu’ege kingdom, a man named Agengawei (Apei in Chinese texts), in order to persuade him to side with the Tang against the Nanzhao. According to the New Tang History (Xin Tang shu), the territory ruled by Agengawei was called the Zangge kingdom, undoubtedly because much of the territory under his control lay within the geopolitical parameters of the former Zangge commandery. Agengawei’s Zangge (Mu’ege) kingdom was situated some nine hundred li east of the town of Kunzhou (Kunming) and covered a vast expanse of land. Betraying their desperate need for military assistance to fight the Nanzhao, Tang officials reported that Agengawei possessed a large and highly skilled cavalry that was capable of traveling great distances in very short periods of time, and that Agengawei was willing to help the Tang fight Nanzhao if the situation should present itself. Although these Tang sources tell us that Agengawei agreed to become an inner vassal (neishu) of the Tang at this time, they fail to mention the presentation of tribute (gong) or the payment of taxes by Agengawei to the Tang court, clear textual markers of submission.

To further solidify a buffer zone between itself and the expansionistic Nanzhao kingdom, in 846 the Tang bestowed upon the patriarch of the Bole patriclan the hereditary title King of the Luodian kingdom (Luodian guo wang). In the same year the Tang forged a relationship with the Awangren branch of the Mo patriclan, which had settled in the Panxian–Puan area of southwest Guizhou, and recognized the Awangren as leaders of the Yushi kingdom. A year later, in 847, the Tang acknowledged the formation of the Badedian kingdom located in northeast Yunnan and headed by the Mangbu branch of the Azhe patriclan. These four kingdoms, Zangge (Mu’ege), Luodian, Yushi, and Badedian formed an initial Tang defensive perimeter between Nanzhao-controlled territory to the southwest and Tang China. These mid-ninth-century military alliances between the Tang state and the various Nasu kingdoms resulted in some of the first Chinese descriptions of the Nasu peoples living in this portion of the southwest.

Fan Chuo, a particularly observant official, described the ancestors of today’s Nasu (he referred to them as black barbarians, or wuman) in the following way:

the men braid their hair, but the women allow their hair to fall loose and unbound. Upon meeting others they exhibit no ritual decorum, neither bowing nor kneeling. Three or four translations are required
before their speech is intelligible to Han [Chinese]. Cattle and horses are plentiful in this region, but silk and hemp are unknown.

The wuman, Fan further noted, showed great respect for their ancestors but were awed by an array of malevolent spirits inhabiting nature’s mountains and rivers. For this reason, the most powerful man among the wuman was a political–religious figure identified as “spirit master” (guizhu).

Each year every household was expected to bring oxen and sheep to the spirit master’s residence to be offered as sacrifice. When the spirits arrive and depart the sacrificial festivities the participants brandish their weapons, and this often leads to violence and blood feuds.16

Moreover, Tang officials noted that the largest tribe among the wuman was led by an individual called the “great spirit master” (da guizhu), while smaller tribes that numbered approximately one hundred households were led by “lesser spirit masters” (xiao guizhu).17 In this regard, then, the spirit master was viewed by Tang officials as the leader of the wuman, and Tang relations with the various spirit masters of the four kingdoms became increasingly important during the second half of the ninth century, as Nanzhao forces continually threatened Tang institutions in Guizhou.

As noted earlier, the Mu’ege kingdom’s seat of power at the beginning of the seventh century was a small mountain hamlet in central Shuixi called Mugebaizhage; however, by the middle of the ninth century the Azhe patriclan had shifted the political center of the kingdom south to Shiren Mountain, near modern Guiyang. Nazhiduse, Wuana’s twenty-fourth generational descendant was credited with guiding the Azhe patriclan in its expansion across the Yachi River into the territory called Shuidong, apparently with the Tang state’s blessing.18 Even so, in one of those historical peculiarities that intrigue historians but rarely anyone else, the combatant Tang and Nanzhao empires literally collapsed at the same time, leaving the Mu’ege kingdom free to extend its control throughout central and eastern Guizhou. Whereas Nanzhao dissolved into a myriad of petty kingdoms before reunifying to form the Dali kingdom (934–1253), in 960 China overcame the powerful centripetal forces of the Five Dynasties period (906–60) when the Later Zhou general Zhao Kuangyin (927–76; Song Taizu, r. 960–76) founded the Song dynasty (960–1279). Thus, once again, the Mu’ege kingdom was placed in the middle of two energetic and expansionistic empires: Dali to the southwest and Song China to the north.

Zhao Kuangyin’s strategy to extend Song sovereignty over the southwest region relied primarily on diplomatic intimidation instead of blatant military muscle. During the latter half of the tenth century, the four most powerful families located to the northeast of the Mu’ege kingdom, the Yang of Bozhou, the Song of Manzhou, the Tian of Sizhou, and the Long of Nanning, each claimed descent from earlier Chinese military officials sent to pacify rebellious barbarians (man)
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in the Tang period, and were therefore deemed susceptible to Zhao’s entreaties of service to the Song state. For example when Long Yanyao, patriarch of the Long family in Nanning, submitted to Song rule in 967 he was named by Zhao Kuangyin the General Who Returned to Virtue (guide jiangjun), the Regional Inspector (cishi) of Nanning Prefecture, and Commissioner of the Barbarian Tribes (fanluo shi). Zhao guaranteed Long Yanyao that even though Nanning was now an official prefecture of the Chinese state he would not appoint Chinese officials to the post nor would he dispatch Chinese military units to the region, unless requested by Long himself. Moreover, Long’s descendants would be allowed to inherit the various titles awarded by the Song emperor, and the Song state would continue to recognize Nanning Prefecture as the Long family’s personal domain.19

In return, Long Yanyao was ordered to lead a tribute delegation to the Song capital as an act of submission, but his poor health and eventual death in 971 prevented the tribute delegation from traveling to the Song capital at this time. In 980, Long Yanyao’s grandson Long Qiongju did lead a delegation of nearly 750 Long family members and their retainers to the Song capital to present a tribute gift of 500 Dali horses to the new Song emperor, Zhao Guangyi (939–97; Song Taizong, r. 976–97). In 995, the Long family patriarch, Long Hanyao, sent another large tribute delegation to the Song capital during which Zhao Guangyi requested the Long delegation perform a dance according to the customs of the people of Nanning.20 The performance so impressed the Song emperor that he bestowed upon Long Hanyao the two additional titles, General-in-Chief Who Brings Peace to Distant Corners of the Realm (ningyuan da jiangjun) and King Who Returned to Civilization (guihua wang), and awarded imperial titles to twenty-four high-ranking members in Long’s delegation. Three years later, in 998, Long Hanyao personally led yet another tribute delegation to the Song court to pay his respects to the new emperor, Zhao Dechang (968–1022; Song Zhenzong, r. 998–1022). This massive delegation consisted of over 1,000 members, mostly Long family members, and 1,000 Dali horses. Again, the Song emperor was so flattered by this show of submission and filial behavior that he granted imperial titles to 130 members of this delegation.

The early Song rulers treated the Yang of Bozhou, the Song of Manzhou, and the Tian of Sizhou in much the same manner, bestowing lofty titles on the patriarch of the family and investing other family members and high-ranking retainers with minor titles. For the Mu’ege kingdom, however, Song diplomacy proved to be less effective. In 975 Zhao Guangyi dispatched a communiqué to Pugui, the spirit master of the Mu’ege kingdom and the thirty-third generational descendant of Wuana, in an attempt to convince Pugui to acquiesce to Song overlordship. Written in a way that would both appeal to Pugui’s sense of dignity and yet threaten his very existence, Zhao’s declaration reads as follows:

I rely on justice to attract loyalty from China’s neighbors, while tribal peoples (manbo) use force to gain followers. Only you [Pugui] in far-off
Qian [Guizhou] are willing to abide by our sense of justice. Regulations created by China’s previous emperors demanded that those who submitted to our authority must present tribute to the court. As a result the frontier tribes who presented tribute became quite successful, while our armies punished those unwilling to present tribute. Recently I dispatched troops to assist the Yang family of Bonan [Bozhou], an act that certainly frightened many of you in Qian. When my officials suggested I dispatch troops to your domain to punish you for not presenting tribute to my court, I said: “When people in remote areas refuse to submit to our authority, then our culture and sense of justice should be used to attract them. I do not believe using force can create loyalty.” Not long after my troops returned [from Bonan], I learned that you and your mother wanted to submit; therefore, I have written this edict announcing your allegiance. Once your territory is allied with my court, you will be granted title and salary, and the land and people will remain as it is now for generations to come. I will not break my promise. I announce this edict so that all will obey.21

Although we have no record of Pugui’s reply to Zhao Guangyi’s edict, the historical record indicates quite clearly that the Song emperor was not pleased. Less than a year after sending his decree to Pugui, Zhao Guangyi ordered the Yang, Song, Tian and Long families to mobilize their forces to attack Pugui’s headquarters on Shiren Mountain. Zhao ordered Long Hantang, Long Yanyao’s son and inheritor of his numerous titles, to attack Pugui from the south while Song Jingyang, the patriarch of the Song family and recently named regional inspector of Manzhou prefecture, was ordered to attack Shiren Mountain from the north. In fact, the Song family had the most to gain from this military action for it had long coveted Pugui’s territory east of the Yachi River – Shuidong.22

The Song family rose to prominence in the Manzhou area of central Qian toward the end of the Tang period, and by the beginning of the Song dynasty Song Jingyang’s lands bordered Pugui’s Shuidong lands. According to Chinese sources, Song Jingyang’s Manzhou domain was relatively small in size. It bordered Bozhou to the north, Sizhou to the east, and Pugui’s kingdom to the south and west. What Song Jingyang’s domain lacked in geographic size was made up for in total acreage of cultivable land. The Song of Manzhou owned some of the most fertile land in Qian, and as such it had attracted settlers from as far away as Sichuan and Hubei. The Song emperor’s orders to both Song and Long were to attack Pugui and drive him back across the Yachi River into Shuixi. Whatever territory Song and Long came into possession of during this action they could incorporate into their personal domains. Although the military action would take well over a year to complete, the Song family eventually came into possession of the Shuidong region east of the Yachi River, while Pugui fled west into Shuixi where he and the Azhe patriclan re-established the political center of the Mu’ege kingdom back in the city of Mugebaizhage.23
Nasu historical texts mention this bitterly fought war with the Song state and note that, throughout the Song dynasty, the Mu'ege kingdom was divided between Shuixi and Shuidong. But this bitterness did not result in permanent hostilities between the Azhe patriclan and the Song state. Quite the contrary, both Song and Nasu sources remark on the growing political relationship between the Song state and representatives of the Azhe patriclan, due primarily to the growing threat of an expanding and increasingly bellicose Dali state. For example, in 1042 the prefect of Luzhou (in Sichuan) wrote:

control of the streams and grottoes (xidong) in the ten halted and bridled (jimi fuzhou) prefectures were heretofore granted by Tang and our [Song] officials. Now the wuman king Tekkai exercises control over much of the area, and he is very wealthy. He lives near the old Yaozhou prefecture, which was abolished long ago, but Tekkai would like to be named regional inspector (cishi) of Yaozhou in order to control all the barbarian tribes (yizu) in this area.24

A short time later the Song state ordered Yaozhou to be re-established and Tekkai to be appointed regional inspector of Yaozhou. Upon receiving this appointment in 1044, Tekkai responded: “I have received the imperial favor of becoming the regional inspector of Yaozhou, and I now beg to surrender to the emperor. I have instructed my descendants to always consider their native soil to be a part of the emperor’s vast territory.”25 According to Song texts, when Tekkai died his son claimed the title of spirit master of the Luo clan (Luoshi guizhu), and when Tekkai’s son passed away his son Bukia inherited the title of spirit master. From this point on the title spirit master of the Luo clan became identified in Chinese texts as the leader of the spirit kingdom of the Luo clan (Luoshi guiguo), which from the Nasu perspective identified the head of the Azhe patriclan, rulers of the Mu’ege kingdom.26

To entice the Azhe patriclan to continue to serve as a loyal client along the strategically important southwest frontier, the Song state entered into economic relations with the spirit kingdom of the Luo clan and granted a number of prestigious titles to the head of the Azhe patriclan. For example, in the spring of 1133, the spirit master of the Azhe patriclan, a man named Ayong, led a delegation of several thousand people and approximately one thousand horses down from the mountains of Shuixi to the city of Luzhou, where they spent three days selling their horses and purchasing supplies from the city market. According to the Luzhou prefect who received Ayong’s delegation, the merchants of Luzhou prepared weeks in advance for this biannual visit; Luzhou merchants stocked up on large quantities of tea, rice, wine, salt, cloth and hemp to exchange for what many believed to be the finest horses in China – Shuixi horses.27

Moreover the Luzhou prefect noted in his report that when he received Ayong’s delegation he faced the laborious task of reciting all of the titles bestowed on Ayong and his predecessors by the Song state: Head of the Spirit Kingdom of
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the Luo Clan in Northwest Qian (Qian xibei Luoqi guigu shouling), Grand Military Assistant to the Southwest Barbarians (Xinan fan waiyi dafu), Defense Commissioner of Gui Prefecture (Guizhou fangyu shi), Chief Inspector of the Barbarian Territory South of Luzhou (Lu zhou nan yijie duda xunjian shi), and Grand Military Strategist, Regional Inspector of Zhong Prefecture, and Chief Inspector for the Barbarian Tribes of the Southwest (Wujing dafu zhongzhou cishi xinan fanbu da xunjian shi).28 The Song state–Azhe patriclan relationship remained strong until the end of the Song dynasty; in fact, the Azhe patriclan proclaimed allegiance to the Song state until 1279, at which time Mongol forces launched their invasion of the Shuixi region.

The Mongol conquest of the Mu’ege kingdom: a brief interruption

Although orders to invade the vast territory controlled by the Azhe patriclan were not announced until the sixth month of 1279, Qubilai Qan (1215–94) had authorized the Tanzhou Branch Secretariat (Hunan) to send a reconnaissance mission into the eastern portion of the former Dali kingdom at the beginning of the year. Liu Jichang, a military commander (zhotaosi) assigned to the Liangwei Circuit in Tanzhou, led a contingent of troops west along the Dian–Qian–Xiang road that linked Tanzhou and Yunnan.29 This road bisected Qian and the transitional zone that separated the former Song and Dali states. Liu Jichang’s detachment encountered only sporadic resistance as it made its way through eastern Qian, but when Liu reached Xintian in the sixth month of 1279, he was ordered to halt his march and reinforce his position. By the middle of 1279, Liu Jichang’s Tanzhou army was positioned along the eastern edge of Shuixi, while Sayyid ‘Ajall Shams al-Din, the Manager of Governmental Affairs for the Branch Secretariat of Yunnan (xing zhongshu sheng pingzhang zhengshi), positioned Yunnan forces along Shuixi’s western borders. It was at this time that Qubilai Qan issued orders to secure control of Shuixi.30

In compliance with the Grand Qan’s orders, Liu Jichang employed the time-honored Mongol tactic of dispatching envoys ahead of the main army to intimidate communities into surrendering. Liu knew that if he pressed west along the main Qian–Dian–Xiang road toward the town of Yushi he would expose his army to attack from the heretofore hostile Bafan (eight barbarians) tribes located to the south of the road, and from Azhe troops situated to the north of the road. Therefore, his envoys met first with the preeminent political figure among the Bafan tribes, Wei Changsheng of the Da Longfan tribe, and with the patriarch of the Azhe patriclan, Acha.31 To Liu’s surprise his envoys returned unharmed with news that both Wei Changsheng and Acha had agreed to submit to Mongol rule. As part of the surrender procedure Wei Changsheng led a delegation of tribal leaders from Bafan to Liu’s headquarters at Xintian and presented Liu with the land and population registers for the entire Bafan area. According to these registers there were 1,186 villages (zhaidong) and 89,400 households (hu).
among the nine tribes of Bafan. In return for peacefully agreeing to be a part of the Grand Qan’s empire, Liu appointed each of the nine tribal leaders to the office of military commissioner (anfu shi) and ordered them to govern their respective localities as they always had, although now as officials of the Yuan state and servants to the Grand Qan. 32

Acha, too, surrendered to Liu Jichang in Xintian; however, the land and population registers he presented to Liu represented only a fraction of Azhe territory. According to these registers the 1,626 villages and 11,168 households were located east of the Yachi River – in Shuidong – and did not include the vast Azhe-controlled territory of Shuixi located to the west of the Yachi River. In other words, at some point prior to the arrival of the Mongols in 1279 the Azhe patriclan had crossed the Yachi River and re-claimed this territory as their own, even though the Song family still resided in the area. While it is hard to imagine that Liu did not know about Acha’s Shuixi territory and Sayyid’s preparations to attack Shuixi from Wusa, he nonetheless bestowed upon Acha the lofty title of pacification commissioner (xuanfu shi) of Shunyuan, thereby making Acha a nominal official of the very same Yuan state of which Sayyid and the other Yuan officials in the region were a part. 33 Not surprisingly, Acha’s surrender and appointment to the post of pacification commissioner failed to insulate him and the Mu’ege kingdom from provocative actions carried out by Yunnan forces to the west of Shuixi, or for that matter from the Grand Qan himself.

Even though Yuan officials from the Tanzhou had negotiated Acha’s surrender and appointed him the Shunyuan pacification commissioner (xuanfu shi), Sayyid was still carrying out Qubilai’s stern directive of mid-1279. Specifically, Qubilai had ordered the Yunnan branch secretariat to pacify Yixibuxue (the Mongolian translation for Shuixi) and to organize an army out of former Dali troops and attack the Mian kingdom. 34 In accordance with these orders (which were not countermanded following Acha’s surrender to Liu in Xintian), by the end of 1279 Sayyid’s commander in charge of the Yixibuxue campaign, Ailu, had amassed an impressive army along Shuixi’s western border: 6,000 Mongol and Central Asian troops, 10,000 Cuan and Bo (Hacizhang) troops from the Zhongqing area of central Yunnan, and another 10,000 Yaocihai and Wanjiannu troops from western Sichuan. 35 In addition, a Mongol force of about 10,000 under the command of Yesudinger had taken up position to the south of the city of Luzhou in order to attack Yixibuxue from the north. Finally, the ruthless Central Asian commander Alihaya had moved his personal cavalry estimated at 8,000 men into “the region”, despite assurances from Liu Jichang that his Tanzhou forces were firmly in control. 36 Due to an unusually large snowfall during the winter months of 1279–80, the armies from Yunnan and Sichuan did little more than provoke skirmishes with Azhe forces along the western edge of Yixibuxue; however, by the sixth month of 1280 the weather had cleared and Ailu was ready to invade Yixibuxue. To justify the invasion, Ailu announced that Acha had “rebelled” three months earlier, thus precipitating the attack.
As Ailu and Yesudinger’s armies attacked Yixibuxue from the west, Liu Jichang and his subordinates in Xintian were scrambling to determine if Acha had in fact rebelled. Liu Jichang ordered his military commander stationed in Bozhou, Li Dehui, to send a team into Shuixi by way of a small mountain trail that linked the towns of Bozhou and Mugebaizhage to meet with Acha.37 Li Dehui’s envoys emerged from the Shuixi Mountains at the end of the eighth month leading a large delegation of Azhe officials and a gift of 1,000 horses. Acha himself did not make the formidable journey to Bozhou due to ill health, but he did send his brothers and sons to deliver a letter to Li Dehui explaining Acha’s position. Acha’s letter, accordingly, blamed the hostilities in Yixibuxue on the Mongol commanders in Wusa—that is, Sayyid and Ailu. Acha charged that the officials in Wusa had been tricked by Acha’s long-time nemesis, Wusuonuo, the patriarch of the Wumeng patriclan, into believing that Acha would never accept Mongol overlordship. The letter goes on to tell how the Wumeng patriclan had long coveted the territory belonging to Acha’s patriclan and now Wusuonuo was taking advantage of Mongol naïveté concerning the region and its complex history to incite the Mongols into attacking Yixibuxue. Acha’s letter reminded Li Dehui that he had assisted Liu Jichang in convincing Wei Changsheng and the peoples of Bafan to submit to Mongol rule; that he had also submitted to Mongol rule over a year earlier and was appointed pacification commissioner of Shunyuan; and that he had never renounced his loyalty to the Grand Qan or his claim to the pacification commission post, as Ailu reported.38

Evidently Li Dehui’s negotiations with Acha’s sons and retainers went well. He forwarded the information he collected from Acha’s delegation to Liu Jichang in Xintian and to Qubilai in the Yuan capital. Even though he was a relatively minor military commander, Li Dehui nonetheless boldly recommended that hostilities toward Yixibuxue be stopped at once and that a thorough investigation of events in Wusa be authorized. Li also suggested that following Acha’s death the Yuan state should confer upon his brother, Ali, the title pacification commissioner of Yixibuxue–Shunyuan, thus extending recognition to the entire territory under Azhe control. Clearly sympathetic to Acha’s position, Li Dehui downplayed Acha’s failure to present himself personally in Bozhou, which was a serious offense to Mongol protocol. Acha, according to Li Dehui’s report, was near death and the trip to Bozhou would have surely killed him.39

In response to Li Dehui’s report, an irate Qubilai blasted his field commander for failing to make Acha conform to Mongol protocol and submit personally to officials in Bozhou; for recommending that Acha’s brother be appointed to a new office called Yixibuxue–Shunyuan Pacification Commission; and, most importantly, for suggesting that Mongol commanders in Yunnan and Sichuan were to blame for the escalating violence in Shuixi. To clear Sayyid and Ailu of such accusations, Qubilai included in this communiqué a copy of the original orders he issued to Sayyid in mid-1279 ordering Yunnan forces to attack Yixibuxue. However, Qubilai also presented his military commanders with an alternative to war: he ordered Li Dehui to inform Acha that he had one month to personally
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surrender to Ailu in Wusa, or face complete annihilation. To make his point Qubilai redeployed Alihaya’s troops to Xintian and ordered 1,000 Mongol and Bozhou troops to travel along the trail from Bozhou to the border of Yixibuxue in order to eliminate bandit (tukou) activity along the trail.40

Acha’s attempt to resolve what he considered a misunderstanding between himself and the Yuan state had failed, and Mongol forces continued to harass his villages near Wusa. In response to these provocative acts Acha decided not to meet Ailu in Wusa, which he all along considered a one-way journey to execution, but instead opted to resist. As a result, Yunnan forces under Ailu moved forward from their positions in Wusa; Sichuan forces under Yesudinger attacked Yixibuxue from the north; Bozhou forces led by the Yang family attacked from their mountain enclave to the northeast; and Tazhong forces under Alihaya, Tahai and Manggu’dai consolidated Yuan control over the portion of the Qian–Dian–Xiang Road between Xintian and Yushi before advancing north into Yixibuxue from the Bafan and Shunyuan areas.41 At the beginning of the campaign Qubilai ordered all captured Azhe soldiers to be sent to the Mian front, but as the Mongol campaign dragged on for the next year and a half many of the captured Azhe troops were simply incorporated into the various Mongol armies as slaves.42

By mid-1282 Mongol forces had pushed far into the interior of Yixibuxue and occupied the major towns of Caoni, Mugebaizhage, Pingchian, Dagezhai and Mopoleipo. Pockets of resistance continued to plague Mongol forces until the end of 1282, but by this time Yuan officials were well on their way towards carving up the former Mu’ege kingdom into administrative units. According to Yuan sources, the Mu’ege kingdom extended from Bozhou in the east to Wusa in the west, and from Ayong Man in the north to Luodian in the south. In this mountainous territory Yuan officials created ten prefectures (zhou): Yao, Hao, Lu, Tangwang, Jian, Gong, Yi, and Hui prefectures were located in Shuixi, while Juzhou and Qingzhu prefectures were established in the territory directly east of the Yachi River.43

The eight prefectures in Yixibuxue were placed under the jurisdiction of three newly created route commands (lu zongguan fu), the Yixibuxue, Pingchian, and Mopoleipo. A route commander, an overseer (darughaci), and contingent of Mongol troops were assigned to each route, and these Yuan officials were authorized to enfeoff influential local figures as extra-bureaucratic native officials (tuguan). The routes, prefectures, and tuguan jurisdictions of Yixibuxue were incorporated into the newly established Shunyuan Pacification Commission (xuanwei si). One of the three heroes of the Yixibuxue campaign, Suge, was appointed pacification commissioner, while the other two heroes of the campaign, Yesudaier and Yaocihai, were named chief military commander (du yuanshuai) and garrison commander (zongling), respectively.44

Interestingly, Suge, Yesudinger, and Yaocihai were all commanders of Sichuan armies involved in the Yixibuxue campaign, and their subordinates likewise filled important administrative posts throughout Yixibuxue (Shuixi). This meant
that Chengdu, the administrative seat of the Sichuan Branch Secretariat became responsible for recycling officials and troops into and out of Yixibuxue and for provisioning its personnel in the region. Clearly, this was no easy task. Because Yunnan and Sichuan bore the brunt of responsibility for directing the Mian campaign, Mongol forces in Yixibuxue were not only stretched precariously thin but they even lacked basic necessities such as food, clothing, and horses to carry out policing activities in Yixibuxue. For example, when two minor rebellions broke out along the northern periphery of Yixibuxue during the early months of 1283, the Sanmao revolt and the revolt in Nine Streams and Eighteen Grottoes (jiuxi shiba dong), Mongol commanders throughout Yixibuxue reported to Chengdu that disease, malnutrition, and the lack of adequate provisions prevented the garrison troops from suppressing these revolts. Yaocihai, the garrison commander in Yixibuxue, sent a number of dispatches to Chengdu urgently requesting provisions, but when supplies were not forthcoming he improvised by exchanging Yixibuxue livestock for grain with military commanders from Tanzhou and Yunnan.45

Yuan officials in Chengdu were not purposely abandoning their troops and officials in Yixibuxue; quite the contrary, they were well aware of the dire circumstances of their garrison troops in Yixibuxue but there was very little they could do. Officials in Chengdu were under strict orders from Qubilai to mobilize and allocate all available resources in Sichuan for the Mian campaign. In the fourth month of 1283, officials in Chengdu had become so desperate for able-bodied men to fight in Mian that a general amnesty for criminals was declared if they agreed to fight in Mian. As this explosive mix of disgruntled civilians, freed prisoners, and military supplies filled the roads of Sichuan heading south to Yunnan and eventually Mian, the local population scattered along the main arterial became easy targets for the raw and undisciplined recruits. The escalating violence along the main roads linking Yunnan to China proper forced Qubilai to temporarily withdraw troops from the Mian front and from Yixibuxue just to quell hostilities and hunt down deserters in Yunnan and Sichuan. As a result, almost immediately after Mongol forces had moved into Yixibuxue, they were on their way out. And Yuan authorities in Chengdu had no other recourse but to turn over the day-to-day running of the administrative units in Yixibuxue to the local population.46

To deal with the growing level of anti-Mongol violence, Yuan officials decided in the fourth month of 1283 to concentrate Mongol and Central Asian forces in the main urban centers in the southwest and to rely on loyal members of the indigenous elite to govern the non-urban and non-strategic areas of southern Sichuan, Yunnan, and the recently pacified areas of Guizhou. As soon as this new directive was announced Yesudinger, the chief military commander of the Shunyuan Pacification Commission, was ordered back to Chengdu and placed in charge of the Sichuan provincial garrison. Yaocihai, the garrison commander in the town of Yixibuxue, replaced Yesudinger as Shunyuan’s chief military commander, but before he assumed his new posting he was ordered to select
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a new garrison commander and train a new garrison force for the town of Yixibuxue. To do this he was to rely solely on the indigenous population. In addition, Yaocihai was asked to offer recommendations on how to reduce the burdensome task of governing the entire Yixibuxue portion of the Shunyuan Pacification Commission.47

After a couple of months of heated exchanges between Yaocihai, provincial leaders in Chengdu, and officials assigned to the Shunyuan Pacification Commission, Yaocihai was granted permission to carry out a series of reforms that would eventually place the Azhe patriclan back in power in Yixibuxue. First, Mongol garrisons were withdrawn from the Yixibuxue region altogether, although by this time they really existed in name only, and replaced with garrison forces composed of indigenous soldiers led by indigenous commanders. Yaocihai personally selected the garrison commanders from among the indigenous elite, but he allowed the commanders to build their own garrison force. Second, Yaocihai removed the Yixibuxue region from Shunyuan Pacification Commission control and established an entirely independent Yixibuxue Pacification Commission (xuanfu si). To govern the new Yixibuxue Pacification Commission Yaocihai appointed none other than Ali, the younger brother of Acha, to be not only the pacification commissioner of Yixibuxue, but also the route commander of the Yixibuxue Route. This dual appointment ensured that Ali and the Azhe patriclan would once again control the political landscape of Yixibuxue. Finally, Yaocihai withdrew Mongol forces from the Shuidong region east of the Yachi River and appointed Song Tianfu, a member of the well-known Song family that had lived in the Shuidong area since the closing years of the Tang dynasty, to the post of Shunyuan battalion head (qianhu) with authority over the entire Shuidong region.48

Although the Mongol occupation of Yixibuxue was brief, the institutional foundation of Yuan bureaucratic and extra-bureaucratic offices clearly had an impact on the future political development of the area. When Ming officials visited the region for the first time one hundred years later in 1381–2, they were surprised to find non-Chinese peoples living in this remote part of the southwest frontier governing territory through an elaborate network of bureaucratic offices. In place of the three routes and ten prefectures created by the Yuan in 1282, Ming officials discovered the region divided into thirteen granaries (zexi), and each granary was governed by an official called zimo – usually a member of the extended Azhe patriclan.49

Closing in on Mu’ege: Ming expansion into Guizhou

The New Illustrated Gazetteer of Guizhou (Guizhou tujing xinzhi), an authoritative text on the early history of Guizhou province compiled in the early sixteenth century, informs us that in 1372 the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–98, r. 1368–98 as Hongwu), accepted the surrender of
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the spirit master of the Luo clan, a man named Aicui. According to the
gazetteer,

Aicui was a descendant of Huoji. During the Shu Han period [221–
64], Huoji assisted Prime Minister Liang [Zhuge Liang] in capturing
Meng Huo, and in return was invested as King of Luodian (Luodian
wang). Throughout history Huoji’s descendants, such as Apei in
the Tang dynasty, Pugui in the Song dynasty, and Ahua in the Yuan
dynasty all received recognition from China’s emperors, so that
today Huoji’s descendants reside in Shuixi and go by the title Great
Spirit Master (da guizhu). Toward the end of the Yuan dynasty Aicui
was an official in the Sichuan route, and he was named Guizhou
Pacification Commission with control over Shuixi and Shuidong.
From his headquarters in the city of Guiyang, Aicui oversaw a large
cavalry of horses and elephants, and foot soldiers divided into forty-
eight divisions (tumu) stationed primarily to the west of the Yachi River
in Shuixi.50

As this quote indicates, the power base of the Azhe patriclan had, by the
end of the Yuan dynasty, shifted back to the Shuidong region east of the
Yachi River. Likewise, the emerging Ming state was clearly interested in Aicui’s
military force, and for good reason. In Yunnan, the Mongol Prince of Liang,
Basalawarmi (d. 1382), possessed a powerful army, and despite repeated at-
ttempts by the Ming to persuade the Prince of Liang to submit to Ming rule, he
adamantly refused. An alliance between the Ming throne and Aicui was of vital
strategic importance to the Ming state because the two main routes connecting
China proper with Yunnan passed either through or along the periphery of
Aicui’s territory.51 If Basalawarmi continued to resist Ming overtures, then it
would be easier for Ming forces to march through Aicui’s territory as allies
rather than fight their way through to Yunnan.

In the fall of 1381, Zhu Yuanzhang appointed Fu Youde (d. 1394) to be
commander-in-chief of the Yunnan campaign with orders to eliminate
Basalawarmi’s presence in Yunnan and consolidate Ming control there. At roughly
the same time Zhu also assigned a seasoned military commander named
Ma Hua to the post of chief military commissioner (dudu) of the southwest region.
Hongwu ordered Ma Hua to make his headquarters in Guiyang so that he and
Aicui could coordinate the assault against Basalawarmi; however, relations be-
tween Aicui and Ma Hua quickly deteriorated as Ma Hua conscripted local
artisans and laborers to construct a city wall around Guiyang. This large stone
wall, the first for Guiyang, was to be built according to Ma’s specifications, and
laborers who failed to abide by these instructions were publicly executed. With
the death of Aicui in 1382 and the emergence of his wife She Xiang (d. 1396) as
regent for the still infant heir to Aicui’s post of pacification commissioner, Ma Hua
embarked on a bold plan to eliminate the office of pacification commission and
seize control of Shuidong. In short, Ma Hua planned to establish the Ming prefecture system in the vicinity of Guiyang.

In a provocative act designed to incite the indigenous population to open rebellion, Ma Hua accused She Xiang of a minor crime, stripped her before the people of Guiyang, and whipped her until near death. Enraged by Ma Hua’s actions, She Xiang’s subordinates immediately mobilized the vast forty-eight-division army in Shuixi and advanced on Ma Hua’s headquarters in Guiyang. Before they reached Guiyang, Liu Shuzhen, the matriarch of the Song family, met She Xiang’s Shuixi forces near the Yachi River and warned them that Ma Hua had set a trap and they were marching directly into it. Liu pledged to personally travel to the Ming capital to inform the Son of Heaven (tianzi) of Ma Hua’s unjust actions toward the people and She Xiang, but only if the Shuixi army disbanded and returned home. She promised to return from the capital and lead the Shuixi and Shuidong forces into battle against Ma Hua and the Ming army if her arguments failed to convince the emperor to remove Ma Hua from office. As a result of Liu’s intercession the Shuixi force dispersed and Liu Shuzhen traveled to the Ming capital.

During her audience with the Hongwu emperor, Liu Shuzhen reminded him that Aicui had pledged allegiance to the Ming long before most other Yuan officials in the southwest, and Aicui worked assiduously to convince many other Yuan native officials (tusi) to ally with the Ming against the Mongols. Moreover, Aicui, and now She Xiang, cooperated fully with Ming authorities in preparing for the Yunnan expedition, even to the point of mobilizing their own forces to fight alongside the Ming in Yunnan. After discussing Liu’s charges against Ma Hua with Empress Ma (1332–82), Hongwu informed Liu that even though he believed Ma Hua to be a loyal and sincere official, he would investigate Ma Hua’s activities in Guizhou. Surprisingly, it was Empress Ma not Zhu who led the investigation of Ma Hua. She summoned Liu to her palace to answer questions, and after a lengthy interrogation she ordered both She Xiang and Ma Hua to come to the capital for an audience with the emperor. As a result of the subsequent imperial investigation Ma Hua was reprimanded, She Xiang and Liu Shuzhen received the illustrious titles, Lady of Virtue and Obedience (shunde furen) and Lady of Virtue and Intelligence (mingde furen) respectively, and She Xiang retained control of Guiyang and the Shuidong region.

In spite of the judgment rendered in 1383, by the time the Yongle emperor (r. 1403–24) created the province of Guizhou in 1413 the Ming military had already established twenty-five garrisons (wei) along the main thoroughfares and in the major towns of Guizhou, and an increasing number of Chinese settlers were moving into the region. Having said this, it is important to note that Ming officials would continue to view Guizhou not so much as a contiguous part of China proper (neidi), but as an internal frontier or semi-periphery defined roughly by provincial boundaries. Even after the spirit master of the Azhe patriclan, now identified in Chinese texts as the Guizhou pacification commissioner, decided to
relocate his headquarters back in Shuixi in 1486, approximately two-thirds of Guizhou province remained beyond direct Ming rule.56 There were prefectures (fu), departments (zhou), counties (xian), and military garrisons (wei) in the eastern portion of Guizhou, but for the most part tusi dominated the rest of Guizhou’s landscape. It was during the Yuan dynasty that the inchoate character of a negotiated relationship between the Chinese state and its frontier elite, a process with widely differing cultural conditions on both sides, gradually conformed to a single institution of extra-bureaucratic offices known during the Ming and Qing dynasties as tusi offices.57 As we have already seen, during the Yuan dynasty the spirit masters of the Azhe patriclan were routinely appointed to high-ranking offices, and it was these offices that became part of the repertoire of tusi offices during the Ming and Qing dynasties; for instance, when Liu Jichang named Acha the Shunyuan pacification commissioner in 1279; when Yaocihai nominated Ali to be the Yixibuxue pacification commissioner in 1283; and when Aicui was appointed Guizhou pacification commissioner at the end of the Yuan.

When the Ming state bestowed a tusi title it classified the recipient as either a civilian-rank tusi or a military-rank tusi. Generally speaking, the civilian-rank tusi’s area of control was located within a delineated provincial boundary. The size of the area and population previously under the frontier leader’s jurisdiction usually determined whether the tusi title was granted as a native prefecture (tu zhifu), native department (tu zhizhou), or native county (tu zhixian), and as the titles suggest these offices mirrored the Ming civilian administration. The civilian-rank tusi offices were truly cross-cultural governing institutions for they regularly allowed low-ranking Chinese officials to reside in the tusi jurisdiction and oversee day-to-day administrative affairs. Chinese officials living among the indigenous frontier population were not a permanent feature of the earlier haltered-and-bridled prefectures (jimi fuzhou) of the Tang and Song periods.58 In addition, civilian-rank tusi were usually established in areas where the economic infrastructure was productive enough to support a modest bureaucratic staff, and where Chinese immigrants had settled alongside the indigenous population.

Military-rank tusi, on the other hand, enjoyed a higher degree of autonomy from the Ming state. Frontier leaders who were granted this tusi title usually controlled lands located either outside China’s provincial boundaries, or in remote internal frontiers within a province, much like the Shuixi region of northwest Guizhou and the Daliang Mountains of southern Sichuan. Military-rank tusi pledged allegiance to the Ming throne, swore to defend China’s borders from hostile foreign powers, and agreed to present tribute to the throne, but were allowed to rule their domains in accordance with their own laws and customs. In this sense, then, military-rank tusi resembled the old haltered-and-bridled prefectures of Tang and Song times because they were theoretically subordinate to the Ming throne but legally independent of the Ming state, a claim civilian-rank tusi clearly could not make. The Office of Guizhou Pacification Commis-
sioner bestowed upon Aicui by the Yuan and Ming states was the highest office among the various military-rank tusi offices.

Another way to examine the extent to which tusi domains dotted the landscape of the southwest is to look at the total number of tusi offices conferred by the Ming state. Throughout its 276-year history the Ming state granted 1,608 tusi titles; 960 were military-rank tusi titles and 648 were civilian-rank tusi titles.

In the three southwest provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou, and Sichuan alone, the Ming state issued 1,021 tusi titles, or 63 percent of all tusi titles issued during the Ming. Of these 1,021 tusi titles, 69 percent were military-rank tusi titles. In Sichuan, 95 percent of the 343 tusi titles issued by the Ming state were military-rank tusi titles; in Guizhou, 83 percent of the 244 tusi titles were military-rank tusi; and in Yunnan, 41 percent of the 434 tusi titles were military-rank tusi.

Conversely, of the 337 tusi titles issued to individuals in Guangxi province during the Ming, 309 or 92 percent were civilian-rank tusi titles.

More importantly, a recent examination of China’s tusi offices in Guizhou indicates that the number of tusi remained fairly constant throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with 228 tusi offices registered in Guizhou in 1573; however, by the end of Ming rule in 1644 that number had been reduced to just
While it can be argued that the Ming state entered a long and undeniable phase of dynastic decline beginning in 1573, and therefore the decline in the number of tusi offices in Guizhou represents an inability on the part of the Ming state to accurately count its tusi offices, the historical evidence indicates that just the opposite is true. During the last quarter of the sixteenth century the Ming state eliminated a significant number of tusi offices in Guizhou, and this process of “administrative consolidation” (gaitu guiliu) continued unabated until the 1630s. In short, as the Ming state was losing its grip over much of north China, it was extending direct rule to many heretofore independent and semi-independent areas in the southwest. One tusi office the Ming state sought to eliminate during this time was the Azhe patriclan’s Guizhou Pacification Commission.

The Mu’ege kingdom’s changing political economy

As mentioned earlier, Ming travelers to the southwest made note of the political institutions through which the Azhe patriclan governed Shuixi. They were aware that the Yuan had established eight prefectures in Shuixi region west of the Yachi River and two prefectures east of the river. More importantly, the spatial layout of these ten prefectures conformed roughly with what they knew about the traditional pattern of Nasu patriclan rule; thus, the ten Yuan prefectures established in 1283 probably did not depart in any fundamental way from pre-existing patterns of indigenous rule at the prefecture level. However, we also know from the last section that the route administration established in 1283 was little more than a hollow shell by 1285 as developments in Sichuan and Yunnan forced Yuan officials to turn over their posts to prominent members of the indigene community – the Azhe patriclan. Interestingly, these early Ming accounts report that each patriclan governed its territory through a network of offices called a granary (zexi), and that all together there were thirteen granary units in Shuixi.

Though early Ming texts fail to mention anything more about these thirteen granary units, Nasu language texts are rich in detail about these thirteen administrative units in Shuixi. According to these texts, the territory west of the Yachi River was divided into eleven granary or zexi units: Mukua, Fagua, Shuizhu, Jiale, Ajia, Dedu, Longkua, Duoni, Zewo, Yizhu, and Xionsu. To the east of the Yachi River were two additional granary units, Yude and Liumu. The head of a granary was called a zimo (elder administrator). Upon the death of a zimo, the deceased zimo’s eldest son by the principal wife inherited the zimo post, while siblings who demonstrated ability were appointed to a number of posts that formed the granary bureaucracy. The most prominent post below the zimo was the muzhuo (the Chinese term for the muzhuo office was tumu). Nasu texts tell us that there were between three and four muzhuo posts in each granary unit, that a branch of the zimo’s patriclan usually controlled the muzhuo offices, and that the eldest son of the deceased muzhuo inherited the post. Reportedly, there were forty-eight muzhuo officials located throughout the Shuixi region.
Further down the granary unit’s administrative ladder there were two additional posts to which capable individuals in either the zimo’s or the muzhuo’s patriclan were assigned, the mayi and yixu offices. Both the mayi and yixu offices were civilian posts whose responsibility was to govern villages that were composed of people not related to the Black Nasu warrior aristocracy – the Azhe patriclan and its various branches. The mayi official was appointed to oversee the White Nasu or commoner villages, whereas the yixu office was reserved primarily for the multiethnic commoner/slave population that consisted of Miao, Qilao, Lonjia, Caijia, and Han Chinese villages scattered throughout Shuixi. According to several seventeenth-century Nasu sources, zimo and muzhuo officials occasionally appointed to these posts individuals who were not of the aristocratic Black Nasu; in other words, White Nasu would occasionally be posted as mayi and ordered to govern the White Nasu population on behalf of the zimo and muzhuo, and Miao, Qilao, and Chinese were frequently charged with governing their respective populations as appointed yixu officials.63

Regulations governing the zexi or granary system stipulated that individuals appointed to the muzhuo, mayi, and yixu territorial posts maintained public security, organized labor teams for public works projects, and transmitted grain (taxes) grown in their jurisdiction to the zimo’s granary. These officials supposedly did not receive a salary from the zimo, but instead were awarded a grant of land by the zimo from which they could draw their living expenses. This grant of land was not inconsequential considering that in the Shuixi region there were only forty-eight muzhuo. If these officials performed their tasks successfully, then their sons were allowed to inherit the post; however, if their performance proved less than satisfactory to the zimo, then the individual would be required to step down from office and return control of the land to the zimo so it could be awarded to another individual. According to Nasu texts, at the beginning of the fifteenth century there were thirteen zimo, forty-eight muzhuo, 120 mayi, and 1,200 yixu offices governing an estimated 7,000 villages in the Shuixi region.64 Although Chinese and Nasu sources do not provide population figures for the Shuixi region, a simple comparison of the number of yixu offices with that of the zimo, muzhuo, and mayi posts suggests that the multiethnic commoner/slave population was probably much larger than the commoner White Nasu and the aristocratic Black Nasu population.

In addition to the territorial offices of muzhuo, mayi, and yixu, each zimo relied on a number of administrative appointees to govern his zexi or granary unit. There were nine offices (jiuzong) that formed the zimo’s personal staff of advisors: gengju, mokui, zhuokui, bunu, qimo, beisuo, maxie, xiba, and heicha. Among this staff of advisors the gengju, mokui, and zhuokui participated in resolving important political and religious matters within the granary, with the gengju’s position superior to the others for he acted as regent for the infant heir to the zimo’s post. The bunu, qimo, and beisuo posts were concerned primarily with economic matters in the zexi, although they appear to have been responsible for managing appointments to the yixu posts, whereas the gengju, mokui and zhuokui advisors were consulted on
appointments to the muzhuo posts and the zimo’s advisory staff. The maxie, xiba, and heicha offices were responsible for military affairs within the zexi, including the training of the zimo’s personal cavalry. The maxie was the principal military advisor to the zimo, and he routinely assigned the xiba and heicha to important military commands and to personally oversee strategic points throughout Shuixi and Shuidong.

To manage his day-to-day affairs, each of the thirteen zimo had a household staff comprising nine offices (jiuche); each assigned to carry out a specific task. Like the zimo’s advisory staff (jiuzong), the head officials of the household staff (jiuche) offices worked and resided near the zimo’s residence, but their duties often demanded they reside periodically in other parts of the zexi jurisdiction. The office names and duties included the amuche, who was the zimo’s personal secretary; the offices of butu and zhuoyi, who were jointly in charge of etiquette and protocol, with the butu responsible for determining etiquette and protocol between the Black Nasu patriclans, and the zhuoyi in charge of etiquette and protocol between the Black Nasu and the non-Black Nasu. The baixiang post was in charge of transportation (road and bridge repairs), whereas the office of baisu handled the zimo’s communications; the chemo instructed the zimo on the rituals in the sacrifices to gods and ancestors, and the xiangmu oversaw the preparation of utensils, vessels, and buildings used in the sacrifices; the huanyue acted as the zimo’s personal bodyguards; the suwen was the zimo’s personal instructor in the arts of war; the mushi publicly announced decrees and proclamations issued by the zimo; and the chengmu was the zimo’s recorder. The same granary regulations that applied to the muzhuo, mayi, and yixu offices also applied to the advisory (jiuzong) and household (jiuche) posts: the zimo provided the holder of these posts with land and slaves to work the land, he did not issue a salary, and the zimo reserved the right to withdraw the appointment and grant it to someone else.

The Black Nasu (the Azhe patriclan and its many collateral branches) dominated the administrative landscape in Shuixi as a warrior aristocracy, and for this reason they were also the principal slave-owning class in the region. The vast slave population in Shuixi was called sugie (lit. base people). Nearly all of the sugie performed manual labor for the Black Nasu, like farming land and raising livestock, but some sugie were assigned as bodyguards to the Azhe elite. The sugie were a multietnic class made up mostly of White Nasu, Miao, Qilao, Longjia, Caijia, Zhongjia, and Chinese, who lived in their own family households and in separate villages from the Black Nasu. Interestingly the Azhe patriclan assigned specific tasks to specific ethnic groups; for example, the White Nasu and Longjia people were regarded by the Azhe as possessing greater sophistication than the other ethnic groups and therefore routinely assigned them to minor administrative posts; the Caijia people were considered adept at training horses; the Zhongjia (present-day Buyi) were considered better farmers than the Miao and Qilao and therefore were allocated the best farmland, while the Miao, Qilao, and Chinese were settled on relatively infertile land.
Below the sugie in social status were the dzesu or household servants. Although individual members of the dzesu class were selected from the ranks of the sugie prior to the sixteenth century, by the end of the sixteenth century it is clear that the Azhe patriclan is relying almost exclusively on captured Chinese to staff the dzesu class. Indeed there are reports from Ming military commanders even as early as the 1380s warning their field commanders to be particularly careful when entering the southwest frontier because the inhabitants were notorious for kidnapping Chinese. By the middle of the fifteenth century Ming officials were alarmed at the extent to which Chinese settlements were attacked and the inhabitants carted away to be sold in markets. For example, in 1450 Ming forces entered the Miao villages of Pingqiao and Qinglang in eastern Guizhou in order to free more than 1,700 Chinese destined for western Guizhou, presumably Shuixi; in the following year Ming forces entered the Jingzhou area of Huguang to free 1,425 Chinese men and women who had been captured; in 1458 an estimated 5,000 Yao troops attacked the Bingzhou area of Guangxi and made away with more than 2,600 Chinese men and women, many of whom were transported to Shuixi for sale; and in 1459 Yao and Zhuang troops in the Guilin and Wuzhou areas attacked Chinese settlers and kidnapped more than 1,900 Chinese men, women, and children. When questioned, the perpetrators and victims both indicated it was common knowledge that the Guizhou Pacification Commission paid handsomely for Chinese captives.

There is general agreement among historians that the Chinese population residing in the southwest provinces of Yunnan and Guizhou increased substantially following the arrival of the Ming military in the latter half of the fourteenth century, even though it is virtually impossible to measure this population with any certainty. We do know that, following the Ming campaign against Basalawarmi (Prince of Liang) in 1381, the Ming state settled nearly 250,000 soldiers throughout Guizhou and Yunnan. The same modus operandi followed nearly every other Ming military campaign into the southwest: with the creation of Guizhou Province in 1413, the Ming state settled nearly 30,000 Chinese soldiers in eastern Guizhou; following the First Luchuan Rebellion in 1391 the Ming state settled an additional 20,000 soldiers in central and western Yunnan; as a result of the Second Luchuan Rebellion (1441–9) the Ming state relocated approximately 50,000 soldiers and their dependents throughout western Guizhou and Yunnan; and following a military campaign into central and southeastern Guizhou in the 1520s the Ming state settled another 50,000 soldiers and their dependents in central Guizhou. According to James Lee’s detailed analysis, between 1250 and 1600 the population of the southwest nearly doubled from three to five million. But even here, as Lee admits, we are able only to estimate the size of the population in the southwest, and we are speaking of just the Chinese population, not the indigenous population. The sheer difficulty of the task can be gleaned from a report issued in 1555 by the Provincial Governor of Guizhou in which he states:
There is no way I can find out the complete size of the provincial population. Not only are there no statistics for the barbarian (man), even the army registers for military [Chinese] households are incomplete. Moreover, many of the immigrants from Sichuan and Jiangxi refuse to recognize our authority and avoid registration. 73

In 1600, following the Ming state’s successful military campaign against Yang Yinglong (d. 1600), the Bozhou Pacification Commission, the presence of a large contingent of demobilized Chinese soldiers and their dependents so near the Shuixi region led to the proliferation of Chinese settlements near Azhe territory. 74 In response, the number of incidents whereby Chinese were kidnapped and taken into the Shuixi region, often never to be seen and heard from again, became an endless topic of concern for Ming officials in Guizhou and Sichuan.

The following passage is a lengthy account of a young Chinese boy named Zhang Changqing who was kidnapped from his home in Chishui and sold repeatedly as a slave in Shuixi.

In the second month of Tianqi 2 [of 1622] She Chongming [the Yongning Pacification Commissioner] and his son Yan led more than one-hundred troops from their barracks (ying) to attack the town of Chishui. . . . After a four-day siege, She’s troops captured Chishui. . . . Zhang Dazhuang [the Chishui guard commander, wei zhihui shi] was captured following the siege and because of his hatred toward She Chongming, he was executed. Zhang Dazhuang’s mother, nee Liu and her two grandsons were also captured and taken away. The reason the mother and two grandsons were not killed along with [Zhang] Dazhuang was because the Zhang family was well known in Chishui and it was believed that the remaining family members in Chishui would pay a significant ransom to gain their release. . . . On the following day She ordered nee Liu and the two young boys to be sent to different camps [where they spent the evening]. As he was ordered to leave camp the next morning Zhang Changchun [one of the two boys] saw his grandmother dead in a field. . . . At this time Zhang Changqing [the other boy] was thirteen years old and Zhang Changchun was eleven, and they lived with the barbarians (man) for more than a month before they broke camp. The boys were then taken to Heisong village (zhai). Zhang Jingsheng [Zhang Dazhuang’s brother’s son; the boys’ cousin] found out where Changqing and Changchun were located, and he paid a ransom for their return. The boys were eventually returned to their families in Chishui.

In the eleventh month the barbarians returned to Chishui and kidnapped the two boys again. . . . When the boys were handed over to She Yan, Zhang Changqing was sold as a slave to the toumu [minor official] named Guishi, and Zhang Changchun was sold as a slave to
the "toumu" named Aqi. In the spring of 1623 the barbarian chief [She Chongming] ordered the two kids to learn the barbarian language and dress like them. He also ordered them to live like barbarian children, to learn to ride a horse, and to learn the skills of a warrior. While learning to ride Changchun fell off his horse and died. In the fourth month the imperial [Ming] court ordered its soldiers to fight the barbarians She Chongming and his son Yan. In response She Chongming first led his troops to the town of Zhenyi, and then traveled several hundred li to the dangerous place of Moxiang Ying. After about a month in Moxiangjun Changqing was sold to the Red Barbarians (hong man), but because Changqing tried to escape from the Red Barbarians he was sold again to the Silver River Barbarians (yinhe man). The Silver River Barbarians practice very strange customs, and their customs are very different from the Red Barbarians. Among the Silver River Barbarians both horses and dogs are good at running, and only the local barbarians can control them.

At this time, Changqing thought, "instead of waiting to die it would be better to try to escape." One evening he stole one of the best horses and rode east as fast as he could for about thirty-to-forty li. At nightfall he came upon a river. The river was long but shallow. There was no one around but debris filled the river. Because the situation was dangerous he decided to abandon the horse and cross the river. Just then he heard his pursuers coming so he hid in the river next to a large rock. The barbarians set their dogs loose, since their dogs can detect human scent. As the dogs barked towards the rock, the pursuers with torches in hand came ever closer to the rock where Changqing was hiding and he was almost captured. But suddenly a mountain tiger roared in the woods behind the pursuers and the dogs immediately stopped barking. Frightened by the tiger, the barbarians left. Changqing then decided to sleep during the daytime and travel at night. He traveled like this for three days and nights until he reached Moxiang Ying.

When he reached the village of Moxiang Ying it was midnight so he went to the military camp. Several of the Lin [Yongning] barbarians asked him questions and he answered them in the Lin language. At this time he noticed an old man to the side looking suspiciously his way. The old man was aware that Changqing spoke the Lin language with a Han [Chinese] accent so he spoke to Changqing in the Han language. The old man took Changqing to a private room and asked him where he was from and Changqing answered his questions. The old man said that he had been a slave in Moxiang since the town of Xichuan was destroyed several years earlier. As the old man recalled this he burst into tears. Then the old man led Changqing to where five or six Chinese women were staying and when they met they all cried like they were relatives. After a short time the women gave Changqing food and
drink, they changed his clothes, and they let him stay in their dwelling and work in the fields.

The _touma_ Fanlong and his brothers began to behave irrationally and the barbarians rebelled. At this point Changqing knew he needed to return to Chishui. The old man heard that the Silver River Barbarians were planning to come to Moxiang to apprehend Changqing, and if that happened they would probably die, so he planned to send Changqing away. There was a government military official named Ding San located in the town of Jianwu, located near Moxiang, and Ding San often had communication with the barbarians in Moxiang. The old man thought it a good idea if he could get Changqing to go with Ding San, which he was able to do in the second month of 1624.75

There are many other captive narratives just like Zhang Changqing’s that describe in harrowing detail the events surrounding their captivity among the Nasu of northwest Guizhou and southern Sichuan. By way of example, in 1622 and 1623, the Ming military freed 5,553 Chinese men, women, and children who had been the property of indigenous Nasu leaders living along the Chishui River.76 To sort out the freed people in hopes of reuniting them with their families, Ming officials recorded the circumstances surrounding their capture and imprisonment, thus giving us a wealth of information about the political economy of Shuixi and Yongning at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In most accounts, the Chinese captives told of having been sold (or given as a gift) repeatedly to various “masters”; of having been forced to adopt their captor’s language and life ways; and of having seen Chinese working as advisors and military officials for the indigenous elite.77 Likewise, these captive narratives contain fascinating descriptions of the importance of animal husbandry to the indigenous elite, in particular the raising of horses, although most of the information concerns agriculture.78

During the first half of the Ming dynasty the most common form of agricultural production in the Shuixi region was slash and burn cultivation (_daogeng huozhong_). Yaocihai, the Mongol garrison commander (_zongling_) in Yixibuxue (Shuixi) often reported to his superiors in Chengdu that the slash and burn agriculture in Shuixi generated insufficient food supplies for the occupying Mongol forces. In one report Yaocihai pleaded, “Our [Yuan] troops in Yixibuxue will face starvation unless grain shipments from Sichuan arrive soon. The horses are already severely malnourished and we are unable to respond to disturbances in Yixibuxue.”79 In 1385 the magistrate of Wusa prefecture reported that the population in Shuixi and Yongning relied exclusively on slash and burn techniques to grow grain, and that every year the people faced food shortages.80 Even several fifteenth-century sources note the predominance of slash and burn agriculture in the Shuixi–Yongning region; but this begins to change during the mid-sixteenth century as more and more Chinese travelers to the southwest, in addition to the captive narratives discussed above, describe the growing use of
sedentary agricultural techniques in Shuixi and Yongning. Evidently much of the change in Shuixi’s economic infrastructure was the result of decisions made in the 1560s by An Guoheng (d. 1595), the patriarch of the Azhe patriclan and the Guizhou Pacification Commission.

Initially An Guoheng hired Chinese to introduce sedentary agriculture production to the sugie class in Shuixi and to assist in the reclamation of lands previously used for grazing horses and sheep, and Ming officials noted this minor “brain drain” into Shuixi. In the words of one Chinese advisor to a zimo in southern Shuixi, “the leaders of the Luoluo [Black Nasu] realize they can generate more revenue by farming the land like Han [Chinese] than if they continued with traditional methods of slash-and-burn agriculture, and they use Han to introduce these farming techniques to the barbarians (man).” By the 1570s these same Ming officials began to report a new aggressiveness on the part of the zimo and muzhuo officials in Shuixi to reclaim land not only along Shuixi’s northern and southern periphery, but also in the contested territory of Shuidong. Moreover, when the Ming state decided to eliminate the Yang patriclan’s control of the Bozhou region of northern Guizhou, An Jiangchen, the successor to An Guoheng and patriarch of the Azhe patriclan, readily volunteered to assist the Ming cause by leading a large army into the western portion of Bozhou. As Li Hualong (1554–1612) and Guo Zizhang (1543–1618) later remarked in their analysis of the Bozhou campaign, An Jiangchen joined the campaign only to acquire new lands, not to help the Ming defeat Yang Yinglong.

As we might expect, An Guoheng’s decision to introduce Chinese agricultural techniques into Shuixi in the 1560s and the Azhe patriclan’s subsequent expansion into Shuidong, Bozhou, and other areas along the Shuixi periphery had a rippling effect that extended far beyond these fundamental changes to the Shuixi agricultural regimen. For instance, a network of frontier markets quickly sprang up along the Shuixi periphery that integrated more fully the respective Shuixi and Chinese economies. Shuixi’s merchants purchased tea, salt, wine, and manufactured goods from the Chinese, while Chinese merchants purchased horses, grain, and minerals such as cinnabar (zhusha), mercury or quicksilver (shuiyin), iron (tie), and lead (qian) from the Shuixi merchants. In addition to horses, grain, and mineral resources, Shuixi craftsmen sold textiles, wood products (the Nasu used wood to make saddles, and their technical ability in this area was greatly admired by the Chinese), and tiles (the Longjia in Shuixi built their homes with tiles and their expertise in this area was recognized by all) on Chinese markets located in central Guizhou.

Of the grains harvested in Shuixi and purchased by Chinese merchants, the most often mentioned in Chinese sources were buckwheat (qiaomai), oats (yanmai), barley (damai), and most impressive, paddy rice (shuidao). In the Qianji, an authoritative text by the late Ming official Guo Zizhang (1543–1618), “oats grown in Shuixi had become a common fixture in Guiyang’s markets, and Shuixi’s rice was not inferior to the rice grown in China proper (neidi).” In 1597, the provincial government established a market just outside Guiyang’s west gate so that
Shuixi’s merchants could sell their goods to the inhabitants of the city. Clearly the proliferation of market activity along the Shuixi periphery (and in Guiyang) and the economic wealth generated in these markets attracted the attention of the cash-strapped Guizhou provincial government. In fact, by 1620 the economic influence of Shuixi had become such that Liu Xixuan, the Guizhou Education Intendant (Tixue dao) reported, “Shuixi is the agricultural heartland (fuxin) of Guizhou. The area of Shuixi is richly endowed, while much of the Han-occupied land in Guizhou is unproductive and barren.”

Not only did Chinese officials have the impression that Shuixi was the most productive region in Guizhou, but so, too, did land-starved Chinese, who began to migrate toward northern Guizhou and Shuixi in search of fertile land. The influx of Chinese into northern Guizhou reached unprecedented proportions following the conclusion of the Bozhou campaign in 1601 as Ming officials actively encouraged Chinese from Sichuan, Jiangxi, and Hubei to settle land formerly belonging to the Yang patriclan in Bozhou. Throughout the first decade of the seventeenth century, Guizhou provincial governor Guo Zizhang moved aggressively to relocate Chinese immigrants into northern Guizhou; he advertised in the major cities of Sichuan, Jiangxi, Huguang, and Hubei; he directed settlers on where to claim land; he offered financial assistance or helped defray start-up costs for most settlers; and he granted tax reprieves to nearly all settlers. In short, prior to the start of the She–An Rebellion in 1621 much of northern and central Guizhou had become a peripheral battleground between two expanding political economies: the recently reformed Shuixi polity under the control of the Azhe patriclan, and the Ming state, with its provincial headquarters in Guiyang.

**Epilogue: the origins of the She–An Rebellion, 1621–9**

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Li Xixuan’s heroism during the siege of Guiyang lent his analysis of the origins of the She–An Rebellion an authoritative tone. According to Li, rampant corruption among many of the Ming officials in Guizhou prior to 1621 played a pivotal role in fanning the flames of discontent among the Nasu of Shuixi (northwest Guizhou) and Yongning (southern Sichuan). One of the most damning accusations made by Li was his criticism of Guo Zizhang, who as provincial governor in 1607 demanded a huge bribe from An Jiangchen, then spirit master of the Azhe pacification Commission, just to confirm An as the next commissioner. Li informs us that the bribe was paid. Li also mentions briefly the destabilizing impact of the Ming campaign against the Yang patriclan in Bozhou (1591–1601), the militarization of Guizhou and the influx of Chinese from China proper into northern Guizhou following the Bozhou campaign, and the apparent wealth of the Shuixi region and its leaders, but it is his fellow Ming officials whom Li censures with his brush.
The origins of the She–An Rebellion, as told by Li Xixuan, stemmed from what should be considered a relatively common incident in frontier areas: in 1620 An Yaocheng (An Jiangchen’s son), then Guizhou pacification commissioner, died suddenly and his title was inherited by his 10-year-old son An Wei. Because of An Wei’s youth and inexperience, the Azhe patriclan selected An Wei’s uncle, An Bangyan, to manage the patriclan’s affairs and handle the complicated duties of the pacification commission until An Wei could assume these responsibilities at the age of 15. An Bangyan was already well known to Ming officials in Guizhou for he had been particularly active in recent years to extend the patriclan’s control over the Shuidong region—formerly a part of the Azhe patriclan’s greater Mu’ege kingdom. According to Li, An Bangyan became intoxicated with political power and kidnapped An Wei in order to prevent him from taking office. To solidify his political coup An Bangyan negotiated with An Wei’s mother She Shehui, the niece of the Yongning pacification commissioner She Chongming, and with Ming officials in Guiyang.91

It needs to be mentioned here that the history of southwest China during the Ming is a canvas covered with murdered tusi. These tusi were, for the most part, murdered by a family member who coveted political power, and Ming officials almost always acquiesced to reality and recognized as tusi the individual who achieved political supremacy. In essence, there was very little Ming officials could do about it, and Li Xixuan understood the futility of attempting to control events in Shuixi. But in this case, instead of simply accepting An Bangyan as the Guizhou pacification commissioner, which would have been normative behavior for such an incident, Ming officials in Guiyang accused him of soiling the honor of the Ming emperor—it was the Ming emperor who conferred the title of pacification commissioner on the Azhe patriclan—and demanded An Bangyan pay a substantial bribe or face a massive Ming punitive expedition against Shuixi. In response to this threat, and recalling the humiliating bribe An Jiangchen had paid just a few years earlier, An Bangyan “rebelled” and marched on Guiyang.

Interestingly, Nasu language sources about the She–An Rebellion say very little about the corrupt Ming officials and nothing about a bribe demanded by Ming officials in Guiyang. Instead, these texts chronicle the struggle by An Bangyan to gain control of the patriclan’s political institutions; his intent to bring new land under cultivation and increase the wealth of the Azhe elite (Black Nasu); and most importantly, his ability to rally support by claiming that his mission was to retake land formerly belonging to the Azhe patriclan—as part of the Mu’ege kingdom—but now occupied by Chinese.92 In other words, An Bangyan was responding not so much to the corrupt Ming officials in Guiyang, as Li Xixuan would lead us to believe, but to both the economic changes that were taking place in Shuixi at the time, and the historical legacy of a once-dominant kingdom that had since seen its land seized by the Chinese state. An Bangyan evidently believed the military resources at his disposal were sufficient to dislodge the Ming state from areas formerly a part of the Mu’ege kingdom,
and this included the city of Guiyang. Guiyang was the political seat of power for the Azhe patriclan during the Tang and Song dynasties, and at the end of the Yuan dynasty Aicui, the spirit master of the Azhe patriclan, also resided in the Guiyang area, not Shuixi. In short, An Bangyan was using his newfound wealth to reclaim territory he felt had been unjustly taken from his ancestors by the Ming.

Notes


3 Liu Qing (1993), p. 156. Yongning is present-day Xushui.

4 For a first-hand account of the siege, see Liu Xixuan, *Qiannan shiji*, especially the section titled *Wei cheng rilu* (daily record of the siege of Guiyang), 3/2a–69b. When Shuixi forces surrounded Guiyang, Liu Xixuan described them as a “cavalry that wore martial attire” (*tieqi rongzhuang*). In addition to the horse-mounted cavalry, Li stated that Shuixi forces relied heavily on elephants to transport supplies. Foot soldiers also had their own system, in which each soldier brought two horses for mount, and every five soldiers had a servant.

5 Zha Jiaozuo, 34/2002; Hu Qingjun (1981), pp. 92–115. The Nasu are a subgroup of what the People’s Republic of China refers to as the Yi people. There are four subgroups of the Yi that have used a written script since at least the sixth century CE, if not earlier: the Northern Yi, or Nuosu, live primarily in southern Sichuan; the Eastern Yi, or Nasu, who are the subject of this book, reside in western Guizhou and northeast Yunnan; the Southern Yi, or Nusu, live in central and southern Yunnan; and finally the Southeastern Yi, which includes several subgroups, such as the Sani, Axi, Azhe, and Azha. Prior to 1949, the Ming, Qing, and Republican states referred to the Nasu as Luohuo.


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9 Ibid.

10 Ibid. See also Guizhou Gudai Minzu Guanxi Shi, pp. 191–8.

11 Guizhou Gudai Minzu Guanxi Shi, pp. 181–2. In the Zhenxiong Department Gazetteer it is written that Huoji (Tuoazhe) and Zhuge Liang met at Seven Star Pass (qixing guan) to discuss Huoji’s deeds. Zhenxiong Zhou zhi (1827), 12/2a. Luogen is the modern city of Bije. The three rebels in Yunnan were Meng Huo, Yong Kai, and Gao Dingyan.

12 After Mowang established his capital at Mugebaizhage, he had Tuoazhe’s cremated remains transported from Luogen to Muhebaizhage. Tuoazhe’s tomb was relocated to Huoyan Mountain, just east of Muhebaizhage. Huoyan Mountain is also known as Jibao Peak, with Jibao the reverse order of the characters Huoji.


14 Xin Tang shu, 222/6314–16; “Guanyu ‘Laozu, ’ Luodian guo’ deng wenti de diaoacha,” in Xi Tianxi, ed., Sichuan Guizhou Yizu sheshi lishi diaoacha (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chuban she, 1987), pp. 175–80; Li Qing, “Guizhou Yizu tui yangue kouke,” Guizhou Wenshi congkan (1996) 4, pp. 35–6; Guizhou Gudai Minzu Guanxi Shi, p. 182. During the Tang, Agengawei’s territory was often referred to as the Zangge kingdom, but by the Song the Chinese began to call this area Luoshi gui guo, or “spirit kingdom of the Luo clan.” The emergence of the Nanzhao kingdom during the first half of the eighth century was closely related to nearly three centuries of warfare between the Tang and Tibetan empires. According to Christopher I. Beckwith’s study of the Tibetan empire, a series of able and energetic leaders in Tibet, most importantly Gnam ri slon mtsan, his son Sron btsan sgampo, and minister–military commander Mgar Ston rtsan, forged a series of complex alliances with Tibetan noblemen that not only unified Tibet for the first time, but by the end of the seventh century, extended Tibetan rule to the Tarim Basin in the west, to western portions of present-day Gansu and Sichuan provinces in the east, and to parts of northwest Yunnan in the south. Tibet was clearly the aggressor throughout much of Central Asia at this time, and Tang China, despite its own arrogant appraisal of preeminence, was forced to deal with Tibet as co-equal. In medieval Central Asian politics, however, there was no such thing as political equality and the Tang were determined to fight. Christopher I. Beckwith, The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese during the Early Middle Ages (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 14–36.

15 Xin Tang shu, 222/6315; Guizhou Gudai Minzu Guanxi Shi, pp. 182–8; Guizhou shengshi, dili zhi (1985), p. 14. The Yushi kingdom controlled the Puan, Panxian, Xingren, and Xingyi areas of present-day southwest Guizhou. There were five powerful wuman patriclans located in the Zhenxiong region of northeast Yunnan: the Wusa, Atou, Yiniang, Wumeng, and Bipan. The Wusa controlled the present-day cities of Weining, Hezhang, and Zhaotong. To the east and west of Zhenxiong were the Bumangbu and the Asheng patriclans, respectively.

17 Xin Tang shu, 222/6315.
19 Song shi, Manyi zhuan 4/12a–13b; Guizhou Gudai Minzu Guanxi Shi, pp. 147–8.
20 Guizhou Gudai Minzu Guanxi Shi, p. 147.
21 Ibid., pp. 182–3.
22 Manzhou prefecture is located near the present-day city of Kaixang.
26 Fang Guoyu (1984), pp. 460–2; Guizhou Gudai Minzu Guanxi Shi, pp. 182–3; Song shi, Manyi zhuan 4/23a–b; Song shi, Luzhou manyi, 4/33a–33b.
27 Guizhou Gudai Minzu Guanxi Shi, pp. 153–4. According to one firsthand account, “Each year after the winter season had subsided the barbarians (man) and their horses would come to Luzhou, and officials would be dispatched to inspect them closely. From Jiangmen village they would float the horses on rafts to Luzhou. A total of ninety-three people, a mixture of barbarian officials and [Chinese] people, tended to the horses on the rafts. In all, several thousand people make the trip to market [every year]. They remain at Luzhou for nearly a week selling their horses and buying goods they need like tea, hemp, rice, wine, deer, cloth, leopard skin, and salt.” Fang Guoyu (1984), pp. 462–72.
28 Ibid.
29 Fang Guoyu (1984), p. 508. “Chitugeer” was the Mongol term for the eastern portion of the former Dali kingdom, roughly eastern Yunnan and western Guizhou. The Tanzhou branch secretariat was later renamed Huguang branch secretariat. The Tanzhou city of Shanhua was located near present-day Changsha.
30 Fang Guoyu, Zhongguo xinan lishi diqu nuli zhidu (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press reprint, 1990), p. 942. Xintian is present-day Guiding.
31 There were nine tribes in the Bafan area: Chengfan, Fengfan, Fangfan, Hongfan, Da Longfan, Xiao Longfan, Jinshifan, Luofan, and Lufan. Gong Yin, Zhongguo tusi zhidu (Kuming: Yunnan minzu chuban she, 1992), pp. 766–78; Guizhou shengzhi, Manyi zhuan, 4/17a; Fang Guoyu, Zhongguo xinan lishi diqu nuli zhidu, pp. 943–4.
32 In addition to the nine military commissions, Liu established three tribal commands (manyi zhangguan si) in the Bafan area. For the complete list of tusi (native offices) in this area, see Guizhou shengzhi, dili zhi, p. 21. Yuan officials were mildly surprised to discover nine tribes in Bafan (the land of eight barbarian tribes), but instead of changing the region’s name to Jiufan (nine barbarian tribes), the region continued to be called Bafan.
33 The Shuidong region includes the modern cities of Guiyang, Xiuwen, and Qingzhen.
34 Fang (1990), pp. 971–4; Fang (1984), pp. 472–3, 506–14. According to several sources, the Chinese characters for “Yixiubuxie” represent a transliteration of the Mongol script used to render “Shui” into Mongolian; in addition, the Mongolian script was apparently a transliteration of the indigenous Nasu characters for “Shuixi.” Accordingly, “Yixi” meant “Shui” (water) and “buxie” meant “xi” (west). During the Song dynasty, Chinese officials identified the Shuixi area as the “spirit kingdom of the Lao clan” (Luoshi gu guo). The Mian kingdom was located in modern Myanmar.
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37 Fang (1990), p. 984; Yuan shi, 123/3129–31. During the Yuan dynasty, “Yixibuxue” referred to the entire area of Shuixi, as well as the former city of Mugebaizhage, or present-day Dafang.
38 Guizhou tongzhi (1555), Zhang Dao, ed., 9/2b; Yuan shi, 11/226.
43 Yuan shi, 12/244; Fang (1984), pp. 508–15; Fang (1990), pp. 971–4, 983–9. Caoni is present-day Biejie; Mugebaizhage is present-day Dafang; Pingchiande is present-day Qianxi; Daguzhai is present-day Jinsha; and Mopoleipo is present-day Zhijin. Ayong Man is the present-day town of Shuyong in Sichuan. Luodian is present-day Anshun.
45 Yuan shi, 12/247; Yuan shi, 12/255. Following the campaign against the nine streams and eighteen grottoes area, prefectures (zhou) and counties (xian) were established and the entire area placed under the control of the Shunyuan Pacification Commission.
46 Yuan shi, 12/248; Yuan shi, 12/254. When, in 1282, the Yunnan branch secretariat ordered Amou, the patriarch of the Wusa patriclan and head of the Wusa tribal command since 1278, to send Wusa reinforcements to the Miandian front, he rebelled. Soldiers from Sichuan heading for Miandian were ordered to pacify Wusa, which took nearly two years to accomplish. Eventually, the central government decided to extend Yuan control of the Wumeng road, so in 1284, the Yuan state established the Wusa–Wumeng Pacification Commission and staffed it with Mongol and Central Asian administrators. Fang (1984), pp. 470–1.
47 Yuan shi, 12/253; Guizhou shengzhi, dili minnu he zexi de guanli, 9/2b; Tian (1506), 3/1a.
48 Yuan shi, 12/255–6; Yuan shi, 12/256; Fang (1984), pp. 508–15; Fang (1990), pp. 971–4, 983–9. Yaochun was quite familiar with Ali, for he had named Ali battalion commander (yanmin xuanweishi su) of Yixibuxue soon after the Mongol forces pacified the town of Yixibuxue. Prior to Song Tianfu’s appointment, he had been a tribal commander (yanmin zongguan) stationed in the Shuidong portion of the Shunyuan route, but with this new appointment, and the near total withdrawal of Yuan officials from the region, Song became the sole Yuan authority in Shuidong.
50 Guizhou tujing xianzhi, Wang Zou, ed. (Hongzhi reign, 1488–1506), 3/1a–1b; Tian Rucheng, Yanjian jicen (1560), 4/50a–b.
51 Taizu Hongwu shilu, 71/4b–5b, 75/5a, 84/4a–b, 88/1a–2b, 139/1a–b, 141/4a, 141/6a–b, 142/4b–5a; Ming shi, 316/8169–70; Guizhou zhibi, dili zhi, pp. 18–22. As expected, one consequence of granting the tusi title to prominent local leaders in Shuixi was the disappearance from Ming texts of the previous title of spirit master (guzhi).


53 Since the death of her husband, Song Qin, a few years earlier, Liu Shuzhen not only assumed control of the vice pacification commissioner’s post in charge of Shuidong, but also she acquired a reputation of being a wise and fair administrator. Tian Rucheng, 4/50b–51b; Ming shi, 316/8169; Guizhou tongzhi, qianshi zhi, vol. 2 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chuban she, 1987), pp. 33–9.

54 Taizu Hongwu shilu, 144/7a–b, 156/5b; Tian Rucheng, 4/50b–51b; Ming shi, 316/8169; Guizhou tongzhi, qianshi zhi (1987), pp. 35–6; “She Zhi (She Xiang) jin jing,” in Wang Shijun and Wang Yunquan, eds., Xinan Fuzhi, vols 7–8, pp. 316–20; Guo Zizhang, Qianji (1608), 3/1b–4a.

55 Taizu Hongwu shilu, 150/7a–b; Tian Rucheng, 4/51b–52a; Guizhou tongzhi (1987), pp. 37–8. According to the biographical information we have on Empress Ma (1332–1407), she was indeed a truly influential figure in the early Ming court. She was one of only a handful of people Hongwu trusted, and the emperor constantly looked to her for advice on affairs of state. For further information, see Goodrich and Fang, pp. 1023–6. Beginning in the Ming dynasty the former tuguan (native officials) posts of the Yuan dynasty were now called by the generic term, tusi.


58 Ibid. At the provincial level, civilian-rank tusi were supervised by provincial administration commissions (buzheng shi si), whereas military-rank tusi were under the authority of the regional military commissions (du zhuhai shi si).

59 Gong Yin, pp. 57–63, 747. In addition to these large tusi domains, in 1385 Mu Ying (1345–92), the adopted son of the founding Ming emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang, was granted 20,000 mu of land in Yunnan province, which was divided among 170 estates. By the latter half of the seventeenth century, the Mu family in Yunnan had amassed over one million mu of land divided among 1,846 estates, or nearly one-tenth of all cultivated land in Yunnan. Li Lung-wah, “The Control of the Szechwan–Kweichow Frontier Regions during the Late Ming,” Ph.D. diss., Australian National University, 1978), p. 40; James Lee, “China’s Southwestern Frontier: State Policy and Economic Development, 1250–1850,” Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1982), pp. 82–164; Dictionary of Ming Biography, pp. 1080–1. For an examination of Chinese
state/society expansion into Guangxi during the Ming and the impact on the non-Han population there, see Richard David Cushman, “Rebel Haunts and Lotus Huts: Problems of Ethnology of the Yao,” (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1970).


61 “Shuixi dadu he jianshiqiao ji,” Cuanwen congke, Ma Xueliang, ed., (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chuban she, 1986), p. 184; “Tudi minnu he zexi de guanli,” Cuanwen congke, pp. 115–41; Meng Xian, “Liangshan Yizu ‘zimo tongzhi shiqi’ chutan,” Xinan minzu yanjiu (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chuban she, 1987), pp. 277–309; Hu Qingjun (1981), pp. 31–3; Dadang Fuzhi, (c. 1835), 11/3a. The early Ming sources do not mention the names of the Yuan routes in Shuixi, but simply say that Shuixi was divided into the following three geographical jurisdictions: the zhongshui (middle waters), the xiaohui (lower waters), and the dishui (waters at the base).

62 Ibid. It should be pointed out here that the Song patriclan in Shuidong governed their territory through twelve similar, albeit much smaller units called Matou (lit. horse head), and the Bole patriclan ruled their territory through a system of twelve barracks (ying).

63 Ibid.


65 Ibid.


67 Dadang xuanzhi, 21/7b. For example, in 1576 the Guizhou pacification commissioner, An Guoheng, presented to one of his muzhuo (guest house) family members, a man named An Zhi, a gift of the Mao family’s horse (sugie). The historical information that sugie could be bought and sold, acquired as booty in revenge wars, presented as gifts, and even killed if the slave-owner so desired the sugie’s fate. It also appears that the Black Nasu in Shuixi were not alone as slave-owners of sugie, for information from the early Ming period indicates that the Bozhou pacification commissioner, Yang Hui, also purchased people for his personal use.

68 During the Ming period, except for the above three social classes, there also existed in Nasu society another class, one that is called “guest house” (kehu). The people given this designation were, for the most part, Chinese who had fled to this frontier area and were able to obtain this special status because of a particular skill or knowledge deemed valuable by the officials in Shuixi. These kehu acquired the protection of a powerful noble, and were able to pass their non-slave status on to their descendants, usually signified by the wearing of a special article of clothing and by providing gifts annually to their lord. Hu Qingjun (1981), pp. 28–30.

69 Yingzong Tanshun shilu, 199/17b, 200/18a–b, 294/11b–12a, 302/5a–b. In 1459, the Tanshun emperor (r. 1437–64) admonished (sugie) the Guizhou pacification commissioner, An Longfu, to devise a plan to ease the widespread looting in Guizhou. Ming shi, 316/3b. According to the Yingzong Tanshun shilu, in 1460 the province of Guizhou was overrun with the trafficking of humans. In that year, a palace eunuch named Yuan Rangyang was assigned to the post of Grand Defender of Huguang and Guizhou (Zhenshou Huguang Guizhou). Not long after he arrived in Guizhou, Yuan reported that
in recent months Miao forces had kidnapped 1,565 Han Chinese from their villages. 

Yingzong Tianshu shilu, 313/7b.


71 Guizhou Tongzhi (1555), 7/12a.


73 Guizhou Tongzhi (1597), 4/8b–9a.

74 One reason given for why the Bozhou pacification commissioner, Yang Yinglong, instigated an anti-Ming revolt was that he wanted to apprehend slaves that had fled Bozhou for Chinese territory. Hu Qingjun (1981), pp. 18–20; Guizhou tongzhi (1987), pp. 349–52, 370–3; Guo Zizhang, *Qianji* (1608), 5/2a–b; Li Lang-wah (1974), pp. 78–118.


76 Ibid. See also Liu Xixuan, 2/6b–12a, 54b–62a; Xizong Tianqi shilu, 53/13a–b.

77 Liu Xixuan, 2/6b–12a, 54b–62a; Bijie xianzhi, 8/4a–b; Qu Jiusi, *Wanli yuanyong lu*, An Guoheng zhuannie, 23/18b–22b; Hu Qingjun (1981), p. 27; Liu Qing, in Yu Hongmo *et al.*, eds, *Guizhou Yixue*, pp. 158–9; Xizong Tianqi shilu, 53/13a–b. We know that when An Guoheng became the Guizhou pacification commissioner in 1560, he immediately became embroiled in a conflict with a powerful muzhuo official named An Zhi. An Guoheng’s forces were led by two Chinese military commanders, Wu Qiong and Wu Ake. Apparently An Guoheng ordered the Miao and Qilao peoples under his control to koutou to these two Chinese officials. See Qu Jiusi, *Wanli yuanyong lu*, She Xiaozhong zhuannie, 24/1a–12a. In addition, with the outbreak of the She–An Rebellion in 1621, She Chongming appointed He Ruohai, a Han Chinese, to be his military commander. In the fifth month of 1622, He Ruohai was captured by Ming forces and executed. At roughly the same time, An Bangyan, regent for the boy Guizhou pacification commissioner, appointed a former Ming military commander, Chen Qiyu, to lead his forces against the Ming. In 1624, Chen Qiyu supposedly pretended to surrender to the Guizhou provincial governor, Wang Sanshan, but during the height of a battle near Dafang, when Chen was expected to defect with his troops thus turning the battle in favor of the Ming, he instead turned against Wang Sanshan’s troops and killed the provincial governor.

78 The *Taizu Hongwu shilu*, 146/23b–24a states, after Ming forces defeated the Nasu in Wusa, they confiscated several thousand head of horses, cattle, and sheep. Similar scenarios were played out in Wumeng, Dongchuan, and Mangbu. During the Ming period, the most prominent exchange activity for the Nasu people of Shuixi involved the trading of horses for Chinese salt, tea, and manufactured products. Regarding the horse trade activity, in 1383 the Ming court established a Tea and Horse Bureau or Horse Trading Office (chamasi) in Yongning in an attempt to trade salt, tea, and cotton cloth for Nasu horses. According to the *Hongwu shilu*, a high-quality horse should be exchanged for forty jin of tea, a mid-quality horse for thirty jin of tea, and
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a low-quality horse for twenty jin of tea. Evidently Ming traders were having a difficult time convincing the Nasu to trade their horses at such a price, for in the following year the exchange value was raised: it was advised that one horse should be exchanged for thirty bolts of cloth, or 100 jin of tea or salt. Taizu Hongwu shilu, 156/7a–b and 162/3a.

79 Yuan shi, 12/256.
80 Ming shi, 311/23b.
83 Liu Xixuan, 2/13b–14b; Guizhou tongzhi (1987), pp. 347–8, 370. During the late Ming period the town of Mangbu had a vibrant market called “Rat Street” (shujie), where the Nasu would come daily to meet and exchange goods. Along the northern Shuixi border with Linzhou (near Yongning), was a town called Longchangba, and here, also, people from various ethnic backgrounds gathered to exchange goods. To the southeast of Shuixi, in an area where Nasu, non-Nasu, and Han Chinese lived together, there were several markets established by Chinese merchants who supposedly named their markets after the twelve heavenly stems and earthly branches. In 1638, the intrepid Xu Xiake traveled along the southern portion of the Shuixi region between Qingya and Shuicheba, and he noticed many Sichuan merchants engaged in commerce here. Near these markets the Sichuan merchants had also established hostels, which indicates the scope and regularity of market activity.

85 Guo Zizhang, Qianji (1608), 2/4b.
86 Liu Xixuan, 2/13b–14b. Moreover, Liu mentioned that the Yongning, Chishui, Bijie, and Wusa area was also fertile land. Shuixi became important to the Ming state in other ways as well. In addition to the yearly demand for “tribute horses,” provincial officials demanded large quantities of wood products from the richly endowed Shuixi region. For example, in 1607 the Ming court paid for 12,298 of Shuixi’s “finest” trees to be cut, prepared, and shipped to Beijing.

87 Guizhou tongzhi (1987), pp. 303–90, 513–24, 530–2, 536; Qu Jiusi, Wenti wugong lu, An Guoheng zhuanlie, 23/19a–b. An Guoheng’s successor, An Jiangchen, expanded on An Guoheng’s economic policies by offering to assist the Ming state in its pacification campaign against Yang Yinglong and the Bozhou Pacification Commission. An Jiangchen occupied some of Yang Yinglong’s most fertile territory, and then abruptly stopped campaigning, much to the consternation of Ming military commanders. Moreover, following the successful elimination of the Bozhou Pacification Commission, An Jiangchen refused to evacuate the Bozhou territory he seized, claiming it was spoils of war. In a related note, early in the Guangxu reign (1875–1908) of the Qing dynasty, a stele was discovered to the side of Kejia Bridge Road, north of the city of Dading (present-day Dafang), on which the script, written in Nasu, states: “it is prohibited to allow horses and cattle to trample the young seedlings.” Dading xianzhi, 18/3b.

90 Li Xixuan, 2/13b–22a, 54b–62a.
91 Li Xixuan, 2/54b–62a. For a later account see Zha Jizuo, 34/2802.
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GLOSSARY

Acha 阿察
Aicui 露翠
An Guoheng 安國恆
cishi 刺史
Anfu si 安撫司
Dafang 大方
Azhe 阿哲
Dali 大理
Bafan 八番
dzesu 則蘇
baiman 白蠻
Guyang 龍陽
Bozhou 播州
guizhu 鬼柱
### THE MU'EGE KINGDOM

<table>
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<th>Chinese Name</th>
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TRAVELER’S VOCATION
Xu Xiake and his excursion to the southwestern frontier

Andrea Riemenschneider

Traveler’s aspiration

Xu Xiake (1587–1641) was probably still in his teens when he decided to dedicate his life to travel. Having failed to pass the initial district examinations at Jiangyin in 1601, he convinced his father that he was not going to waste his whole life in vain attempts to pursue the career of a degree-holding official. While he could not avoid the standard training in “eight-legged examination essays” (baguwen), Xu from then on was also permitted to read his own choice of books on history, literature, and travel. The future Hanlin member and later Donglin martyr Miao Changqi (1562–1626), a neighboring acquaintance of his father’s, was chosen to be his new teacher in 1602. Accompanied by Miao’s own sons, Xubo and Chunbo, Xu continued to study the canon of Chinese classical education, while at the same time being allowed to pursue his one and only literary ambition, cosmography. Miao is even said to have shared his student’s taste for geographical gazetteers, travel essays (youji), and early medieval imaginary cosmographies, written in the form of anomaly accounts.

Regarding his own excursions, Xu very early departed from the prevalent convention of writing short, elaborate records post eventu, and kept diaries with immediate, much more detailed records of his travel experiences. In this way, he accumulated more than 600,000 characters concerning geographical observations, scenic views, hardships, adventures, and other subjects. The extant travel records cover a time span of twenty-six years from his first note in June 1613 to his last entry in October 1639, while the actual amount of lost records remains unknown. Including the two initial, unrecorded excursions in 1607 and 1609, a total of seventeen journeys led Xu to an impressively large number of central China’s scenic spots and, finally, to the southwestern periphery. Long before geographers from our century scientifically evaluated his approach and factual data, both the ardent fervor of Xu Xiake as imperturbable explorer and the uncompromising originality of his diaries attracted the admiration of
TRAVELER’S VOCATION

contemporary as well as later generations of traveling literati. The later efforts to elevate Xu to the position of a national hero, who is credited with a repertory of legends and myths, were in all probability inspired by the Western veneration of great scientific explorers like Christopher Columbus (c. 1451–1506), James Cook (1728–79), or Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1729–1811). But these attempts fail to consider Xu’s own construction of a cosmographer’s self in response to the historical environment of a rapidly declining empire.8

Interestingly, Xu constructed a persona as a geographer during his lifetime that was to endure as a posthumous image. At the point of death, he declared to his friend Qian Qianyi (1582–1664):

There have been only three men who have made their names in remote areas: Zhang Qian of the Han, who passed through empty deserts but did not catch sight of the Kunlun Mountains, and Xuanzang of the Tang, and Yelü Chucai of the Yuan, who were supported by imperial authority on behalf of their journeys to the west. If a commoner like me – who, with nothing but his walking stick and sandals – was able to explore streams and deserts, to vanquish the Kunlun Mountains, and to roam all over the western territories, can be counted as the fourth, I may die content!9

Among the multitude of anecdotes about Xu’s eccentricity narrated by his commentator-biographers, the one just quoted stands out for its open acknowledgment of Xu’s highly ambitious attitude towards travel. In this chapter, I aim to scrutinize some of the motives that may have caused the offspring of an illustrious lineage10 to abandon traditional paths to public recognition in order to fashion himself as the fourth great Chinese explorer. An investigation of Xu’s most portentous journey to the southwestern periphery – in terms of both autobiographical and documentary outcomes – will help to clarify both the late Ming discourse on cosmography and Xu’s unique construction of the cosmographer’s self. His quest for a place in history that would clearly distinguish him from the above-mentioned official travelers like Zhang Qian or Xuanzang was based on an all-exclusive dedication to his cosmographic mission. This concept of roaming landscape (you shanshui) as a non-official, independent literati vocation has, among others, political motives that will be clarified below. The rather radical self-refashioning of late Ming literati from amateur to specialist involved changes in aesthetic representation that reach far beyond the conventional landscape symbolism, which used to be applied by earlier travelers as means of poetic identification. It seems that Xu was particularly sensitive to this issue. I shall therefore discuss the strategies Xu has relied on to represent his extraordinary “passion for the mountains and waters” (shanshui shi pi), as Chen Jiru (1558–1639) has put it.11

With my discussion of a poetics of Xu’s travels I suggest taking an extended perspective on (late Ming) ritual practice, arguing that, aside from standardized cult performances, there is also a cultural space for expressive individual
enactments – which are most likely to unfold within private ceremonies – that has so far hardly been noticed in textual hermeneutics. 12

**Chinese conventions of travel and cosmography**

The question of how Xu Xiake could discover that travel was the most compelling, or even the only, occupation to match his ambitions, cannot be answered without considering important socioeconomic and political developments that became manifest from the mid-sixteenth century on. Apart from a period of competent political leadership by prime minister Zhang Juzheng (1525–82), late Ming rulership lacked both efficiency and popularity. The court ignored the common people’s hardships – caused by natural disasters as well as exorbitant tax exactions – while power-holding elites were split into factions. Even staunch oppositional elite cliques like the famous Donglin party lacked the power, determination, and solidarity needed to exert lasting political influence. Local uprisings, border conflicts, epidemics, and famines contributed to a rapid decline of the Ming regime. 13 Under a climate of constant menace and severe punishments on account of the court eunuchs’ monopoly and, consequently, gross abuses of power, upright intellectuals withdrew from official service and chose to express their moral concerns through artistic, rather than political, means. Fiction, drama, literary criticism, art connoisseurship, and the fine arts flourished. The very old practice of political criticism by means of artistic expression – now clad in the guise of iconoclasm, individualism, and eccentricity – in the early seventeenth century prevailed briefly as a major stimulus for innovative trends. 14

Within the philosophical framework of what has been termed the “Crisis of the Confucian Order,” 15 aesthetic theories and works of art and literature contributed considerably to a thorough re-evaluation of the imperial ideology. In this process, cosmology – a discipline pervaded by ideologies of dominance and power in traditional China’s intellectual history – played a crucial part, just as it had from earliest times, shaping traditions of historiography, science, and arts. Observations of nature’s cyclical changes and its unpredictable plagues and calamities were constitutive of the formation of a worldview that interpreted human history as both function and factor of the patterns and anomalies of cosmic forces. 16 Investigation, not only of nature’s phenomena but also of explanations offered by court specialists, was one of the earliest concerns of cultural producers. 17 *Heavenly Questions* (*Tianwen*), a long poem attributed to Qu Yuan (c. 340–c. 278 BCE), was arguably structured as a hidden challenge of the ruler’s heavenly legitimation, the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming*). As the poem *Heavenly Questions* employed not only the phenomena of the cosmic universe, but also descriptions of the world’s wonders derived from early cosmographic texts, 18 it could be read as a critical questioning of man’s subjection to the whims of a deity and his mortal representatives. By offering “a chronological sequence of events that outlined the evolution of the world from the undifferentiated cosmos to heavenly mandated rule,” and, at the same time, questioning the “sanitizing process
undertaken by the official historians who were responsible for the selection of knowledge recorded in the standard texts, Stephen Field’s reading of Qu Yuan’s poem suggests a very early forerunner of a materialistic worldview as well as emancipation from official thought control. Likewise, the persuasive force of travel accounts relies upon the questioning of arbitrary claims for authority, camouflaged in arcaic settings. As a sociological link between cultural themes and political developments, since its earliest forms cosmography was employed in *politics of meaning* to represent those unrepresented times and spaces that might “haunt the historical present.” Consequently, applying functional analysis of conceptions and representations of landscape travel will have to focus on different options for *position-taking* in the context of historical settings.21

As for Xu Xiake’s *Travel Diaries* (*youji*), if the literary texts’ functions are viewed as historically determined yet individual responses to contemporary social contingencies, then readers can avoid narrow ideological allocations and trace strategic arguments and implicit motives in Xu’s and his commentators’ literary discourse on travel. From the time of the painter Zong Bing’s (374–443) famous statement concerning imaginary journeys (*woyou*) onwards, when responding to controversies about the ethical value of travel, scholars have chosen the cooption of legitimating arguments that were considered outside the Confucian canon. Thus, by the time Zong praised the authenticity of the experience of visionary roaming among painted mountains, the — basically Confucian — metaphorical conception of inner journey (*neiyou*) already comprised shamanic and Daoist heavenly flights.22 Zong further amplified this notion through his transferral of Buddhist meditational quests for transcendental truth into the language of aesthetics:

Now, those who take as their principle “the realization of [truth] in the heart, through the response of the eye” can achieve the essential nature (*lei*) [of the sacred mountains] skillfully [in their paintings]. Then [the viewer’s] eye can get the same response, and his heart reaches the same truth [as he gets from real nature]. This is the experience of the mystical communion and the spiritual [karmic] interaction [of the man and the great mountains], with which the viewer’s spirit achieves transcendence and his mind attains the truth. Even if we seek [real] solitary cliffs here and there, what can we gain that adds [to the experience of the painting]?23

Like Zong, the landscape poet Xie Lingyun (385–433) was an admirer of the famous scholar-monk Huiyuan (334–417). Huiyuan’s lay disciples both developed analogies between mountaineering and spiritual enlightenment.24 While Xie was the first to hint at a concept of roaming landscapes as compensation for the superior man’s manifold, troublesome responsibilities towards the community,25 the painter Zong did largely expand the spiritual capacity and accessibility
of natural vistas through his idea of imaginary journeys. His aim was an essential truth beneath the visible forms, which implies the successful transmission of the painted objects’ categories of correspondence (lei) as the main task of the painter-as-mediator. Up to our days, Zong is well remembered for having covered the walls of his retreat with images of his favorite mountains in order to roam them at pleasure when confined to bed because of old age:

I make my place secluded, regulate my vital force, clean the wine cup and strum my lute. [After this preparation of mind] I shall open the painting and face it quietly. Then, while sitting, I can reach the limits of the four remote corners of the world, without failing to face a host of supernatural forces, and alone respond to the wilderness where no human forms can be seen. There, with peaks of various shapes towering high and with the cloud-covered forest mysteriously stretching afar, I will sense the sages and worthies shining through the innumerable ages and their divine thoughts clearly showing through the myriad spiritual effects [of the great nature]. Then what have I to do? I will just let my soul be exalted. When one’s soul is exalted, there is nothing more left to do.26

Centuries later, Hao Jing (1223–75), an eminent Yuan scholar, and many others drew attention back to the Confucian values of self-cultivation by means of learning from books in the context of inner journeys—a classical paradigm to be found in the Analects (Lunyu), the Great Learning (Daxue), and the Mencius (Mengzi), which nevertheless does not seem to have been much esteemed or referred to before Yuan times (1279–1368) in travel literature. In his essay Inner Journeys (Neiyou),27 Hao Jing holds that literature is not the only repository of knowledge. Learning also manifests itself in human behavior as well as in the management of all sorts of affairs. Having attained the superior cosmic mind (dao) and abundant cosmic energy (qi)28 through study, he argues that, through books, the traveler can unite with heaven and earth without the external support from mountains and waters.29 Legions of armchair travelers were to follow this invitation.30 However, this contemplation of liminal times and spaces by internal as well as external wanderers did not require transgressions of political boundaries. Since Immanuel Kant’s Chinese counterparts were not looking for new worlds across the seas, they chose microcosmic introspection. Their geographical imaginations were not concerned with religious salvation or the more or less subliminal desires bound to Western conquests of aliens,31 but instead with a deeper understanding of their empire’s alienated spaces and times.

The empiricism of the Song (960–1279) period was overtaken by imitationalism from the Yuan through high Ming times, that is, from the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries.32 Generic features of travelogues were abundant in spiritual autobiographies,33 which combined categories of chronological progress and spatial locomotion in order to relate individual stories of self-cultivation. In these
texts, quests for knowledge and truth were structured according to the manner of the Buddhist pilgrimage, comprising forms of fetishism connected with historical sites, buildings, or inscriptions. Although the main concern of Confucian pilgrims was with imaginary journeys within the classics, accounts of their inner journeys quite often were represented in terms of double movements: as polychronicity of internal and external dislocations or transitions, which culminated in experiences of enlightenment. The metaphor of “life as journey” suggests a stress on inward development, which finally was conventionalized to the extent that images of the wandering self could be read as hollow references to the bureaucratic “ladder of success,” that is, memoirs of juvenile ambitions and anxieties written retrospectively by established officials.

Early seventeenth-century discourse on travel

By the time Xu Xiake studied travel literature, a remedy to the shallowness of the career-oriented “inner journey” mode was sought by means of reorientation towards external journeys (waiyou). The act of visiting places then became linked to a connoisseur’s recognition of their various – cosmological as well as historical – meanings and to the search for an appropriate response. However, traversing the world in order to understand and react in accordance with its principles was not conceived as a singularly modern notion. Rather, this pursuit of “external journeys” was modeled after both early imperial descriptions of professional cosmographers’ special knowledge, called the fangshi perspective – in texts like the Book of the Mountain- and Waterways (Shanhaijing) or in The Master Who Embraces Simplicity (Baopuzi) – and after discussions of ancient rulers’ ritual performances (xunshou), documented in, among others, the Canon of Shun (Shundian), the Comprehensive Discussions in White Tiger Hall (Bohutong), and The Story of Mu, Son of Heaven (Mu Tianzi zhuan). The special interest of Ming travelers in “strange things” (qiwu) – such as rocks, trees, flowers, medicinal plants, and caves – and “strange events” (qishi) – like natural calamities or extraordinary encounters – can therefore be viewed as a resumption of early imperial arguments, which by then, however, were employed for different persuasive ends. During the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), the idea of a balance of center and periphery through fangshi encyclopedic knowledge had emerged. It had generated a practice of collecting and classifying the empire’s strange things, so that they denoted the symbolic possession of “all under heaven” (tianxia) by the ruler. Replacing those earlier notions of cosmological balance, representations of strangeness during the late Ming could be read as signifiers of cosmic deviation. In addition to being observers of spiritual activities across the human realm, travelers could perceive themselves as eyewitnesses of nature’s response to human violations of the cosmic laws. They often chose to transmit their ideas about anomalous phenomena through dream narrations and the like. Hence, numinous connotations were hidden under the surface of aesthetically motivated descriptions. However, no indications of moral verdicts on strangeness as an aesthetic category, nor on its
andrea riemenschnitter

Various manifestations, as to be found. On the contrary, bizarre natural forms appealed to Ming cosmographers as symbols in competition with Confucian signifiers of unity and sameness, as representations of the world’s diversity and individuality. Thus, main categories of perception were authenticity (zheng), sublimity (da), and uniqueness, or strangeness (qi). When Qian Qianyi urged Xu Xiake’s cousin to compile and print the extant body of the Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake, he enthusiastically commended the work’s characters (wenzi) for actually being this world’s authentic, sublime, and unique signifiers.39

Travel and eccentricity

External travel was promoted by several famous Ming literati travelers. Wang Siren (1575–1646), using the image of fish and birds who unconsciously yet incessantly praise their creator, alluded to the exploration of scenic sites as an heroic act, and accused the old, homebound sages of lack of courage.40 When he spoke in defense of extensive travel, he developed the image of the professional explorer who broadens his knowledge by traversing the world while at the same time educating people with descriptions of what he has been eyewitness to. Yuan Hongdao (1568–1610), too, held the adventurous, heroic quality of travel in high esteem. While he did not develop, as Wang Siren had, an elaborate theory of travel,41 Yuan’s casual remarks reveal an affinity to Wang’s ideas with respect to the professionalism and courage of the traveler. There is a concept of life-as-journey notably different from the one revealed by conventional spiritual autobiographies implied in his scattered representations of heroic types of personality – such as the wandering immortal, the knight-errant, or the eccentric, madness-feigning political dissident-as-poet.42 In a paradigmatic discussion of love for flowers, Yuan supplants the study of books – which in his view is an unspecific and secondary method of self-cultivation – with an occupation pursued eagerly according to an individual’s own inborn inclination:

When those among the ancients whose vocation was flowers heard others chatting about some unusual specimens, although the flowers grew in deep valleys or on peaks, in their pursuit of them they would never fear tumbling [down into valleys] or falling [off precipices]. Even in the dead of winter and at the height of summer, when their skins were wrinkled like the scales on fish and their sweat was as dirty as mud, they would be oblivious to all. When the flowers were about to bloom, they would then pack up their pillows and, carrying their quilts, would sleep next to the flowers. They would observe the flower from its first bud to its full bloom, to the time when it falls and dies on the ground. Only then would they leave.

Some of them would grow thousands upon thousands of specimens in order to learn every single aspect of their development; some of them would focus upon several varieties in order to satiate their interest.
Some of them, by smelling the leaves, could then know the size of the flower, and some of them, by looking at the stem, could distinguish between the hues of red and white. These people can be called true connoisseurs of flowers; and they are the true experts.

The term he chose for this uncompromising pursuit of one’s own inclination, *pi*, beyond addiction, implies a notion of superior talents that must be delegated to unconventional pursuits on the grounds of an impediment from appropriate public engagement. Furthermore, Yuan’s classified description of the organization of a virtuoso’s enterprise makes clear that his aim is knowledge, not merely diversion. Several of Xu Xiake’s biographers, commentators, and eulogists applied the term to his passion for travel (*youpi*). Travel, in this perspective, would by no means be carefree, idle touring by temporarily released officials, as it had been fashioned up to Yuan Hongdao’s and Xu Xiake’s times. More likely, travel would now have to be understood as an ambitious pursuit of new interpretative approaches, which, however, could comprise elements of ancient ritual enactments, such as an invocation of the mountain spirits. Such fragments of ritual practice appear to have been performed with the aim of declaring cosmic disorder, thereby implying sociopolitical chaos by reference to established cosmological notions of the correlation between nature and society. Inasmuch as human as well as natural announcements of the world’s disorder testify to the failure of a regime, writing about travel (as well as painting, gardening, antiques or book collecting, etc.) does play a crucial part in the politics of meaning. Therefore, it cannot be measured merely in terms of an irresponsible “hiding away” from public affairs. Not incidentally, the “dissident” Qu Yuan, who – despite little factual evidence for his authorship of the poetic oeuvre ascribed to him – has been celebrated in Chinese cultural history as the first Chinese poet known by name, was still venerated by late Ming advocates of external traveling as an heroic icon, although they did counterbalance his elegiac fantasies of heavenly flights with Sima Qian’s concept of autoptic excursions.

Had Xu Xiake been the only traveler to fit into Yuan Hongdao’s scheme of eccentric enterprise, it would be difficult to argue for a new concept of “life-as-journey” as moral action. But he was not. Several of his best friends, as well as many other contemporary intellectuals, spent major portions of their lives touring landscapes and writing travel literature. Only ten years after Xu’s death, in 1651, Huang Xiangjian (1609–73), an official and minor landscape painter from Changshu (Jiangsu), set out for a most unusual trip. In about one and a half years, he managed to cover around 2,000 kilometers to bring his parents back from Yunnan, where his father had filled an official post and was then stranded because of the turmoil caused by rebellions and invasions at the time of the fall of the Ming. To narrate his ultimate performance of filial piety, Huang chose the medium of painting. Fourteen album leaves, abundant with expressionist imagery and dramatic effects, tell yet another story of intrepid travelers. As Kenneth Ganza has commented on the merits of the album and its creator:
"Huang’s travel experience was extraordinary in terms of the distance it covered, the time it consumed, and the reason it took place; and he has communicated his experience through his painting in an appropriately extraordinary manner."

Is there any common denominator for the journeys undertaken by Xu and Huang, apart from their evident eccentricity? In other words, in what respects (if any) can Xu’s thorough investigation of natural phenomena be compared with Huang’s heroic performance of filial piety? Travel accounts freely borrow from earlier generic conventions, especially when they describe anomalies. As has been argued earlier, these conventions are useful for challenges to prevalent worldviews, since their effect can be a destabilization of categorical taxonomies.

Inasmuch as travelogues are concerned with cosmography, they mostly deal with what has been termed “anomalies of degree,” including deviations of size, shape, composition, and phenomena like excess (such as that of filiality), strange behavior (of either individuals or groups), distinctive source and locale (exotic or distant), frequency (of things which are extremely rare), and unusual refinement (of objects or persons). Descriptions of alterity in this genre rarely employ narratives of distinctly fantastic or supernatural phenomena, but rather those at the limits of categories. In particular, observations of phenomena of dislocation always loomed large in *yuaji*-style descriptions of landscapes. For instance, travelers rarely fail to muse about the alleged exotic origin of a mountain overlooking West Lake (Xihu) named The Summit That Flew Here (Feilaifeng). Yuan Mei’s (1716–98) account of his experience of a collapse of time and space consciousness while exploring a cave at Guilin’s Seven-Stars Rock (Qixingyan) is a later, very sophisticated, case in question. However, late Ming texts and commentaries of travel literature tend to invert the perspective of the strange to inspection of the anomalous selves of cosmographers. Strange writing is traced back to the strangeness of the writer. When even the empire’s most talented people – Xu Xiake, Huang Xiangjian or, to mention another famous Ming eccentric, Xu Wei (1521–93) – all are strange in one way or another, then there is nothing left that is not strange. One of the most important connotations of strangeness in this context is the morally upright personality of the heroic agent. If a superior man happens to behave weirdly, eccentrically, or strangely, then his actions can only mean that the sociopolitical conditions of the time dictate radical individual behavior. “Yi Yin found [his state of being untrammeled] in ploughing, Tai Gong in fish, Xie Fu in chess, Tao Kan in moving bricks,” we read in Xu Xiake’s colophon for a volume of poetry by his host in Yunnan, the leader of the Moxie people Mu Zeng. Later on, he links the achievements of those historical heroes to the political meaning of Zeng’s and his own art of roaming the mountains.

This book of yours is the means by which you roll up your talents and store them in secret... You calm your (thoughts of) regret for not being known and therefore you are content in a state of being untrammeled. But if you were to be summoned to the great foothills,
TRAVELER’S VOCATION

your work would be no less great than what is expressed in the songs of the court of Shun. This being the case, it is the zest of this poetry that can present the empire to primaveran climbers of terraces and a harmonious influence to the cosmos... The reason why we connect zest with mountains is precisely because it was in the mountains that the turtle pillars were established and the four extremities manifested.

Their social marginality perfectly links Xu Xiake to Yuan Hongdao, Huang Xiangjian, and many of their contemporaries, who artistically exposed themselves as “ex-centric” travelers with a morally upright character. Those strange cosmographers were publicly received as impersonations of critical liminality.

Cosmographer’s self-representation: patterns of distinction

As has been mentioned above, the leading Ming literary modernist Yuan Hongdao fashioned his personality in accordance with the “anomaly” paradigm. Although he did not write an autobiography in any of the established genres, fragmentary commentaries on his natural disposition are scattered throughout his letters, poems, and essays. Repeatedly, he depicts himself as a carefree, amoral, self-indulging monster, whose foremost function is to shock and liberate intellectually constipated hypocrites. Whether he mocks people praying for sons on Mount Bai, or offends refined scholars by using vulgar expressions, he infallibly finds ways and means to distance himself from conventional moral demands. Despite his efforts to convince readers of his uncompromising amorality, there is, however, also the most filial son Hongdao, who does not dare to contravene his father’s wish that he remain in office until after his parents’ death. There is also the diligent, upright, and intrepid metropolitan official, who repeatedly took risks by daring to express, in his memorials, critical comments on public affairs. There is, finally, the most devoted brother and friend, who never missed an opportunity to meet and support members of his sodality. Considering that these exemplary descriptions of behavior are altogether in accordance with the system of Confucian ethical values, what is, then, Yuan’s verbal insistence on his amorality all about? Apparently, there is a rupture separating his personal behavior from the way in which he chose to address his reading audience. The contrast between the performative and the literal expressions of the self has a famous predecessor.

One of the earliest cosmographers, Dongfang Shuo (161–c. 87 BCE), to whom authorship of two important, geographically organized anomaly accounts has been attributed, recommended himself to service in a letter to the emperor when he was 22 years old. “This subject,” he wrote, “is twenty-two years of age and nearly three meters tall. His eyes are like swinging pearls, his teeth like a row of shells. He is brave like Meng Ben, clever like Qing Ji, full of integrity like Bao Shu[ya], and devoted like Wei Sheng. Considering this, he surely is suited to be a favorite minister of the Son of Heaven.” Although his boastful self-eulogy
won him an immediate appointment from the Han Emperor Wudi (r. 140–87 BCE), it should not be taken too literally. Its category-shaped representation reveals the author’s ironic hint at the impossibility of knowing the self. Quite similar to the traveler when investigating the strangeness of other places out there, Dongfang and his successors employed strategies of comparison, contrast, and reversal to report on their own selves.64 Whereas the historiographer and compiler of biographies may tend to lay stress on certain facts, such as genealogies, dates of birth and death, and number of descendants, the cosmographer seems to be much more inclined to tell stories of “otherness” when describing his own personality.65 The Chinese cosmographer’s self-portrait in terms of eccentricity surprisingly resembles Arthur Rimbaud’s vision of the poet as communicator of previously unknown marvels and monstrosities – which makes himself appear as “the big insane, the big felon, the big outlaw – and the supreme sage.”66

As will be shown, telling stories of “otherness” in terms of reversal as Dongfang Shuo, Yuan Hongdao, and many others did was by no means the only way to represent absence of a single, invariable identity. Xu Xiake, apparently even more consequent, has observed a strict silence concerning his private life – not only throughout his diaries, but also by refraining to write, for public consumption, anything other than those travelogues. The absence of Xu’s self has been detected and pondered over by Li Chi, who in her pioneering English research on the Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake offered two explanations: first, his travel notes were not intended for publication, but exclusively for his personal use; and second, by being a commoner,67 he could afford to remain completely unconcerned with public affairs and aloof from his officially employed friends’ numerous mishaps.68 Neither observation is entirely to the point. As has been observed above, Xu did harbor a keen interest in being posthumously honored as the fourth great Chinese explorer. Consequently, writing travel accounts with no eye to publication would seem an ineffective, if not downright absurd strategy for gaining such fame. Although quite true, neither does the second argument help much in understanding the motives behind Xu’s silence. Given that Xu had an early and keen interest in travel and travel literature, he must have been familiar with the generic conventions of autobiography as already described. Following these conventions, he could have chosen to tell his story in terms of reversal, as did Yuan Hongdao, whom he admired.69 He could just as well have tried to find a new way of criticizing the methodological approach of spiritual autobiography by reconsidering the “life-as-journey” perspective as did Gao Panlong (1562–1626), who was venerated as a great scholar and Donglin martyr by Xu.70 Seen in this light, radical reticence about describing his private life would also appear to be a logical – if also, from the point of view of his readers, most unsatisfying – response to the late Ming crisis of the erudite elite.

But even Xu Xiake’s silence can be misleading. Returning to the roots of Chinese culture, Xu may have decided to represent himself by means of ritually structured performance. As the reader probes the bulk of detailed information about his personality, motivations, and family background contained
in contemporary accounts by Xu’s admirers, her imagination is struck by the idea of an intentional strategy of self-representation. Could it be that Xu himself controlled his own merits as a most filial son, devoted friend, and undaunted explorer as expressed in his commentators’ views? Evidence for Xu’s sense of dramatical mise-en-scène is to be found in dedicatory essays, composed by friends who were invited for ceremonial celebrations to Xu’s family residence. Supported by his family’s long tradition of eulogizing their major events, Xu would have found ample resources for staging his own life.

Chen Renxi (n.d.) has indicated a way he might have used conventions of ceremonial performance in order to convey his own message in an essay composed on occasion of the construction of Sunny Mountain Hall (Qingshantang). The hall was erected in 1621 to celebrate the recovery of Xu’s octogenarian mother Wang Ruren from illness. Xu considered this outcome to be the deed of benign spirits whom he had asked for a prophecy concerning his mother’s age a year earlier. During his trip to Lake Jiuli he had received a prophetical dream and epigram at the local temple, which, at first sight, however, did not even seem to refer to his question. Only after his mother had regained health was he able to interpret the dream’s message. He then built Sunny Mountain Hall to commemorate the benevolence of the Jiuli gods. As Chen’s description of the event reveals, several layers of symbolic meaning have been artfully woven together to produce a scenario that was received by its spectator as both appealing and problematic. Chen recounts the background of the joyful ceremony—Xu’s journey to Lake Jiuli and his prayer for a prophecy there, his mother’s ensuing illness and blissful recovery as a sudden explication of the enigmatic Jiuli gods’ message; along with other happy circumstances—and then concludes his essay with a series of questions:

By entering this hall [now]: shall we pray for [this lineage’s] continuity? For the mother’s long life? Praise the son, laudate the grandson? He who traverses a myriad li and arrives alone is a single leaf that passes over [Lake] Dongting. As [Lake] Jiuli immortal? Who [dares to] trace and penetrate forbidden realms [with him]: Am I the woodcutter?

Having introduced his subject matter with a panegyric on Xu’s filial piety, Chen switches the focus of his attention from the mother—who should have been the main object of this ceremony—to the son. What actually is the content of the ritual: lineage, filial piety, or rather cosmography, enacted as communication with the spirits? The polysemic nature of the ceremony is likely to cause considerable dislocation not only to Chen, but also to his reading audience.

Since cosmography still encompassed the concept of roaming landscape as a ritual performance, Xu and his contemporaries might have evoked it to disseminate deviating concepts, rather than simply to conjure up ghosts for the purpose of consolidating traditional values. Whereas the legendary ruler Yu’s ritualistically enacted traversing of the world (xunshou) was meant to produce order, late Ming
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travelers could hardly imagine themselves doing anything other than restlessly declaring the world’s disorder in terms of dislocation and exploration. Moreover, since the description of other, peripheral, places after returning home is a universally obligatory rite of passage, it is also a task that qualifies the cosmographer to challenge orthopraxy, i.e. the fundamental norms, values, and orientations which the center of political power disseminates.75

The subversive facets of the traveler’s agency – as unveiled in his efforts to transmit real and imaginary alterity – did not go unnoticed by observers like Chen Renxi. Chen’s helplessness concerning the meaning of a strange private ritual is undermined by allusions to Mozi’s discourse on anomaly (fifth century BCE) in the chapter on ghosts, Explaining Spirits (Ming gui). The opening passage in Chen’s essay, “[t]he perfection of the filial son reaches at recognition by the spirits,” is being paired with another allusion to Mozi’s treatise in the final figure of Chen’s essay.76 Xu Xiake has possibly been styled as a symbol of defiance by Chen Renxi, as the superior man who ventures to roam in forbidden realms and never succumbs to the hazards of apocalyptic times. Like other commentators, Chen may have thought that Xu’s many descriptions of strange encounters on the road attested to his employment of travel accounts as a medium for alluding to the political and administrative disasters of his times. Furthermore, Xu’s strategy of autobiographical address to an audience of intimate friends and relatives has proved empirically successful; an impressive amount of reports on his life, personality, and traveling activities was preserved by his audience, who provided posterity with detailed narrations of personal encounters and events that are only cursorily documented in Xu’s diaries or not at all. Given that the circle of scholars around Xu Xiake consisted of marginal personalities with respect to the established literati class and to dominant ideology, it is hardly surprising that these materials have received little attention since the end of imperial China. Even after the anachronous re-evaluation from hero-cosmographer to model explorer-geographer by radical antitraditionalists of the May Fourth Movement,77 Xu’s diaries – and the various supplements written by dissident intellectuals of the late imperial era – still await hermeneutic efforts for a more thorough understanding of his own epoch’s unique discourse on travel, as documented in both travelogues and travel theories.

The journey to the southwest (1636–41)

For a long time I had harbored plans to make an excursion to the southwest.78 After a further delay of two-years’ time, old age approached and I could not wait any longer. Therefore, on the nineteenth day of the ninth lunar month in the year Chongzhen 9 [October 1636], I equipped myself for a distant journey of a myriad li. Coincidentally, Du Ruoshu arrived when my packing up was almost finished. We drank together until midnight. [Only then, with both of us] being drunk, my boat was released [and departed]. I arrived at Xiyi before sunrise.79 With me, traveled the venerable monk Jingwen.80
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Xu’s last journey took him to the empire’s remote territories south of the Yangzi River, namely Hunan, Guangxi, Guizhou, and Yunnan, as far as to the borders of Vietnam, and Burma (Myanmar). As he himself pointed out, this exploration was a long-cherished project, to be carried out before old age impaired his ability to bear travel’s hardships. His prior sixteen trips to many of the famous sites in the empire’s central provinces had served him as preliminary exercises for the great exploration. During the years 1607 through 1633, Xu had acquainted himself with methods of geographical investigation and description, equipment, guides and companions, and his own physical capabilities. When he finally packed his bundles for a distant journey of a myriad li in October 1636, they contained only basic food supplies. For his bodily protection, he had provided himself with a minimum of warm clothes, but carried no arms to defend himself against robbers or wild beasts. While his tools of observation comprised not much more than a writing brush and a compass, he was lavishly equipped with books. Not only geographical sourcebooks such as local gazetteers and the bulky Gazetteer of the Ming Empire (Da Ming yitongzhi) were always within his immediate reach, but so also were literary oeuvres and valuable handwritten works he had either brought along or acquired en route. Aside from money, he carried valuable silver hairpins and the like hidden within his travel cap – which had been sewn and ceremoniously handed over to him by his mother before he set out for his first trip as a precaution against ending up totally stripped of means if robbed.81 Robbery was indeed a fairly common occurrence, and the strategy of the hairpin proved successful twice. Finally, he would always carry along letters of recommendation to high-ranking provincial officials written on his behalf by influential friends. This long-established practice ensured easy passage and frequently helped him escape from difficulties, such as unexpected shortages of money.

A systematic geography of Ming China’s southern peripheries

As has been mentioned above, geographical narrations from earliest times catered to different ends. Whereas borders and landmarks in ideological (or aesthetic) discourse – continuously based on Han imaginary geographies like the Book of the Mountain- and Waterways – could be left unspecified with regard to their precise location, military and administrative needs had soon enough prompted exact measurement for practical application. But only when Ming travelers altered their habits of performing as amateurs and idle pursuers of conventional literary topos in landscapes to become devoted specialists, who searched for profound knowledge about their world’s unique sites and places, did such a transition lead them to incorporate a new sense of exactitude into their geographic representations. The designated aim of Xu’s explorations was to correct traditional imaginary geographies by empirical means. In his Obituary for Xu Xiake (Xu Xiake muzhiming), Chen Hanhui (n.d.) reports on his having said that “the
existing astronomical and geographical records written by scholars of former
periods have largely been works manufactured from imagination or copied from
tradition.” For example, the discussion of the courses of the Yangzi and Yellow
rivers “have all been limited to the parts within the territory of China. Never
before had anyone investigated their far-away origins and detailed courses.”
Therefore, Chen concludes, Xu harbored the desire to investigate the regions
beyond the Kunlun range and the Chinese frontiers. 82

Xu’s achievements surpassed his objectives insofar as he not only corrected
traditional texts on the origins and courses of the Pan, Chang, and Huang rivers,
as well as other hitherto unexplored waterways, but he also did thorough and
innovative speleological research, especially on chalk formation. 83 The phenom-
enon had been known since the Spring and Autumn period (722–480 BCE), but
was investigated for the first time by the Song scholar Shen Gua (1031–94).
Although there is, to my knowledge, no reference to Shen in either the diaries or
the commentaries of the Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake, it is highly probable that Xu
was inspired by this scholar’s inquisitive attitude towards natural phenomena. 84
Xu may also have been interested in Shen’s apodemic treatise Register of What Not
to Forget (When Going on a Journey) (Wanghuailu). 85 There, he would have found
instructions for the construction of a safe and comfortable traveling cart (anche),
for equipment for mountaineering (youshanju), for the division of luggage among
two porters (xingju erjian), and for a survey of supplementary provisions for an
elegant sojourn in the wilderness. Included under this last heading is information
on tools and detailed instructions for constructing benches, beds, and a snow-
viewing kiosk, for heating wine, for preparing drugs, as well as for selecting the
best fragrant herbs.

Here, we can see that Xu Xiake’s concept of travel differed considerably
from Shen Gua’s. While traveling, Xu lived abstemiously and, moreover, when
climbing mountains he was not the least bit interested in such literati “tourist”
attitudes as the consumption of refined goods. Therefore, what Xu’s admirers
appreciated about his travel endeavors was their outstanding seriousness – a trait
that offered proof of both his capabilities and his willingness to endure hardships.
So states, for example, Pan Lei (1646–1708):

Speaking about Xu Xiake’s explorations, the ones into the middle
provinces are no better than anyone else’s. However, his extraordinary
ones are the four times he went to the outlying areas of the hundred
southern barbarian tribes: to Min [Fujian], Yue [Guangdong/Guangxi],
Chu [Hunan], Shu [Sichuan], Dian [Yunnan], and Qian [Guizhou].
Instead of taking government highways, he had only to come across a
[landscape and geographical] site worthy of fame and he would go out
of his way to investigate it. First and foremost, he examined how a
complete range of mountains was laid out, how the flow of the water-
ways ran together or split apart. Having thus attained a general view [of
a region’s topography], he then proceeded to scrutinize every branch
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and every section of each hill and valley. For ascent, he would not need a path; yet there was no thorny thicket or somber bamboo grove he did not bore through! For traversing, he would not need a ford; yet there was no menacing whirlpool or precipitous cataract he could not overcome! At the highest and most dangerous place on each peak he would cross over to crouch on its summit. In the deepest caves he would hang like a gibbon or wind like a serpent to exhaust every little offshoot and outlet. Running into a dead-end, he never grew discouraged. Taking a wrong turn, he felt no regret. Sleepy, he [simply] lay down among the trees and rocks, hungry, he chewed wild fruits and berries. He did not hide from wind or rain, he felt no fear in the face of tigers or wolves. He never calculated mileage or time, he never sought out mates or comrades. He roamed by virtue of his innate soul, as if it were his life’s fate. Since antiquity, there has not been a man [like him].

Pan’s argument remarkably resembles the aforementioned description of the expert by Yuan Hongdao. Not only flower connoisseurship, but also any other pursuit of authentic knowledge would lead the specialist to painstaking inquiries about natural phenomena. By injecting new life into concepts of empirical research that had been developed during the Song dynasty, late Ming theorists focused on the importance of actuality (jin) and change (bian). New methods, they argued, would gather new insights. Therefore, classical education and introspection could be no substitutes for empiricism.

The connection between Xu’s innovative approach to the acquisition of autoptic knowledge and both contemporary and earlier cosmographical writing should be sought in his continuous communication with the lyrical conventions, from the earliest proto-generic to the later types. The attractions and dangers of the uncultivated periphery were enunciated paradigmatically by the Sichuanese (i.e. Shu) Tang-period poet Li Bai (701–62) in his ancient-style yuefu poem Hard Roads to Shu (Shudao nan), wherein he hyperbolically described the difficulties of the mountain journey from Chang’an to Chengdu. However, the traveler in Li’s poem still has no voice of his own to express his impressions of the marvelous southwest. As in Han anomaly accounts, spirits and other locum tenens of knowledge hold sway over the scenery. Ming cosmographers, while continuously alluding to these former cosmographers’ traces, added new meanings to old topics. But few were ready to risk their lives to investigate nature’s most distant and hidden secrets and to relate their individual experiences as Xu did, thus providing new exploration methods and insights as well as an innovation in literary technique:

I read his records and only then knew about the vastness of the south-western territories. How exceptional (qi) are their mountains and streams, by far surpassing those of the central regions! The records are arranged chronologically, in daily sequences. Because they spontaneously relate moods and landscape impressions, avoiding [the mannerisms of] writing
literature as if it were paintings or carvings, nature’s charms freely circulate and [leave you] lost in wonder (ziran qijing). Mountains and streams unfold before the [reader’s] eyes in orderly succession. Time and again, [information about] local customs and human encounters, frontier passes, bridges, defiles, and borderlines can be obtained. Hitherto [perpetuated] errors and mistakes from the Book of Mountainways (Shanjing) and the geographical gazetteers (dizhi) have altogether been corrected. Continuously, traces of exceptional strangeness (qizong) follow suit on legends of marvelous anomaly (yiwen). However, nowhere are there to be found absurdities or monstrosities that take advantage of their audience’s ignorance. Therefore, what I admire most in Xiake’s journeys, is not their extensiveness and distance, but their exhaustiveness and diligence; what counts in Xiake’s writings is not erudite arguments, but the huge amount of verifiable facts.

**Exploring the empire’s southwestern boundaries at Tengyuezhou**

More than once, well-intentioned people had advised Xu not to proceed any farther, on account of banditry, wild beasts, and other perils; but he persisted until, deathly injured, he had to be carried home on a sedan chair in late 1639. By this time, he had spent more than one year in the province of Dian (present-day Yunnan), touring and exploring the rivers and mountains of China’s tropic southwestern border regions. There, through observation and writing about the distinctions between the different local tribes, he cultivated a fresh view on cultural identities. His thirteen Dian diaries, which comprise the most extensive, yet incomplete, collection of notes he took while traveling, reflect both geological and civilizational boundaries. A variety of phenomena, such as the outer appearance, economic condition, and customs of local tribes people, as well as the region’s history of (Han Chinese) military expeditions and Buddhist developments of mountain roads equally roused his curiosity. In his notes, which cover the time from September 15 1638 through October 11 1639, Xu furthermore observed how the vegetation changed across different climate zones, compared regional characteristics of rock formation and hot springs, and searched the wilderness in order to trace river sources and cave outlets. After having reached his documented itinerary’s furthermost part, the mountainscapes situated between the cities of Yunnanfu (present-day Kunming), Lin’anfu, and Tengyuezhou near the Burmese frontier, he spent five days in a Daoist monastery on Mount Baofeng. On the twenty-first day of the fourth lunar month (May 24), in 1639, Xu set out for a visit to the Daying volcano, which constitutes a rare site of the Chinese empire:

Twenty-first day After meal said farewell to Daoist [hermit] Shao, descended to Chunyang [Pure South] Pavilion, passing by Taiji [Ulterior...
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Principle] Precipice in the east. When ascending from this point to Baofeng Monastery, that is, by crossing Northern Grove, it can be reached after half a 里 [only]. Whereas I, taking the direction of the Southern Grove’s hanging cliffs, yesterday did not meet any path, and therefore today departed from the big road to Yuhuang Pavilion in order to descend by the hanging precipices. Having made my way down in serpents for half a 里, I again traversed Northern Grove’s lower chasm. Upon following the big ridge perimeter road for another half a 里, I ascended northward to Baofeng Monastery. [Arrived there,] I asked the [Buddhist] nuns about the way. They indicated a peak to the temple’s left, pointing to Walnut Garden at its foot. The ridge way led directly north, with a pass road ascending in northwestern direction to Daying mountainway. I learnt that access to Daying Mountain had only recently been opened by a monk from Zhili, and that it was a most extraordinary site. Therefore, I first headed for Daying. I accordingly went down the slope in northeastern direction for one 里, then reached its northern foot. Proceeding further for little more than one 里 to the north, there were several houses leaning to the mountain’s western slope, this being Walnut Garden. To its northwest there is a deep valley, where Baofeng ridge can be traversed from the north. It meets with a big road from the west, while a little creek flows in eastward direction. Having left this behind, I went over one 里 straight north. Then I climbed the slope towards the northwest. After four 里 further westward I turned to the north, and followed the northern direction [by walking] along the western peak, then once again turned west to ascend the ridge. When descending from this ridge, one reaches Bifeng and Longcong Mountains in the north by crossing east of Liquor Kiosk Range, or Elong and Mianjing Mountains in the south by leaving from south of Wild Boar Slope. All roads emanate from this bifurcating ridge.

Five 里 westward, my road between range and valley divided into a crossroads. I thereupon ascended sideways in northwestern direction. As I intended to ascend the slope from the northwest, I mistakenly got to the range’s south by a western path. After two 里 I met a woodcutter who informed me that this was the road to Guidian, and that the construction site of Daying monastery was straight north, below a pair of summits. However, at this time I could no longer see that pair of summits, nor even a shadow of my road, so I braved brushwood and shingle ascending directly for three 里. Fog and mist attacked the peaks, uniting and dispersing in turns. After two more 里 upward I found an uncultivated plain, encircled by small peaks, with a ravine winding across its center, and covered with intertwining [growth of] bamboo and shrubbery. I saw a scaffold resting on several pillars propped up at
the foot of the northern peak, and, there still being no road, approached by following the ravine. To the left of the pillars there was a cave [housing a temporary] shrine. A monk named Baocang welcomed and invited me in, informing me that he was the person who developed the mountain. Thereupon he took me to visit the layout [of the site]. After meal the fog slowly dispersed. I made ready to take leave, yet Baocang insisted on my staying overnight. I then started mounting from a vault in between two hills at the mountains’ rear side.

I went to see the crater where the lava emanates, then descended. Looking back, I saw an entourage of huge mountains. On its top arose two summits with a valley in-between. From afar, their shape looked like a horse’s saddle. Therefore, this mountain’s second name is Horse Saddle Mountain. According to the natives many eagles [nest] on its top. An ancient gazetteer reports its name as Flocking Eagles Mountain, which, owing to the local pronunciation, has been mistaken as Hunting Eagles, respectively. Below Guanzi Plain, the mountain range rises from north to south, then divides into two branches from its top, one piling up to the southwest, the other to the northeast. The branches of these two peaks look like embracing arms. The one that stretches downwards in south-western direction bends at the ravine’s right side, where a little mound rises to form an armrest. It then descends to the south, rises again and builds a peak, which forms a front desk. The other one, which stretches down to the north, bends at the ravine’s left side and then reconnects forming a key to the eastern precipice. The two peaks with the valley precisely build an armpit. Another peak squats squarely in front of them. As its range also descends from the northeastern peak and crosses over halfway through, [it looks] as if [sitting] in a pearl’s tray. In front of this [peak], another two little mounds rise like a bosom with two breasts. Their range extends from the peak squatting in the center, traversing from the left to the right, and turning again from the right to the front. In between them, one more mound rises, building a tripod’s third leg with the two breasts [as first and second legs]. The latter aligns with the armrest and desk, that is, they pile up together. Taking a slight eastward turn, I faced another rising mound, which, though being on the opposite side, aligned with the key connecting the northern and eastern precipices. Thus, every cliff is cut by a valley in front of the two breasts, while behind the central peak every gorge is connected by [rocky] doorbars. This range at first sight appeared to be extremely even, yet after [careful] investigation, [I found that it] rises and bends continuously... The natives told me that, 30 years ago, this [mountain range] was [still] covered with tall trees and bamboo, [thus making] an impenetrable wilderness with four unfathomably deep dragon’s lakes, wherein huge waves arose whenever human footsteps approached them. Nobody dared to come too close. At the rear [of this wilderness] there was a
pasture. With one thunderous [outburst of the volcano], five to six hundred sheep and several shepherds were killed. The fires lasted for days and nights on end, so that the mountain’s tall trees and dense bamboo groves were burnt without leaving a trace. The lakes likewise turned into solid land. Now there are caves with water outlets at the lower part of the mountain, but they all come up from the foothill. The rock on the mountain’s top is of a reddish brown color, its material quality and form is light and porous like beehives. As they are made from froth, you can lift [huge pieces that can] be embraced only in a team with two fingers. Yet the material is very solid: authentic ashes, left behind from primeval times.

Baocang has constructed his cave below the central peak, facing the two breasts. If in future people [want] further to develop [the site], they can make access to the peaks that pile up in the rear, or cross over to the breasts in front for the construction of a bell and drum tower. Although all cliffs have holes, they cannot hold back the dripping water. [Only] on the eastern cliff there is one rock that can be used as a cistern, as it has got one [small] water-storing cavity. Why did the dragons depart [and allow] all those violent and sudden changes in nature to take place, leaving only this spoonful as a supply for the mountain developers? Baocang originally came from Zhili, but arrived here coming from Jizu and Baotai Mountains. From there, he caught first sight of the sharp peak, which, although overhanging from its middle part, has no layers. [Later,] he let his disciples Jingkong and Mishan settle there, too. They set up a temporary shrine and shanty and lived like this for two years. This sight moved the prefecture’s people, so they now contend to carry along wood and bamboo, and started with the construction of one single pillar. However, they are still far from the grand completion, it seems. Jingkong comes from Sichuan, he formerly was an army member who used to fight in vanguard units. He [was there when] Chongqing was restored, and [helped to] rescue Liaoning and Guizhou. Wherever he fought, he achieved meritorious service. Later, he was Qipai at Tengyuezhou, then shaved his head at Ganlu Temple, and became follower of the master Mishan. The master used to meditate on the bare mountain, [while] Jingkong begged for alms at the mountain’s foot. Thus, they acted with one aim, namely to develop the mountain – all of them [truly] are extraordinary men! That night I spent in the shrine. There was also an itinerant monk awaiting his head shaving ceremony here. He came from my homeland, [namely] from Zhangjing Bridge. Meeting him was like seeing an old friend.

Beyond his pursuit of exact terminologies for measurement and geological phenomena, which is a prevalent characteristic throughout all of his explorations, Xu – in this section of his Dian notes – also elaborated on the historical
dynamics and, implied in the reference to the dragons’ leaving, willful agency of nature. While, 30 years ago, the volcano was still a lush and verdant idyll where herds pastured, it had by his times become a dry, lifeless spectacle of towering rocks and clouds, only suited for the ascetic exercises of a few Buddhist monks, or other expert projects like his own geographical investigation. According to the entries in his ninth Dian diary, Xu has spent a time period of forty days surrounding Tengyuezhou by making loops. First, he went to the north to explore the waterways of Lu River. He also contemplated scenes of commemoration dedicated to military expeditions to the southwestern periphery since the Han dynasty, and registered the area’s exceptional views and rock formations. After this, and before leaving Tengyuezhou, he toured its southern mountainscapes down to Fengtianzhuang. Again, the magnificent natural scenery calls for most of Xu’s attention, whereas references to the region’s history, as well as to the natives’ different cultures and livelihoods are scattered throughout the notes.

Xu, who conceived of himself as a traveler as devoted to his own peculiar vocation as a religious or military expert, was prepared to confront the most critical situations whenever he came across a site of geographical interest. One of his best-known adventures is his climbing a hanging cliff near Yawu Mountain Village, where the Eastern Longchuan River has made its way through steep rocks. There, he intended to scrutinize a hidden cave.

Twenty-seventh day: . . . Seeing this lofty peak, I was first struck by its peculiarity (qi). Next, I surrounded its foot, gazing upwards at the twisted cliffs that were spiraling and towering high in layers. When I made an eastern turn to proceed northward, I suddenly discovered a cave facing east on the upper part of the layered cliffs. I wanted to climb up to it but could find no path, then made up my mind to give up this idea but, in the end, was unable to do so. Thus, I instructed my servant Gu to put down the baggage and keep watch over it in the woods by the roadside. Finally, I scrambled upwards. Due to the extreme steepness, after half a li there was no more ground for the feet to step on, and I had to clutch [firmly] to shrubs for climbing. Further up, even the shrubs ceased to provide firm hold, but by then I luckily reached rocks [to clutch to]. The rocks, however, were not solid. One dropped as I trod upon it, another one dropped when I grasped it. In between this, I found one [foothold] to fix myself temporarily, which, with [the rest of] my dangling foot and hands, gave me the impression of being pasted flatly onto a wall. [Like this], it was not easy to move even one step further. If I wanted to go upwards there was no support, but there was no ground for going down either. Of all perilous sceneries I have visited in my life, this one is unsurpassed. I should say that, although there are lofty precipices, [I found] nothing like this [covered by] Jiangsu earth; [likewise,] although they may have got [sites of] shifting soil, there is nothing like this among Jiangsu’s rocks. After a while, I first attempted
to get hold of a rock that would not break down for each of my four extremities, hands as well as feet. After this, I tried to move by first extending one hand, and, successively, extending one foot into the void. With one hand and one foot fixed, I moved the other hand and foot. Luckily, the stones did not drop off, but then my hands and feet had no more power left and almost dropped off by themselves. Much later, I managed to climb up, and, after this, had to traverse [the precipice] horizontally from the south again. After half a 里 I eventually reached the northern cliff. Upon shortly surrounding it and then jumping down, I could enter the cave with a southward turn. The cave’s entrance was arched like a crescent turned upside down, with many stalactites hanging from its ceiling. It was not particularly deep inside. Within a range of no more than 5 丈 it was encircled by backward walls, with a small opening crack below. I proceeded along the crack until it ended after little more than one 里, but found nothing of particular interest. I left the cave and ascended westward along the northern cliff. As I met difficulties ascending diagonally by attaching [myself closely to the cliff], I went up straight through a ravine. [Eventually,] I caught sight of another road, descending and winding northward, but for a long while could not meet with it. After half a 里, I arrived at the slope’s western side. Once again I looked up to the high-arching upper cliff. Below its [peak], there was [another] cave, with an opening facing south. Stumbling and slipping, I further proceeded and reached the cave after half a 里. In front, there was a huge rock blocking its entrance, dividing the opening into two. I first entered through its western part. Inside, I followed the cave’s eastward turn after having walked past the huge rock to reach its back. Halfway through, the cave narrowed to form a crooked room, with a sequential little space behind it, which I found while loitering eastward. Yet, this, too, was no larger than a little more than one 丈 – not a particularly deep access, in fact. I departed through the eastern part of the cave’s opening. Gazing back to the huge rock’s top, I figured that from the part that hid the cave upwards it still rose high for more than one 丈. [Leaving from the] eastern entrance, I again went round a rock facing the cave. This rock had a suspended, terrace-like middle part, as if it had been installed as a step for climbing [the cave], to seize it [would have been] even more peculiar. Having left the cave behind, I went northward along the cliff for half a 里, [but] looking down found no road: all I could see were hanging precipices everywhere. They were, however, covered with intertwining shrubs and dangling roots. Consequently, I decided to slide down sitting on my back with both feet stretched forward, while both hands reached backward to grasp the roots. Suspended in the air, I lingered hesitatingly for a moment, then ventured downwards. In this manner, I reached the foot after one 里. Encountering servant Gu there I felt like being reborn.
Compared to Western volcano visitors’ descriptions of their impressions, readers of Xu’s volcano report may miss details about the outstanding character of the site, which are more generously given on other occasions like his exploration of the – in geological terms – much less spectacular Yawu caves. Amazingly, there is no painstaking description of his approach to the once fire-erupting craters, nor are there any details concerning the crater’s shape and rhythm of eruptions. Very likely, his imagination was not nearly as spurred by a fuming and firespitting – yet culturally anonymous – mountain, as by the rivers and caves, which were – by way of cultural heritage – richly encoded with religious and literary meaning. Although these codes are not foregrounded in systematic geographical projects, they have had a considerable impact on the history of Western scientific explorations. Xu’s lack of curiosity concerning the still ongoing activities of Daying volcano might, accordingly, indicate the important role of a pre-existent (or, in this case, missing) cultural imaginary, since there are hardly any volcanoes in China proper.103

Conclusion

Xu’s contemporaries duly appreciated the innovative, systematic character of his geographical approach, and united in both conferring on him the epithet of an outstanding person (qiren) and praising his diaries as marvelous books (qishu). Yet, his methods as well as his individual perseverance have been culturally constituted, and can be read in other registers beyond the constraints that strictly immanent generic and scientific hermeneutics bring about. In Xu’s diaries, what is not said seems to be just as interesting as what has been related in great detail. His silence concerning autobiographical matters has been re-evaluated in the context of traditional and contemporary generic conventions of travel and self-representation, as well as against the abundant evidence of materials provided by contemporary admirers of Xu’s. His failed arousal of an inquisitive alertness in face of the volcano, on the other hand, can as yet only be preliminarily situated in a context of cultural semiotics. For better evidence, a contrastive reading of pre-existing Chinese descriptions of volcanic eruption would be required.

In a context of shared histories during the process of China’s twentieth-century catch-up modernization, the unilinear reception of Xu’s diaries within and beyond China promoted them as a major contribution to a national history of scientific thought – which they are admittedly, but not exclusively. This phenomenon suggests a further line of critical reappraisal. After a period of oblivion, twentieth-century intellectuals from East and West seemed to make an alliance in presupposing Western contacts for the development of Xu’s methods of observation. Chinese antitraditionalists chimed in with Western orientalists to assume the impossibility of an independent, genuinely Chinese scientific exploration of nature. The West’s claim on a monopoly of systematic knowledge was thus not challenged. This understanding needs to be revised, as I hope to have shown.
There is a genuine tradition of scientific observation Xu could and did make use of. Moreover, the knowledge Xu and other investigators pursuant, was markedly different from the European enlightenment project. In being shaped as a counter-discourse to the dominant ideology of universalism from its very beginnings, this type of cosmography was not employed in a process of unification of knowledge and power. On the contrary, Xu and his contemporaries had pursued ideas of multiple perspectivity and a constant flux of the cosmic order, at a time when monoparadigmism prevailed among Western scholars and the Jesuit missionaries in China. Moreover, there were divergent tendencies insofar as desire is concerned. Like mercantilism, professionalism was not considered a means of community prosperity in traditional China. Therefore, the function of specialization was not related to profit or power. It was an intensely moral vocation of deeply perturbed intellectuals, meant to excavate formerly extant representational remedies against the abuse of power and other calamities.

Figure 9.1 Xu Xiake's itinerary in western Yunnan.
that had long since been buried by official historiography and other standard writings. Obviously, Xu had not set out for marvelous possessions like Western conquerors; he set out neither to enrich himself, nor for the benefit of a religious community, or a nation. His obsession with the marvels of the world was, on the contrary, utterly disinterested. It was as symbols of the periphery’s purity, set against the moral decline of central power, that nature’s marvelous phenomena most fascinated Xu Xiake. In a manner akin to Sir John Mandeville’s travels, Xu’s pursuit of wonder pleads for tolerant perambulation along the center’s rims. Nevertheless, confronted with the Manchu conquest, the calls for departure from the ideology of power and homogeneity emanating from Xu’s and other marginal cosmographers’ writings were ephemeral. At this point, their efforts to promote new, polyphonic structures of a (proto)-national identity could not be put into practice. For the next two and a half centuries, Qing Neo-Confucian reconstruction effectively restored full imperial authority over a re-centered China.
### TRAVELER’S VOCATION

#### Chronological table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1587</td>
<td>January 5, birth of Hongzu, parents Xu Youmian (Yu’an) and Wang Ruren in Nanyangqi, Province of Jiangsu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1601</td>
<td>Xu’s failure in the district examinations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1605</td>
<td>Death of his father in consequence of injuries caused by raiding brigands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1607</td>
<td>Marriage with nee Xu. First excursions to the close environment: Lake Tai; Xu receives a hand-made travel cap from his mother.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1609</td>
<td>Shandong: Mounts Tai, Dai, and Yi; tombs of Confucius and Mencius; Hebei: Beijing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1613</td>
<td>Zhejiang: Cao River, Shaoxing, Ningpo, Mounts Putuo, Tiantai, Yandang; first entry to the diary on May 19.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1614</td>
<td>Jiangsu: Nanjing, Yangzhou.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1615</td>
<td>Birth of eldest son Qi.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1616</td>
<td>Anhui: Mounts Boyue, Huang; Fujian: Mount Wuyi, Chongan; Zhejiang: Shaoxing (mausoleum of the mythical ruler Yu), Kuaiji, Hangzhou (West Lake).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1617</td>
<td>Death of Xu’s wife. Visit to caves in the neighboring district Wuxi.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1618</td>
<td>Marriage with nee Luo, Jiangxi: Mounts Jiuhua, Lu; second visit to Mounts Boyue and Huang.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1619</td>
<td>Birth of second son Xian.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1620</td>
<td>Fujian: Lake Jiuji.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1621</td>
<td>Xu’s mother recovers from serious illness; in celebration of this occasion construction of Qingshantang and invitation to several famous literati to contribute texts on the event. Together with a cousin search for and recovery of a lost family treasure, the necrology for ancestor Xu Yi’an, composed by Li Dongyang (1447–1516) and transcribed for inscription by Wen Zhengming (1469–1559).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>Henan, Shaanxi, Hubei: Mounts Song, Hua and Wudang, Huang River.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1624</td>
<td>The mother of Xu’s 80th birthday, celebration with illustrious guests, installation of the Autumn Garden painting together with many dedicatory literary compositions in the Qingshantang; birth of third son Gou from concubine Jin. Excursion to Xiping with Xu’s mother, first contact with Chen Jiru. Acquisition of sacrificial fields at his mother’s behest; repair of Zhang Temple on Mount Jun; there erection of a stele with an inscription done by Dong Qichang on Xu’s request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1625</td>
<td>Death of his mother.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1626</td>
<td>Execution of Miao Changqi in Beijing, “preventive” suicide of Gao Panlong (b. 1562) at his residence in Wuxi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1628</td>
<td>Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong; meetings with friends Huang Daozhou (executed by the Manzhu 1646) and Zheng Man (executed by the Ming 1638); Xu’s wife Luo chases away the pregnant second concubine Zhou while Xu is traveling: her son remains unacknowledged by the Xu clan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1629</td>
<td>Hebei, Beijing, Mount Pan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1630</td>
<td>Jiangsu, Fujian.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td>Zhejiang, second visit to Mounts Tiantai and Yandang.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1633</td>
<td>Jiangsu, Hebei (Beijing), Shanxi, Mounts Wutai and Heng; Fujian. On his way home visit to friend Chen Hanhui: detailed report to Chen about his journeys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1636–40</td>
<td>Great southwestern journey covering seven provinces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1639</td>
<td>October 11, last entry to the diary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1641</td>
<td>March 8, death of Xu shortly after his return in consequence of skin and foot diseases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes and abbreviations

BBCS  
Baibu congshu, 百部叢書.

CBD  

DMB  


Ming gui  

MS  
Monumenta Serica.

MSJ  


SBCK  
Sibu congkan, Shanghai 1920–2. 四部叢刊.

MSYJ  

SKQS  
Siku quanshu zhenben beiju, Taipei: Shangwu yin shuguan, 1975. 四庫全書 珍本別集.

WJ  

WLX  
Tao Qiyang, ed., Song, Jin, Yuan wenlun xuan (A Selection of Treatises on Literature of the Song, Jin, and Yuan), Beijing 1984. 陶秋英，宋金元文論選.

XKCYJ(a)  
Chu Shaotang and Wu Yinghao, eds, Xu Xiake youji, 2 vols, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 1981. 蕭乾達，徐霞客遊記．

XKCYJ(b)  

XKCYJ(c)  

YHGDJ  
Yuan Hongdao, Yuan Hongdao ji jianxiao, 3 vols, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 1981. 袁宏道，袁宏道集箋校．

1 To Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, Philippe Despoix, Justus Fetscher, Michael Harbsmeier, Michael Lackner, and the discussants of the First Colloque: Expeditions, Encounters and Knowledge – Forschungsreisen, Begegnungen und Wissensformen (1730–1830), Herzog-August-Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (Feb. 1997), where the paper was first presented, as well as to Stephen West and the editors of this volume, Nicola Di Cosmo and Don Wyatt, I wish to express my sincere gratitude for invaluable comments and advice. As I have, over a long period of time, worked with different editions of XKCYJ, I will give, whenever possible, for reference the page numbers of my own copy, XKCYJ(b). Only when citing texts that are not contained in this edition, I indicate the annotated volumes by Chu Shaotang (best edition, but only temporarily accessible to me) and Zhu Huirong. Translations are, if not otherwise indicated, mine.

2 DMB 1067–9. The Donglin academy was located near Suzhou and housed a group of oppositional intellectuals, who propagated general moral reform of court politics;
many of them, like Miao, died as martyrs as a consequence of accusations forwarded by mighty court eunuchs. See Hucker 1957.

3 Yang and Yang 1986: 5–34. On the concept of literary cosmography see Riemenschnitter 1998; on Ming/Qing geographical literature Brook 1988; collections of travel essays have been provided since the thirteenth century (GDYJX I: 286), the most comprehensive of which being contained in late Qing XFHZ (books 4 and 5).


5 There is also a (lesser) tradition of immediate, dated records, best represented by Fan Chengda’s (1126–93) Diary of a Boat Trip to Wu (Wuchuanlu), written in 1177.

6 XKKY[a]: 5.


8 See, e.g., the plethora of myths in the biographical narrative by Yang and Yang 1986.

9 Qian Qianyi, Xu Xiake zhuan, XKKY[a]: 1194. For an abbreviated version of this statement see Li 1974: 25. The Han general Zhang Qian (fl. 2nd century CE) went to Bactria on a diplomatic mission in 122 CE, where he collected information about places and people visited. This expedition initiated trade traffic across the Silk Road.

The Tang monk Xuanzang (603–64) was a famous pilgrim to India, where he spent the years 627–44. He collected Buddhist scriptures and accomplished an imperially sponsored translation project after having returned to China. Yelu Chucai (1190–1244) accompanied Chinggis Khan on his military expedition to Persia 1219–24, and, in the guise of a travelogue, wrote a pamphlet against religious fundamentalism as performed by a militant Daoist sect he originally had sponsored. For introductions to and translations from Xuanzang’s and Yelu’s travelogues see Strassberg 1994: 97–102, and 225–33.

10 Xu’s ancestor Xu Gu was prefectural governor of Kai-feng during the fall of the Northern Song dynasty (app. 1115–26), and moved to the new capital Lin’an (Temporary Residence, now the city of Hangzhou with the court of the Southern Song in 1138. Gu’s great-grandson Xu Shoucheng was prefect of Wu county (with its seat in present Suzhou) during the reign of Emperor Ningzong (1195–1223). After the Mongol conquest, the Xu clan abstained from seeking of official posts, while during the Ming (1368–1644) several clan members gained renown for their erudition and literary talent, but for several reasons never passed the higher jinshi examinations that qualified degree-holders for official service. See Li 1974: 13–15.

11 Chen Jiru, Biographie of Mr. Yu Yu’an, accompanied by Wang Ruren’s (You’an Xu gong jipei Wang Ruren zhuan), XKKY[a]: 1247–9.

12 The contributors to McDermott 1999 have studied the historical and functional variability of political rituals; see especially Di Cosmo, pp. 352–98, who discusses the development of a Manchu state cult as reinforcement of Manchu identity during the Qing, provoked by the integrative, overwhelming power of Han ritual practice. McDermott: 299–351, and Laidlaw: 399–416, both stress internal negotiations—enacted as distinctions between different social groups, or as processes of rational reflexivity effected on particular ritual acts through history. Similarly, I would like to suggest that private symbolic enactments could on occasion become media of enunciation, and could then (partly) be read in analogy with written texts by the spectators/participants—a prospect which calls for a hermeneutics of agency, arguably founded on the Geertzian findings, but with modifications of some of his assumptions (see, i.e., Laidlaw).

13 William S. Atwell’s research concerning the impact of climatic change, namely volcanism, on the history of humanity suggests a shift of perspective on the factors that have contributed to the fall of the Ming. According to his data (dust veil index),
there were five years of severe, consecutive drought between 1637 and 1641 in China, leading to the collapse of, first, Ming (and, presumably, also Manchu) economics and consecutively, of Ming military power. The drought in China coincided with “sharp climatic fluctuations, severe agricultural problems, and significant political unrest in Japan, Korea, Manchuria, and many other parts of the world” (Atwell 2001: 32, 67–78).

15 See, for example, Chow 1994: 15–43.
16 On the role of religious syncretism and a spatial concept of virtue as means of accommodating heterodoxy see Schmidt-Glintzer 1983.
18 Campany 1996 provides an evaluation of early medieval, geographically structured anomaly accounts.
19 The poem begins: “In the beginning of old, who was there to tell the tale?/ All is yet formless, no up or down. What is the basis for study?/ Dark and light are a blur, who can fathom it?/ The image is only a whir. How was it perceived?/ Bright gets brighter, dark gets darker, what brought this about?/ The yin mingles with the yang – what was basic? What transformed?/ Then was the round pattern manifold. Who devised and calibrated it?/ What an achievement that was! Who first fashioned it?” The Tianwen poet’s point of departure thus resembles “a debater’s list of rebuttals,” and is interpreted by S. Field as “subjection of a particular ontological stance to an objective analysis” (Field 1992: 86f.). The poem then proceeds in exposing “key concepts in contemporary (fourth century B.C.) astronomical lore,” (p. 108) later on abruptly changing the subject “from the material heavens to the politics of earth” (p. 109).

20 Bhabha 1994: 12.
22 See Li and other sao-poetry in the Chuci, an introduction to which D. Hawkes (1959) gives in Minford and Wong 1989: 25–42; early Taoist meditation instructions are described in Robinet 1976 and Schipper 1987.
23 Zong Bing, Preface to “Painted Landscapes” (Hua shanshui xu), Munakata, 1983: 125.
24 Mather 1958.
25 “Clothing and food are things which [physically] support human life. Mountains and streams are things which accord with the natural disposition. In this life, involved in the toils of that which [physically] supports, we simply crowd out our natural dispositions which [spiritually] accord. Worldly discussions for the most part hold that joy and satisfaction are basically to be found in splendid mansions, while those who pillow themselves on crags and drift along with streams are said to be lacking in great ambition. Therefore [most men] hold on to their withered estate [in the world]. I hold otherwise. The gentleman has feelings of love toward other beings and has the ability to save other beings. Since the calamity of overflowing waters (political disorder) can only be controlled through talent, therefore if at times there are those who demean themselves in order to rescue others, surely it is not because they consider the place of fame and profit to be more worthy than the realm of purity and boundlessness?” (Mather 1958: 74).
26 Munakata 1983: 121.
27 WLX: 480–1.
28 For an exposition of dao and qi in the context of Daoist aesthetics see Chang 1963: 19–88.
29 Hao Jing, Neiyou, WLX; also cit. in Guo 1992: 312.
TRAVELER’S VOCATION

32 Song travelers like Su Che (1039–1112) had declared Sima Qian (c. 145–c. 85 BCE) to be the first external traveler, contrasting him appraisingly against the archetypical internal wanderer Mengzi (371–289). See Su’s Letter to Privy Council Member Captain Han (Shang Shumi Han Taiwei shu), Guo 1992: 199. Consequently, Su was harshly criticized by Hao; see his Neiyou, op. cit.

33 Wu Pei-yi 1990: 93–141 has studied this genre, which flourished during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and which was strongly influenced by the theme of the quest as derived from travel literature.

34 For a survey of the examination system as the road to prestigious official careers see Ho 1962; its effects on the Ming literati habitus are discussed in Hegel 1981: 11–22.


36 "Tianxia" is commonly rendered as “the Empire”. Han marvelous possessions included strange objects, to be gathered in the palace or exposed in imperial gardens, and strange writings, that is, texts. The role of Daoist imperial advisors has been analyzed at length in Campany 1996, see especially the many Dongfang Shuo anecdotes, e.g. pp. 318–21, and passim. Vervoorn 1990 deals with Han hermit advisors from a more general cultural perspective.


38 Qian Qianyi, Appeal to Xu Zhongzhao for Printing the Travel Diaries (Zhu Xu Zhongzhao ke Youji shu), XXKYJ(a): 1179.

39 Wang Siren, Preface to “Summons to Travel” (Youhuanxu), WJ: 276–8. Parts of the ensuing travelogues (Youhuan) have recently been translated by Duncan Campbell, Victoria University of Wellington, NZ, to whom I am obliged for providing me with his unpublished manuscript.

40 Shi Xialong, Shixu, XXKYJ(a): 1255f., where Shi ascribes Xu to a category of eccentric personalities in history, which, at least since the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove (third century), does have such political overtones. For a German translation of the preface see Riemenschnitter 1998: 217f.

41 See, e.g. Chen Jiru, op. cit.; Wu Guohua, Kungzhiming, XXKYJ(a): 1181.


43 As ideologically streamlined literati officials never ceased to accuse holders from public service of; for a detailed discussion of a southern dissident literati class-formations during the late Ming see Chen 1988: 37–83.
50 Yuan Hongdao and his brothers, but also Qian Qianyi, Wang Siren, Gao Panlong, etc.; after the collapse of the Ming dynasty, Ming loyalists such as Wang Fuzhi, Chen Chen, Jin Shengtan, Pan Lei, etc. continued to be zealous travelers. For a collection of travel literature focusing mainly on Ming authors see MSYJ; Qing travelers are best represented in XFHZ.

51 “Xiao”, the foremost Confucian virtue by this time. For an evaluation of xiao as a key concept of cultural identity see Wu 1995: 192–217.


53 Ganza 1990: 222.

54 This is one of three subcategories of a class of anomalies called “anomaly by taxonomic location.” Their specific method of probing culturally constructed boundaries lies in presenting things that belong to a certain “normal” category, but are anomalous because positioned at its outer edge or limit due to some special feature. Therefore, those phenomena require “an enlargement or bulging of the extension of the category they inhabit – perhaps in some cases stretching it to such an extent that the category seems pointless or obsolete” (Campany 1996: 237–45).


57 Xu Wei was a dramatist, notorious eccentric and author of travel poetry highly praised by Yuan Hongdao. On his life and oeuvre see Nienhauser 1986: 436f.

58 “Mei Kesheng told me in his letter: ‘Wenchang is an old friend of mine. His illness is stranger than his personality; and his personality stranger than his poetry.’ I would say that there is nothing to match Wenchang’s strangeness. There being nothing to match his strangeness is equal to [saying] that he has nothing that is not strange. Alas!” Yuan Hongdao, Xu Wenchang zhuo, YHDJ: 715–19; slightly altered translation from Hung 1995: 122.

59 Xu Xiake, Colophon for “Untrammelled Zeal for the Mountains” (Shanzhong yiqu ba), XXKYJ[a]: 1138–9. For a discussion of the different versions and a compelling translation of the colophon see Ward 2001: 183–5. I am greatly indebted to the author and Curzon Press for having provided me with a copy of the manuscript, which had not yet been published when I wrote this article.

60 Harbsmeier 1985: 283.

61 Chou 1988: 93–104 gives a set of examples.

62 The Classic of Divine Marvels (Shenyijing) and the Records of the Ten Continents (Shizhouji).

63 The Biography of Dongfang Shuo (Dongfang Shuo zhuo), Hanshu 9, zhuan 3/65: 2841–76, English tr. in CBD: 792; for a recent German translation see Bauer 1990: 77.

64 Harbsmeier 1983: 282f.

65 “From the time of Tung-fang Shuo, the fang-shih consciously strove to make themselves interesting characters” (DeWoskin 1983: 41).

resembling the Ming poets’ position, arguably comes the other way around, i.e. from a former, more or less firm confidence in it.

67 As a member of the landowning gentry Xu Xiake was not poor, yet his family did not enjoy the privileges of the literati, as neither in his own, nor in his father’s generation had the family produced holders of examination degrees.

68 “Had he written with an eye to posthumous fame, we would be better informed about his personal life” (Li 1974: 16, 22–8).

69 “I had always liked Yuan Shizhong’s (i.e. Hongdao’s) lines: ‘Making [ourselves] a new passage through heavy piles of snow, erecting our little hut among leisurely floating clouds.’” This is one of the rare occasions when Xu quotes from literary sources. Diary of my travels in Dian, 13 (Dian you riji shisan), XXXYJ(b): 518. Dian is an ancient term for today’s Yunnan province.

70 Gao Panlong, Letter from Master Gao’s Bequest (Gaozi yishu), SKQS 231: 355–8, 608–24. For a brief discussion of Gao’s autobiographical approach see Wu 1990: 131–41. Gao Panlong wrote several autobiographies, two in the cosmographical convention of external travel, Wulin youji and Sanshiji, another one as a “spiritual autobiography,” kunshu.

71 There is a picture of Ni Zan’s (1301–74), a tomb essay composed by Li Dongyang (1447–1516) and transcribed for inscription by Wen Zhengming (1470–1559), and a commemoration essay on the bestowal of imperial honor by Song Lian (1310–81) among the family treasures. See Li 1974: 14.

72 For a translation of this excursion’s diary see ibid.: 117–25.

73 Allusion to the message of the prophecy at the temple of Lake Jiuli. Chen Renxi, Qingshantang ji XXXYJ(a): 1243.

74 “The perfection of the filial son reaches spiritual knowledge/recognition by the spirits” (Xiaozhi zhi zhi, tonghu shenming) (ibid.).

75 Harbsmeier 1985: 281ff.

76 A sample of references to mountain spirits by Xu Xiake is offered in Ward 2001: 177.

77 For an in-depth study of leading May Fourth intellectuals’ Western position-taking as totalitarian antiradicalism see Lin 1979.

78 This remark refers to an earlier statement in 1620, when Xu took off for Lake Jiuli: “My travels in Chekiang and Fukien are a thing of the past. My desire is to see the O-mei of Szechwan, Kweilin of Kwangsi, Ta-hua and Heng the Northern Sacred. Lo-fou and the Heng in Hunan come next and the Wu-hsieh (the Five Leakings) of Chekiang and the Nine Reaches of Fukien come after these. But Szechwan, Kwangsi, and Kuan-chung are at great distances and the age of my mother does not allow me to go so far. Heng in Hunan need not be a special tour, as it can be included in some other trip. Within my reach is Nine Reaches if I go by way of Chiang-lang and the Three Rocks.” Diary of my Excursion to Lake Jiuli (You Jiulihu riji) XXXYJ(b): 20, tr. Li 1974: 120.

79 Xiyi is today’s Wuxi, situated south of Xu’s hometown Jiangyin in Suzhou, Jiangsu.

80 Diary of my Journey in Zhe [jiang] (Zheyou riji), XXXYJ(b): 54.

81 This symbolic act of maternal approval of the son’s unconventional pursuits is documented in many necrologies and other documents on Xu’s life. See The Travel Cup (Yi deng huxiugao), Yang and Yang 1986: 34–7.

82 Chen Hanhui, Xu Xiake muzhiyin, XXXYJ(b): 529, tr. Chang Chun-shu, see Li 1974: 226ff.

83 Yang and Yang 1986: 244f.

84 Shen’s scientific observations were gathered in a collection of essays written in the “casual notes” genre (biji). Among others, Shen’s Brush Talks from Dream Brook’s Studio (Mengzi bitan) also covers geography and geology. This is also one of the first books to discuss the compass as a scientific tool. Finally, Shen treats more technical
Instruments needed for measurement and mapping systematically: "I recently made a map of the counties and prefectures on a scale of 5 cm [sic] for 100 li. I used the methods of rectangular grid, mutual inclusions [ . . . ], checking from the side, heights and depths, right angles and acute angles, curved and straight lines. With these seven methods you can work out the distances, as a bird would fly them. The finished map had four-cornered, square, divisions strictly to scale. Then the four (azimuth) directions and the eight positions may be increased to twenty-four." Shen Gua, Mengji bitan, BBCS/Xue sci. 3072; Ronan 1981 (v. 2): 279f. For a discussion of cultural functions and generic codes of traditional Chinese cartography see, e.g. Smith 1996, 1997, and 1998.

Shuofu 349–51.

"Geng gu yi lai, yi ren er yi," Pan Lei, Pan Xu, XKKY]b): 2f. These words are normally used with reference to Confucius.


Abbreviation for the first part (5 books) of the Mountain- and Waterways, Shanhuijing. See Fracasso 1983.

Sima Qian, Shi ji, v. 10: 3180, complained about the unreliability of these texts as geographical sources. Pan Lei here seems to allude to the durability of its errors, and, consequently, the special merit of Xu Xialke to finally have achieved the long-awaited corrections. I have to thank Nicola Di Cosmo for pointing out the importance of Pan’s reference to me.

"Following the path of his ancestors [in performing] exceptional heroism" (Yi qizong xi ju yigu). Xiao Tong, Wenxuan/Lu Shiheng/Bianwanglun, shang.

Pan Lei, Pan Xu, op. cit. The complete preface has been translated in Ward 2001: 206–8.

On this region’s geohistory see Rock 1948, Wiens 1967, as well as John Herman’s contribution to this volume (Chapter 8).


In between his Qian (last note: ninth day of the fifth month) and Dian diaries (first dated entry: seventh day of eighth month), there is a gap of 87 undocumented days. For an estimation of this period’s itinerary see Chu 1991: 68.

One li during the Ming is approximately 650 meters.

According to XKKY]c): 1042, Xu here relates what he has learnt from the local residents about the volcanic eruption of 1609.

Before coming to Tengyuezhou, in early 1639, Xu had already spent several days on Jizu Mountain, which is situated to the east of Erhai Lake at Dalifu (Chu 1991: 77). Later this year, on the twenty-second day of the eighth lunar month, he returned to Jizu Mountain and stayed there until he was brought back home in early 1640 (ibid.: 80). Baotai Mountain is situated to the southwest of Erhai Lake, south of Yongping (ibid.: 83).

High-ranking official, bestowed with two symbols of imperial authority, the blue flag (qi) and a plaquette (pai).


I.e., the Southern Expedition led by Zhuge Liang in 225, and Wang Ji’s various attempts to subdue a local rebellion during the 1440s of the Ming dynasty. See Dian you riji jiu, Eleventh day, XKKY]b): 415–17.


Needham 1959: 610f. A geographer’s evaluation of Xu’s volcano exploration can be found in Pan 1986.

Li Chi gives a hint on contemporary collections of specialized knowledge, observing that "[i]n this respect, Hsu can be compared with some other prominent men of his
time who turned their backs on the recognized and esteemed but narrow field of scholarly pursuits and catered to their scientific interests” (1974: 26f).
105 Stagl 1996: 106.
106 For a description of the different concepts of the terrestrial organization of space employed during the Han and later dynasties see Dorofeeva-Lichtmann 1995.

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TRAVELER'S VOCATION


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GLOSSARY

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A calculated but rarely discussed cultural metamorphosis took place in eighteenth-century China. A deliberate imperial policy infused political life, the physical landscape, and material culture with an assemblage of new meanings intended to draw attention to and command respect for military success and imperial power. The familiar acquired new implications: government adjusted its practical and symbolic orientations; social distinctions were reconfigured; physical surroundings and the ways in which people experienced and interpreted them changed; and literature and art launched in new directions. The new culture of the high Qing (1662–1800) did not replace the vibrant tradition in which “being civilized” (wén) reigned supreme, but it dislodged it from its exclusive role at the height of political prestige. The consequence was that a military frame of reference featured much more prominently and significantly in the cultural landscape than had been the case during the Ming dynasty.2

A common theme of much recent scholarship on Chinese political and institutional history is that there was a substantial separation between public pronouncements and actual practice: between what was said and what was done. Among the most famous examples of this dichotomy is the misleading statement from which much of Western (mis)understanding of China has been derived, namely the Qing emperor’s disingenuous 1792 declaration to the ambassador of King George III of England that China was absolutely self-sufficient. This episode indicates how clearly we have become seduced by the authority of language in Chinese culture. That is, in order to understand how things really were, we must look as best we can at what actually happened and at the broader range of evidential materials, and not rely exclusively on what was said or written. When we adopt this approach, many former assumptions about Chinese history and civilization are discredited.3 To give a few examples: we now know that, contrary to what was once believed, traditional China had a thriving civil as well as criminal system of law, and that ordinary Chinese people were quite litigious and often invoked the legal system to enforce their rights against one another. In
foreign relations, despite rigid Chinese assertions that their empire was the center of the world, and a determined insistence that others acknowledge its superiority, the reality was that Chinese foreign policy was highly pragmatic and often adapted to circumstances as necessary. As for commerce, despite professions of disdain for trade, Chinese across the social spectrum have in fact always energetically and enthusiastically engaged in commercial exchange. In military conflicts, notwithstanding much rhetoric about preferring peaceful solutions, China rarely hesitated to use force when necessary to achieve its political ends. Finally, scholars have begun to demonstrate that the traditional view of the perennially overwhelming predominance of the civil, or civilized (wen) over the military, or martial (wu) is amply due for revision. 4

The Qing promotion of martial values

Qing China is commonly characterized as the victim of Western imperialism, as the result of its experiences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet in the two centuries before the advent of the West, the Qing itself pursued an ambitious and sophisticated program of imperial expansion that in many respects was not substantially different from the Western version. The seeds of this program had already been sown by no later than 1636, even before the Manchu conquest of China, but it began to take a more clearly demarcated shape under the Kangxi emperor (1662–1722), continued under the Yongzheng emperor (1723–35), and reached its height under the Qianlong emperor (1736–95), a man obsessed by empire and the military power necessary to attain it. With an intensity that increased with time, these emperors underpinned massive military expansion by implementing an ambitious program of cultural transformation. Aiming to create an all-new hybrid Qing culture, indissoluble from the project of empire and founded on the bedrock of Manchu martial ideals, they anticipated that a new shared consciousness of and high regard for military success and its consequences would help mute the chauvinism of Chinese culture, at the same time as it counteracted the partial sinicization of the Manchus. We can no longer, therefore, confidently apply to this period two long-held assumptions about Chinese history – namely, the uniform predominance of a civil ethos over a military one, and the completeness of Manchu sinicization. 5 The two are closely connected, as will become apparent below.

Two principal reasons underlay Qing emperors’ quest to transform the culture of their imperial subjects. First, ever alert to the resonance of history, they wished to avoid repeating the mistakes made by the Ming, whose allocation of excessive powers to the civil arm of government at the expense of the military resulted in such a widespread disaffection and defiance of civil authority as to contribute substantially to the Ming fall. 6 The Qing rulers, who owed their presence as emperors to military force, wished, in short, to adjust the civil–military balance to give greater influence to the latter, rhetorically as well as actually. This did not, however, entail a necessary devaluation of wen values,
because they still intended to keep military elements under firm control and, moreover, they fully appreciated the centrality of civilian culture to the long-term pursuit of their imperial goals. In other words, they understood the relationship between the civil and military principles not in terms of mutual exclusion but as a continuum in which wende, scholarly or literary virtue, and wugong, military achievement, mutually produced and reproduced one another, to the ultimate advantage of imperial power.

A second, but not secondary, motivation underlying the plan to promote greater attention to martiality and military success was that the Qing emperors aimed thereby to forge a more closely aligned set of cultural preferences among the diverse peoples they ruled—Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans, and Uighurs, as well as Chinese. Rather than seeking to draw their Inner Asian subjects into the orbit of Chinese civilization, the Qing rulers sought to promote values associated with the cultures of Inner Asia among their Chinese subjects, in a process that was just the reverse of the sinicization routinely claimed as inevitable. The purpose was to bring together diverse traditions within a single polity, in other words to unite and rule their multiethnic and multicultural empire.

The long-term Qing strategy to inculcate an awareness of and appreciation for military success into the mainstream of Chinese culture was not constructed in a vacuum, nor did it encounter an unreceptive audience. Not least, it rested on the foundations of a popular tradition that accorded enormous importance to martial values and political loyalty, as attested by the perennial popularity of such epics as Romance of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguo Yanyi) and Outlaws of the Marsh (Shuihu Zhuan); the pervasiveness of martial arts; and religious cults centered on such military heroes as Guan Yu (162–220) and Yue Fei (1103–1141).7 Typically the underlying narratives might include dramatic swordfights, magical fire-weapons, sudden mysterious mists, or storms that rained blood, exploding battlements, deadly rays of light, and so on, often within a context of conflicts fought for such morally uplifting purposes as national preservation.

Such tales, often the subject of story-telling performances, held great appeal to ordinary people, for whom such lore became part of their everyday cultural environment, but they appealed as much to members of the elite, whose literary encounters with warfare began with the classical texts despite the latter's conventional dissociation from high culture. For the elite, furthermore, civil–military interaction in the cultural sphere had long been far greater than is sometimes supposed, taking such forms as the patronage of artists by army generals, and the appreciation of elegantly decorated swords by fashionable aesthetic connoisseurs. From a more practical point of view, scholars often developed a keen interest in military matters as the result of the fact that—as leaders of local communities and as officials—they frequently had to cope with such matters as bandit suppression and combating the threat of rebellion or invasion, latterly including that of the Manchus themselves. Thus, the distaste for military matters often attributed to the traditional Chinese elite has been gravely overstated.
Finally, for many members of the elite the timeliness of the high-Qing imperial project was an important factor in generating a generally favorable reception. The crisis of elite identity occasioned by the Ming fall, combined with the Qing introduction of a hereditary military–administrative elite (the banners, discussed below) into the social hierarchy, had meant that the traditional Chinese elite needed to find new ways beyond education and scholarship through which to legitimize itself. The pride in empire and the new sense of national community fostered by the imperial cultural program offered a new means of self-definition for the elite. On the whole, therefore, it was more expedient for them to cooperate than to resist.  

By the late eighteenth century, war itself had become, in effect, a major Qing institution. The successful conclusion of the wars of dynastic consolidation in the 1680s was shortly followed by a series of campaigns, first against Russia and then against the Zunghars, whose imperial ambitions in Inner and Central Asia matched those of the Qing. These wars culminated in the mid-eighteenth century when the Qing assumed political control over what became Xinjiang, and exterminated the Zunghars who had occupied much of its eastern portion. From this time on, if not even earlier, Qianlong vigorously promoted the notion that military triumphs were one of his reign’s central accomplishments. Toward the end of his life, in 1792, he even began to style himself “Old Man of the Ten Complete Victories” (shiquan laoren) after an essay enumerating his “Ten Complete Military Victories” (shiquan wugong) that, in addition to the wars for Xinjiang, included those in the Tibetan borderlands in the 1740s and 1770s (the Jinchuan wars), campaigns in Burma, Taiwan, and Annam (Vietnam), and the Gurkha wars of the 1790s.  

Evidence of the intentional reshaping of culture to give prominence to a more markedly military ethos can be discerned throughout the records of Qing China. Areas affected included what we may call the culture of government, dress codes, religion, art, ritual, literature, drama, and landscape. In this chapter I address the two aspects of this cultural recasting that cover both the organization of ideology and its transformation into physical space—namely, the culture and institutions of government, and landscape and its representations.

**Militarizing government culture and institutions**

As the Qing waged these wars and simultaneously set out to recast culture in a more martial mold, government institutions were one key object of their attention. They introduced two major innovations. The first was the development of the Grand Council (junjichu). Created in the early eighteenth century to run military campaigns in the northwest, it became the highest privy council of state, with its members effectively running the country in the emperor’s name (although always under his authority). A substantial proportion of grand councilors (junji dachen) ran military operations or commanded armies during their tenure—it was usual for them to hold concurrent positions elsewhere in the government.
– while some came to the Council fresh from military success. Thus civil government came to be dominated by an originally military agency, one which never altogether lost its primary character. Over the course of time, moreover, increasing numbers of bureaucrats owed their appointments to military exigency, as the sale of degrees and appointments intensified as a fundraising mechanism in wartime.

In such ways, a close interrelationship developed between military and political success in the high Qing, as well as an increase in mobility between civilian and military posts. By the mid-eighteenth century, some connection to military success, whether through soldiering, strategizing, logistics, historiography, or otherwise, was acknowledged to be instrumental – if not prerequisite – to the achievement of a successful political career. Scholars drafting imperially authorized biographies for the official history of the period explicitly noted this, stating, for instance, that “in the middle and later years of the Qianlong reign, many people used military achievement as a means to bring about political success.” This observation comes at the end of a chapter of biographies whose principal subjects were the editors of the *Four Treasuries* imperial bibliographic project (*Siku quanshu*). In other words, the definition of military achievement was ample enough to embrace contributing to the cultural project by recording imperial successes. *Four Treasuries* editor-in-chief Ji Yun (1724–1805) had already endeared himself to the Qianlong emperor by composing a poem on the so-called return to allegiance of the Torguts who had migrated from Russia to Qing China, an episode the emperor regarded as akin to a military triumph.11

Qing rulers did not draw simple equations between, on the one side, Manchus and the military, and, on the other, Chinese and civil government. Emperors were acutely conscious of the political sensitivity of both ethnic and civil–military issues, but they were well aware – Kangxi and Yongzheng perhaps more clearly than Qianlong – that their blanket attribution of great martiality to the Manchus contained an element of wishfulness and was not wholly grounded in reality. More precisely, the collective designation of the Manchus as preeminently martial was a more or less conscious expedient devised for purposes of empire. Thus, while it is tempting to characterize the focus on military success as a bid to make the bureaucracy “more Manchu,” this would be mistaken: the move to militarize the culture of government by no means represented a straightforward attempt by the Qing emperors to downgrade Chinese and promote Manchu within the central administration, even though most high-Qing grand councilors were Manchu. It was martiality, a supposedly Manchu characteristic, rather than ethnic identity as such, that emperors regarded as essential to the cultural project.

This situation sometimes led to unexpected results. For instance, when the Kangxi emperor arbitrated political conflicts, he was increasingly severe towards Manchus and relatively lenient towards Chinese, although the ultimate results of this differential treatment were often indistinguishable. According to modern historian Dai Yingcong, moreover, even within the Qing military establishment
the Kangxi emperor sought to create an ethnic balance between Chinese and Manchus. Certainly he showed marked favor towards Chinese military men, perhaps in part to acknowledge how essential they were to the imperial project. That their role was critical was apparent not only because of their earlier participation in the armies of conquest, but also because Manchu troops had performed quite inadequately in the pivotal Three Feudatories (sanfan) rebellion of 1673–81. The Grand Council’s creation by Yongzheng itself derived from some of these ethnic issues. Yongzheng wished to find an effective means of combating the threat posed to the Qing imperial project by the interference in government of certain Manchu princes, although, even so, a majority of those in whom he placed most reliance continued to be Manchu. 12

The careers of several grand councilors illustrate some of the political and ethnic subtleties involved in militarizing the culture of government. Zhang Tingyu (1672–1755) a rare Han Chinese among the early grand councilors, was said to have been appointed as the result of his display of absolute political reliability, the consequences of which some scholars have likened to a military victory. Zhang had edited the Veritable Records (Shilu) of the Kangxi reign to conceal Yongzheng’s maneuvering for the succession.13 O’ertai (1680–1745), another early member of the Grand Council, was well known for having pacified aboriginal groups in Yunnan in the 1720s when he was governor-general in the region prior to his Council appointment. Later he served as a supervisor of military supplies in the northwest, before concluding his career in civilian work. Bandi (d. 1735), Qianlong’s ethnically Mongol son-in-law, led a number of campaigns in the field, first against Miao rebels in Huguang in 1739–40 and later against the Zunghars in the mid-fifties. In the interim, Bandi served as a grand councilor, and was concurrently quartermaster-general for the first Jinchuan campaign (1746–8), performing similar duties in the northwest in 1754. Liu Tongxun (1700–73), like Zhang Tingyu, was one of relatively few ethnically Han grand councilors in the early years of the agency’s existence. Liu had held civilian jobs prior to his elevation to grand councilor in 1753, but in the following year he was sent west in a staff position relating to the Xinjiang wars. He later served in the quartermaster’s office. Another Chinese councilor, Sun Shiyi (1720–96), was involved first in fighting rebels in Taiwan and later (with rather mixed success) in Annam, before his appointment to the Grand Council in 1789, apparently his only year in the office. Sun’s flair for logistics was a major factor in Qing success against the Gurkhas in the early 1790s. At the time of his death, he was involved in attempts to suppress White Lotus (bailian jiao) rebels.

Grand Council military connections were not limited to the grand councilors alone. Grand Council clerks (zhangjing) who, in Beatrice Bartlett’s words, “were entrusted with high-level discretionary tasks,” also bridged the theoretical divide between civilian and military roles. One such clerk was Zhao Yi (1727–1814), best known to posterity as a historian. Zhao’s work as a Grand Council clerk in the late 1750s included drafting military communications from the Council to the armies on the northwestern front in the wars for Xinjiang. In 1768, he
served for a time with the army in Burma, later being seconded to help in the war in Taiwan in 1787–8. Among his writings is an important study of Qing wars, *Record of the Military Achievements of this August Dynasty* (*Huangchao wugong jisheng*), which draws both on his personal experiences and his familiarity with the government perspective.14

The Grand Council controlled a number of subordinate agencies, one of which was the “Office of Military Archives” (*Fanglüeguan*), formally founded as a permanent entity in 1749, when earlier separate archival and publishing functions were brought together under its single aegis.15 While these publications appeared under the names of grand councilors, the bulk of the actual work was done by large teams of scholars, copyists, translators, and so on. They produced massive, detailed official histories of the many campaigns of the eighteenth century, accounts that of course depicted these wars in the most favorable light possible, as well as such compilations as a history of the Qing palaces and a gazetteer of the entire empire, works that included pointed references to Qing victories. The production of the campaign histories bridged the civil–military gap in more ways than one: men whose chief distinction was military achievement (usually current or future grand councilors) gained the opportunity to lay claim to literary accomplishment while, conversely, scholars, including some of the most distinguished of the realm, thereby acquired a new variety of state-sanctioned literary merit by joining the Qing project to glorify military success. An example of the councilor/warrior-turned-literary man was Shuhede (1711–77), a veteran of several military campaigns, whose name appears in a number of campaign histories; examples of the scholar assigned to military historical work included Wang Chang (1725–1806), a leading scholar, poet, and official, and Lu Xixiong (1734–92), joint chief editor of the *Four Treasuries* project.16 Both the sheer quantity and the often high caliber of the educated men working on the campaign histories, beside the fact of official sponsorship, lent these works weighty authority and influence, as well as impressing the military campaigns onto the minds of the histories’ compilers. All this, combined with the mere fact of their addition to the literary corpus, could not but affect cultural norms. This mode of melding *wen* and *wu*, therefore, helped set in motion new ways of conceptualizing status and identity.

In a less concrete sense, the Qing style of government, which included a standing military presence and favored mass mobilization in times of crisis, reflected an esteem for martial values. R. Bin Wong’s recent characterization of eighteenth-century government in China as “campaign-driven,” or underwritten by a military style of management, seems apposite here. In this view, the enormous effort devoted to handling such periodic crises as flood and famine relief was organizationally akin to military campaigns.17 To these crises one might add the several imperial Southern Tours (*nanxun*), major feats of logistics consciously conceived as peacetime counterparts to the military campaigns and designed as a material allusion to Inner Asian martial prowess. Indeed, Qianlong, sensitive to the need to extend imperial power and its aura beyond the northern regions
– where the imperial capitals made these all too evident – explicitly ranked his Southern Tours as equal in significance to his military victories in the achievements of his reign. In sum, the Qing permeated political space with a military aura, both by making military success a leading factor in political power and by tending to run government as though it were a military operation. The fallout from these shifts of emphasis percolated throughout the bureaucracy and across the empire.

The eight banners

The other major institutional innovation of the Qing period – one that dated from the pre-conquest period and hence long preceded the creation of the Grand Council – was the eight banner (baqi) system, a military and administrative structure that in effect created a hereditary aristocracy to parallel the Chinese merit-based civil service elite. As is well known, the basic system called for eight separate banner organizations each for Manchus, Mongols, and “Han-martial” (hanjun) – the latter being originally Chinese who had joined the Manchu cause before the fall of the Ming. The Qing maintained a standing army drawn principally from the banners and consisting both of garrison troops stationed across the country and armies deployed in the various campaigns. As time went on, however, many banner descendants ceased to have much real connection to the military and effectively lost their elite status while, conversely, some ethnic Han successfully infiltrated the banners, whether through adoption, promotion, or enterprising subterfuge with a view to personal advantage. In practice, therefore, both ethnic and civil–military boundaries became increasingly hard to distinguish.

The point here is that whatever the precise status of individual bannermen and their families, from a systemic point of view, the existence of the banners interwove a military-based social structure into existing social hierarchies, altering China’s social framework. Moreover, in the Qianlong era Han-martial were progressively excluded from the advantages of banner membership, which by imperial policy became more of an exclusive Manchu–Mongol preserve. In this context, the case of grand councilor Sun Shiyi is instructive. For ambiguous reasons Sun expressed a dying wish to enter the banners; this request was granted his grandson along with other posthumous honors but subsequently withdrawn. Sun’s wish suggests the possibility that the Qing had successfully produced a desire among its Chinese subjects not just for banner status as such, but for the greater social standing that positioning within the military–administrative hierarchy might bring.

In short, both Chinese elites and banner elites generally found it necessary to seek new ways of reinforcing the superior status they claimed. The sense of common interest intentionally fostered by the high-Qing cultural project, with its attention to military success and empire, provided one highly promising solution to this predicament.
Members of the twenty-four banners lived, whether in Beijing or in the provinces, in insular walled garrison compounds that often were located right in the heart of existing cities. (The separation was also marked by the massive funding the central government allocated to the preservation of the banner system as a marker of ethnic identity.) Known as the “Manchu cities” (mancheng), these compounds were set aside for the exclusive use of banner garrison officers and soldiers, their families and households. Within them individual banners were assigned living quarters by reference to the colors assigned to different points on the compass, in an arrangement that echoed standard battle formation. As described by Evelyn Rawski in relation to Beijing, the plain and bordered yellow banners occupied the northwestern and northeastern parts of the inner city, plain white and bordered white the eastern and southeastern portions, plain and bordered blue the southern portion, and plain and bordered red the western and southwestern portions, respectively. They were divided into left and right wings, with, on the right, the plain yellow, plain red, bordered red and bordered blue, and, on the left, the bordered yellow, plain white, bordered white, and plain blue banners. These living arrangements were reduplicated in every garrison across the empire.

In certain locations the garrisons’ high visibility as a sign of Manchu occupation was marked with especial clarity. For example, in Nanjing, formerly the Ming capital, the garrisons initially were located right in the precincts of the former imperial palace itself, while on the northwest frontier dual Manchu and Chinese cities became a characteristic marker of Qing expansion. Yet, over time, many of the garrison cities became progressively incorporated into the landscape of daily life, thus, as it were, naturalizing the militarization of the physical environment.

The banner garrisons marked the intersection of the transformation of government culture and that of the physical landscape. In the remainder of this chapter, I address ways in which Qing cultural reconfigurations were expressed in physical and material form through transformations of the natural and man-made landscape and of its meanings.

Militarization of the landscape

The Qing accomplished these transformations of landscape through a variety of overlapping methods. These methods included the creation of completely new natural landscapes and the erection of new structures on existing ones. Even without new construction, another type of transformation involved the attachment of new significance to an existing landscape — for example by ensuring its permanent association with a particular event or ritual, or by drawing new attention to it, or by bestowing fresh meaning on a landscape or location by the very fact of imperial presence there.

Perhaps the most conspicuous high-Qing transformation of the landscape was the expansion of the imperial borders to their greatest extent ever. Emperors
quickly took steps to portray their conquests in cartographic form so as to confirm their permanence through textual representation. Among the earliest and best known result of these cartographic efforts was the imperially sponsored map of the empire produced by Jesuit missionaries over a ten-year period. It was completed in 1718, although subsequent additions were made to keep pace with fresh conquests. Although for security reasons these maps were not widely circulated, so that the technology used was not immediately influential, some of the information they included appeared almost at once in a number of relatively accessible encyclopedic compilations. In a parallel development, during the eighteenth century, Chinese cartographers also produced a number of “world maps” that incorporated those changes in the contours of the empire that resulted from Qing military conquests. As Richard Smith has noted, each edition of every such map begins with a formulaic proclamation that the extent of the territory controlled by the Qing was unprecedented. By thus authoritatively associating their fixing of territorial expansion, in textual and visual form, with military success, cartographers not only created a new picture of “the world” but thereby helped perpetuate, in apparently full consciousness, the normalization of the changed imperial landscape.23

A distinctive feature of Qing rule was the practice of maintaining multiple capitals. As Evelyn Rawski has described, this practice, derived from such earlier “alien” empires as the Liao, Jin, and Yuan, served the important purpose of establishing an imperial presence in more than one location. All Qing capitals were located in the north, a fact that lends force to the argument that the imperial Southern Tours, as well as other imperial excursions, were intended at least in part to make imperial power felt across the empire.24

Manchu founder Nurhaci (1559–1626) did not maintain multiple capitals simultaneously, but moved his capital several times between 1587 and 1625, when he settled in Shenyang, which as Shengjing, also known by its Manchu name of Mukden, became the capital from which the Manchus conquered China. Both Nurhaci and his son, Hung Taiji (or Huang Taiji) (1592–1643) were buried there, in elaborate imperial tombs that became an important ancestral site for later Qing emperors. Mukden remained an imperial capital even after the move to Beijing in 1644, although somewhat eclipsed in importance by both Beijing and the summer retreat at Chengde (Rehe). Both Kangxi and Qianlong visited Shengjing several times to pay their respects to the imperial ancestors and confirm its continued prestige and imperial significance. These northern, somewhat less ostentatious versions of the imperial Southern Tours were known as “Eastern Tours” (dongxun), in an indication of the continued importance accorded Shengjing as a sacred space of empire. Ever conscious of the uses of imperial spaces, Qianlong also instigated large-scale renovation and expansion of the palaces during the later eighteenth century.25

The Shengjing palace complex built by Nurhaci and Hung Taiji offers a prime example of the infusion of martial references into architecture at an early stage of Qing imperial expansion. This militarization of architecture, a
Figure 10.1 The Hall of Great Administration (Dazhengdian) in the imperial palace at Mukden, at the head of ten pavilions, five on either side of the courtyard.

Eight of these were assigned to the banners and one each to the banner commanders of the left and right wings.

Source: photograph courtesy of Margaret Clinton.

phenomenon by no means limited to or invented by the Manchus, was most prominent in the eastern of the three main sections of the palace. In this portion of the palace was built an octagonal structure, the Hall of Great Administration (Dazhengdian), located at the head of ten pavilions, five on either side of the courtyard (see Figure 10.1). Of these, eight were assigned to the banners and one each to the banner commanders of the left and right wings. Perhaps the eight-sided shape of the Hall of Great Administration, which recalled a structure built in Nurhaci’s earlier temporary capital at Dongjing, near Liaoyang, was also intended on one level to evoke the eight-banner military-administrative system. One may also speculate that it simultaneously made deliberate reference to the characteristic octagons favored by the royal house of Liao, whose tenth- through thirteenth-century empire had coincided with some of the territory now controlled by the Manchus, and as such was intended to legitimate Hung Taiji’s imperial ambitions. In other words, architectural reference to imperial stature
coincided with and supplemented military motifs. It has also been suggested that the almost parallel arrangement of the rows of pavilions was intended to resemble the Chinese character \textit{ba}, meaning eight, in a further reference to the eight banners. At any rate, the disposal and shape of the structures both symbolized and substantiated in material form the close relationship of early Qing rulers to their military establishment, and set a clear early precedent for subsequent Qing architectural manifestations of military prowess and imperial power.\footnote{27}

Further, the Mukden imperial palace expressed the interconnection of \textit{wen} and \textit{wu} in architectural form. Two arches (\textit{pailou}) located on either side of the main entrance to the imperial palace in Shengjing, and dating from 1637 (soon after Hung Taiji’s 1636 proclamation of a Qing empire), are labeled respectively as the Arch of Literary Virtue (Wende fang) on the eastern side and the Arch of Military Achievements (Wugong fang) on the western side. In this respect, the Mukden palace bore some resemblance to the Forbidden City in Beijing, where the Hall of Literary Glory (Wenhua dian) was located on the eastern side and the Hall of Military Prowess (Wuyingdian) on the western side, in an arrangement that dated back at least to the Ming. The architectural expression of balancing \textit{wen} and \textit{wu} thus appeared to evoke Chinese practice but, as with the octagonal shape of the Hall of Great Administration, it may have borne additional significance given that precedents could also be found in the architectural arrangements of such early non-Han empires as the Liao.\footnote{28}

The military and imperial architectural subtexts at Mukden were not limited to the palaces and banner structures discussed above. In 1635, Hung Taiji set in motion the construction of a major Tibetan Buddhist temple-and-stupa complex dedicated to the cult of Mahakala, whose martial power and protective ferocity were linked to the tradition of Mongol emperorship and their cachet in the region. Such public works not only provided a key means to simultaneously proclaim imperial devotion and affirm Qing power; in addition, monumental evidence of Hung Taiji’s support for Tibetan Buddhism in general and Mahakala in particular reiterated his intention of claiming the specific heritage of the Mongol empire, most crucially its military prowess and its political relationship to religion. In short, Hung Taiji’s imperial pretensions required him to coopt the patron–lama relationship that had enabled Khubilai Khan (1215–94), who had ruled China from 1279 until his death, to dominate Tibet. Such assertions proved central to eventual Qing domination of both the Mongols and Tibet. As with the palaces, the very early (1635) date of this temple construction at Mukden indicates that the political and religious aspirations of the Qing surfaced very early on. Whether Hung Taiji and his successors were devout believers or simply cynical politicians is less important than the point that they acutely grasped the political utility of manipulating their subjects’ beliefs to suit their own purposes.

The principal shrine of the Mahakala complex, the Temple of True Victory (Shishengsi), which commemorated the military successes of the Manchu rulers, conformed architecturally to certain Chinese principles (e.g. facing south) but at the same time certain elements, such as the placement of four subsidiary temples
at each of Mukden’s cardinal directions, appear to have derived from such other traditions as Hindu temple design (Mahakala being a Hindu deity). These four, which formed part of the overall complex, each bore a Chinese inscription reiterating the intent of enlisting the Buddhist gods to protect and support the nascent Qing empire. This architectural representation of the Buddhist cosmological order celebrated the succession of their “first emperor,” Hung Taiji, as a universal monarch (cakravartin) in the Buddhist tradition. That this custom-made sacred space specifically linked martial prowess, religious devotion, and empire could hardly be more clear. 29

Another important religious site with overtones of empire was Mount Wutai (Wutaishan) in Shanxi province. Steady imperial attention, including repeated imperial visitations and lavish donations, cast this long-time sacred site in a new light. At Mount Wutai, emperors particularly graced the temple of Manjusri, the Buddhist figure whom they claimed, as had the Mongol emperor Khubilai Khan and the Ming emperor Yongle before them, to be the living reincarnation. 30 Like the claim to the protection of Mahakala at Mukden, the assumption of the “persona” of Manjusri was critical to Qing imperial pretensions because it implied that the Manchu rulers had superseded the Mongols as the legitimate successors of Khubilai, whose power had extended over just the same areas now claimed by the Manchus. 31

Attention to the building, consecration, and advancement of temples that supported Qing claims to universal overlordship continued throughout the eighteenth century. A major Tibetan Buddhist site of this period was the Yonghegong, earlier the princely residence of the future Yongzheng emperor, and the birthplace of Qianlong. Under the latter the Yonghegong, located in the center of Beijing, became the fifth most important Lamaist Buddhist site in the empire as well as the site where the emperor chose to install the famous stele whose inscription (Lama shuo) established the imperial claim to overlordship over Tibetan Buddhists in both the religious and secular realms. 32

Qing emperors’ sense of the potency of place, vividly deployed at Shengjing, Mount Wutai, and the Yonghegong, also manifested itself pointedly at the ruined former Ming palace in Nanjing. As Jonathan Hay has described in a recent article, Kangxi deliberately left this site unrestored because he wished to imbue it with new, politically charged meaning. Although the ostensible purpose for his visit to the ruins of the palace and the Ming imperial tombs in Nanjing in the 1680s was a simple act of respect, Kangxi used the occasion to claim connection to the former emperors supplanted by his forebears, and to draw attention to Qing power. 33 It was a subtle and skillful way in which to coopt for Qing purposes a site that otherwise offered rich potential for subversion because of its strong Ming associations.

Shifting our attention from the former Ming capital of Nanjing to the Qing summer capital at Chengde, we find an example of the alteration of terrain to manufacture an artificial landscape that was intended to convey a particular meaning. Qing emperors spent several months at Chengde each year, and
transformed it from a culturally insignificant outpost into an empire in miniature. As Philippe Foret and others have described, the Chengde complex included architecture and vistas that exactly replicated those in Lhasa, Tibet, and temples specifically dedicated to the deity Manjusri, as well as man-made landscapes that resembled the Mongolian steppe and scenic spots in southern China. By thus reconstructing famous landmarks and landscapes from throughout the empire, and reiterating their connection to Manjusri, Qing emperors found multiple ways of expressing their hegemony over the various parts of their empire and reiterating their close association with and derivation of legitimacy from Tibetan Buddhism, at the same time publicizing their technical accomplishments. The construction of replicas in this manner was not wholly unfamiliar to the Chinese cultural tradition—indeed it dated back at least to the time of the first emperor of Qin (r. 221–210 BCE)—but the extent, the inclusion of so many non-Chinese references, and the strong Tibetan Buddhist inflection, all marked a strikingly new departure. In this way, the Qing staked their claim to a place in history—past and future—as creators of an empire that was at once in many respects quintessentially Chinese and yet—by openly incorporating elements from other traditions—far surpassed anything the Chinese had ever accomplished. Such transformations represented the essence of the new Qing culture.

At Chengde, where Inner Asian princes came regularly to pay their respects, high-Qing emperors also erected temples and monuments that commemorated the military triumphs of the age. Many of their commemorative inscriptions purportedly were authored by the emperor himself; authentic or not, engraving his calligraphy on the monuments served as a reminder of imperial authority, while his supposed authorship made it quite clear both that remembrance was profoundly important and that, whatever the realities, this was how the wars were to be remembered. Engraved in the several main languages of state (usually Manchu, Chinese, Tibetan, and Mongol) on often huge monuments, such inscriptions played a central role in the transformation, both physical and metaphorical, of the landscape.

Some 120 kilometers north of Chengde lay the imperial hunting preserve at Mulan. Kangxi hunted there for about a month almost every autumn from 1681 until 1722 (he missed annual hunts only when he was on campaign), while Qianlong also held more than forty hunts there during his long reign. Both emperors explicitly regarded the hunt as a peacetime surrogate for military training, particularly Qianlong, whose intense military focus was partly attributable to the fact that, unlike his grandfather Kangxi, he did not personally go out on campaign, and presided over a period in which warfare was fought to expand rather than preserve the empire. Mulan was reserved exclusively for hunting, and its name became virtually synonymous with the exposition, review, and rehearsing of Manchu martial skills. The amount of time spent by Kangxi and Qianlong at Mulan almost justifies describing it as a subsidiary Qing capital, characterized by its devotion to the military rather than the civil arts. Moreover,
the transfer of the emperor and his entourage to Mulan was akin to a military parade, albeit conducted over long distance and over perhaps a month’s duration. The logistical arrangements required for this imperial journey called for military precision and close attention to detail. And for those whose home areas were traversed each year by the huge imperial retinue of attendants, officials, and troops, the material evidence of an empire that rested on a foundation of military power was absolutely manifest.36

Monuments commemorating war were erected in many parts of the empire: in the palaces at Beijing and Shengjing, in temples erected for the purpose on the sites of battlefields, particularly on the imperial periphery, and in newly conquered regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet. As in Chengde, this proliferation of monuments permanently changed the very appearance of the landscape. At the same time, it literally inscribed it with texts whose content was intended to forge a basis for the creation among their diverse and multilingual audience of a united community, under Qing lordship. The propagation of the imperial last word on the campaigns was, moreover, not limited to stele inscriptions: the monuments, including reproduction of their inscriptions in toto, were also incorporated in paintings, while the texts themselves were hung as calligraphic scrolls that adorned halls and pavilions within the imperial palace complex and recorded in a variety of catalogs that probably reached most educated circles.37

Many other locations both inside and outside the capital acquired very visible links to Qing military prowess and, by association, imperial power. The installation of one set of war memorials infiltrated the celebration of warfare right into the heart of Chinese civilian culture, thus representing a bold effort to blur the traditional separation of civil and military, wen and wu. These war memorials were installed in the Confucian Temple, adjacent to the National Academy (Guozijian). The nearby presence of the spirit tablet of the great sage, and the fact that the Confucian Temple and National Academy complex was the educational center of the empire, where there stood row after row of stone tablets listing the successful candidates for the triennial civil service examinations, as well as others inscribed with the thirteen classical texts of Confucian orthodoxy, made this a striking choice of location indeed. The erection of these war memorials changed forever the appearance of these courtyards, within which war could never again be forgotten. Their presence in the National Academy affirmed the no less than equal status under Qing rule of the values of martiality and those derived from classical Chinese scholarship.38

Also in Beijing stands the Pavilion of Purple Radiance (Ziguangge), an old pavilion originally used for parades, archery review, and the like, and expressly restored in 1760 as a center for the glorification of military triumphs. To adorn its interior, court painters produced portraits of one hundred meritorious officials, divided into upper and lower groups of fifty, after each campaign. The emperor personally authored eulogies for the upper fifty portraits in the first series (produced after the conquest of Xinjiang), while three grand councilors, Yu Minzhong (1714–80), Liu Tongxun, and Liu Lun (1711–73), produced them
for the lower fifty. Each eulogy appeared in both Chinese and Manchu. Additional series of portraits of meritorious officials were produced after the Jinchuan, Taiwan, and Gurkha wars; one hundred for the Jinchuan, forty for the Taiwan campaign, and thirty for the Gurkha wars. Alongside the portraits hung depictions of major battles and the spectacular celebrations that took place after each of the “Ten Great Victories.” In this hall, with its triumphal artistic decoration, the emperor hosted banquets to reward victorious generals and received visiting tributaries; distinguished foreign visitors are, in fact, still received there today.

Behind the Pavilion of Purple Radiance stood the Hall of Military Achievements (Wuchengdian), near which were displayed stelae engraved with several hundred of Qianlong’s compositions on his wars. The Hall of Military Achievements was used to exhibit various war trophies, such as the silver sutra case of Amursana, infamous turncoat and Qing archenemy of the Xinjiang campaigns, captured weapons, and so on. These buildings, the Pavilion of Purple Radiance and the Hall of Military Achievements, thus owed their existence and derived their identity from the celebration of military victory. Apart from the immediate purpose of extolling Qing military success for the benefit of the Qing elite and the tributary lords, together they were intended to serve as a triumphant beacon to cast light on Qing glories across both space and time, in other words for the edification of both a putative international audience and of generations to come.

As with the Mulan hunting grounds, certain other locations also became defined primarily by their association with warfare, martial pursuits, and empire. One was the main gate of the Forbidden City, the Meridian Gate (Wu Men), where among other things the emperor presided over the ritual presentation and then execution by quartering of prominent prisoners of war, a form of celebration carried out only after outstanding military success. By the late eighteenth century, these rituals had become the primary association of the Meridian Gate, as we can see from a description found in a late Qianlong-period description of the capital produced under imperial sponsorship, in which the author specifically notes that the Meridian Gate had become a symbol of imperial military triumph. In a similar vein, a village in Liangxiang county, outside the city walls, was the locus of another relatively rare military ritual (jiaolao), in which the emperor rode out to greet victorious homecoming generals. Some version of this ritual was performed early on in the Manchu march to power, well before the conquest of China; after the conquest it was carried out most notably by Kangxi after the Three Feudatories rebellion in 1681 and by Qianlong after the conquest of Xinjiang and the subjugation of the Jinchuan tribes. In the late nineteenth-century edition of the Liangxiang local gazetteer, Liangxiang is defined as “the place where the ritual for welcoming home victorious generals was performed.” An engraved stele was erected to commemorate the moment of triumph, with which Liangxiang acquired permanent association. In such ways, Qing practice changed the meaning assigned to an existing site.

Outside Beijing, the Qing transformed the scenic area of the Fragrant Hills (Xiangshan) into a military site, which indeed it remains today, guarded by
JOANNA WALEY-COHEN

armed soldiers. In that area in the eighteenth century were erected, for example, a guard tower once used for drilling assault troops, and the former Imperial Military Inspection Grounds (Tuancheng yanwu ting), essentially consisting of a set of covered platforms with military–patriotic names – such as the Pavilion for Remembering Military Success (Jigong lou) filled with commemorative stelae (Figure 10.2). From these carefully contextualized heights, the emperor regularly inspected the troops below. In 1749, a temple called the Temple of True Victory (Shisheng si) – modeled on the much older Mukden temple of the same name that commemorated earlier glories – was also built nearby to commemorate victory over the Jinchuan (Figure 10.3). This choice of name plainly implied that the Qing considered themselves to have joined the ranks of imperial-luminaries-cum-military-heroes who were worthy of emulation.

Other parts of this complex included hundreds of replicas of the tall stone towers (diaoyi) that Qing armies had found so redoubtable in the Jinchuan wars. At least some of these last were constructed out of stone, possibly from towers destroyed by the Qing, that was laboriously transported to the capital from its original location in remote Sichuan province. Erected partly for drilling and training purposes, these towers also served as a material reminder of what Qing armies had achieved (and perhaps to camouflage their less glorious moments). Similarly, after the Burmese wars of the 1760s, Burmese-style pagodas were built

Figure 10.2 The Pavilion for Remembering Military Success (Jigong lou) at the former Imperial Military Inspection Grounds.
in this area, representing perhaps more wishful thinking than substantive military success, for the Qing commander in that war had perished while covering his troops’ ignominious retreat. Whatever the realities, the net effect of all these installations was to transform a scenic area within reach of the capital into a sprawling military and commemorative site, one that effectively incorporated typical architectural features from conquered areas, somewhat in the manner of Chengde, but without the palatial environment. Colonial architectural styles, war memorials, commemorative temples, and halls of military fame – all contributed to a transformation of space within the empire that was intended as a permanent reminder of Qing military power.

The legacy of militarization

Thus, by the late eighteenth century, the external shape of the Qing empire had changed dramatically to include Mongolia, Tibet, and the vast area of Central Asia that the Qing called Xinjiang (and Taiwan, a topic that lies beyond the scope of this chapter). These changes, with the exception of that part of Mongolia that fell into Russian hands and then became independent, provided the foundations for the territory today claimed as Greater China by the People’s Republic. Within the empire, both conceptual spaces (such as government and
society) and actual landscapes that formerly had had no particular connection to military success and imperial expansion acquired such associations as the result of deliberate Qing strategy. Wu came, if not to eclipse wen altogether, then to occupy a far more conspicuous and significant position than previously.

The consequence was that a major part of the legacy of the high Qing was to have provided fertile ground into which to plant the seeds of the twentieth-century militarized state and its corollary, nationalism. While it would be tendentious to claim a direct intellectual trajectory from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, the cultural transformations described in this chapter suggest that the physical and cultural relationship between empire and nation, and the military ethos that informed them both, as well as the “isms” commonly associated with them—imperialism, nationalism, and militarism—neither appeared in a vacuum nor arose solely as the result of the complicated “encounter with the West.” In sum, the seventeenth- and particularly eighteenth-century Qing cultural policies referred to above—even if subsequent events prevented their maturing to full fruition in the way the high-Qing emperors would have wished—were relevant, significant, and necessary precursors of the development of modernity in China.

Notes

1 I have accumulated many debts in preparing this chapter: thanks in particular to Michael Crook, Nicola Di Cosmo, Anne Higonnet, Rebecca Karl, Cary Liu, Iona Man-cheong, Moss Roberts, Don Wyatt, and Louise Young; to participants in the Columbia Modern China Seminar, and to participants and audience of the panel on “Chinese Nationalism—Premodern and Modern” at the International Convention of Asian Scholars held at Noordwijk, The Netherlands, June 1998, at the first International Conference of Asian Studies.


3 See Joanna Waley-Cohen, “China and Western Technology in the Late Eighteenth Century” American Historical Review 98.5 (December, 1993): 1325–44.

4 On law, see Philip C.C. Huang, Civil Justice in China: Representation and Practice in the Qing (Stanford, 1996); on foreign relations, see Joanna Waley-Cohen, The Sextants of Beijing: Global Currents in Chinese History (New York, 1999); and James Millward, Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759–1864 (Stanford, 1998); on commerce, see Timothy Brook, The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China (Berkeley and London, 1998); on military conflicts, see Alastair Iain Johnston, Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History (Princeton, 1995); on civil–military relations, see essays by Skaff, Lorge, Swope, and Dai in War and Society (October, 2000).


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7 On the association of the cult of Guan Yu with that of Nurhaci, founding ancestor of the Qing, see Crosby, A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology (Berkeley and London, 1999), 244–5.

8 See Liah Greenfield, Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity (Cambridge, MA, 1992), on the need for elites to find new definition and justification in several other national contexts.


10 For the text of the essay, see Shi Qian Ji, in Peng Yuanrui, comp., Guozong Yuzhi Shihua Shi Qian Ji (The Qianlong Emperor’s prose and poetry on the Ten Great Campaigns), edited by Xiong Hui (Zhengzhou, Guji Chubanshe, 1989–90).

11 National Palace Museum, Taipei, draft biographies of Ji Yun and Lu Xixiong, no. 7763; see also Qingshì Gāo, juan 320, 10772. I thank Iona Man-cheong for providing me with this reference. See also Man-cheong, “Examinations, State and the Elite in Eighteenth-Century China: The Class of 1761” (Stanford, forthcoming), chapter five, particularly the discussion of narrating the empire.


13 Arthur Hummel, Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period (Washington DC, 1943), 917, cited by Beatrice Bartlett, Monarchs and Ministers, 184.

14 Quotation is from Bartlett, Monarchs and Ministers, 201. For a summary of the careers of Bandi, O’ertai, Liu Tongxun, Sun Shi-yi, and Zhao Yi, see A. Hummel, Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period, 15–16, 601–3, 533–4, 680–2, and 75–6, respectively. For a tabulation of grand councilors, see Qian Shifu comp., Qingdai Zhiguan Nianbiao (Beijing, 1980), 153–56; this is only one of several such lists. In general, see also Man-cheong, “Examinations, State and the Elite,” particularly on Sun Shi-yi and Zhao Yi. Perhaps the most powerful man in the empire in the late eighteenth century was the imperial favorite Heshen. Originally an imperial guardsman, his only battlefield experience was a brief and disastrous sortie in the suppression of a Muslim uprising early in his career. Although he never again went to the war front, as a senior grand councilor through most of the last part of the Qianlong reign, he undoubtedly played an important role in strategic decision-making and the control of staff operations in subsequent military campaigns.

15 On the Office of Military Archives, see Bartlett, Monarchs and Ministers, especially 225–8.

16 See, e.g., Fuheng et al., comp., Pingding Zhunke’er Fanglìù, Laibao 来保 来保 来保 来保 来保 来保 (paper presented at Columbia University East Asian Institute, 1999). One might perceive here a precursor of both Chiang Kai-shek’s fascist-inspired movement of the 1930s and the mass campaigns of the early People’s Republic.

18 “Yuzhi nanxun ji” [Imperial account of the Southern Tours],” in Sazai, comp., Qianlong Nanxun Shouqian (Siya Quanshu Zhenben, vol. 11), juan shou, 1b. This imperial observation has been cited by various scholars, including Zuo Buqing, “Qianlong Nanxun, (The Southern Tours of the Qianlong emperor)” Gugong Beiyuan yanjiu 2(1981): 22; Maxwell Hearn, “Document and Portrait: The Southern Tour Paintings of Kangxi and Qianlong,” in Phoebus 6.1: Chinese Painting Under the Qianlong Emperor, edited by Ju-hsi Chou and Claudia Brown (Tucson, 1988), 184 n. 10. For an important new
study of the Southern Tours, see Michael G. Chang, “Back in the Saddle Again: Imperial Touring and the Material Forms of Manchu Authority in the High Qing” (paper presented to the panel on *Structures of Power: Architecture and Authority in the Qing Empire*, Association for Asian Studies conference, San Diego, CA, March 2000; this paper distils some of the arguments from a doctoral dissertation, 2001.

19 Mark Elliott, “The Manchu Way: Institutions and Ethnic Identity in Early Modern China” (Stanford, 2001). I am indebted to this work for much of the detail about banner garrisons included in this chapter. On the Han-martial and ethnic identity, see also Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*; on Sun Shiyi, see Man-cheong, “Examinations, State and the Elite,” chapter five.


22 See the highly suggestive work of Chandra Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge, 1997), where she notes, for instance, the use of designs and engineering techniques drawn from the military sphere in the creation of the gardens at Louis XIV’s palace at Versailles. King Louis specifically wished to draw domestic and international attention to France’s military power and to the central role it played in the formation of a newly formidable state.


24  Evelyn Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 18–19. Citing Steinhardt, *Chinese Imperial City Planning* (Honolulu, 1990), 166–7, Rawski notes that the founding Ming emperor attempted to set up a system of multiple capitals but for various reasons found it impracticable. On the capitals at Hetu Ala and Shengjing, see Giovanni Stary et al., *On the Tracks of Manchu Culture 1644–1994: 350 Years after the Conquest of Peking* (Wiesbaden, 1995).


26 See Nasser O. Rabbat, *The Citadel of Cairo: A New Interpretation of Royal Mamluk Architecture* (Leiden, 1995), especially 292–4, on the militarization of architecture under Mamluk rule in Cairo in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, ironically in part by way of celebration of victories against both Christian Crusaders and the Mongols. One might also, of course, readily draw analogies with the military and militarized architecture of the Roman and other empires.

27 For photographs of the banner pavilions and the Dazhengdian, taken in the 1990s, see Stary et al., *On the Tracks of Manchu Culture*, 18–19; Tie Yuqin and Wang Peihuan, *Shengjing Huanggong*, and see p. 43; see also Fred W. Drake, “The Mukden Palace and Nurhachi’s Tomb as Symbolic Architecture,” in Ch’en Chieh-Ihsien, ed., *Proceedings of the 35th Permanent International Altaistic Conference* (Taibei, 1992), 89; Swart and Till, “Nurhachi (sic) and Abahai: Their Palace and Mausolea. The Manchu Adoption and
Adaptation of Chinese Architecture” *Arts of Asia* 18.3 (May–June, 1988): 150. See Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture* (Honolulu, 1997), 322–3, 358, 363, on the significance of octagonal structures in Liao. It is possible that the layout of the Dazhengdian and pavilions may, furthermore, have been intended both to reflect the collegial nature of early Manchu rule, marking the key role played by the banners in Nurhaci’s rise to power, and to facilitate communication between the ruler and the various banner leaders, originally all family members with a claim to share power.

On the Wuyingdian and the Wenhuadian, see Man-cheong, “Examinations, State and the Elite,” chapter five. On the placement of halls to Chinese civil and military officials in the Liao capital of Zhongjing, in modern Hebei province, see Steinhardt, *Chinese Imperial City Planning* (Honolulu, 1990), 127. Cary Liu has pointed out that the Ming palaces contained another wen and wu pairing in the courtyard in front of the Taihedian (known in Ming as Fengtiandian): the Wenlou or Wenzhaoge, on the east, and the Wulou or Wuchengge, on the west. I am grateful to Professor Liu for pointing this out to me in private correspondence (July, 2000). On Mukden, see Foret, *Mapping Chengde: The Qing Landscape Enterprise* (Honolulu, 2000), especially 105–7. Further resemblance to Beijing is found in the Mukden palace’s division into concentric inner and outer cities and its north–south orientation.

On the display of captured weapons, see Hu Jianzhong, *Qing Gong Bingqi Yanjiu* (*An investigation into weapons of the Qing palaces*) *Gugong Bowuyuan Yuankan* 1990.1: 17; for an illustration, see Ka Bo Tsang, “Portraits of Meritorious Officials: Eight Examples from the First Set Commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor” *Arts Asiatiques* 55.1–2 (June, 1999): 138–40.

On the significance of imperial calligraphy in this context, see Jonathan Hay, “The Kangxi Emperor’s Brush-Traces: Calligraphy, Writing, and the Art of Imperial Authority” (forthcoming).
Annales du musée national des arts asiatiques – Guimet et du musée Cernuschi 47 (1992): 69–88, figure 3. This article also discusses the Zi Guang Ge portraits. For Qianlong’s view of the Zi Guang Ge and Wu Cheng Dian, see Peng Yuanrui, ed., Gaozong Yuzhi Shiwen Shiquan Ji (The Qianlong emperor’s prose and poetry on the Ten Great Campaigns) (Zhengzhou, 1989–90), 17, 208–12. For lists of the upper group, in each case, of meritorious officials, see ibid., 21, 274–81 (Xinjiang); 32, 410–18 (Jinchuan); 39, 409–93 (Taiwan); 54, 679–83 (Gurkhas).

On wen men, see Yu Minzhong, comp., Rixia Jiuwen Kao (1774), juan 10, 142–5 (reprint: Beijing, 1983). The author was a grand councilor. On Liangxiang and the jiaolao, see Liangxiang xian zhi (1889); see also Qing Diaying Huadian Shili (Imperially commissioned institutes of the great Qing) (1899), 413; and see Waley-Cohen, “Military Ritual and the Qing Empire,” in Nicola Di Cosmo, ed., Warfare in Inner Asian History (Leiden, 2002): 405–44.

For the text of an inscription at a temple commemorating Qing commander Mingrui who perished in Burma, see Yu Minzhong, comp., Rixia Jiuwen Kao, juan 44, 606; a rubbing of the inscription is at the National Library, Beijing: jing 1767; for a photograph, see Beijing Tushuguan Cang Zhongguo Lidai Shike Taben Huibian (Beijing, 1989–91), vol. 72, 183.

**Bibliography**


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Liangxiang Xian Zhi (1889) 良鄉縣志.


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GLOSSARY

*bailian jiao 百蓮教* dongsun 東巡
Bandi 班第 Fanghuguan 方略館
bagi 八旗 Guan Yu 關羽
Chengde 承德 Guozijian 國子監
Dazhengdian 大政殿 Han jun 漢軍
duo 鎮 Huangchou wugong jisheng 皇朝武功紀盛
Dongjing 東京 Huguang 胡廣
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KIRGHIZ NOMADS ON THE QING FRONTIER
Tribute, trade, or gift exchange?

Nicola Di Cosmo

With the expansion of the Qing dynasty in continental Asia, several nomadic groups established relations with the Qing whose nature has been variously described as “tribute,” trade, and other forms of dependency or collaboration. These frontier nomads — who were very different in status from the nomadic peoples incorporated early on in the Manchu state — remained marginal to the formation of the Qing empire. Yet, the position that they held is relevant as we consider that a large part of the recent history of Kirghiz, Kazakhs, and Mongols is one of struggle against, and incorporation within, expanding sedentary states. The conquest of Xinjiang, which marked the last great expansionist stride of the Qing empire, is part of this history. What means did the Qing state employ to control these nomads after their armies had occupied northwestern China? How was the nomads’ military potential used, and defused? Were they turned into subjects? Were they “tributary” states? Or, were they simply independent trading partners?

In this chapter, I intend to show how Qing imperial agents in Kashgar used the language and “structure” of the tribute system not only to maintain peaceful relations with the nomadic Kirghiz tribes, but also, eventually, to assimilate them within the political society under Qing rule in Xinjiang. The sources examined in this chapter are draft memorials that describe Kirghiz tribute missions to the Qing imperial agents in Kashgar, a close examination of which may lead us to question standard interpretations of the role of “tribute” in the history of Qing imperial expansion. Unlike the sedentary Muslim subjects of Xinjiang, the Kirghiz nomads were subject to a looser form of control, aimed primarily at enlisting the military force of the nomads and preserving the loyalty of the chieftains. The language of tribute used by the Qing representatives in this relationship was arguably meant to create a political space that on the one hand allowed the nomads access to a series of economic privileges without apparently compromising the integrity of the political structure internal to their tribes; and on the
other hand, created the conditions for the nomads’ subordination to the Qing dynasty.

A discussion of these documents should be preceded by a few remarks on the position of nomads in China under Manchu rule. With the declaration of the Qing dynasty in 1636, and the subsequent conquest of China in 1644, the Manchus placed themselves within the centuries-long tradition of Inner Asian powers that had conquered China, completely or partially. In particular, by creating a multinational empire, they emulated, and consciously aspired to recreate the Mongol empire created by Chinggis Khan (1167–1226) and his successors. Either as allies of the Manchus or as their enemies, nomadic peoples remained the single most important issue on the Manchu foreign policy agenda to the end of the eighteenth century.2

Steppe nomads have traditionally constituted the largest reservoir of military power for those northern dynasties that had kept China under direct domination, or the threat of it, for centuries. The original Manchu army emerged from this military milieu, and was therefore composed of mounted troops. Its soldiers were not unlike the Mongols in archery skills and riding ability, and their numbers remained relatively few until Nurhaci unified the majority of Manchu tribes – i.e., the jušen tribes, as Manchurian peoples called themselves before the name Manchu was adopted – and began to incorporate Mongol and Chinese soldiers on a large scale in the 1620s. As the Manchu state expanded territorially into China and Mongolia, the Manchu military–administrative system known as the Eight Banners (baqi) needed to be updated, thereby leading, in the 1630s, to the creation of Mongol and Chinese banners. The gradual incorporation of Chinese and Mongol troops was an integral and central part of the political and social changes in the northeast on the eve of the Qing conquest of China. This process was not governed merely by the crude reason of force, but occurred largely, in particular with regard to the Manchus’ relations with Mongol tribes, within a context of ritualized diplomacy, which included the frequent occurrence of marriage alliances, blood oaths, exchange of envoys, and tribute missions.

The conduct of such negotiations remained both highly sensitive and highly volatile, since the vast Mongol tribal universe continued to be deeply divided. Before the conquest of China the Manchus had succeeded, with great difficulty, in incorporating the easternmost tribes, while the Khalkha Mongols of Northern Mongolia, and especially the Western Mongols, known as Oirats (Weilate) or Zunghars (Zhung’gaer), remained either independent or actively hostile. After the last gasps of Ming loyalty had died down, with the Qing hard-fought suppression of the so-called Three Feudatories Rebellion in 1681, the consolidation of the Qing dynasty required that the potential threat represented by the large number of nomadic peoples on the northern and northwestern frontiers be removed. Through skillful diplomacy the Khalkha Mongols were persuaded to pledge allegiance to the dynasty in 1691, while the struggle against the Western Mongols constitutes a long chapter of frontier history, stretching approximately from the 1670s to the 1750s. Eventually the Qing armies conquered the territory
of the Zunghars, in the Ili region north of the Tianshan Mountains, in what is today the northern part of the Xinjiang region. In the years following the virtual annihilation of these nomads, the Qing military extended the dynasty’s power over the oasis cities in southern Xinjiang, bordering on the central Asian khanate of Kokand. During the “pacification” of the northwestern frontier, the Qing found in this region a complex ethnic, political, and religious mixture of peoples, which they had to rule with relatively few troops and at great distances from the center of the empire.

Kirghiz nomadic tribes lived in a strategic position on both sides of the border between Xinjiang and the khanate of Kokand, and played an important role in the consolidation of Qing rule in the region by supporting militarily the Qing as it attempted to suppress local foci of resistance. As nomads, they were respected for their military valor, and for the same reason the Qing pursued from early on the goal of bringing the Kirghiz tribes within the scope of frontier government, thus both enlisting their help and neutralizing their potential as a threat. Exploring how the Qing achieved this goal can shed new light on the political mechanisms that led to the incorporation of stateless nomads in eighteenth-century China. The descendants of these nomads, to this day, constitute one of China’s national minorities and, like other nomadic frontier peoples, have been separated from their kinsmen living in Kyrgyzstan and other central Asian countries.

After the occupation of Xinjiang, in 1758, the difficult relationship between the Qing forces and the pre-existing regional elites found expression in the language typically associated with “tribute.” That is to say, the emperor, through his representatives, would “extend favors,” “bestow his grace,” and grant gifts and honors as “encouragement to virtuous behavior” to his newly acquired subjects. Those who submitted to Qing sovereignty, be they nomadic chieftains or urban administrators, naturally had to recognize the authority of the emperor and his boundless virtue, then had to present gifts, and bow to his representatives. The “tribute system,” intended as the manifestation of asymmetric political and cultural relations between a center and many peripheries, permeates a great deal of the political life of Xinjiang under Qing rule.

The question of tribute

A traditional notion of the tribute system holds that, since even before the beginning of a Chinese imperial tradition, China received tribute from foreign countries as a sign of political subordination and acceptance of a Sinocentric world order. John Fairbank partly challenged that notion by stressing the tangible aspect of tribute (the actual items presented to the emperor and the “rewards” received in return), and by switching emphasis from the ideological plane to the commercial interests hidden underneath a ritualistic coating. Hence, “tribute” came to be understood less in terms of cultural worldviews and abstract cosmographies, and more in terms of economic agencies and international
This shift was crucial for removing the study of tribute from the ideological cliché of the virtuous and civilized center surrounded by barbaric peripheries, thus posing the basis for a more historically oriented study of China’s foreign relations.

That notion was insightful, but monochromatic. John Fairbank and Ssu-yü Teng found that not all the political and commercial relations carried out under the aegis of the tribute system could be adequately made to fit within the bounds of their economic interpretation, and therefore limited its scope to maritime relations and sea trade, while leaving out the issue of continental relations, and in particular the question of the Inner Asian territories which fell under the domain of the Lifan Yuan. By the authors’ own admission, that choice was due to lack of sufficient research that could clarify the relationship between these regions and the center. Later on, Joseph Fletcher showed that it was impossible to extricate the relations with central Asia from the broader issue of the tribute system as it developed in both the Ming (1368–1644) and the Qing dynasties.

The issue of tribute acquires further complexity when we consider the many facets of the language and conventions normally associated with the tribute system, such as the recognition of the superior status of the emperor, the rendering of gifts, and the reward bestowed upon the tribute-bearing party. These aspects of the tribute system defined both the direct relationship, at court, between the emperor and the tributary parties, and the diplomatic correspondence between central government bureaux and foreign powers. In addition, and more crucially in terms of the Qing Inner Asian context, they also defined the relationship between state and local peoples in the more restricted political environments of the economically, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally mixed societies of the frontier regions. In Manchuria, for instance, the trade in sable pelts operated in compliance with the canons of the tribute system.

On the other hand, turning to the relationship between the Qing and the Kazakhs, James Millward has recently argued that there was a clearly marked difference between trade and tribute, and that the two were treated as distinct by the Qing authorities. Millward acknowledges that, in the case of the Manchurian sable trade, the ritual aspect was important, but he maintains that tribute was clearly distinct from trade, and that all parties concerned understood the two forms of exchange to be entirely separate. In support of this point, Millward cites an edict of 1758 by Emperor Qianlong (r. 1736–95) that explicitly refers to a Kazakh sultan and his retinue as merchants, who were, as such, not entitled to the same privileges as “those paying respects and presenting tribute.” Thus Millward appears to set a distinction between a tribute system that would involve a direct contact between the tributary parties and the center (the court), and a trade context that would be relevant to the specific reality of the economy of the frontier. The ritual context of the latter would not be, in the last instance, relevant to the definition of its essentially economic function.

While I concur with Millward that the reduction of every instance of trade to “tribute” and vice versa is not tenable, to draw such a sharp distinction between
trade and tribute does not seem fully warranted. Surely in the history of China’s tribute relations we can find several instances of requests that were duly turned down by the emperor or other branches of the government because they did not quite fit the etiquette or the purpose of tribute presentations. Sometimes the mission was considered fake, as in the case of Arab merchants who tried to smuggle their merchandise into China pretending to belong to a tribute party. Sometimes the demands for imperial “gifts” in return for the tribute presented were considered excessive, as in the case of the elephants that envoys from Kucha requested of the Ming emperor.

Those examples show that the court was indeed eager to distinguish between trading and tributary missions. At the same time, evidence of demarcation does not in itself mean that the ideology of the tribute system could not influence the way in which imperial representatives and non-subject or semi-subject peoples interacted on the frontier. While the Kazakh sultan did not qualify, in the eyes of the Qing authorities, as a bearer of tribute, it would be too sweeping a statement to expunge issues relevant to or derived from the broader framework of the tribute system from the context of frontier politics. On the contrary, the language and rituals used on the frontier, rife as they are with references to “imperial grace,” “tribute,” and “gifts” – all elements constitutive of the tribute system – played an important role in regulating Qing relations with Kazakh or Kirghiz nomads, and contributed to the creation of a controlled space of communication and interaction in which economic and political elements fed off each other. The goal, for the Qing administrators, was political, and the structure of tribute worked as an exoskeleton that held together potentially centrifugal tendencies even in situations in which, from the viewpoint of the court, the Qing frontier administrators were dealing with peoples who may not have qualified as “tributary.”

The notion that political protection, access to markets, and military aid provided by the Qing to other peoples had to be preceded by a series of ritual actions that included the presentation of tribute and formal submission was deeply entrenched in Qing political culture. Thus, it becomes virtually impossible to separate any aspect of the interaction between these frontier entities and the Qing from the broader framework of the tribute system, even when it is obvious that the “tribute” parties were in fact simply seeking access to the local markets. This consideration suggests that a distinction should be made not so much between trade and tribute, but rather between, on the one hand, the central dimension of the tribute system based on a complex protocol involving the court and the emperor – which may or may not have carried commercial significance – and, on the other hand, a frontier dimension of the tribute system – which was less rigidly regulated and subject to ad hoc definitions according to the circumstances. This was not properly a system, but rather a political, ritual, and economic “environment” that enabled the Qing to interact with native peoples.

Since the Kazakhs, according to Millward, were not required to present tribute horses when they approached the Qing authorities, the relationship between
them and the Qing appears to have been less conditioned by the “tribute environment” than the frontier relationship between the Kirghiz and the Qing. However, the tribute environment did not operate exclusively with respect to trade. Saguchi Tôru has shown how access to pasture grounds was an object of prolonged negotiation between Kazakh tribes and Qing authorities. As the Qing armies moved into the Ili region they occupied the winter pastures of Kazakh tribes on the Tarbagatai frontier. Moreover, the virtual extinction of the Zunghars had created a vacuum not only in political but also in economic terms, freeing valuable pasture land that other nomads could then claim. The newly arrived Qing forces strictly controlled access to these pastures by establishing lines of military outposts (karun) along the frontier. The Kazakh nomads who needed access to the pasture grounds under Qing authority were not deterred by the Qing prohibitions and frequently trespassed or, conversely, requested access. Pastoral nomadism, by its very nature, requires a seasonal alternation of pastures, and the Qing officials eventually realized that they could not enforce their will to keep the Kazakhs out of the lands nominally under Qing jurisdiction. In the 1760s, the Qing authorities allowed the Kazakhs to use the winter pastures within the Qing territory, that is, within the line of military forts, but requested payment of a tax of 1 percent of their herds. Moreover, because of the disturbances due to frequent acts of banditry, and because of the Kazakhs’ trespassing onto other peoples’ pasture grounds, the Qing authorities continued to keep a watchful eye on Kazakh tribesmen, even after they had acknowledged Qing authority in the region. Given this situation, it is difficult to say whether the Kazakhs should be regarded as Qing subjects or not. For sure, however, the Qing negotiated with them from a higher ground, while the nomads accepted a position of “lower lords.” This negotiation was carried out within the framework of the tribute system, in which submission and bestowal of rewards, tributes, and gifts, were the common political fares.

For the local Qing officials, the tribute system was a function of frontier administration. For the local Muslim administrators, it was a channel to gain political advancement, and, indirectly, economic advantage. For the nomadic people, it allowed the preservation of commercial rights and the security of political protection. We can possibly posit, with James Hevia, that in fact the relationship formed between imperial power (superior) and local elite members (inferior) along the Qing frontier empowered both sides. Thus, the role of “hosts” and receivers of tribute assumed by the imperial commissioners at the remotest frontier of the empire enabled the Qing emperor to extend his reach (or his “virtue”) into foreign areas and among foreign peoples.

Burut tribes at the time of the Qing conquest

The Kirghiz–Qing relationship is especially revealing of the existence of an intermediate political space – not quite subjects, not quite independent entities – that was circumscribed and defined by the tribute system. The investigation of
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the frontier political environment shows that tribute served to establish a level of communication that enabled the Qing authorities to create new regional hierarchies and, at the same time, to avoid extreme tensions that could easily turn into inimical confrontations, or alienate the nomads. (Both Kirghiz and Kazakhs had, in the Kokandians and Russians respectively, potential allies who were antagonistic to the Qing.)

The Kirghiz were called Burut by the Qing—a term that appears in both the Chinese (Bulute) and the Manchu sources. They were constituted in tribes (otok, sometimes also referred to as aimakh) divided into two groups, namely, the western Buruts, living in the western part of the Ili region, north of the Tianshan Mountains, and the eastern Buruts, who lived to the south of the Tianshan Mountains, along the border area between Kashgar and the khanate of Kokand.

The earliest contacts between Qing expeditionary forces in Xinjiang and Kirghiz tribesmen were made in 1758. The commander-in-chief of the Qing army against the Zunghars, Zhao-hui (1708–64), sent emissaries to the Kirghiz tribesmen as he was pursuing and destroying the remnants of the Zunghars. At this time a few Kirghiz tribes pledged loyalty to the dynasty. This first contact was no doubt facilitated by the hostility between Kirghiz and Zunghars, as the former had been chased out of their former territories by the Zunghars and forced to migrate west towards Andijan; they managed to return to their old territories only after the Zunghars’ annihilation by the Qing. The eastern Burut tribes were therefore the first to accept, according to Chinese official sources, Qing sovereignty.

Also in 1758 and early 1759, the “rebellion” of the so-called Big and Little Khojas (respectively Burhan-al-Din and Khozi Khan) was gaining ground and spreading across southern Xinjiang. The eastern Kirghiz tribes fought together with Zhao-hui and played an important role first in pinning down the troops of the Big Khoja in Kashgar, and then in carrying out mopping-up operations after the two Khojas had fled to Badakshan, in the fall of 1759. At this point a delegation of western Burut tribes, led by Haji Bi of the powerful Edegenü (or Edigenü, Ch. Edege’na) tribe, came to “submit” to the dynasty. Another important tribe, the Kartigin, submitted in the same year.

Having “submitted,” or “pledged allegiance,” to the dynasty, the Kirghiz tribes embarked on a complex relationship that was deeply set in the tributary mode. Whether they were regarded as “foreign” or “internal” to the Qing state is a moot point. In effect, the degree to which different peoples were regarded as “internal” subjects varies from case to case and depends on the process of incorporation of these peoples from time to time. But the honors bestowed upon the Kirghiz chieftains by the Qing emperor, consisting of hat buttons (a high distinction within the Qing honors system) from the second to the seventh rank, and of peacock feathers surely bespeaks a close relationship. A list of tribal aristocrats reproduced in the Xichui zongtong shilüe shows that by 1807 (the twelfth year of the Jiaqing reign, which is the date of our memorials) sixty-three Kirghiz chieftains had been awarded Qing honors, of whom two had buttons of the...
second rank, three of the third rank, six of the fourth rank, nine of the fifth rank, twenty-four of the sixth rank; moreover, seventeen people had been granted only a golden button, and two only a blue feather. Most chieftains carrying a rank button had also been given either a blue feather (lan ling) or a single-eyed peacock feather (hua ling).25

Although the native titles of bi26 and akhalakci27 were preserved, the appointments were routinely confirmed through edicts issued by the emperor upon requests submitted in memorials by the Qing agents. As pro forma as this procedure might have been, it introduced an element of external control in the political process of selection and appointment of the Kirghiz leaders. They were supervised by the imperial representatives in Kashgar (Ch. canzan dachen; Ma. hebei amban) and in Ili (the Military Governor of Ili, or Tili jiangjun) who sent on a yearly basis their officials to the various tribes to make sure that they remained loyal. Occasionally a few were selected and sent to court to pay homage to the emperor.28 Most importantly, every year the aristocrats of the tribes were to present a horse tribute and to receive in return a fixed amount of silk and one sheep per horse.29 The taxes on the merchandise they traded in Xinjiang were theoretically one-third of those paid by local merchants.30 In fact, as we see from the records of the Qing representatives, fees and duties were regularly waived as part of the tribute relationship (see below).

Appreciating the importance of the military potential of the Kirghiz, the Qing government offered protection when necessary. In 1762 the khanate of Kokand invaded and seized some territories that belonged to Haji Bi of the Edegene tribe.31 The Qing representative Yong-gui then intervened to persuade Kokand’s ruler, Erdeni Bek, to return the territory to the Kirghiz. On the occasion of the rebellion of the people of the city of Ush (1765), which resulted in the killing of the Qing representative and of the hakim beg (Muslim governor) of the city, and developed into a widespread uprising against the Qing, some Burut tribes openly sided with the Qing, while others remained neutral, refusing to join the rebellion. The services provided by the Burut tribesmen in this instance are not indifferent, as one chieftain, Jilikje Bi, captured one of the agitators who had tried to win the Buruts over to the cause of the rebellion, and sent him to Kashgar to be executed.32 Incidents caused by Kirghiz chiefs who refused to submit to the Qing authorities are recorded for the period from the late 1760s into the 1780s. These were handled by other Kirghiz tribesmen, who acted as a kind of ethnic police and screened Qing Kashgaria from the armed resistance developing in their midst.33 Among the tribes that were particularly active in quelling the rebellions we find the Chungbagash, Kipchak, Tüüt, Naïman, and Yöwaš, several of which appear in the memorials discussed below. In 1789 the repression of rebellion by a “bandit” named Jampulat required the intervention of Kirghiz chiefs from five tribes: Chungbagash, Cırık, Edegene, Baskis, and Monggoldor, who received rewards from the Qing. Samsaq (or Sarimsaq), who tried to agitate against the Qing, also attempted to enlist Kirghiz support in 1797. An analogy could be made between this situation and the time-honored
Chinese frontier policy of “using ‘barbarians’ to control ‘barbarians’” (yi yi zhi yi), but the use of these “foreigners” was possible only thanks to the political instruments available through the tribute system, such as the rewards bestowed upon the chiefs who acted in defense of Qing interests.

Later on, however, these good relations deteriorated. In 1815 a complex affair involving a certain Diyā al-Dīn akhond – a religious leader of the Black Mountain sect – with Burut connections led to a revolt in the village of Tashmiliq, near Kashgar. The direct cause of the rebellion was attributed to the abuses of the hakim beg of Kashgar, Yusuf, but it was also related to a long-standing factional hostility between the White Mountain and the Black Mountain sects. The fighting led to the death of several Manchu soldiers, and as a result the Qing apprehended and executed the people involved in the uprising – including the Burut chief of the Kipchak tribe, who had helped the akhond. According to a memorial by the stern Qing commissioner Na-yan-cheng (1764–1833), this episode marked the beginning of the disaffection of the Kirghiz. When the Jihangir rebellion broke out, shaking deeply Qing power in Kashgaria throughout the 1820s, several Burut chieftains joined him.

What we are concerned with here, however, is the type of relations that, from the 1760s to the 1820s secured widespread Kirghiz support for the Qing, which was essential both to quell internal opposition and to frustrate foreign invasions. The Qing consistently implemented a system of rewards structured along the lines of tribute relations. But how did this system work? What effects (if any) did this system have on Kirghiz tribal politics? What were its economic implications? The analysis of memorials submitted by the Qing agents to the emperors may provide a few answers.

The memorials

The documents under examination are drafts written in Manchu of ten memorials that were submitted by the Qing representatives in Kashgar to Emperor Jiaqing (1796–1811). The memorials cover a time span of approximately one year (1806–7), and were written by the imperial agents residing in Kashgar, who had authority over all civil and military matters concerning the population under their jurisdiction, including Muslim sedentary subjects, Kirghiz nomads, and foreign residents. They also were in charge of the conduct of relations with entities not directly under their rule, but which had established a tribute relationship with the Qing, specifically the khanate of Kokand. Nine of the memorials record the “tribute” visit by several Kirghiz chieftains in Kashgar, while one of them is a record of the appointment of a new chieftain.

Tribute visits

From the ninth month of the eleventh year of Emperor Jiaqing (1806) to the tenth month of the twelfth year (1807) nine Kirghiz missions visited Kashgar.
The following memorial may serve as an example for all the others, which do not differ from the basic structure represented here:

Your Servants Jin, I, and Ai respectfully memorialize in order to inform the emperor about the tribute horses presented by the Burut. Recently the Burut Isa Bi of the Naiman tribe who carries a blue feather and a button of the sixth rank, the Burut Akhalakci Palat of the Huśici tribe who carries a blue feather and a button of the sixth rank, the Burut Akhalakci Badašaka of the Cirik tribe and the Burut Molo Bi of the Edegene tribe one by one have come to meet us. Wishing Your August Majesty a myriad years of peace, they have come to present tribute horses. Prostrating themselves, they requested that the duty on the small number of horses, cattle and sundry objects they brought for sale be waived. We, in order to broaden the scope of His Imperial Majesty’s grace and meritorious deeds, waived the mandatory taxes on the various goods brought by Isa and the others. Then we ordered that the four tribute horses presented by them be added to the official herd and brought to pasture. Thereafter, after having given Isa and the others silk and sheep according to regulation, we sent them back to their nomadic territories. We have respectfully memorialized on this account to inform [the emperor] on the twenty-first day, ninth month, of the eleventh year of Jiaqing [November 2, 1806]. Imperial endorsement in vermilion ink received on the twenty-seventh day of the eleventh month of the same year [January 6, 1807]: “Noted.”

The first element recorded after the Qing officials are the names of the Kirghiz who had been received. In order to understand frequency, composition, and ranking order of the missions, we need to list here the names, tribal affiliations, and ranks of all participants recorded in the nine memorials. These missions were recorded between the ninth month of the eleventh year (October – November 1806) and the tenth month of the twelfth year (November – December 1807) of Jiaqing. The first mission included the following people: Isa Bi, of the Naiman tribe, who carried a blue feather and a button of the sixth rank, Akhalakci Palat, of the Huśici (Ch. Hushiji) tribe, also honored with a blue feather and a button of the sixth rank, Akhalakci Badašaka, of the Cirik (Ch. Jilike) tribe, and Molo Bi of the Edegene tribe. For the second mission, the memorial records the presence of the following people: Iman Bi, who carried a blue feather and a button of the sixth rank, Isa Bi, Akhalakci Yaramun, and Akhalakci Bekmet, all of the Naiman tribe, and Akhalakci Aisangladi, carrying a blue feather and a button of the sixth rank, Akhalakci Kioirukioi, honored with a golden button, Osman Bi, and Akhalakci Aijuli of the Cirik tribe. The third mission was quite large, including members of four different tribes: Sadak Bi, honored with a peacock feather and button of the fourth rank, and Bektemür Bi of the Kartigin tribe, Akhalakci Palat, honored with a button of the fourth rank and a blue
feather, Akhalakci Edegene, honored with a golden button, and the akhalakci Sarit, Muzei, and Bekmurad, all from the Huși tribe; Akhalakci Maimahuli, honored with a golden button, and the Akhalakci Atayan of the Monggoldor tribe; and finally Akhalakci Yoldaşı, who carried a golden button, of the Baskis tribe. The fourth recorded mission included: Akhalakci Ahan and Akhalakci Adabeg of the Yowaşı tribe, and Akhalakci Beg Ailiag of the Sayak tribe. The fifth mission included two chiefs already seen in the first mission, that is Akhalakci Palat of the Huși tribe, honored with a button of the sixth rank and blue feather, and Isa Bi of the Naiman tribe, also honored with a button of the sixth rank and blue feather; the mission was completed by Akhalakci Saidula of the Edegene tribe. The sixth memorial mentions Hojomhuli Bi of the Huși tribe, honored with a button of the fifth rank and peacock feather; and Akhalakci Beşek of the Tiit tribe, who has been granted a button of the sixth rank. The seventh mission included again Sadik Bi (previously spelled Sadak) of the Kartigin tribe, honored with a peacock feather and a button of the fourth rank, Hojomhuli (Khujämquili) Bi of the Huși tribe (the same already met in the previous mission), honored with a peacock feather and a button of the fifth rank, and Akhalakci Murat of the Naiman tribe. The eighth mission included three chiefs: Akhalakci Atyan, who carried a golden button, of the Monggoldor tribe, Akhalakci Aijuli of the Chahar Sayak tribe, and Akhalakci Bektemür of the Huși tribe. The ninth and last mission recorded in this set of Manchu documents includes three members, too: Isa Bi, honored with a button of the sixth rank and a blue feather, and Akhalakci Bekmet of the Naiman tribe, and Akhalakci Sarik of the Huși tribe.

From this list of Kirghiz chieftains and tribes we can derive the following observations. First, the Kirghiz chiefs were listed within each tribe in descending order of rank—not according to their tribal title, but according to the rank and honors bestowed upon them by the Qing authorities. One may assume that they also presented themselves to the Qing representatives according to the same hierarchy. Second, the tribute parties included representatives from several tribes, and members from the same tribe could also join different missions. Whether there is some special logic in the tribal composition of the parties, I have not been able to ascertain. Third, while Qing geographical and historical compendia for this region generally say that the Burut tribes presented a horse tribute annually, which I take to mean that the various chieftains were allowed to visit Kashgar once a year, the memorials show that some of the chieftains went to Kashgar more than once, and, in the case of Isa Bi of the Naiman tribe, as many as four times within a single year.

Then the memorials record the ritual exchange that took place. The tribute ceremony included two separate elements: the exchange of horses for silk, and the waiving of commercial fees. Invariably each of the members of the delegation presented the Qing authorities with one horse. This tribute was accompanied by the ceremonial genuflection and the request that the commercial fees normally charged by the Qing be waived. At that point, the Qing agents granted
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their request and returned a gift which consisted of half a bolt of silk and one sheep per horse. This “transaction” is so small in size that it cannot be taken for “trade under another form.” The Turkic qualifier used in the Manchu text (and elsewhere also in Chinese memorials) for the tribute horses is belek, the Turki word for “gift.” From this, we can infer that, on the Burut side, the transaction involved an exchange of gifts. On the Qing side, however, this was clearly understood as tribute, since in other contexts the same offering of horses is referred to as gong (tribute). This tribute – one horse per member of the commercial mission, totaling a few horses per mission – seems insignificant from a commercial standpoint, and the “reward” received in return, probably roughly equivalent to the value of the horse, does not seem to be worth the trouble of a journey to Kashgar.

It is fairly safe to say that, from the nomads’ viewpoint, the exchange of gifts was simply the routine confirmation of a customary right to trade. The economic interest of the Kirghiz rested on securing the waiving of commercial duties, which in any case were among the less burdensome imposed on commercial transactions in Kashgar (which, as I mentioned above, was one-third of that imposed on “internal” merchants).

Why did the Qing ambans accede to such a request? We might reasonably surmise that, as in the case of the Kazakhs’ access to pasture mentioned above, the Qing found it impossible to impede the customary right to trade in the local urban centers. But probably more important was the strategic consideration that granting favorable trading conditions to the Kirghiz would reduce border tension and increase the security of the region, exposed as it was to Kokandian commercial and political penetration. What we see here is a commercial agreement based on local trade customs in “tribute system” garb that allowed the ambans to retain nominal local authority without altering established practices, and indeed to strengthen relations with local leaders necessary to the promotion of the dynasty’s interests. Even so, it is not clear why the granting of the waiving of fees “to expand the grace of his Imperial Majesty” had to be preceded by a gift exchange of very limited economic value to both parties. We shall look at this issue more closely below.

Appointments

Here I reproduce the translation of a memorial that quite explicitly states the manner in which the Qing intervened in the internal affairs of the Kirghiz:

Your Servants Jin, I and Ai respectfully submit a memorial requesting an imperial edict. Recently the Burut Bi Bušhur of the Chungbagashi tribe, who holds a button of the second class and a peacock feather, taking with him Maimet Yusub, son of his subordinate, the Burut Akhalakci Hunci, who has been granted a button of the fifth class and a
peacock feather, came to meet us. He reported as follows: “Hunci was seventy-two years old. This year on the third month he, being ill, passed away. We brought back, holding them high [in sign of respect], the button and feather that he had been granted. Hunci left four sons. The eldest is blind; the second is a confused and weak man, and the third takes the animals to pasture and takes care of family matters. The fourth son Maimet Yusub this year turns twenty-two years of age. He is an intelligent and good man. When Hunci was alive Maimet Yusub often took care of [official] matters and assisted him. The Buruts of many tribes would all be very happy if Maimet Yusub were made akhalakci, and would willingly follow him.”

We have observed Maimet Yusub. The man is wise and his appearance is mature. We have examined the matter. On the twenty-eighth year of Qianlong [1763], since in every position he held Hunci was dynamic and energetic, following a memorial by Yong-gui, he was granted the golden button. On the thirtieth year [of Qianlong, 1765], because of the merits acquired while fighting in the Ush army, and following a memorial submitted by Nasitun, he was granted the blue feather. On the forty-ninth year [of Qianlong, i.e. 1784], because he behaved well and spared no efforts in the affair of the capture of the Burut fugitive Yaici, after a memorial by Boocang Hunci was granted a button of the sixth rank. On the fifty-fourth year [1789], having come to Kashgar to trade, he heard that the military commander Bobin had arrived, charged with the task of capturing the bandit Jampulat, who had plundered the goods of merchants. Hunci immediately abandoned his trade and business, and joined in the pursuit [of Jampulat]. He behaved bravely in front of everybody and seized and brought back Jampulat. Because of this, following a memorial by Ming-liang, he was granted the button of fifth rank and the peacock feather. Hunci over the course of many years has behaved with valor, and spared no efforts. Now, after he passed away, taking into consideration that all the Burut of the subordinate tribes hope that his fourth son Maimet Yusub will become the akhalakci, we have reviewed the matter, and request an imperial favor. After an imperial edict is issued to appoint Maimet Yusub as akhalakci, and after His Majesty has wisely indicated whether he should be granted a button of the sixth rank and a blue feather, lowered by one degree with respect to the button and feather held by Hunci, or a button of the fifth rank and a peacock feather as it was already, we shall respectfully follow it. On this account we have respectfully submitted a memorial requesting an imperial edict on the twenty-second day of the fourth month of the twelfth year of the Jiaqing period [May 29 1807]. The imperial rescript in vermilion ink was received on the twenty-eighth day of the sixth month of the same year [August 1 1807]: “An edict has been issued.”
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[Text of the imperial edict] received together [with the rescript] on the same day: “Edict issued on the twenty-sixth day of the fifth month of the twelfth year of Jiaqing [July 1, 1807]. From the office of Jin and others a memorial has been sent on the matter of whether, the Burut Akhalakci Hunci, of the Chungbagash tribe, a dependent [Ma. havangga] akhalakci holder of the button of the fifth rank and of the peacock feather, having fallen ill and passed away, his fourth son Maimet Yusub should or should not become akhalakci. Hunci for many years behaved diligently and assiduously. Recently he passed away; since all the Buruts of the dependent tribes hope that his fourth son Maimet Yusub will become akhalakci, with the bestowal of imperial favor Maimet Yusub shall be made akhalakci, and he be granted a button of the sixth rank and the blue feather.”

This document is structured in four parts. First there is the request from the Burut side, then the independent examination carried out by the Qing agents, which is followed by the Qing agents’ recommendation and request for an imperial edict. Finally, we have the imperial edict with the emperor’s decision. The Buruts’ request is presented by Bušihui (Ch. Boshihuai), who at that time was a prominent leader, since there were only two Kirghiz chieftains honored with a second-rank button. His high-standing position depended, however, on the honors bestowed upon him by the Qing, and whether he had in fact a large following (as opposed to some other bh who had not been equally decorated) is difficult to say. In any case, he presented himself as the official speaker of the Chungbagash (Ch. Chongbagashi) tribesmen, and obviously the Qing authorities, doubtless because of his high rank, did not question this claim. This is a clear evidence of the power, within the tribe, that could accrue to the recipients of Qing rank.

The investigation of the ambans covers two areas: the candidate himself and the background of the chief who had just passed away. The personal observation of the 22-year-old Maimet Yusub persuaded them that he was a wise and mature person. It is possible that they asked him a few questions, but the “interview” is not described. The background of Hunci (Ch. Hunji) showed a long history of loyal service to the Qing, and several promotions. The hereditary nature of the title was the norm unless some problems emerged, but we can see also that the candidate was the last of four brothers, and that he had been mainly recommended because of his qualities and popularity among the other tribesmen, not just because of his family background.

The ambans’ request for an imperial decree shows that the emperor intervened directly to ratify the appointment. That this was not a “rubber stamp” decision is indicated by the second part of the request. Possibly pressed by the Burut chief, the ambans asked the emperor to determine whether the title to be passed down to Maimet Yusub should be lowered by one rank (as was customary) or should remain the same as that held by his father. The emperor decided to lower it from the fifth to the sixth rank.
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Qing interference with and influence over tribal matters was, thus, fairly substantial. First, the candidate for the native title of akhalakci had to be supported by the highest ranking chief of the tribe according to the Qing ranking system. Second, he had to be approved of by the local ambans on the basis of his family history and personal character; third, the emperor had to confirm the appointment. As for the long-term implications of this system, it resulted in the creation of a number of individuals and families who owed their social and political position to the Qing. The highest ranking among these individuals also held the power to approve those who would receive an important tribal appointment. Given these conditions, the independence of the political process among the tribes that had accepted a tributary position vis-à-vis the Qing is highly questionable. Even though the Kirghiz were not formally subjects of the dynasty the dependent status of their tribes (Ma. harangga aiman) was very real, and the tendency was to accumulate more dependency as the number of chieftains on the Qing honors roll increased.

Tribute and dependency

The Qing resorted to the “structure” of the tribute system within an overarching strategy for the conquest and rule of Central Asia which included direct military rule and indirect rule through local elites. The immediate objectives that the Qing policy towards the Kirghiz aimed to achieve, even before the campaign against the Zunghars had been brought to a close, were the stabilization of the frontier and the recruitment of nomadic military forces to repress resistance in southern Xinjiang. The Qing imperial agents could count on banner and green standard military units garrisoning the region. But given that these forces were relatively small and far apart, the cooperation of the local peoples was vital, and the nomads provided a key element of military support. At a time when the international picture was becoming more complex due to the rise of Kokand as a regional power and the growing influence of Russia, Qing officials also tried to preempt Kokandian attempts to mobilize Kirghiz tribesmen in support of Kokand’s own designs of political and economic penetration in Kashgaria.

But nomads, by their very nature as seasonally migrating pastoralists, were difficult to fence in within state borders. Virtually all the Kirghiz tribes lived with their herds over a large territory that included areas under Qing and Kokandian control. The tributary “environment” that the Qing policy exploited in dealing with the Kirghiz created a different type of limina whereby the authority of the emperor did not reside in territorially and administratively defined borders, but rather in a sphere of influence that operated at both the economic and the political level. Once the trappings of the tribute relationship had been adopted on the frontier to regulate trade, tribal appointments, and visits to court, while the Kirghiz tribesmen were not fully subject to Qing authority, they nonetheless ceased to be fully independent; the relationship was that of “clients” rather than subjects, which is well expressed in the Manchu phrase harangga aiman, “dependent tribes.” This situation yielded significant advantages for the nomads, too. By
accepting the symbols of Qing authority, Kirghiz chiefs gained access to markets and political protection against Kokand or hostile nomads. They also bolstered their status within their own tribe.

The keystone of the relationship was the system of rewards in exchange for the acknowledgment of the superiority of the emperor of China, and therefore of the tributary party’s “dependent status.” If we take this as the core and most meaningful part of the tributary relationship between Kirghiz and Qing, then trade, like other aspects of the relationship, becomes a function of it, and can be articulated in different ways according to the locus and circumstances in which it takes place. Clearly there were differences of protocol and regulations between the tribute ceremonies carried out by missions at the capital, in the presence of the emperor, and the ritual ceremonies and trade relations taking place along the frontier. But, in both cases, the acknowledgment of subordinate status and rewards received by the tributaries were the required preconditions. If we take this as the core and most meaningful part of the tributary relationship between Kirghiz and Qing, then trade, like other aspects of the relationship, becomes a function of it, and can be articulated in different ways according to the locus and circumstances in which it takes place. Clearly there were differences of protocol and regulations between the tribute ceremonies carried out by missions at the capital, in the presence of the emperor, and the ritual ceremonies and trade relations taking place along the frontier. But, in both cases, the acknowledgment of subordinate status and rewards received by the tributaries were the required preconditions.

From the memorials, it appears that the horse tribute presented by the tribal chieftains to the local Qing agents was part of a ceremonial gift exchange that produced the unfettered and fee-exempt access to the Kashgar markets. Tax exemption could not be achieved other than through the ritual “gift exchange,” which in turn could only take place within the ritual and verbal space of the tribute relationship. In economic terms, the gift exchange in itself is not particularly significant, as Kirghiz chieftains only deliver one horse each and receive in exchange half a bolt of silk and one sheep. This lack of economic significance creates a problem with the way this relationship is generally understood. If trade was not the principal issue in the gift exchange, and if an admission of subordination (leading to the true economic benefit, which consisted of the waiving of commercial fees) had to precede the gift exchange anyway, what was, then, the function of the gift exchange? Could the nomads not have simply pledged subordination to the Qing emperor and thereby been granted the fee waiver?

In my view, the central function of the gift exchange resides in that it filters the relationship of subordination through one of equality implicitly expressed in the exchange of gifts, so that the independence of the nomadic political process could be restructured into a relationship of dependency without apparent dislocation of the internal source of authority, that is, the native chieftains. At the same time, the tributary relationship also created new canons of authority, so that the Qing agents could actively intervene in the process of selection of the chieftains, and virtually “hold the strings” of nomadic politics.

Naturally, we should not underestimate the implicit threat carried by the Qing offer to entertain tribute relations, which in the case of the Kirghiz was doubtless made all the more real by the fate that had recently befallen the Zunghars. For the nomads, the acceptance of this relationship was also a way of ensuring their cultural survival and relative independence against formidable odds, in particular against the expansion of “sedentary” powers that by the early nineteenth century had already greatly reduced the nomads’ space throughout Asia. That the Kirghiz later rebelled against the Qing, following the temporary
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decline of Qing authority in the region, shows that the establishment of tribute relations was contingent upon and linked to historical circumstances.

The tribute “environment” provided primarily an area of negotiation through which the imperial agents attempted to create a new social and political order – one leading to the encasement of old equilibria in a new reality functional to the preservation of Qing power in the region. As long as Qing authority was accepted, the independence of the local elites, as autonomous entities, became subject to unremitting erosion. The gift exchange, by representing equality in the ritual aspect of the relationship, concealed the insidious penetration into nomadic politics of the Qing “reward” system, and consequent incorporation of the Kirghiz nobility within the ranks of Qing officialdom. The otherwise relatively abstract authority of the emperor was translated into a system of benefits and duties which, once accepted by the tributary party, defined not only its relationship with the center but, even more importantly, its relationship with other regional elements. In other words, we can see in the tribute system, as it took shape in Qing China’s frontier regions, the blueprint for a new order that reorganized political and social agents into a new historical formation.67

Notes
2 Important administrative innovations, such as the Board for the Administration of Outlying Regions (Lifan Yuan), and the Grand Council (Junjichu) were the product of Qing strategies for the control of nomadic peoples.
3 For instance, Kirghiz of the Edegene tribe were enlisted in the Kokand army, and were regarded as its core troops. Saguchi Tôru, “The Eastern Trade of the Khokand Khanate,” Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko 24 (1965), p. 64.
5 This was the government branch in charge of the continental border regions, traditionally rendered in English as “Court of Colonial Affairs,” but more correctly translated as Board for the Administration of Outlying Regions. For a general description of its scope and function see Ning Chia, “The Lifan Yuan and the Inner Asian Rituals in the Early Qing (1644–1795),” Late Imperial China 14.1 (1993): 60–92; and Nicola Di Cosmo, “Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia,” The International History Review 20.2 (1998): 287–309.
10 According to Millward, this piece of evidence overrides the abundant references to “submission,” special beneficence bestowed upon the Kazakh, “tribute” and “gifts” granted in return; ibid., pp. 48–9.
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12 Gong Yu et al., *Zhongguo lidai gongpin daguan* (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan, 1992), p. 701.
13 I owe the metaphor of the “exoskeleton” to Professor Elvin, who used it in an unrelated but thought-provoking context.
15 According to Millward they were not. *Beyond the Pass*, p. 304, n. 17.
16 See, for instance, the account on the origins of the Kazakhs (Hasake yuanliu) in *Xichui zongtong shilüe*, 11:5a–7b.
18 According to Hauer, *Handwörterbuch der Mandschusprache*, vol. 1, p. 128, the term Burut indicated a Mongol tribe living in the proximity of Kashgar. According to other sources this is a Western Mongolian (Oirat) term that means “people of the highlands” and referred to the inhabitants of the high plateau of the Pamir and western Tianshan regions. See Xue Li et al., *Zhongguo sichou zhi lu cidian* (*Dictionary of the Chinese Silk Road*), p. 291.
20 For a brief overview of the early Qing relations with the Kirghiz see Ke’erkezi zu jianshi bianxi zu, *Ke’erkezi zu jianshi* (A Concise History of the Kirghiz Nationality), pp. 77–82.
22 *Xiyu tuzhi*, 45:1b.
23 *Xiyu tuzhi*, 45:9b.
24 They are not mentioned by Millward in his distinction between internal and external peoples.
27 This is a Mongol title (Mo. *aqalakci*) meaning “senior,” “elder,” “chieftain.” Among the Kirghiz it also meant “leader” or “chieftain.” Cf. Lin Enxian, *Qingchao zai Xinjiang de Han Hui geli zhengce* (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan, 1988), p. 212.
28 *Ke’erkezi zu jianshi*, p. 79.
29 Xinjiang zhilüe, 12:37b.
30 Ibid.
31 Haji Bi had surrendered to the Qing in 1760, representing a coalition of tribes whose population amounted to 210,000 people. The struggle between the Edigenü tribe and Kokand had lasted for some time, and resulted from a Kokandian reaction to the frequent attacks of the Kirghiz against Andijani merchants; however, the Kokandian action was also part of the more general strategy of territorial expansion. See Saguchi, “The Eastern Trade,” pp. 59–65. On the relations between Kokand and the Kirghiz in a period later than the one considered here see also A. Kh. Khasanov, *Narodnye diszhemina v Kirgizii v period Kokandskogo khanstva* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), pp. 25–6.
32 Xinjiang zhi,üe, 12:37b.
33 For details of an episode of this type of policing, which occurred in 1769–70, see Ke’erkezi zu jianshi, p. 80.
35 See on this Saguchi Tôru, “The Revival of the White Mountain Khwajâs, 1760–1820 (from Sarimsaq to Jihangir),” Acta Asiatica 14 (1968): 7–20. In this article the author maintains that the White Mountain sect had not been able to mount a “holy war” for a long time because of resistance by the Black Mountain sect, favored by the Qing, and because of the obstruction by the Muslim bek loyal to the Qing. In fact, considering the Kirghiz military support Jihangir was able to garner, especially from the Chungbagash tribe, one might also add the Qing ability to ensure Kirghiz loyalty among the causes that delayed Jihangir’s revolt.
36 Ke’erkezi zu jianshi, p. 82.
37 On the authors of these memorials, their identity, rank, and duties see Nicola Di Cosmo, “Reports from the Northwest: A Selection of Manchu Memorials from Kashgar (1806–7),” Papers on Inner Asia no. 25. Bloomington, Ind.: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1993, pp. 3–5.
39 The three Qing officials are respectively Jincang (Ch. Jin-chang), Icunga (Ch. Yi-chong-a) and Aisinga (Ch. Ai-xing-a).
40 The word for tribute, belek, is a Turkic loan, and means “gift” or “tribute.”
41 The blue feather (Ch. lan ling) was normally conferred on members of the Imperial Guards below the sixth rank; cf. H.S. Brunner and V.V. Hagelstrom, Present Day Political Organization in China (Shanghai, 1912), no. 950b. It was granted to members of the Burut tribes upon recommendation to the throne from the Assistant Military Governor of Kashgar.
42 The buttons (Ch. dingdai or dingzi) from the second to the seventh rank, as well as the golden buttons (Ch. jin ding), were also conferred upon the Burut chiefs as honorary Qing rank following a recommendation to the throne from the Assistant Military Governor of Kashgar. Cf. Xichui zongtong shilüe, 11: 20a (rpt. Taipei 1965, 719).
43 Located in the territory of Ush. According to the Hui jiang tongzhi altogether in this tribe there were three people carrying Qing insignia of rank: one carried a fifth rank button and a peacock feather, another carried a sixth rank button and a blue feather, and a third carried a golden button; see Hui jiang tongzhi (Comprehensive Record of the Muslim Frontier) comp. He-ning, 9, 8a–8b; see also Xinjiang zhi,üe, 12:56a. According to Saguchi their territory originally was in the Arawân district of Osh, Ferghana, and was later driven out to Aksu by the Kokandians. Cf. Saguchi, “The Eastern Trade of the Khokand Khanate,” pp. 60–1.
44 This was also located in the area of Ush. The people carrying Qing ranks included: one with a button of fourth rank and a peacock feather, one with a button of the fifth rank and a peacock feather, one with a button of sixth rank and a blue feather, and one with a golden button. See Hui jiang tongzhi, 9:8a.
45 This was located, together with the Yowā’ tribe, to the northwest of Kashgar, outside the Kalan karan, and its pasture grounds extended to Marghilan, Kokand, and other areas. Xinjiang zhi,üe, 12:49b–50a.
46 This was located to the southwest of Kashgar, and its nomadic ground extended as far as the Badakshan Mountains, Kokand, and other places; Xinjiang zhi,üe, 12:45a.
Located southwest of Kashgar. Its nomadic territory extended to Kokand and other places; *Xinjiang zhihui*, 12:46a.

Located northeast of Kashgar; *Xinjiang zhihui*, 12:52a.

Located to the northwest of Kashgar; *Xinjiang zhihui*, 12:52a.

See note 32.

Occupied the same area as the Chahar Sayak tribe; *Xinjiang zhihui*, 12:51a.

This was located to the northeast of Kashgar; *Xinjiang zhihui*, 12:48a.

Located northwest of Kashgar; *Xinjiang zhihui*, 12:50b.

See the chapter on “administrative regulations” in the Kashgar section of *Hui jiang tongzhi*, 7.

*Hui jiang tongzhi*, 7.

With only a few emendations I am quoting here a translation from Nicola Di Cosmo, “Reports from the Northwest: A Selection of Manchu Memorials from Kashgar (1806–1807),” Papers on Inner Asia no. 25 (Bloomington, Ind.: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1993), pp. 40–2. The Manchu text is available in facsimile and transliteration in the same publication.

Bushihui’s name appears as the main title holder in *Xichui zongtong shilue*, 11:20b; in *Xinjiang zhihui*, 12:38a–39b, the main title holder is his son, who had inherited the title from him.

One of the most important Burut tribes. It was located to the northeast of Kashgar, and extended into the Kokand territory; *Xinjiang zhihui*, 12:38a.

The peacock feather is an honorary distinction conferred for public service. There were three classes to this decoration: the three-eyed peacock feather (*san yan hua ling*), the double-eyed peacock feather (*shuang yan hua ling*), and the single-eyed peacock feather (*dan yan hua ling*), also referred to simply as *hua ling*. The latter was the only kind bestowed upon Burut chieftains. Cf. Brunnert and Hagelstrom, no. 850a.

One of the few important foreign relations of the Qing were tribute relations; some were regulated by bilateral treaties, such as those signed with the Russians.

A parallel can be drawn between this situation and other instances of colonial rule, whereby a new and predominant military and political force establishes its authority over alien regions and peoples, thereby altering, to its advantage, the development of that region in all of its most important aspects, from economic production to social, political, and cultural change. The emergence of a new configuration for the development of a certain region, as it becomes both dependent and piloted by another, more powerful entity, is the result of a protracted situation of dependency which is typical of colonial rule. Unlike parallels with “imperialist” policies and expansions, speaking of the “colonial situation” allows us to focus more closely on the local and regional dynamics rather than on the analysis of strategies of conquest and rulership that take the metropolitan center as their primary focus.
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GLOSSARY

Ai-xing-a 愛星阿
Bao-cheng 保成
Baqi 八旗
Boshihuai 博什懷
Bulute 布魯特
Burhan-al-Din (Bulanidun) 布拉尼敦
canzan dachen 卡贊大禪
Chongbagashi 崇巴噶什
dan yan hua ling 單燕花翎
dingbalt 頂戴
dingzi 頂子
dige ne 德格內
gong 金
Hasake yuanliu 哈薩克源流
hao ling 花翎
Hunji 渾齊
Hushiji 胡什齊
Ili (Yili) 伊犁
Jiaqin 齊克
Jilike 齊里克
jin ding 金頂
Jin-chang 晉昌
jun jia 軍機處
Khozi Khan (Huoji Zhan) 霍集佔
lan ling 藻翎
Lijon Yuan 理藩院
Ming-fiang 明亮
Na-hsi-tong 納世通
Na-yang-cheng 那彥成
Na-yan hua ling 三眼花翎
Tianshan 天山
yi yi zhi yi 以夷治夷
Yi-chong-a 伊犁阿
Yeli jiangjun 伊犁將軍
Yong-gui 永貴
Zhao-hui 趙惠
Zhong'e er 准噶爾
In Chinese theater history, the nineteenth century was a period of change, uncertainty, and instability. The highly literary *kunqu* (kun opera) continued to decline in popularity while numerous local dramatic forms were flourishing. The multiplication of regional voices from the common people, along with various newly imported Western artistic forms, enriched traditional theatrical expression, but also threatened to undo traditional cultural boundaries. At this moment of crisis, one type of local drama, a genre that I refer to as “border-crossing drama,” was especially important in popular reconsiderations of China’s frontiers. By examining the new borders of ethnicity, gender, geography, and nation created in late Qing local drama and fiction, I intend to discuss how nineteenth-century writers challenged and remade the borders that had supported the border-crossing genre in earlier ages, and to investigate how the newly defined borders reflected local senses of identity in an era of disintegration and multiplication, destruction and reinvention.

“Border-crossing drama” refers to plays on historical characters who cross – or contemplate crossing – the border that separates the Han Chinese from other ethnic groups. The geographical boundary in such plays, the Great Wall, for instance, inevitably evolves to include other kinds of cultural, political, ethnic, and gender borders that define Han China and divide it from its other. By means of the principles of border-crossing drama I have selected a set of dozens of plays on Wang Zhaojun (fl. 33 BCE), Cai Yan (fl. 194–206 CE), Su Wu (d. 60 BCE) and Li Ling (d. 74 BCE) – all historical characters from the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) – whose border-crossing actions reflect aspects of intercultural conflict between Han and its northern neighbors, the Xiongnu. Wang, a court lady, married a Xiongnu chieftain in a peace-alliance marriage in 33 BCE; Cai, a widow, was abducted by Xiongnu marauders (194–5) and married to a Xiongnu lord; Su Wu, an envoy held prisoner among the Xiongnu after a failed peace
mission (100 BCE), married a Xiongnu wife, and Li Ling, a general, after fighting fiercely but vainly, was forced to surrender and remain among the Xiongnu for the rest of his life.

The earliest extant and probably the most famous example of the border-crossing genre is Ma Zhiyuan’s (c. 1250–1324) Hangong qiu (Autumn in the Han Palace), in the zaju (variety play) form and in which Wang Zhaojun is the central figure. Where Ma departs most from the historical record is in his invention of Wang Zhaojun’s death by suicide on the border and the Xiongnu chieftain’s unconditional surrender—all measures to intervene in the border-crossing action. In Ma Zhiyuan’s modification of the episode, Emperor Yuan (r. 49–33 BCE) orders Mao Yanshou, a painter-official and the designated villain of the play, to prepare portraits of a hundred beautiful young women so that he can select his companions accordingly. Wang Zhaojun, whose portrait Mao disfigured after she refused to bribe him, has to suffer in the Cold Palace for ten years before she becomes the emperor’s favorite concubine. After Mao’s scheme is revealed, he flees to the Xiongnu and presents Wang’s portrait to the chieftain; the latter demands Wang’s hand in marriage and threatens to invade China. Out of loyalty to her country, Wang volunteers to sacrifice herself and enter into a peace-alliance marriage with the chieftain; however, in order not to violate her fidelity to her husband, she has to kill herself before actually crossing the border. The Xiongnu chieftain, transformed by her patriotism and chastity, surrenders unconditionally to the Han emperor. The spirit of Lady Wang visits the emperor in a dream, but the brief encounter does not satisfy the emperor’s longing for her. After hearing the news of Wang’s sacrifice and the Xiongnu’s surrender, Emperor Yuan orders Mao Yanshou’s execution, presents the head to her spirit and brings the play to a satisfying conclusion.

Ma Zhiyuan wrote in a period of Mongol rule, and his proto-nationalist stance was also adopted by later playwrights in similar periods of foreign domination. Ma set the tone for border-crossing drama: the marginalization of the ethnic other (the Xiongnu or some contemporary equivalent) presented on stage an ideal China with clearly defined borders, while the melodramatic death of the Chinese woman, with its bittersweet spectacle of suffering, reinforced borders of gender. The lamenting and wailing before her death represented the stock climax of border-crossing drama in later generations. While Chinese women should not violate the gender code by crossing the border, male generals like Su Wu and Li Ling cross the border at will and marry foreign women without incurring blame. Proto-nationalism forms the historical and political background for border-crossing drama, but it is a gendered nationalism that stands out and makes this genre popular and durable.

In the late Qing, with the explosion of regional voices and the gradual advance of Western power, this old dramatic tradition took on extraordinary new forms, as southern local theater practitioners used their art to maintain old ideals of the Chinese nation in the collective imagination. Compared with chuanqi (marvel drama), the highly refined language of which is intelligible only to
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intellectuals, these local plays usually lack literary pretensions, but they are full of local color, contemporary references, and – very often – historical mistakes.\textsuperscript{12}

**Portrayals of a virtuous woman and barbarians**

Many of the local plays I have collected and especially from the southern coastal areas, seem to have been inspired by the pseudonymous Xueqiao Zhuren’s eighty-chapter novel *Shuangfeng qiuyuan* (*The Wonderful Karma of Double Phoenixes*), the earliest extant edition of which dates from 1809.\textsuperscript{13} With Wang Zhaojun as its central character, this novel was sometimes called *Zhaojun hefan* (*Zhaojun Appeasing the Barbarians*). *The Wonderful Karma of Double Phoenixes* was itself an expansion of the anonymous Ming *chuangqi* drama on Wang Zhaojun, *Herong ji* (*Appeasing the Barbarians*), which was printed in the Wanli period (1573–1620). Although the novel largely preserves the traditional storyline and its characters, it also imports historical characters from various other periods into the plot. The stories of Wang Zhaojun, Li Ling, and Su Wu are interwoven and their fates connected.

*The Wonderful Karma of Double Phoenixes* begins with the definition of wonderful men (*qi nanzi*) and wonderful women (*qi núzi*) in history: a wonderful man is a man of loyalty (*zhong*) and filial piety (*xiao*), while a wonderful woman exemplifies chastity (*jie*) and righteousness (*yi*). The first fourteen chapters set an ominous tone for the wonderful woman, Wang Zhaojun: after suffering in the Cold Palace due to the plotting of Mao Yanshou and the emperor’s evil concubine, she is finally united with the emperor, just in time for their eternal parting. Conflicts between Han and the Xiongnu worsen when the Xiongnu chieftain demands to have Wang. The military plan fails as Li Ling is captured and other generals lose their battles; the peace mission is also unsuccessful as Su Wu is imprisoned by the Xiongnu chieftain. A fake Zhaojun is sent to the Xiongnu, but when the truth is revealed, the real Zhaojun has to go, accompanied by Liu Wenlong.\textsuperscript{14} The border-crossing scene – the climactic moment that usually involves melodramatic farewell gestures and ends with Wang’s suicide – now takes up sixteen chapters (Chapters 47–62). With divine help, Wang stays in the borderland not just for a few days, but for more than a decade, as the chieftain completes several almost impossible tasks, by which he hopes to win her heart.

The involved plot and numerous characters of the novel are not really suitable for stage representation; however, local artists seemed to be able to find local and contemporary resonances in the work as they borrowed from it. The complicated political situation of the late Qing period provided excellent conditions for the thriving of border-crossing drama. It was the end of both the second long period of foreign rule and an imperial tradition over two millennia old. It was also a time when Western imperialism and colonialism made their strongest impact on the Chinese. The flame of ethnic hatred toward Manchu rulers was reignited when the corrupt Qing court failed to protect its people and territory from Western imperialism. The frontier of China, once clearly identified with
the Great Wall or a river between China and its northern neighbors, had to be redefined as the foreign newcomers joined in the camp of China’s ethnic other. The rise of regional drama also made audible the voices of the common people, and these plays have become one of the most precious historical documents of that period.

In 1842, after China’s defeat in the Opium Wars, the humiliating Treaty of Nanjing gave the British, aside from other various privileges, the rights to commerce and to reside in five important ports: Guangzhou (Canton), Xiamen (Amoy), Fuzhou (Foochow), Ningbo (Ningpo), and Shanghai. This event had a direct impact on southern local people, and therefore it is not surprising that conflicts with foreigners are often represented in dramatic works from these areas.

While it was customary to consider ethnic minorities such as Mongols and Manchus as foreign barbarians in earlier border-crossing drama, those ethnic minorities belonged to a centuries-old tradition—they were at least familiar barbarians. The Western colonizers, on the other hand, were much stranger in their appearance and customs, and more threatening due to their weapons and technology. The conflict between China and the Western invaders reached a peak when the troops of the allied Western powers marched on Beijing and sent the imperial court into exile in 1900. Chinese identity, already severely battered when the Manchus took Beijing two centuries earlier, now received another serious blow, as the capital fell into the hands of Western barbarians.

The barbarians in traditional border-crossing drama are easily recognized as members of northern ethnic groups by their stereotyped physical traits, such as darker skin and abundant facial hair. “Hair as dry as pine needles, a face as black as ink, a nose like an eagle’s beak, and a mustache as curly as a mountain donkey’s” is one of the typical passages that would describe the appearance of the traditional barbarian (Figure 12.1). However, as time progresses, the description of barbarians becomes more bizarre and less recognizable. The barbarians in *The Wonderful Karma of Double Phoenixes* have “green sideburns and red hair.” In the Fuzhou pinghua play *Qian hefan* (*The Former Appeasing the Barbarians*), the barbarians have “yellow beards and golden eyes, red mustaches and purple faces.” The familiar physical traits of traditional barbarians are less visible.

That Westerners were barbarians was a general conception as well as misconception of the era. Wang Zhongyang (fl. 1840), a literatus of the late Qing period, described the British he had seen as having “noses like the beaks of eagles, eyes of cats, red beards and hair.” An anonymous satire of the “Western devils” (*yang guizi*) from late Qing portrayed Westerners as people with “yellow and curly hair and green eyeballs,” contrasting with “clean and pleasant looking” Chinese. In a famous pictorial news journal of the period, *Dianshizhai huabao* (*The Pictorial News Journal from Lithography Studio*), many drawings of Westerners exaggerated their height, facial hair, and other alien characteristics (Figure 12.2).
The idea of the unfathomable colored-haired newcomers was best captured in local theaters. Beyond being ugly and dirty, an age-old stereotype for the male barbarians, Westerners are sometimes portrayed as having supernatural or bestial qualities. Although this representation may explain their invincibility, it also tends to disqualify them as human. The strange coloration of barbarians’ faces and hair is reminiscent of the description of ghosts or demons in the Chinese fiction tradition. In the min’ge (Min song drama) play24 \textit{Wang Zhaojun hefan quange xiaben (The Whole Song of Wang Zhaojun Appeasing the Barbarians, Part 2)},25 the tactician for the Xiongnu army is in fact a thousand-year-old turtle spirit who uses supernatural powers to defeat Chinese troops.

Various attempts to change the status quo were undertaken by activists from all social levels. Among the most famous official reforms were the Self-strengthening Movement (ziqiang yundong) of the 1860s and the Hundred Days Reform (bairi weixin) in 1898. The old Chinese way of dealing with foreigners – “learning about the strengths of the barbarians in order to control barbarians” (shi yi zhi changji yi zhi yi) – was an important concept behind these reform movements. Modernization and Westernization naturally became important tactics for
Figure 12.2 “They dare not befriend them” by He Mingfu, from The Dianshizhai Pictorial News Journal (1884–1908), ser. 5.

improving China’s political situation. Building railroads, training soldiers in firearms, building a naval force, setting up schools to train students in foreign languages and modern technology, and sending students abroad were just a few of these official reforms. Many late nineteenth-century Western-inspired intellectuals also advocated modernization and Westernization on a smaller scale. For instance, Kang Youwei (1858–1927), Liang Qichao (1873–1929), and Tan Sitong (1865–98) were among the famous intellectuals who wrote, published newspapers, and organized societies for the exchange of political ideas with other intellectuals. Besides advocating the education of the masses, “development from below” (kaiminzhi), many scholars also promoted democratically inspired and even revolutionary approaches to governing. According to nationalist intellectuals, it was not until China had learned from the strengths of the other that she could redraw a new solid border between herself and the other. In the late Qing, the proto-nationalist border of ethnic identity was deliberately made inclusive and permeable, with the hope that a permanent border could be set up in the near future.
However, “learning about the strengths of barbarians in order to control barbarians” was not an attractive concept for local theater people. In the min’ge play *The Whole Song of Wang Zhaojun Appeasing the Barbarians, Part 2*, after sending Wang to the Xiongnu, the emperor desperately seeks help from his subjects. One remonstrates: “The old policies are not appropriate. If we want to be rich and powerful, we have to learn from the new policies of the foreign countries.” He suggests:

- a constitution, autonomy, elections, sending students to the West to learn about Western laws . . . building battleships and firearms . . . setting up a police system, and building railroads . . . excavating mines with the help of private business . . . opening banks . . . and using bank notes instead of silver.  

All these steps toward modernization and Westernization will help build a stronger and richer modern China, so that “when the army is well trained we can kill all the barbarians and they won’t be able to return!”

But the “foreign new policies” are bluntly rejected by the prime minister:

- Foolishly copying the barbarians is useless . . . It is like trying to draw a tiger but failing, so that you end up with a dog . . . Both civil and military officials should work hard and, most importantly, employ the right kind of people.  

The modernization plan is surprisingly full of contemporary references and concrete details; however, the emperor would rather accept the abstract advice and traditional approach of the prime minister. Note that in these passages, words like “barbarian” (*fan*, the traditional way of referring to domestic ethnic minorities), “Western” (*yang*) and “foreign” (*waiguo*) are used interchangeably. Westerners and foreigners are once again regarded as barbarians. As a matter of fact, on the cover of the min’ge play, Manchu officials, who would logically be the present-day barbarians in the border-crossing drama tradition, now occupy the position of Chinese subjects, the “inside” Chinese. These Manchus, identified by their official outfits, appear civilized and modest, in stark contrast to the rough and hairy northern barbarians we are accustomed to seeing in the border-crossing iconography tradition (Figure 12.3). This kind of procession scene is standard in the iconography of Wang Zhaojun’s farewell moment, with another example being the illustration for Chen Yujiao’s *Zhaojun chusai* (*Zhaojun Leaving the Pass Behind*), from *Sheng Ming zaju* (*Zaju of the High Ming Period*), printed in 1629 (Figure 12.4). Comparing this min’ge print with the illustration of Chen Yujiao’s *zaju*, one finds that several features in both prints – the border geography as well as the composition and direction of Wang’s procession – are very similar. Wang’s Chinese female companions and male attendants create no ambiguity in either print, but the Manchu officials in the min’ge play now occupy the position of the
Chinese subject on horseback in the print from Chen Yujiao’s zaju. Now that the domestic barbarians, the lesser of the two evils, have been identified as insiders, the Western colonizers, because of their strangeness, have assumed the position of the ultimate barbarians.

This court scene in the min’ge play certainly reflects the constant dialogue that took place between the traditionalists and reformists among Chinese politicians and intellectuals at the end of the Qing period. The local people likened the Westernization and modernization advocated by the government and certain members of the elite to the failed drawing of the “tiger.” But they also regarded the stubborn traditionalists at higher levels, represented by the play’s prime minister – traditionalists who won court support when they entrusted China to the Boxers in 1898–1900 – with suspicion. Chinese commoners, caught between these two choices, felt that China’s quandary desperately needed a solution. Sensitive playwrights of the era, therefore, were compelled to find a new conclusion for local border-crossing plays that satisfied the contemporary audiences.
Instead of modernization and Westernization, mass movements strove for ethnic and proto-nationalist revolution. The slogan “overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming” (fan Qing fu Ming) was adopted by many anti-Qing activists even as early as the fall of the Ming in 1644.30 “Restoring the Ming” granted bandits, pirates, and secret societies a noble pretext for rebelling against Qing authority. The Taiping Rebellion (1851–64), the most large-scale of many Qing insurrections, originated in southern China and provides the most conspicuous example of this kind of pro-native rule sentiment. Although inspired by Christianity and partially supported by Westerners, the leader Hong Xiuquan (1814–64) attracted followers mainly through his anti-Manchuism and his proposals for economic reform. Old ethnic hatred was rekindled after two centuries as Manchus were condemned as “barbarians and demons” who had occupied China and forced people to wear barbarian garments and monkey headdresses, and disparaged as “barbarian dogs” and “rank foxes” who polluted and enslaved Chinese women.31
Although Hong’s forces were eventually suppressed, the Taiping version of Chinese ethnic consciousness and pride continued to permeate popular thought. It is known that the great Sun Yat-sen [Sun Wen] (1866–1925), who is regarded as the founder of the Chinese republic, was inspired by the legendary stories of Hong’s rebellion from a very young age.

Local popular theater, located on the lowest rung of both the social and the artistic ladder, responded positively to this type of proto-nationalist rebellion. Some contemporary theatrical works reflect revolutionary thinking; some actors even joined in rebellion forces to “act out” their own versions of “nationalism.”

One legendary example of actors’ rebellion was that of Li Wenmao (d. 1858) and his fellow Cantonese opera (yueju) actors. Li, a Cantonese opera actor famous for playing the role of Zhang Fei, led his fellow actors in joining in the Taiping Rebellion in 1854 at Foshan (near Guangzhou). Since the goal was to restore the Ming government, he believed that it was essential for the actor-soldiers to wear “genuine” Chinese costume, the Han Chinese outfit. "The rebels wore red turbans and stage costume. There were generals, commanders-in-chief, vanguard officers, and adjutants." Li’s forces were called the Red Turban Troops (or the Red Turban Bandits, from the government’s point of view), because of the red turbans the soldiers wore.

The theatricality of this rebellion was inevitably mythologized and dramatized by theater historians. His troops/troupes seemed formidable: “The actors used their stage combat skills, such as somersaults and high-jumping, to mount the city walls. The city guards were all shocked when they saw flying soldiers suddenly descending from the sky.” In 1855, the “Country of Great Success” (Dacheng guo) was founded, with the reign title “Great Virtue” (Hongde). Li then took the city of Lúzhou and made it his capital, “Dragon City” (Long cheng). He established his own administrative and military systems, and even circulated his own currency. Despite his successful reforms, he was defeated and died in 1858, and the Country of Great Success collapsed in 1861. His rebellion had a great impact on Cantonese opera: Cantonese opera was banned for nearly fifteen years (1856–71), and numerous actors were slaughtered or forced into exile. Li’s uprising was originally directed against the Qing government, the domestic barbarians. However, when the Governor General of Guangdong and Guangxi, Ye Mingchen (1807–59), was losing the battle to Li’s troops, he sought help from the British army. To protect their own economic interests in the Guangzhou region, the British provided ammunition and food and even stationed their gunboats so as to obstruct Li’s forces. It was the alliance of domestic and foreign barbarians that finally expelled Li’s troops from Guangzhou.

The conflict between traditionalists and reformists at court in the min’ge play The Whole Song of Wang Zhaojun Appeasing the Barbarians, Part 2 is resolved in the subplot of the Fuzhou pinghua The Former Appeasing the Barbarians, Part 1. Despite the sacrifice of Wang Zhaojun, the barbaric chieftain still declares war on China. Wang’s brother Wang Long, after a long adventure, is befriended by a group of bandits led by the chief Lei Yong. After many failed attempts by the government
to stop the barbarians, Lei Yong is entrusted by the emperor with the command of the army, defeats the barbarians, and becomes the national hero. A parallel situation is presented here: after Wang’s death, the Xiongnu chieftain demands another woman from a family that has helped Lei Yong in the past. Out of a sense of loyalty to his benefactor, the brave bandit hero kills the Xiongnu leaders and defeats their forces. Unlike the incompetent Chinese emperor, who cannot save China even though he has generously sacrificed his own favorite concubine, the mountain bandits, who regularly rob Chinese civilians, intervene at a crucial time to save a civilian woman and the whole of China from being enslaved by foreigners.

The character of the bandit-hero was not a new creation in local drama, in which numerous heroic characters are taken from the popular novel *Shuihu zhuan* (*The Water Margin*). On stage, honorable bandits and outlaws epitomized traditional Chinese values such as loyalty, courage, righteousness, and friendship at a time when foreign domination gave these values special meaning. The characters of the bandit-heroes introduced a new dimension into border-crossing drama: the clash between classes. It is evident that the Westernization and modernization advocated by the government or by the elite could not save China from its misfortunes. Heroic outlaws – whether Lei Yong on-stage or Li Wenmao off-stage, that is, people of the lower stratum who truly believed in traditional Chinese ethics and arts – could understand people’s needs at the local level. Only their savoir des gens could resurrect China as a real nation. It was also essential to cross the border between classes – to join the efforts of court and populace, so that the larger “nationalist” border could be defended successfully.

On the other hand, we can see the anti-Western stance that many local theater practitioners adopted as a kind of desperate gesture at preserving traditional Chinese local art. Western spoken drama (*huaju*), introduced into China by Chinese intellectuals, was often seen as a better model for a modern nation. The term “civilized drama” (*wenming xi*), also used for spoken drama, implied that the traditional form was “backward.” Western culture was permeating local villages and Western styles of performance such as singing, circus spectacles, and freak shows were not unfamiliar to local people. In order to survive, some local artists advertised their plays by using fashionable terms such as “modern” and “civilized” to appeal to larger audiences. Western musical instruments and styles of staging were also adopted by some local theaters to attract curious people.

The attitudes displayed by the local theater artists toward the elite, however, were ambivalent, and reminiscent of other colonial situations. Because Chinese nationalism was fashioned after Western ideas that elicited limited or no resonance in popular culture, and because of the close connection between nationalism and the Western dramaturgical models promoted by condescending elites, local artists not only found it difficult to embrace matrices and forms of promotion derived from Western models, but even reacted against them.
In addition to embodying traditional proto-nationalist and gender ideas, the border in local drama now also became set against contemporary currents – modernization, Westernization, imperialism, colonialism, and elitism. At the turn of the twentieth century, the border in local border-crossing drama becomes a more realistic geographical location, as in the cases of the Black Dragon River (Heilong jiang) in Autumn in the Han Palace, the Yumen Pass (Yumen guan) in Chen Yujiao’s Zhaojun Leaving the Pass Behind, or the Border River (Jiao he) in You Tong’s Mourning the Pipa. In The Wonderful Karma of Double Phoenixes, as noted earlier, the short scene between Wang’s farewell to the emperor and her suicide, the typical border-crossing scene, is stretched into sixteen chapters. Wang encounters a tiger, is saved by divine powers, and is given a magic gown to protect her chastity. She also writes numerous poems to her loved ones, sending them by the typical means of “entrusting her letters to a wild goose.” After she has reached the Xiongnu border, she delays the consummation of her marriage by putting drugs in the chieftain’s wine, pretending to be sick, and finally using her magic gown to keep the chieftain away. After making the chieftain promise to surrender to China, to pay tribute, to execute Mao Yanshou, and to send Su Wu and Wang Long home, she finally has him agree to build a floating bridge over the White Ocean River (Baiyang he). It is a nearly impossible task that takes sixteen years and thousands of workers to finish.

In some of the local dramas inspired by the novel, although the time frame is still sixteen years, the difficulties of the border are represented visually rather than temporally. In both the min’ge play The Whole Song of Wang Zhaojun Appeasing the Barbarians, Part 2 and the yueju play Zhaojun touya (Zhaojun Throwing Herself from the Riverbank), Wang postpones her suicide by sixteen years. Wang agrees to marry the chieftain, but only on the condition that he build a floating bridge over the wild White Ocean River (in the min’ge play, it is simply called “the ocean”) so that she can present a sacrifice to a certain god. In the min’ge play, the chieftain exhausts the national treasury and borrows heavily from foreign countries to construct the bridge. Accompanied by Liu Wenlong, the chieftain, his entourage, and a great deal of fanfare, “Zhaojun comes to the new bridge. Seeing the ocean water rushing and rushing, she sheds her tears drop after drop.” Pretending to be burning incense and presenting a sacrifice, she “clenches her teeth and jumps into the water in tears.”

Shocked, the chieftain tries to retrieve her body but his effort is in vain; heartbroken, he orders an extravagant memorial service for Wang. The ceremony is a display of wealth and power: the whole populace is dressed in mourning clothes; there are also sutra-reciting and a performance of the Buddhist play Mulian; the whole bridge is completely covered with carpet. It is against this spectacular background that the Xiongnu chieftain mourns for the woman he could not possess. However, his love for Wang is satirized as the folly of a “great stupid pig.” Wang’s body later emerges in the pond inside the Han palace, her beauty unmarred. After crying and kneeling in front of the corpse, the emperor gives her a proper burial and builds for her an “honorary arch of chastity.”
The Cantonese opera play *Zhaojun Throwing Herself from the Riverbank* handles the suicide in similar fashion, but the specific stage directions offer even greater visual pleasure. There is “scenery of river and bridge” for Wang’s suicide scene, and for the scene when her body appears in the palace, the stage directions say, “Water scenery. Enter the floating body [of Wang], covered with flowers carried in the mouths of hundreds of birds.” The emperor then retrieves the body and mourns for her. The meticulous description of the scene and stage instructions might have been inspired by Western theatrical practice of about that time, as Cantonese opera was among the most “progressive” regional dramatic forms.

Water seems to have been an important image in local border-crossing drama, and the water scene is also featured in some of the Su Wu stories. In *The Wonderful Karma of Double Phoenixes*, when Su Wu is ready to return to China, he asks a native if it is possible to take a boat south, since he is too old to ride a horse. The native indicates that at the mouth of Southwest Mountain there is an ocean, the water of which will take Su Wu directly to Yanmen (the Yanmen Pass). Although the name of China’s frontier remains the same, the geography of the border has completely changed.

**The sacrifice of the ape-woman**

Both the ocean and the White Ocean River suggest that the new barbarians come from the vast water, the ocean. Raging water, replacing the desolate northern desert, becomes the new frontier in southern local drama. Water is also important in some of the Su Wu local plays. Based on *The Wonderful Karma of Double Phoenixes*, some of the Su Wu local plays feature an extraordinary character, the ape-woman. After being sent to the North Sea (Lake Bakal) as a shepherd – a punishment for his loyalty to Han – Su Wu suffers cold and starvation, but is rescued and cared for by an ape-woman. When Su Wu returns home, the ape-woman has to stay among the Xiongnu. In both *yueju* plays *Xingxingnü zhuizhou* (The Ape-Woman Chasing the Boat) and *Xingxing zhuizhou* (The Ape Chasing the Boat), the parting scene between Su Wu and his ape-wife takes place on the boat. Knowing that her husband is leaving without her, she hires a boat to follow him. Pregnant with Su Wu’s child, she condemns him for his heartlessness but cannot change his mind. In the latter play, Su Wu even makes her promise him that she will send the child if it turns out to be a boy.

Water and boats appear prominently in Cantonese opera. Located in the delta region of the Pearl River (Zhu jiang), Cantonese opera troupes usually traveled by boat, and the term “red boat people” (*Hongchuan zidi*) became a synonym for “Cantonese opera players.” Moreover, adding a boat scene presented a great opportunity to demonstrate the actors’ virtuosity. Using an oar to symbolize the boat, both Su Wu and the ape-woman sail into the imaginary ocean, and when the ape-woman’s boat finally catches up with Su Wu’s, the two boats clash (the stage direction reads: “one clash, one bump”) and both have to
try very hard to maintain their balance as the boats rock. Su Wu was played by the famous actor Xinhua (the stage name of Kuang Daqing [1850–1923]), whose role was sheng (male); the ape-woman was played by his male disciple Lanhuami, whose role was huadan (flower female). As a flower female, Lanhuami could use this scene as an opportunity to demonstrate the beautiful physique of the ape-woman through a series of dance movements. It is said that Xinhua edited the play, and it is possible that he created the boat scene with the intention of displaying his disciple Lanhuami’s dancing skills.

In some cases, the geographical border is not clearly defined, but other types of ideological borders contribute to the overall demarcation between China and its foreign other. In order to grasp this concept, we must consider Su Wu’s barbarian counterpart, the ape-woman who appears in some of the local plays. In the yueju play Su Wu muyang (Su Wu Tending the Sheep), an ape-woman of the Seven-Star Cave has acquired the Way of humans after a thousand years of Taoist cultivation on Mount Qixia in the country of the Western Barbarians (Xifan guo). She saves the “virtuous loyal subject” Su Wu from cold and starvation and raises two sons for him. When she learns about Su Wu’s departure, she catches up with him and gives him their sons so they can stay with their father. Su Wu says: “A man who does not return a favor is not a gentleman. That even an ape should know righteousness! I will report to the emperor: she should be given the title of Lady.” In another yueju play Su Ziqing gui Han (Su Ziqing Returning to Han), Su Wu describes to Liu Wenlong his days with his ape-wife, The Hundred-Year-Way-Cultivating Illusionary Pretty Peach (Bainian xiudao huanjiaotao). Liu remarks, “No wonder you are still a gray-sideburned youth, and your mustache is still black.” Unlike traditional evil female fox spirits, who often exhaust male essence, this ape-woman is able to restore Su Wu’s virility because of her beauty and magic.

A clear outline of the ape-woman character is presented in the Cantonese opera tradition: kind-hearted, she takes care of Su Wu when he is desperately in need; fertile, she bears him two children; virtuous, she knows her sacrifice is necessary for the best ending; beautiful, she is named “Pretty Peach” and cast as a huadan (the character type for cute and vivacious women); and spiritually advanced, she attains her human form through self-cultivation. However, she is utterly victimized: her sexuality is fully exploited without reward. In some versions it is even suggested that she commits suicide, following the Wang Zhaojun tradition. She becomes the ideal Madame Butterfly figure on the Chinese stage. Her origin in “the Western Barbarian Country” connects her with the contemporary barbarians and makes her sacrifice even more intriguing. The feminized ape-woman also transforms the otherwise dull and stiff iron-hero Su Wu into a kind of heartless lover figure in Cantonese opera, giving the centuries-old play a romantic twist and box-office attraction.

The traditional Chinese view suggests that apes have a feminine side and are often considered pitiful creatures. In Shuijing zhu (The Commentary on the Water
Classic), apes are described as having: “a human face, with features correctly proportioned; they are good at talking to people. Their voices are beautiful, like those of women and pretty girls. Listening to them talking to each other makes one sad. Their meat is sweet and delicious.”

Other sources also suggest the relation between ape and human consumption: ape blood can be used as a red dye, and its lips are supposed to be one of the eight rare gourmet foods. Its flesh and blood are exotic and precious commodities. Since apes are generally known as rare animals from the south, it is very curious that the ape-woman becomes a legendary figure in the northern Xiongnu territory in the Su Wu stories. As a matter of fact, the location of Su Wu’s story in the yueju tradition is quite obscure. In The Ape-Woman Chasing the Boat, the ape-woman goes to the river to take a boat, sailing into the vast ocean and soon catching up with Su Wu’s boat. She says to him, “You are such a heartless man! When you were trapped in Xiongnu territory, you were sent into exile in the deep mountains. And the North Sea is a desert place, a no-man’s-land. . . . It is I who took care of you.” Su Wu then promises to send people to the mountains to escort her back later. River, ocean, deep mountains, the North Sea, desert: where does this play take place? If the barbarian territory cannot be clearly defined geographically, where are we to set the border?

A new generation of barbarians, represented by refined but pathetic ape characters, brought an intensified melodramatic quality to border-crossing theater. They were the perfect barbarians for China since an ideal Chinese nation cannot exist without its barbaric counterpart. However, as is stated in the Li Ji (Record of Rites), “A parrot can speak, but it is still a bird; an ape can speak, but it is still a beast”; the passage epitomizes the ape-woman’s tragic destiny. An ape-woman can cultivate her Way, acquire a human form, bear human offspring, and possess all the human female virtues, but she is eternally condemned to her ape form. The best compliment she can receive – “that even an ape should know righteousness” – is both condescending and indicative of her tragic fate. Her bestiality is something she cannot shed; she is eternally imprisoned in her own species. This ape imagery is an ingenious new invention in late Qing border-crossing drama. It is not easy to draw a border between the civilized Chinese and barbarians, since China is no longer surrounded by barbarians on the periphery, but is permeated by them. In fact, the geographical border no longer matters because the species border is ubiquitous. A barbarian wife might be virtuous and beautiful, but she is still a barbarian, like the ape-woman, and her sensational sacrifice is pathetic but inevitable.

Another case of the sacrifice of a barbarian female is also worth examining. In the Cantonese opera play Zhaojun Throwing Herself from the Riverbank, Li Ling is captured, but refuses to surrender. The chieftain sends his own sister, Goldflower Princess (Jinhua gongzhu) to persuade him, but Li humiliates her: “Don’t you try to seduce me! I’m a man. I will never behave like a beast, following your brother’s command to marry you!” The princess says:
I am a chaste woman. Why does my brother want to give me away like a prostitute? I am truly ashamed... I'd rather die to avoid blame and bad repute. In order to preserve my chastity, I cannot survive. (She kills herself with a sword.)

Li Ling is moved: “The princess is so chaste that I genuinely admire her. I will celebrate her chastity in poetry.”

After glorifying the barbarian princess in poetry, Li Ling kowtows to heaven and earth, bids farewell to the Chinese emperor and China, and kills himself by striking his head against a pillar. The double suicide, presented in such a short scene, has a very sensational effect. Now the barbarian woman can die in order to remain chaste, and her determination even inspires the Chinese general to kill himself. Although the sacrifice of the female barbarians is on a lower level – unlike Wang Zhaojun’s suicide, which benefits all of China, their sacrifice nevertheless presents a powerful and sympathetic image on stage. As the barbarian men had grown fiercer and stranger as time progressed, the barbarian women of the present-day generation had become more advanced and civilized than ever. And yet, the barbarian women are completely victimized – the best possible outcome for them is a melodramatic suicide, or parting from their husbands and even their children. They share the spotlight with Chinese heroes because they can be victimized in the most beautiful and poignant way.

As Wang Zhaojun continued to kill herself in her stories and other newly created female characters mimicked her style of sacrifice, more intensely demarcated gender boundaries and female self-immolation came to represent the burden women had to bear in the construction of an ideal China. While the traditional borders were being shattered and new ones were being drawn, while playwrights blurred historical time and shifted spatial boundaries, while commoners fought for the traditional arts and defied class boundaries, the gender border embodied a resistance to change and itself resisted change.

Notes
1 Kunqu is an operatic form sung with southern tunes originating in the Kunshan area in the Ming. After a series of changes and improvements by Wei Liangfu (1522–73), kungu became the major musical form for chuanqi from the late sixteenth century onward. Its popularity began to decline after mid-Qing.
2 Tanaka Isei thinks that the decline of kungu and the rise of local drama took place from the late Ming through the mid-Qing (seventeenth–eighteenth century); see “Development of Chinese Local Plays in the 17th and 18th Centuries,” Acta Asiatica 23 (1972): 42. The end of the reign of Emperor Qianlong (r. 1735–96) is generally used as a marking point for the decline of kungu. See Aoki Masaru’s Zhongguo jinshi xiqu shi (History of Chinese Theater in Recent Times), trans. Wang Guhu (from Japanese: Shina kinsei gikyoku shi) (Hong Kong: Zhonghua, 1975), pp. 576, 468. For a general introduction to local theater in English, see also the works of Colin Mackerras: “The Drama of the Qing Dynasty,” in Chinese Theater: From Its Origins to the Present Day, ed. Colin Mackerras (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), pp. 92–117; “The Growth of the

3. Space does not permit listing here the studies that have been done on border-crossing drama and its characters. For a detailed bibliography, see Daphne Pi-Wei Lei, “Performing the Borders: Gender and Intercultural Conflicts in Premodern Chinese Drama (Ph.D. diss., Tufts University, 1999).


5. For a historical account of Su Wu, see Ban Gu, 8: 2459–68.

6. For a historical account of Li Ling, see Ban Gu, 8: 2450–8.

7. For a historical account of Li Ling, see Ban Gu, 8: 2450–8.


9. In addition to *Hangong qiu*, the major dramatic works on Wang Zhaojun include a Ming *qu* play *Zhaojun chusai* (*Zhaojun Leaving the Pass Behind*) by Chen Yujiao (1544–1611), an anonymous Ming *chuangi* play *Herong ji* (*Appeasing the Barbarians*), printed in the Wanli period (1573–1620), a Qing *qu* play *Diao pipa* (*Mourning the Pipa*, 1661) by You Tong (1618–1704), a Qing *qu* play *Zhaojun meng* (*The Dream of Zhaojun*, printed in 1661) by Xue Dan (seventeenth century), and a Qing *qu* play *Pipa yu* (*The Words of the Pipa*), printed in 1830, by Zhou Leqing (fl. 1801–30).

10. Another important female border-crossing character, Cai Yan, is a foil to Wang’s Chinese female virtue. The widow of Wei Zhongdao and daughter of the famous scholar Cai Yong (132–92), Cai Yan was abducted by Xiongnu troops and married to a Xiongnu chieftain. After spending twelve years among the Xiongnu and bearing a chieftain’s daughter, she was brought back to China by Cao Cao (155–220). Her children, considered barbaric, were not allowed to return to China with her. Erudite and good at music, in the border-crossing-dramatic tradition she is nevertheless often compared with Wang Zhaojun and condemned for her survival. Suicide at the point of abduction (her version of border-crossing) is the action she should have taken in order to win respectful and sympathetic praise.

11. Originating in Yuan southern drama (naniu), *chuangi* was the dominant dramatic form during the Ming dynasty. *Chuanqi* plays were longer than *qu* and used more southern music. In the Qing, *chuangi* was synonymous with *kunqu*.

12. I have collected dozens of dramatic pieces from the turn of the twentieth century on border-crossing characters. Most of the works are from the archives of the Fu Ssu-nien Library at Academia Sinica in Taipei, where they are categorized as “popular songs” (*syngu*). By “piece” I mean either one entry in the catalog of the Fu Ssu-nien Library, or any independent work identifiable in other collections. There are complete and fragmentary plays, scenes, or songs. Publication information is largely unavailable for these late Qing plays and songs. Some of them were handcopied, and some printed (with woodblock, lithography, or lead plate). Names of printing houses, theater troupes, and leading actors are sometimes provided, but never authors’ names, as “playwriting” in local drama was often a practice of collaboration or adaptation, done by theater practitioners rather than by renowned literati. Liu Fu, in his *Zhongguo suyu zoongma gao* (*Draft of the Complete Catalog of Chinese Popular Songs*), states that although scholars (Liu Fu, Li Jianzhi, Gu Jiegang, Ma Yuqing et al.) began collecting popular plays and songs in 1917, this catalog was not complete until 1932. There are more than six thousand pieces in the collection, of which I have identified about fifty as examples of border-crossing drama.

Liu Wenlong, or Wang Long, a brother figure of Wang Zhaojun, seems to have appeared first in the Ming *chuanqi* play *Appeasing the Barbarians*. In some of the plays, Wang Long is the brother of Wang Zhaojun; in others, Liu Wenlong is a young man who has just taken first place in the Imperial Examination. Liu is ordered to accompany Wang Zhaojun on the peace-alliance marriage mission. He becomes her sworn brother and changes his name to Wang Long. Since it is this brother figure who shares her loneliness and sorrow in the borderland (for up to sixteen years), a kind of quasi-romantic and quasi-brotherly relationship develops in the absence of her emperor husband. The character Wang Long would work especially well on stage; he is the companion who shares with Wang's danger and distress, and confidant who listens to her sorrows and responds in poetry. He makes the otherwise one-woman show on the borderland much livelier and more interesting. In some of the local plays, the story and adventure of Wang Long form an important part of the subplot.

This phrase is from the *chuanqi* play *Herong ji* (vol. 2, sc. 29, p. 24), but it keeps reappearing in Wang Zhaojun plays centuries later. The extant version of the play is the Fuchuntang edition, printed in the Wanli period (1573–1620), in *Guben xiqu congkan erji* (*Collected Early Editions of Ancient Dramas, Ser. 2)*.

Pinghua, also called *pingshu*, is a storytelling tradition that usually involves a single performer with minimal props.

*Qian hefan*, published by Yiwen in Fuzhou (publishing date not available), is in two parts. The first part covers Mao’s scheme, the adventure of Wang’s brother, Wang’s days in the Cold Palace, and her meeting with the emperor, and the second part includes the war, Wang’s suicide, and the final peace. No information on *Hou hefan* (*The Latter Appeasing the Barbarians*) is available.

The Former *Appeasing the Barbarians*, part 2, p. 4.

*Yupian zhanzheng wenxue ji* (*Literature on the Opium War*), ed. Guangya chuban youxian gongsi bianjibu (Taipei: Guangya, 1982), vol. 1, p. 249.

Ibid., vol. 1, p. 322.

*Dianshizhai huabao* (*The Pictorial News Journal from Lithography Studio*) was published from 1884 to 1908.

Figure 12.2 features two British men pursuing frightened Chinese prostitutes in a brothel in the British concession. The title of the print, “They dare not befriend them,” indicates that even prostitutes despised the barbaric conduct of the British. This drawing is by He Mingfu. See *Dianshizhai huabao* (*The Pictorial News Journal from Lithography Studio*), ed. Guangdong Renmin (Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin, 1983), ser. 5.

*Ming*, or “Min songs,” is a local dramatic form from the Min (Fujian) area. Introduced to Taiwan in the late seventeenth century, *ming* (also known as *gezai*) has retained its popularity in Taiwan and is sometimes referred to as “Taiwanese opera.”

There is another *ming* play entitled *Wang Zhaojun langgong ge* (*The Song of Wang Zhaojun in the Cold Palace*), which is marked “Part One.” This section covers Mao’s scheme and Wang’s days in the Cold Palace. It was also published by Bowenzhai in Xiamen, the same company that published *Wang Zhaojun hefan quange xiaben*. From the plot, print, and publication information, I believe these two plays are supposed to be read/seen together. The publishing dates for the plays are not available. The title on the cover of “Part Two” reads: “The Newest Whole Song of Wang Zhaojun Appeasing the Barbarians, Part Two,” indicating that it is a newer edition of an earlier play.

These three scholars also participated in the brief “Hundred Days Reform.” For an introduction to these scholars, see Hao Chang’s “Intellectual Change and the Reform
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28 Ibid., p. 5.

29 Ibid., p. 5.

30 Very often, more practical factors, such as economic desperation, were likely the immediate motivation for the revolts. A good discussion of the causes of late Qing revolts is the chapter by Susan Mann Jones ("Dynastic Decline and the Roots of Rebellion") in *The Cambridge History of China*. One of the main reasons for the revolts was a 56 percent increase in population during the middle Qing period (1779–1850). See Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, 10: 107–62.

31 See "Fengtian taohu xi" (The Manifesto for the Heavenly War against Barbarians) of the Taiping Kingdom, quoted in Li Yunhan’s *Zhongguo jindai shi* (The Recent History of China) (Taipei: Sanmin, 1985), pp. 38–9.

32 I have written about Li Wenmao’s "theatrical revolution" at greater length in "Real Chinese Playing ‘Real’ Chinese On and Off Stage: the Ban on Cantonese Opera and Its Effects at the Turn of the Twentieth Century" (unpublished manuscript). This paper was presented at the annual conference of the American Society for Theatre Research in Washington DC, 1998.

33 The Manchu government promulgated an overall change in dress code and hairstyle after taking over China. Besides dressing in Manchu style, men had to shave their heads in a certain way. "Shaving the head" (tifa) was to many Chinese men the most submissive gesture to the Manchu rulers. Many people preferred to die than shave their heads. Inside the theater, however, actors were much freer in their choice of costume and hairstyle. The traditional Chinese theater costume is rather timeless and ahistorical; it does not specify a particular dynasty, but reflects a general ethnic tradition, the Han Chinese tradition. Therefore, Li Wenmao’s costumed rebellion made a perfect statement of resistance to foreign domination.

34 This account is recorded in the county gazetteer of Shunde, quoted in Lai Bojiang and Huang Jingming, *Yueju shi* (The History of Cantonese Opera) (Beijing: Xinhua, 1988), p. 14.


37 About two dozen of his coins have been excavated. One kind bears the legend "restoring Han and destroying the Manchus" (xing Han mie Man). *Zhongguo xiqu zhi, Guangdong juan* (Accounts of Chinese drama: Guangdong), ed. Zhongguo xiqu zhi bianji weiyuanhui (Beijing: Xinhua, 1993), 8: 451–2.


40 Michel Foucault identified a kind of subjugated knowledge which includes the “naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientifcity.” He used the term *le savoir des gens* (popular knowledge) to refer to this kind of local, disqualified knowledge “whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought.” Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 78–92.
Western spoken drama was performed in the British concession in Shanghai in the mid-nineteenth century, but Chinese spoken drama (performed in and by Chinese) was first introduced to China by students who had studied in Japan in 1907.

For instance, the cover of the dagu script *Shuangfeng qiyuan* (*The Wonderful Karma of Double Phoenixes*), published by Baowentang in Beijing, reads “fashionable tunes and civilized pastime” (Shidiao gequ,wenming xiaoqian), and a collection of dagu songs which contains the play *Zhaojun hofan* (*Zhaojun Appeasing the Barbarians*), is entitled *Wenming dagushu ci* (*Civilized Dagu Songs*) (Beijing[?]: n.d.). Dagu (which means “big drum”) is a storytelling form popularized in northern China as early as the eighteenth century. The singer/narrator usually uses a drum (sometimes also a clapper), while an instrumentalist plays an accompaniment. Li Jiarui, *Beiping suqu lüe* (*A General Introduction of Popular Songs from Beiping*) (Taipei: Wenshizhe, 1974), pp. 4–7.

Violin, piano, and saxophone were used in yueju. In 1898, real water was used on stage for a flood scene. See Mai Xiaoxia, pp. 23–8.


Starting in *Herong ji*, the dramatic Wang Zhaojun often writes a letter to the emperor and entrusts it to a wild goose. To intensify the dramatic action, the author often makes Wang write the letter with her blood on a piece of torn clothing. Sometimes the wild goose is personalized as the audience for Wang’s sorrowful singing in the no-man’s-land. The scene of letter-writing and the wild goose usually take place just before her suicide, when the dramatic pathos is at its height. A historical connection of wild goose and letter-writing in a border-crossing story is found in *Hanshu*. In order to make the Xiongnu chieftain release Su Wu, the Chinese envoy claimed that the Chinese emperor had received a letter from Su Wu carried by a wild goose (to prove Su Wu was still alive). See Ban Gu, 8: 2466.

The play is in five volumes/acts, starting with Wang’s departure from the pass and ending with the emperor’s marriage to her sister. It is a special version for lead actors Qianliju (1888–1936, male flower female) and Chang’eying (dates unknown, flower female). It was published by Wuguitang in Guangzhou. Page numbers start anew with each act.

Bell Yung points out that the constrained circumstances of Cantonese opera’s survival have made it a hardy genre. It absorbs elements from other dramatic genres, and adjusts itself to contemporary tastes. See Bell Yung, *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 9. The ban on the Cantonese opera is one of the reasons why it had to seek new means of survival.
Southern Song or early Yuan dynasty, *Su Wu muyang ji* ([The Story of Su Wu Tending the Sheep](#)). This play is collected in Qian Nanyang’s *Song Yuan nanxi baiyi lu* ([One Hundred and One Southern Plays of the Song and Yuan Dynasties](#)) (Cambridge: Harvard Yenching, 1934), pp. 179–214. Su Wu sees a lone wild goose and thinks about sending a letter to the emperor to express his feelings. He explains how he survived these years: “What fills my stomach is grass fruit, and apes are my companions” (p. 208). This phrase also appears in later plays; however, there is no explanation of the gender or number of the apes. Not until *The Wonderful Karma of Double Phoenixes* does the ape character become Su Wu’s wife.

This short play appears in the collection *Guangdong youjie suijin*. It was printed by Yiwen tang in Guangzhou (date not available). Xinhua and Lanhuami (male flower female) were the leading actors.

This play is from a *yueju* collection *Biebutong suijin quanji* (also printed by Yiwen tang in Guangzhou; date not available), vol. 2, pp. 14–15.

The Ape-Woman Chasing the Boat in *Guangdong youjie suijin*, p. 1.

The play is in four volumes/acts. It was published by Wuguitang in Guangzhou (date unknown). Pagination begins anew with each act. According to the publisher’s brief introduction, this play was by the Guofengnian Theater Troupe, with leading actors Xinhua et al. The publisher obtained the play from the theater and then cut the woodblock, printed it, and distributed it. See *Su Wu Tending the Sheep*, vol. 4, p. 7.

This play is also from *Guangdong youjie suijin*.

A comparison between her and Cai Yan can be made here. In the patrilineal tradition, only the father can “own” the children; therefore, Cai Yan’s children, considered Xiongnu offspring, are not allowed to return to China with her, while the ape-woman’s children, considered Han offspring, cannot stay with her.

The opening line of the *yueju* play *Xingxing zhuizhou* is spoken by Su Wu: “Su Ziqing tries to persuade the lady [the ape-woman] not to commit suicide. Let’s talk about our parting sorrow with smiles” (p. 14). Another interesting *yueju* play, *Xingxingxiu li Ling bei* ([The Ape-Woman Washing the Li Ling Tablet with Blood](#)), features Li Ling, Su Wu, Wang Zhaojun, and the ape-woman. Su Wu entrusts Li Ling to the care of the ape-woman after he returns to China. Noting that Li seems to waver in his loyalty to China, she erects a tablet for Li and washes it with blood to encourage him. Later, knowing that Wang Zhaojun has committed suicide, Li also kills himself. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find the script for this fascinating play. There is an entry for the play with a plot summary in *Yueju jumu gangyao* ([A Catalog of Cantonese Opera Titles and Plots](#)), ed. Zhongguo xijujia xiehui Guangdong fenhui (Hong Kong?: Zhongguo xijujia xiehui Guangdong fenhui, 1982?), 2: 625. In modern Beijing opera, the suicide of Su Wu’s barbarian wife seems common. She is now given a name Hu Ayun and is no longer an ape. She commits suicide before Su Wu returns to China. See *Su Wu muyang* ([Su Wu Tending the Sheep](#)), in *Xiuding guoju xuan* ([Edited Selected National Drama](#)), ed. Lingyin guanzhu (Taipei: Diyi wenhuashe, 1976).

Cited in *Shanhai jing* ([The Classic of Mountains and Seas](#)) (Anon.), collated and annotated by Yuan Ke (Chengdu: Bashu, 1992), pp. 325–6.

“There are apes in Yongchang County who can speak, and one can use their blood to dye blankets red.” See Chang Qu’s *Huayang guozhi* ([The Account of Huayang](#)), annotated by Ken Naiapiang (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1987), p. 285. The color seems to be a kind of bright and sensuous red. In modern Chinese, “ape-red” is the color scarlet.

Ma Duanlin’s *Wenxian tongkao* cites a passage from the early lexicon *Erya*: “As for delicious meat, it is ape’s lips.” However, this passage does not appear in *Erya*. See *Wenxian tongkao* (Taipei: Xinxing, 1959), 8: 2600. People disagree about what the eight foods are, but they range from mythological foods such as dragon liver and...
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phoenix marrow to rare foods such as leopard placenta, bear paw, gold carp tail, owl soup, milk-cicada, and ape lips. Ji Yun (1724–1805) wrote about having received a pair of ape lips as a gift but giving them away since his cook did not know how to prepare them. They appeared to be very precious and were kept in an embroidered box. As a whole piece from forehead to chin, including nose, mouth, and eyebrows, the ape lips actually resembled a theater mask. See Ji Yun, Yuewei caotang biji (The Notation Book of the Yuewei Cottage), edited and translated by Bei Yuan et al. (Beijing: Xinhua, 1994), p. 857.

63 Such as from Yunnan province and from Vietnam.
64 The Ape-Woman Chasing the Boat in Guangdong youjie suijin, p. 1.
65 Ibid., p. 2.
66 Liji (The Record of Rites) (Anon.), annotated by Chen Hao (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1987), p. 2.
67 From the yueju Su Wu Tending the Sheep (IV, 7).
69 Ibid., pp. 6–7.

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GLOSSARY

Baiyang he 白洋河
Cai Yan 蔡琰
Chen Qing 陳情
Bainian xiudao 百年修道
hunjiaotao 百日維新
bairi weixin 百里維新

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