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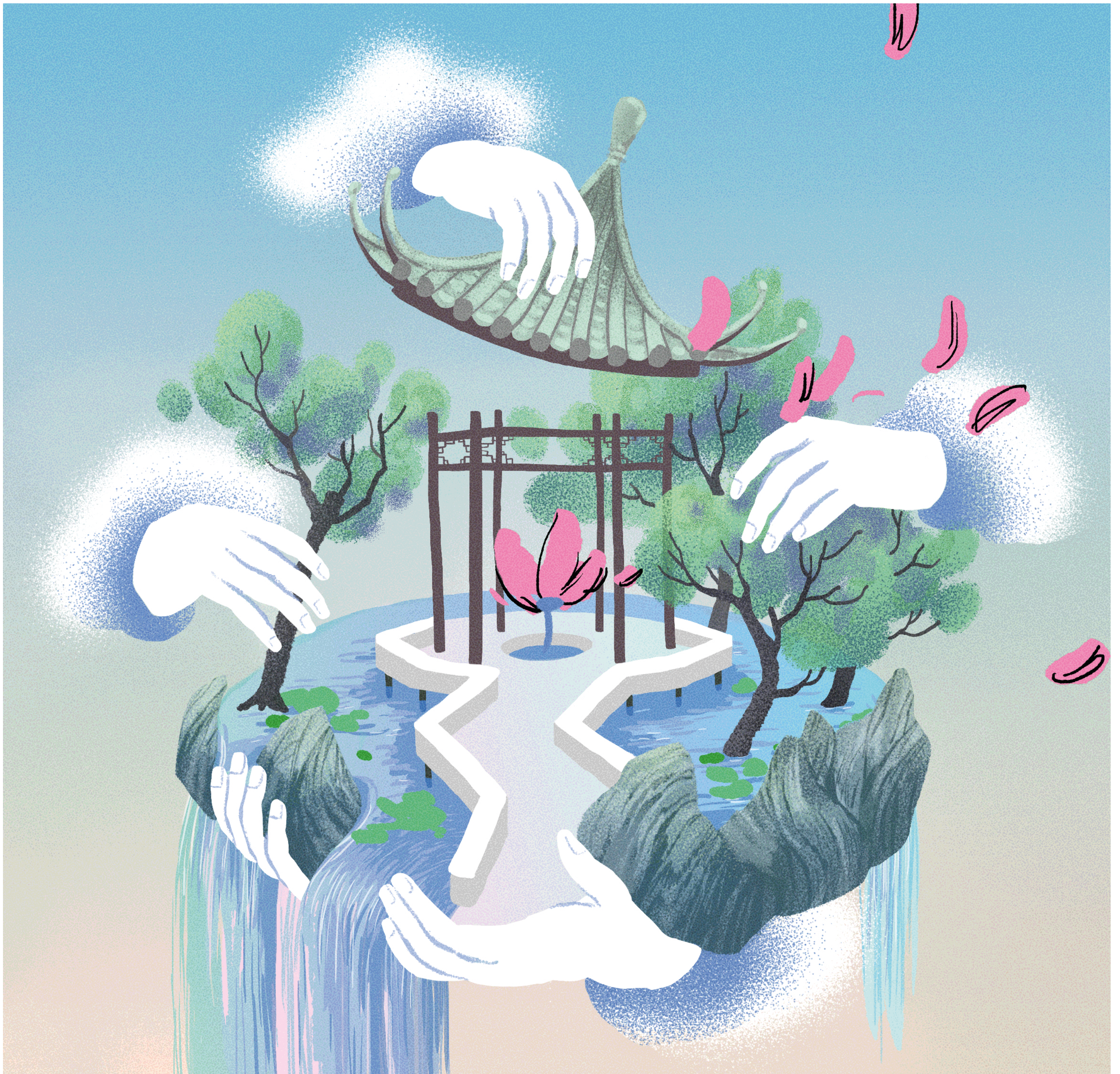
| COMMENTARY & EXEGESIS | 詮釋與註釋



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CONTENTS

Editorial

Marie BIZAIS-LILLIG, Laura DE GIORGI, Alison HARDIE, Sascha KLOTZBÜCHER, Frank KRAUSHAAR, Irmy SCHWEIGER and Elizabeth SMITHROSSER — 1
Between the Lines
字裡行間

Commentary and Exegesis 註釋與詮釋

Marie BIZAIS-LILLIG — 7
Commentary and Exegesis in the Pre-Modern, Modern, and Contemporary Chinese Worlds: An Introduction
中國古今註釋與詮釋研究：導言

In Poetry and Fiction 詩賦和小說

Michael SCHIMMELPFENNIG — 19
Tracing Controversies of Understanding in Traditional Commentaries to "Lord Amidst Clouds" from the *Songs of Chu*
《九歌・雲中君》傳統評註中解讀爭議的歷時性研究

Olga LOMOVÁ — 57
Exposing the Authorial Intent? Self-Commentaries in Xie Lingyun's *Shanju Fu*
自現其意？謝靈運自註《山居賦》

Xiaofei TIAN 田曉菲 — 77
Mastering Meaning: Self-Exegesis in Medieval Chinese Poetic Writings
掌控意義：中古詩賦裏的作者自註

Roman LASHIN — 107
Reading Yan Lianke's Fiction through the Lens of *Shijing* Exegesis
從《詩經》訓詁視角解讀閻連科小說

In History 史

Evan NICOLL-JOHNSON — 125
Textuality and Performance: Citations of Personal Literary Collections in Liu Xiaobiao's Annotations to *Shishuo Xinyu*
文本與言行：劉孝標《世說新語》註文中對別集的引用

Hsienmin CHU 朱先敏 149
Visible and Spectacular: Commentary on Geographical Writings in Medieval China
可見與壯觀：中古時期地理書寫中的註疏

In Thought 子

Shad GILBERT 169
Continuity in Zhangian Ontology
張湛本體論的連續性

Marco POUGET 185
Between Cooperation and Competition. A Comparative Reading of Eastern Han Commentaries to the *Liji* 禮記
互動與競爭：東漢《禮記》註文的比較研究

Rusha JIN 金如沙 207
What is Other than "Us": Non-Buddhist Sources in the Buddhist Commentary *Zhiguan Fuxing Chuanhong Jue*
非"我"之"它"：佛教註釋書《止觀輔行傳弘決》中的非佛教文獻

Spotlight

Michel VIEILLARD-BARON 225
Issues at Stake in Poetic Commentary in Medieval Japan: Fujiwara no Teika's *Secret Investigations of Kenshō's Commentary [on Kokin waka shū]*, *Kenchū mikkan* (1221)
日本中世紀時期的詩歌評論：藤原定家的《顕註密勘》研究

Research Article

Qian SU 蘇謙 245
Epistolary Activities in the Early Southern Ming Period (1644–1652)
南明初期書信交換活動研究（1644-1652）

Book Reviews

Irmy SCHWEIGER 269
邱貴芬 Chiu Kuei-fen, *台灣文學的世界之路* [The Global Path of Taiwanese Literature]

Helmut OPLETAL 277
Jennifer Dorothy Lee, *Anxiety Aesthetics. Maoist Legacies in China. 1978–1985*

Alison HARDIE 283
Su Shi, Lu Cai and Tu Benjun, *The Misadventures of Master Mugwort: A Joke Book Trilogy from Imperial China*

Bart DESSEIN 287
Xin Wen, *The King's Road. Diplomacy and the Remaking of the Silk Road*

List of PhDs Defended at European Institutions in 2023–2024 293

Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies

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EDITORIAL

Between the Lines

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The editorial committee is pleased to present volume 5 of the Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies, which opens with a special section on "Commentary and Exegesis".

編委會榮幸地推出《歐洲漢學學會學刊》第五期。本期特設"註釋與詮釋"專題，作為開篇內容。

Keywords: Editorial, China, Sinology, Commentary, Exegesis, Hermeneutics

關鍵詞： 編委，中國，漢學，詮釋，批註，註釋，解讀

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The editorial committee is pleased to present volume 5 of the *Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies* which opens with a special issue section, dedicated to commentary and exegesis. This section starts with an introduction by Marie Bizais-Lillig, which delineates the contours of the topic under study. It is followed by ten research articles organised in chronological order within three large textual categories. We are extremely glad that the papers of the two finalists of the EACS 2024 Young Scholar Award fit in the special issue and, thanks to the efforts of their authors, could be integrated in this volume.

The first category entitled "poetry and fiction" (*shifu ji xiaoshuo* 詩賦及小說), spans from pre-imperial *Chuci* 楚辭 (Songs of Chu) to the contemporary novels of Yan Lianke. It starts with a long diachronic panorama on the interpretation of the *Songs of Chu* from the Han down to the Qing dynasty, which **Michael Schimmelpfennig** chooses to analyse minutely by focusing on the poem "Yunzhong jun" 云中君 (The Lord Amidst Clouds). The author identifies five landmarks, namely commentaries by Wang Yi 王逸 (2nd century CE), the Tang dynasty Five Ministers 五臣 commenting upon the *Wenxuan* 文選 pieces, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), Wang Yuan 汪瑗 (?–1565), and Lin Yunming 林雲銘 (ca. 1628–1697), which operate as testimonies to the different choices commentators make when it comes to dividing a base text into meaningful segments, structuring a commentary, integrating external materials, associating texts, or identifying elements and personae within a text. Given that commentators were aware of their predecessors, adding a new stratum equates to accepting a challenge to promote one's reading and interpretative techniques.

In contrast, **Olga Lomová** narrows down the attention to one single piece, the *Shanju fu* 山居賦 (Rhapsody on dwelling in the mountains) by Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433), accompanied by one single commentary by the same author, the length of which is approximately similar to that of the *fu* proper. The article examines the different functions performed by the unprecedented device of *zizhu* 自注 (self-commentary) appended to a long poetic autobiography that describes the Southern estate where Xie Lingyun retired due to political turmoil. It argues that commentaries not only serve to shed light on meaning and intertextual references or funnel the interpretation: self-commentary anticipates the possible challenge to the imperial central power carried by the grand *fu* style piece, and works as a muffler.

Tian Xiaofei 田曉菲 takes a different stand on the role played by self-commentary in Xie Lingyun's *Rhapsody on dwelling in the mountains* where she sees a means to individualise and substantiate a description that would otherwise echo the abstract rhetoric of the Han *fu*. The analysis of Xie Lingyun's work inaugurates a larger reconstruction of the early history of self-commentary in the belletrist tradition, which shifts from rhapsody to *shi* 詩 poetry, continuing with Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531–590s) and Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) as exemplary figures. The paper shows how self-commentaries embody a wish to maintain the readability and to communicate the tone or the implications of a text for a larger audience—in time in particular. It also demonstrates how commentaries reveal deficiencies in a base text, impose themselves as necessary, and build a dialogic relationship with both the text and life. The paper finally suggests that the broad adoption of poetic auto-commentary from the late eighth century onwards reflects a transformation in the representation and value of the belletrist field.

After a great leap in time that brings us to Yan Lianke 閻連科 (1958–), **Roman Lashin** invites us to pay attention to two novels, namely *Fengyasong* 風雅頌 (Ballads, Hymns, Odes) and *Jianying ru shui* 堅硬如水 (Hard Like Water), whose titles are connected to the *Shijing* 詩經 (Classic of Poetry). This paper shows that the history and practice of *Shijing* exegesis were an inspiration to Yan Lianke and that, from many aspects, the tribulations and struggles of the novels' main characters can be better understood if observed through the lenses of commentarial Confucian traditions on the love poems in the anthology. On the one hand, Yan's work illustrates the tension between bodily desire and political discourse, along with the possible censorship this tension may produce. On the other, the novels evidence the socio-political power of words in a world continuously reinterpreted through a hermeneutic process that resembles commentarial discourse on texts.

The second textual category, which corresponds to the traditional category of "history" (*shi* 史), starts with a paper at the junction of literature and history by **Evan Nicoll-Johnson**. This article focuses on Liu Xiaobiao's 劉孝標 (462–521) annotations to the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (New stories from worldly talks) compiled by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444). A close examination of a set of annotations that contain quotations from the collected literary writings (*bieji* 別集) of historical figures reveals the dialogic relationship established between the base text and the commentaries, to the point that the anecdotes may sometimes appear as subordinate to Liu Xiabiao's text. Even more strikingly, the commentarial method twists the usual understanding of the anecdotes as testimonies of highly oral and performative social interactions: Liu Xiaobiao deciphers them from the standpoint of text, in a world where literary collections and texts (as opposed to masters' texts *zi* 子) gain more and more symbolic value.

Hsienmin Chu 朱先敏 sheds light on a complementary dimension of commentaries, that of memory and sensation, in an article dedicated to Li Daoyuan's 酈道元 (d. 527) *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 (Commentary on the Classic of Waterways) and Yang Xuanzhi's 楊衒之 (fl. 528–547) *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 (The Records of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang), to which is appended the author's own commentary. Beside supplementing diverse types of information, mainly topographical, historical, and textual, both commentaries deepen the experience of the reader, mediated by accounts of perception of the landscapes. Annotators capture keywords and distinguish between seeing (*jian* 見) and observing (*guan* 觀), Hsienmin Chu argues, to highlight sensory experiences, which turn the objective world recorded in texts into something spectacular.

The third and last category corresponds to masters' texts, *zi* 子, and the associated philosophical and religious debates. **Shad Gilbert** illustrates how a commentary, in this case Zhang Zhan's 張湛 (fl. 370 CE) annotations to the *Liezi* 列子 chapter "Heaven's Gifts" (*tianrui* 天瑞), can be read as a piece of intellectual work proper. This paper scrutinises the commentary almost independently from its base text to reconstruct Zhang Zhan's perspective on the issue of ontological continuity. It thus shows how commentaries may be the place for parallel discourses, attached to a network of texts thanks to their physical position on the page.

In his paper on the case of Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127–200 CE) and Lu Zhi's 盧植 (?–192) commentaries to the *Notes on Mores* (Liji 禮記), **Marco Pouget** reminds us that transmitted texts can be understood only within a historical context of reading, which is made available to us thanks to collections and fragments of commentaries. His analysis sheds light on the connexion, similarities, and contrast in reception and transmission of two commentaries from the same era. It shows how Eastern Han commentaries attached to canonical texts contributed to the prestige, and possibly promotion, of their author, and how this might explain that such commentaries mirrored individual hermeneutic practices rather than engaging in interpretative debates.

Finally, **Rusha Jin 金如沙** unpicks the dynamics underway in the process of quoting and paraphrasing from external sources in Zhanran's 湛然 (711–782) commentary to one of the "Three Major Works of Tiantai Buddhism", namely the *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (The Great Cessation and Contemplation). Specifically, this paper focuses on the use of non-Buddhist sources in the commentary. Rusha Jin argues that non-Buddhist sources undertake multiple functions. On the one hand, they reflect Zhanran's training as a Confucian scholar, especially in the case of glosses and exposition of peripheral knowledge. On the other hand, non-Buddhist sources, which are clearly divided into Confucian and Daoist thought, embody the competition outside the text and serve to pursue the commentator's purpose of promoting the Tiantai tradition 天台宗. In other words, when deployed in doctrinal discussion, these sources reveal their alignment or their inferiority in relation to Buddhist doctrine.

This volume contains one spotlight, linked to the special issue, which offers a counterpoint to our analysis of commentary and exegesis in China through displacement to a Japanese context. **Michel Vieillard-Baron** presents a double commentary to the first anthology of Japanese poetry, the *Kokin waka shū* 古今和歌集. The two layers of commentary were composed by two poets, Kenshō 顕昭 (1130?–1209) and Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家 (1162–1241), who represented to rival schools. The article includes extensive translations from Fujiwara no Teika's afterword and from the annotated anthology. While we can find similarities in the commentaries, which supplement information both factual and lexical considered essential to the understanding of the poems, the contrast is also striking: this double commentary stands as an exception in a world where schools relied on oral transmission in order to protect the secret of their reading techniques, but where, as this case illustrates, their divergences in view are not always salient.

The stand-alone research section of the volume consists of one article only. **Su Qian's 蘇謙** paper on "Epistolary Activities in the Early Southern Ming Period (1644–1652)" examines the circulation of letters by five Ming loyalists during the most active period of Ming resistance following the fall of Beijing. The collapse of the Ming postal system, followed by Qing repression of subversive activity, required these correspondents to find innovative ways of getting their letters to their intended recipients, who often included more than just the named addressee. Personal correspondence thus morphed into a means of circulating political and military intelligence between different regional bases of Ming resistance, in the absence of a functioning Ming governmental information system. The author

thus argues that private correspondence during this fraught period was of much more than private significance.

The editorial committee invites submission of research articles on any topic which pertains to the fields of Sinology, Chinese Studies or Taiwanese Studies. For any information on formats and submission process, please consult the journal website.

Four book reviews provide critical perspectives on recent publications in English and Chinese. The selection consists of one translation review on pre-modern literature, and three book reviews ranging from the history of the Silk Road between 800 and 1000 to the avant-garde of the post-Maoist era, and reaching out to the dissemination and reception of Taiwanese literature in the contemporary world.

The journal warmly welcomes reviews in English of sinological works and translations in all European languages as well as in Chinese.

JEACS volume 5 ends with the usual list of PhDs defended in 2024 in European Universities. Although the list is by no means exhaustive, we were able to gather 53 dissertations. Besides abstracts and general information, links are provided when available to freely downloadable versions from their respective universities.

Supervisors and successful doctoral candidates are encouraged to send information about their dissertation to the editorial board at any time using the online form accessible at this address.

This volume benefitted from the arrival on the editorial committee of Elizabeth Smithrosser, a specialist in intellectual history whose research interest lies in the study of humour and publishing in late imperial China.

Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Commentary and Exegesis in the Pre-Modern, Modern, and Contemporary Chinese Worlds: An Introduction

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Despite its centrality and its impact from a historical perspective, commentary is usually considered a tool for deciphering great works or as a faint trace of intellectual activity. Except for a few instances in the field of philosophy, it has been reduced to an ancillary status and denied that of a text *per se*. This introduction presents the framework in which the project of this special issue developed, the questions that were raised, and the key elements that characterise commentaries and that appeared through the project.

儘管註釋在歷史上發揮著關鍵作用，但通常僅被視為理解古典作品的輔助工具，或是反映古人學術活動的細微痕跡。除哲學領域的少量研究外，註釋作為獨立文本的學術價值一直未得到充分重視，更多地被輕視為輔助工具。引言將介紹本專刊的研究框架和探討的核心問題，並揭示註釋在此過程中展現的獨特特質以及學術意義。

Keywords: China, Japan, commentary, exegesis, reading, framework, introduction

關鍵詞： 中國，日本，詮釋，批註，讀法，規範，序言，引言

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In her analysis of commentaries written by translators of modern and contemporary Chinese literature, which focuses more specifically on French translations of works by Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1902–1988) and Yu Hua 余華 (1960–),[1] Florence Zhang pinpoints that such notes keep track of the interpretative process that is at the core of any reading activity — and hence of any translation — although, she adds, some of these notes might appear misleading (Zhang 2018). In other words, because translating and reading consist in interpreting a chosen text, these activities may also all be crystallised in glosses, annotations, and commentaries. Also, the hermeneutic devices are expected to shed light on the meaning of the base text. If not, their appreciation and value will most probably be challenged. If Florence Zhang's standpoint builds on Berman's remarks on the exegetical dimension of translation according to Walter Benjamin (Berman 2008; Baudelaire 1923), it also mirrors broadly accepted views on commentary. However, if we were to look more carefully at Isabelle Rabut and Angel Pino's translation of *Xiongdi* 兄弟 (Brothers) (Yu 2008), we would be struck by the volume and the form taken by the translators' commentaries. The translation *per se* covers almost a thousand pages, followed by almost thirty pages of annotations in tiny characters. Some explanations, such as those related to the Great Cultural Revolution (Yu 2008, 992) are very long and detailed. Others are shorter, like this one on yellow wine (Yu 2008, 991):

> Yellow wine is a kind of rice alcohol that is enjoyed after it has been heated. It can also be used for cooking purposes, to season certain dishes. The most famous of all is produced in Shaoxing, Zhejiang (a coastal province in southeast China, near Shanghai).
>
> Le vin jaune est un alcool de riz qu'on déguste après l'avoir fait chauffer. Il est également utilisé en cuisine, pour assaisonner certains plats. Le plus réputé de tous est celui qu'on produit à Shaoxing dans le Zhejiang (province côtière du sud-est de la Chine, à proximité de Shanghai).[2]

The reader is provided with information on aspects of Chinese material culture, Chinese contemporary history, or even Chinese geography, that are much richer than is necessary to understand the novel. The translators' notes to the French translation of *Brothers* by Yu Hua function as a detour and question the role, function, and form of commentaries in general.

Schools of interpretation of the so-called Confucian Classics appear from the Warring States period (476–221 BC) onwards (Van Zoeren 1991; Nylan 2001), develop during the imperial era, and give shape to hermeneutic traditions that will apply to various kinds of texts. Since the foundation of the Republic, traces of Chinese exegetical history (mostly schools and tools) appear here and there.

A few years ago, in 2019, the diversity in nature and form along with the richness of exegetical enterprises throughout Chinese history triggered the attention of a group of scholars who initially planned to meet in France in 2020. Because of the pandemic, the meeting was postponed. Members of the group presented and exchanged views on their work on three occasions: at the 2021 online EACS

[1] Both authors have been translated into French by Isabelle Rabut.

[2] All translations in this introduction are mine.

conference organised by Leipzig University, and in December 2022 and April 2023 at the University of Strasbourg. The *Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies* (JEACS) expressed interest in publishing the outcome of the conferences and workshops. At the time, a significant work dedicated to the definition of the poetics of literary critique by Florian Pennanech had just been published (Pennanech 2019). The group acknowledged the complexity of the topic in the realm of textual studies as much as it grew conscious of the specificities of the Chinese case. In order to broaden our understanding of commentaries and exegesis in China, it was decided to send a call for papers and propose a special issue on the topic.[3]

The aspects of commentaries that had attracted our attention were the following ones. First, commentaries are designated by a very precise set of words in Chinese — such as *zhu* 注 or *shu* 疏 for instance — with the help of which we might be able to circumscribe what we want to include as commentaries in terms of textual, formal, and semantic characteristics. Second, given that commentaries play a pragmatic role, they undertake one among different possible functions when appended to a text: can we confirm the intuition that commentaries are not marginal? Finally, how do we read commentaries? Does it depend on the style and/or nature of the base text? of commentary itself?

What do We Mean by "Commentary"?

As suggested in the preliminary section of this introduction, many intellectual productions can be studied as if they were partly, if not intended as, commentaries. Translations, adaptations, rewritings, sequels carry an interpretation of and a point of view on a primary text. This dimension of "secondary literature" was methodically studied long ago by Gérard Genette (Genette 1982). Florian Pennanech broadens even further the scope of commentary by including critical texts and studies such as those written by the Goncourt brothers in 19th-century France or by famous intellectuals such as Georges Poulet (1902–1991), for example. However, when we first think of commentary in China, we need to identify what concepts exist in Chinese before we can set a frame for our work.

If we start from a contemporary perspective, two words come to mind, *zhujie* 註解 or *zhushi* 註釋 on the one hand, and *piping* 批評 on the other. These concepts define two distinctive realms of activity, one explanatory, the other critical. *Piping* 批評 is not specific to modern times: Zhong Rong's 鍾嶸 (?–518) *Shipin* 詩品 (Classification of Poets) is one among other early examples of the classification of works and authors at different levels of excellence (high, medium, and low) with a short description

[3] I would like to thank the editorial committee of the JEACS for welcoming this project. The contributors to this project were (in alphabetical order): Marie Bizais-Lillig, Jessica Imbach, Evelyne Lesigne-Audoly, Olga Lomová, Evan Nicoll-Johnson, Michael Schimmelpfennig, Martin Svensson Ekström, Xiaofei Tian, and Michel Vieillard-Baron. The programme of the workshops in Strasbourg is still available https://commentinasia.sciencesconf.org/ (url accessed on December 14th 2024). The project was funded by the GÉO (UR 1340, University of Strasbourg), the CRCAO (UMR 8155, CNRS, Collège de France, EPHE, Université Paris Cité), the GIS Asie, and the USIAS (University of Strasbourg). I would also like to thank all the reviewers who agreed to read submitted papers and whose contribution was essential to this selection.

of the style and appreciation of its qualities and drawbacks (Zhong 1994). However interesting this tradition may be, it is not the one under focus in this volume.[4]

Our starting point was a set of texts in the erudite tradition, similar to the footnote, analysed by Anthony Grafton in his study of Western scholarly culture (Grafton 1997). The words associated with this practice in English can be listed to get a better sense of its diversity: footnotes, glosses, *annotatio*, exegesis, hermeneutics, *argumentum*, explanations, rephrasing, philology, *apparatus criticus*. As for Chinese, the terminology linked to reading and accompanying the process of reading is complex as well.

In pre-modern China, commentary stands as an annotation to a base text under the term *zhu* 註, which is not very precise in terms of methods or content: a *zhu* annotation may indeed consist in glosses, explanations, citations, argumentation, or even narration. The spectrum covered by the *zhu* annotation is so broad that it can combine different parts, including glosses and interpretation for example, or amount to a quotation from another text whose link with the base text is not elucidated, such as in Li Shan's 李善 (630–689) commentary on the *Wenxuan* 文選 (Selection of Refined Texts) or Liu Xiaobiao's 劉孝標 (465–521) commentary on the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (New stories from worldly talks).[5] Alternatively, *zhuyin* 註音 defines an annotation that deals only with phonetic issues, such as those by Lu Deming 陸德明 (ca. 556–630) recorded in many editions of the Confucian Classics. *Gu* 詁 or *xungu* 訓詁 are, on the other hand, glosses, providing definitions or equivalent words (synonyms, so to speak) to explain the meaning of the words present in the base text. Hermeneutic annotations devoted to the Confucian Classics are often called *jian* 箋, although the term might even be more specific and designate commentaries by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) on the Classics. A commentary appears like a school of interpretation, a tradition, so to speak, when it is called *zhuan* 傳. Starting with Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433), some literati direct the interpretative process by adding a *zizhu* 自註 (self annotation) to a text written by themselves.[6] *Shu* 疏 (subcommentary) is characterised by the fact that it is not a commentary directly related to a base text, but one that presents itself as an additional exegetical stratum: *shu* subcommentary undertakes a dialogue with previous commentaries in relation to a common base text. This list, far from being exhaustive, reveals the diversity in terminology to designate commentaries, but also the variety of the texts themselves (and their function as well).

These different types of commentaries are part of a textual ecosystem, as they often combine with one another — a phonetic annotation is often juxtaposed with a gloss or an explanation. It is believed that, after centuries during which commentaries circulated separately from source texts, Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166) introduced a new page layout, which placed commentaries alongside base text, in smaller

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[4] In the encyclopaedic works dedicated to Chinese theories of literature and Chinese literary criticism through the ages, the contrast between the *lilun* 理論 (theory) and *piping* 批評 (criticism) realm and that of *quanshi* 詮釋 (exegesis) and *zhushu* 註疏 (annotations) is clearly visible; see for instance Wang 1996.

[5] For an introduction to Li Shan's work, see Fuller 2021. On Liu Xiaobiao, see Evan Nicoll-Johnson's paper in the present volume.

[6] See for instance papers by Olga Lomová and Tian Xiaofei in the present volume.

characters in double columns just after the part of the text under study. This type of page layout is typical of commentaries in all their forms until the end of the empire, although in late imperial China marginal annotations, sometimes in different colours, are also to be found. This typical page layout contributes to distinguishing what we call commentaries from other types of paratext such as prefaces and postfaces, which appear in separate sections and in full-size characters.

This volume is intended to document, analyse, and study how scholars and intellectuals shed light on a base text and what characteristics their textual products might share. Commentaries, narrowed down as explained above, raise a number of questions, starting with their possible definition as a genre.

A Pragmatic Approach to Commentary

The object under study is a set of texts which seems to constitute a loose category, considering the terms and the variety in length, syntax, and functions that characterise commentaries. The uniformity in the way they are displayed on the page suggests that we might be dealing with a genre. Such is Anthony Grafton's choice, when he extends the meaning of "genre" beyond the literary realm proper, and applies the concept to feature footnotes (Grafton 1997). However, before we choose an umbrella term to characterise Chinese commentaries, we need to carefully examine historical cases.[7]

The variety of words that serve to designate commentaries in Chinese possibly contrast with the European footnote, which appears as a precise device and does not include all types of additions to a base text.[8] The complexity of a paratext recently produced to accompany Jin Yucheng's 金宇澄 (1952–) novel *Fanhua* 繁花 (Blossoms) is presented from a practical perspective by designer Jiang Qinggong 姜慶共 (1960–) in a postface (Jin 2023, 681–82):

> 古书批注，手书或刊印，多以朱笔或蓝笔天头作眉批（书籍页面上方的空白处），或于字里行间圈点、校注。无论涂涂划划的注释，或有规矩的刊刻、活字印刷，竖排的墨色朱笔互嵌，一利阅读识别，二显"添彩"之意。《繁花》批注全本包含了正文、夹批、侧批、段批、尾批等几类版式，文字双色显现，朱色批注于墨色正文间横竖交往，让现代横排批注本，又多了一次版式的尝试和阅读的体验。
>
> In ancient books, annotations, either handwritten or printed, mostly consist of "eyebrow commentaries" — written at the top of the pages in red or blue (using the empty space at the top of the book pages), or in annotations and emphasising circles between the columns of characters. No matter if the exegetical notes are randomly scribbled or if they are regularly printed using xylography or movable type, the vertical lines have black text and red annotations intermingled, so that, first, they are easily distinguished when reading, and second, they express the meaning

[7] In a similar move to Enenkel and Nellen 2013.

[8] This assertion would certainly need more thorough comparative work, along the lines of Henderson 1991.

of "illumination". The complete annotated "Blossoms" book includes such formats as base text, interlinear commentaries, marginal commentaries, section commentaries, and closing commentaries. Characters appear in two colours: annotations in red cannot but interact with the base text in black, allowing for a modern horizontally-printed annotated text to be enriched by experiments in format and the experience of reading.

Such a complex contemporary book format inspired by late imperial novel commentaries (as stated by commentator Shen Hongfei 沈宏非(1962–) in his own postface [Jin 2023, 678]) points to the diversity of functions commentaries may perform. Rather than approaching this set of texts from the perspective of genre categorisation, we need to start by shedding light on the reasons why commentaries are appended to a text in the first place.

Commentarial traditions focusing on philosophical works in general and Confucian texts in particular seem to have triggered much attention from scholars in the past fifty years (see for instance Gardner 1998; Liu and Yang 2007; Chang 2007). Certainly, the case of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) and other Song Dynasty so-called neo-Confucian masters strikingly illustrates how commentaries produce new interpretations, which in turn transform an intellectual trend.[9] One could say that adding a commentary to a text is a way of engaging with the possible meanings enclosed in this text and of producing new meanings, new ideas, along with new texts. The case of Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249) exemplifies the influence of exegetical work (Wagner 2000; A. Cheng 2002).

At a more basic level, this creative dimension is made possible thanks to the following premise: a commentary explains the words of a text; it is meant to unfold its inner meaning. Hence, commentaries perform a didactic function, one of transmission. If the text cannot be directly understood by the readers, it is mainly because particular skills are needed (Church 1999 and Lanselle 2004) or because the passing of time and changes in the world have created distance, although other reasons appear in paratexts. The role assigned to the "Zhengyi" 正義 (Righteous Meaning) enterprise launched by emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 627–650) at the beginning of the Tang Dynasty precisely meets the needs of reader disconnected from the language and traditions of the Confucian age. The *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Old Book of the Tang), in the exposition on *ru* studies 儒學, reminds us that, after he had commanded the establishment of the text of the *Wujing* (Five Classics) by Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) in 629, the emperor ordered in 631 that Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648) set up a team to establish the understanding of the texts (Liu 1975, j. 189):

> 又以儒學多門，章句繁雜，詔國子祭酒孔穎達與諸儒撰定《五經》義疏，凡一百七十卷，名曰《五經正義》，令天下傳習。
>
> Then [After the established text was circulated], because many schools had flourished among *ru* scholars and because the understandings of sentences and paragraphs were very diverse,

[9] This aspect of commentarial history is illustrated in Michael Schimmelpfennig's paper in the present volume.

> [Emperor Taizong] ordered that Kong Yingda, Chancellor of the State Academy Directorate, along with other scholars, edit and establish a subcommentary on the meaning of the *Five Classics*. The resulting work, in a hundred and seventy scrolls altogether, was entitled *The Righteous Meaning of the Five Classics*. Taizong ordained that the work be disseminated and studied throughout the empire.

Notwithstanding the rich contribution of Kong Yingda's team, the choice that consisted in setting up subcommentaries in addition to minutely selected historical commentaries (Meyer 1999) suggests that the team did not mean to stand as a source of authority but preferred to position themselves within traditions. In other words, commentaries crystallise shared reading experiences of texts. They belong to a transmission mindset and contribute to the establishment of schools of interpretation (A. Cheng 1985).

Far from building monolithic discourses, commentarial traditions meet and converse *in the middle* of a text of reference. Each stratum sheds a distinct light on its base text (lexicographic, phonologic, interpretative, documentary). As a result, they generally complement and enrich each other. They may also debate with one another and disagree.[10] Hence, commentaries can be seen as vivid testimonies of intellectual activity triggered by the reading of texts through time. The *Mao Shi Zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (Righteous Meaning of the *Poems* in the Mao Tradition) illustrates the intense discussions that went on to read and interpret or understand the meaning of the poems from the Mao commentators (ca. 100 BC) to Kong Yingda (574–648), including Zheng Xuan (127–200) and many other commentators from the Six Dynasties quoted in the so-called Kong Yingda subcommentary.

Nevertheless, commentators did not simply engage in commentary writing to decipher the meaning of words, sentences, or larger units of texts, or to establish dialogue with their predecessors; it also happens that they introduce pieces of information that complement the text. Among other intentions (see for instance Bisetto 2017), some commentaries were meant to confirm the assertions present in the base text using knowledge of their time, such as Zheng Xuan and Kong Yingda struggling with measurements in commentaries to the Confucian Canon (Morgan 2022). Despite their distinct concerns, commentaries look, in such cases, similar to those attached to mathematical treatises (Chemla and Zhu 2022), as if commentaries were also responsible for enriching base texts with updated knowledge. In stand-alone commentaries – meaning commentaries that circulated independantly from base texts – such as Lu Ji's 陸璣 (ca. 200–500) *Mao Shi caomu niaoshou chongyu shu* 毛詩草木鳥獸蟲魚疏 (Commentary on flora and fauna in the *Poems* in the Mao Tradition), later enriched by Mao Jin 毛晉 (1599–1659) in his *Mao Shi Lu shu guangyao* 毛詩陸疏廣要 (Extended overview on Lu's commentary to the *Poems* in the Mao Tradition), a similar inclination towards the accumulation and aggregation of external snippets of knowledge is to be seen.

[10] Lanselle 2004 illustrates how an opposing view can be imagined by the commentator to help him make his point.

These examples, which remind us that commentaries were written for all kinds of base texts – philosophical, technical, literary, if we use modern disciplines to categorise them –, also challenge common representations that place commentaries in an ancillary relationship to texts (Puett 2017). Given that commentaries play an essential role in textual transmission (Makeham 2003) and that they cover a very broad and diverse field – commentaries are attached to texts in different genres, covering a number of disciplines, they hold diverse functions and use a variety of rhetoric devices (Tian 2022), they establish all sorts of ties with base texts –, not only can we legitimately focus on commentaries as a research topic, we are also compelled to choose a specific perspective to analyse them.

How to Read Commentaries?

Commentaries have mostly been read in accordance with their assumed original function: they stand as hermeneutical tools useful to decipher a base text. The process that consists in reading a base text along with one or a series of its commentaries is rarely described unless it reveals compelling aspects within a commentarial project or in the commentarial effect. In a way, commentaries belong to the silent step of text decipherment; it mostly remains unspoken. The papers gathered in the present volume thereby aim to delineate the unique characteristics of commentaries as units of discourse and as part of textual networks.

Once we shift perspective and turn our focus to commentaries rather than to base texts, the knowledge, references, and thought they contain emerge in a structured manner to reveal some aspects of intellectual activity. As previously mentioned, some intellectual trends or even schools of thought bloom within the space of commentary. This volume contains three papers that adopt this perspective on commentaries. The first paper, by Shad Gilbert, stands as an explanation of one master's conceptual thinking as it crystallises in the form of a commentary. Meanwhile, as shown in the second paper, by Marco Pouget, researchers may observe how different commentaries from the same period and on the same text interplay or how they manifest kinship and differences. It is possible also, as Rusha Jin does in the third paper, to observe and analyse points of friction between a source and its commentary. While shedding light on the intellectual life of a period in history, such minute examination of commentaries seizes the rhetoric at stake in this textual form when it is associated with philosophical and religious texts.

Rusha Jin's article touches upon the role played by a commentary in relation to its base text by describing a case where the commentary states and strengthens the authority of the discourse it comments upon. The relation of commentary to base text is indeed multifold. Commentaries often shed light on elements present in the base text in a disjunctive way, in the sense that they establish keywords that in turn operate like a cogwheel at the junction between two different modes of discourse. As Rusha Jin notes, commentarial discourse may consist of an accumulation of information disconnected from the semiotic rationale present in the base text. This display of quotations, definitions, or even statements,

brings to light the encyclopaedic power of commentaries. However, this discursive mode of commentaries does not necessarily imply a rupture with the base text. Evan Nicoll-Johnson illustrates how references to works mentioned in anecdotes complement and reinforce the ideas and judgements suggested in the base text while building and sharing a bibliographical catalogue of texts partly lost since. Commentaries may also enrich a base text through the juxtaposition of alternative or parallel discourses which convey new approaches to the depictions in the source text and bring the reader to project himself, feel and thus emotionally respond to what would otherwise remain an objective landscape, as appears in Chu Hsienmin's paper.

The different ways in which commentaries are embraced in these studies are not, however, disconnected, given that all shed light on the transformations at stake in the world of literati, on the changes in modes of reading, and on the evolution of the symbolic value attributed to different genres. Commentaries are one of the elements that help us understand traditions of reading and their conditions of transmission, as shown, in a Japanese context, by Michel Vieillard-Baron, as well as in many of the papers on imperial China.

But what might be more striking for those who investigate commentaries should be their transformative power with regard to their source text. Commentaries bring to light issues of authority of the different actors involved in a line of commentators, and of the base text as well. Michael Schimmelpfennig reminds us that the purpose of a commentator may be to establish a text within the realm of revered texts, and that it can also be to contest the legitimacy of a previous commentary. This agency of commentary is not unrelated to its exegetical and hermeneutical functions mentioned above. They may concurrently perform a role that is more complex than that of shedding light on the meaning of a text. Olga Lomová interprets a self-commentary as a device disguised in basic glosses and intertextual pointers, which drives a reading whose purpose belongs to the sphere of politics. Xiaofei Tian, on the other hand, brings to light how self-commentaries complicate the reading process by enriching the elements of context, bringing in historical information, or creating distance, even irony or humour. Such a variety of effects produced by commentaries place them as constituents of textual traditions in their own right.

Finally, commentary can be grasped as an overarching concept that frames the history of intellectual life throughout Chinese history. Commentary and exegesis then symbolise the efforts made by scholars to understand texts and the world simultaneously. Roman Lashin illustrates how such a representation of commentaries may become an inspiration to reflect on the relations of individuals, especially intellectuals, to language, slogans, texts and the world that surrounds them.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Tracing Controversies of Understanding in Traditional Commentaries to "Lord Amidst Clouds" from the *Songs of Chu*

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Using the example of the song "Lord Amidst Clouds" (*Yunzhong jun*) from the "Nine Songs" (*Jiuge*) chapter of the *Songs of Chu* (*Chuci*), this study examines how commentators from the Han to the Qing dynasty engaged with interpretations of their predecessors at the micro level of their commentaries in a non-canonical textual environment. To go beyond the macro level overviews provided by commentary histories of the *Chuci*, the interpretations of Wang Yi (2nd cent.), the Five Ministers (7th–8th cent.), Zhu Xi (1130–1200), Wang Yuan (d. 1565), and Lin Yunming (1628?–1697) are compared line by line in chronological order to better understand their motives for writing new commentaries, their exegetical techniques, and their exegetical decisions. The broader question underlying this study is whether it is possible to determine which parts of the understanding of the song remained controversial as opposed to what was accepted as understanding over the period of commentary production.

本研究以《楚辭・九歌》中的《雲中君》為例，探討從漢代到清代評注者在非經典語境中如何辯證地看待前代評注，並對《雲中君》進行微觀層面的細緻解讀。為突破現有《楚辭》學史提供的宏觀敘事框架，本文按照時間順序對王逸（2 世紀）、五臣（7－8 世紀）、朱熹（1130－1200 年）、汪瑗（卒於 1565 年）以及林雲銘（約 1628－1697）的解讀進行逐行比對，深入分析其新詮釋的動機、釋文技巧及釋經決策。本研究旨在探討在時代變遷中，《雲中君》某些內容的解讀是否持續存在爭議，還是逐漸形成了較為一致的詮釋傾向。這一研究不僅為理解《楚辭》評注傳統的歷史演變提供新的見解，同時也為古代文學作品的詮釋研究提供了新的方法論視角。

Keywords: Ancient Chinese literature, *Chuci*, Qu Yuan, commentary history, textual interpretation, hermeneutics, translation, poetry

關鍵詞： 中國古代文學，楚辭，屈原，楚辭學史，文本詮釋，闡釋學，翻譯，詩

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> "The shared assumption that these texts were authoritative but compressed and coded statements by the Sages that no effort could ever completely translate into the fixed terms of regular mortals created a triple bind: authoritative statements had to be derived from a reading of these authoritative texts of old; the reading had to be plausible and convincing to other readers who might want to derive other conclusions from these canonical texts; and any reading was open to challenge due to the inexhaustibility *in principle* of these texts" (Wagner 2000, 4–5).

To preface an article about the commentaries on a short poem from the *Chuci* 楚辭 (Songs of Chu) with a statement about the commentarial tradition surrounding the Chinese classics may seem overblown. Aside from a debate during the Han dynasty to grant "Lisao" 離騷 (Parting from Forlornness) the status of a canonical text (*jing* 經), only indirect evidence suggests the extent to which other parts of the *Chuci* were viewed as authoritative (Li Daming 1993; Schimmelpfennig 2004). Among this evidence is the tradition of commentaries to other parts of the anthology like the "Jiuge" 九歌 (Nine Songs), the second chapter in the transmitted version of the *Chuci*. Following its earliest commentator Wang Yi 王逸 (2nd cent. CE), most commentators regarded the poems in this chapter as part of Qu Yuan's oeuvre and provided readings of its songs.[1] In doing so they resorted to an authoritative version of the text, entered an existing exegetical discourse of these songs,[2] required plausible conclusions to convince readers of the validity of their own understanding, and by defying the "inexhaustibility *in principle* of these texts", strove to convince their audience of the true limits of possible interpretation accomplished by their own reading. On these counts commentators of the *Chuci* are by no means dissimilar to the exegetes of the Classics.

The suggestion that interpretational controversies involving the *Chuci* have much in common with those over Chinese canonical texts raises a number of questions about the specific nature of these controversies: First, what was it that motivated commentators to challenge an existing reading in a non-canonical textual setting? Second, which empirical findings or exegetical techniques did they use to arrive at these different interpretations? Third, did these commentators perceive their own distinct interpretations as a conscious reversal of existing understandings, or did they view this as enhancing an existing understanding in some way other than through a sub-commentary? Finally, is it possible to identify specific passages in a main text that repeatedly triggered comments? In other words, is it possible to identify what remained controversial in the understanding of a text as opposed to what was taken for granted over longer periods of commentary production?

To answer these questions, I will select a more commonly known song from the "Jiuge" chapter entitled "Yunzhong jun" 雲中君 (The Lord Amidst Clouds). I will use a combined approach to examine

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[1] For a recent discussion of the question of authorship of the *Chuci*, see Du (2019).

[2] "As Confucianism came to be identified over the course of the imperial period with the Chinese cultural tradition par excellence, the writing of interlinear commentary on the canon of texts became a standard, even dominant mode of scholarly and philosophical discourse for Chinese literati" (Gardner 1998, 397).

the specific commentarial engagement surrounding this work: at a macro level, I will survey commentary histories of the *Chuci* to provide information about the authors of the commentaries, their pretexts for producing these works, and their general intentions.[3] In contrast to existing commentary histories and studies of individual commentaries, the emphasis of my contribution lies at the micro level of commentarial modifications over time.[4] To better understand the mechanics that generate specific readings, the impact established understandings have on subsequent readings, and the connectivity between commentaries, this article compares a sequence of commentaries to "Yunzhong jun" line by line, taking the detail of annotations and their exegetical subtlety as indicators for connectivity as well as controversy.

It may rightly be argued that the "Lisao" as the core text of the *Chuci* anthology would be the appropriate candidate for such an analysis. But its length, combined with the substantial amount of commentary written to it, make the poem unsuitable for presentation in an article. I therefore choose "Yunzhong jun" as a case study instead.[5] The poem is rather well known in Chinese literature albeit as an easily recognisable part of the *Chuci* tradition. Its visibility expanded in the 20th century due to its central role in Arthur Waley's (1889–1966) anthropological reconstruction and translation of the "Jiuge" (Waley 1955). We can assume, however, that for traditional Chinese commentators "Yunzhong jun" was one poem among others in the "Jiuge" and in this sense did not stand out like the "Lisao" giving rise to discussions about its canonical status. "Yunzhong jun" is therefore a welcome candidate if we want to understand how commentators have dealt with examples of the *Chuci* tradition that have historically been of lesser renown. In addition, its briefness — of only eighty-three characters in fourteen lines — helps make nuances of interpretational modification immediately obvious.

The song describes a sacrificial ritual involving a deity referred to as *yun jun* 雲君 (Cloud Lord) in various other sources. While transmitted sources associate the deity with rituals performed in the state of Jin, bamboo texts unearthed from a tomb near the ancient capital of Chu prove that the deity was worshipped there too.[6]

This study is limited to six major commentaries to "Yunzhong jun" from the Eastern Han to the early Qing dynasty, a period of roughly 1500 years:[7]

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[3] The commentary histories consulted for the present study are Yi (1991), Li and Zhu (1996), and Liao (2008). Broader overviews are presented in Schneider (1980) and Nailer (1980). An early example of a comparative study of commentaries to "Jiuge" is Waters (1985).

[4] Many existing studies of Chinese commentary either focus entirely on a single commentary or examine a sequence of commentaries as separate elements. While commentary histories such as those in the preceding note provide information about reactions to predecessors and what a later commentator did differently, they rarely address the minute connections between readings at a micro level.

[5] Another legitimate point of criticism would be the objection to a random selection of a song out of a group of eleven works included in the "Jiuge" chapter. Since there are no sources other than the "bracket" of the chapter's preface or parallel titles that indicate the purpose behind the arrangement of the poems, an exploration of how the exegetical development unfolds in one case can serve as a preliminary step towards comparing commentaries to other songs throughout the chapter and beyond.

[6] Tomb 1 at Jiangling Tianxing guan 江陵天星觀 excavated in 1977, has been dated to the middle of the 4th century BCE. See Tang Zhangping (2004, 27f; 113).

[7] Here by "major commentaries" I mean that their commentators emphasised the relevance of their interpretation by commenting on all or a selection of chapters of the *Chuci*. The Variorum of Commentaries by the Five Ministers is included because it is the only existing commentary from the Tang dynasty. Later commentaries in the "evidential scholarship" (*kaozheng* 考證) field were excluded due to

1 *Chuci zhangju* 楚辭章句 (Section and Sentence Commentary to the Songs of Chu) by Wang Yi 王逸 (2nd cent. CE).

2 *Wu chen zhu* 五臣注 (Commentaries by the Five Ministers) by Liu Liang 劉良, Zhang Xian 張銑, Lü Xiang 呂向, Li Zhouhan 李周翰, and Lü Yanji 呂延濟 (7th–8th cent.).

3 *Chuci jizhu* 楚辭集注 (Variorum of Commentaries to the Songs of Chu) by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200).

4 *Chuci jijie* 楚辭集解 (Variorum of Explanations to the Songs of Chu) by Wang Yuan 汪瑗 (d. 1565).

5 *Chuci deng* 楚辭燈 (The Songs of Chu Illumined) by Lin Yunming 林雲銘 (1628?–1697).

My reasons for this selection are the prominence of these commentaries in exegetical history, the cross section of insight these commentaries provide over a long period of time, and the fact that Lin Yunming's final example can be seen as a kind of capstone to the preceding tradition.

In each of the following sections I will present the work of one commentator. A brief description of the author's background and motivation for writing the commentary is followed by a more detailed analysis of the particularities of his understanding and how his reading of "Yunzhong jun" relates to that of his predecessors. To make the exegetical operations of each commentator more understandable, I use the method of extrapolative translation.[8] A synopsis that reflects more broadly on the overall commentarial development, the question of connectivity between commentaries, the dynamics of the interpretational controversy, and its possible impact on modern research concludes the study.

1. Setting the Scene — Wang Yi's Preface and Commentary

Not much is known about Wang Yi. A very short entry in *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (The Dynastic History of the Eastern Han) states that he was born in the Southern commandery town of Yicheng 宜城 in the region of the former state of Chu (Tan 1982, II: 49–50). He held two positions under the emperors An 安帝 (r. 114–120 CE) and Shun 順帝 (r. 125–144 CE) that lack a precise date. Aside from his commentary to the *Chuci* he wrote a substantial number of other works including rhapsodies, treatises, and poems (*Hou Hanshu* 70.2618). Other sources add that he later advanced to the office of inspector of Yuzhou 豫州刺史 followed by the position of prefect of Yuzhang 豫章太守.[9] He also participated

limitations in space. A subsequent study will examine them in comparison to their predecessors in order to take into account early modern reactions to traditional exegesis.

[8] For this approach that attempts to recapture the reader's experience of texts with interlinear commentary through rendering the main text in the understanding of a respective interpretation while maintaining the commentary's explicatory function see Wagner (2003, 112–116) For a broader reflection by Wagner on the function and usefulness of "commentary translation" see (Li 2015, 491ff).

[9] Yuzhou designates a region shared by Honan, Anhui, and Jiangsu province. Yuzhang is the Han administrative name for the capital city of

in the compilation of the *Dongguan Hanji* 東觀漢記 (Records of the Han from the Eastern Repository).[10] These additional data suggest that, contrary to his short biography in *Hou Hanshu*, Wang did achieve high ranks within the Han bureaucracy that involved various compilation projects, part of which may have been the composition of his *Chuci zhangju*.

Wang Yi explains his motivation for extending his commentary to include other works from the *Chuci* in his postface to "Lisao" (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 20–21 [7–83]).[11] He argues that an interpretation of "Lisao" established by Liu An 劉安 (?178–122 BCE) was later distorted by the Section and Sentence Commentaries to "Lisao" written by Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE) and Jia Kui 賈逵 (30–100 CE).[12] Wang further criticises their complete disregard of the additional fifteen chapters of works either written or related to Qu Yuan that Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–6 BCE) had included in his *Chuci* anthology. In an attempt to refute Ban Gu's Qu Yuan critique,[13] Wang Yi examined the old chapters, combined them into a "classic with commentaries" (*jingzhuan* 經傳), and made a Section and Sentence commentary in sixteen chapters (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 20 [79]).

Based on his statement, the commentaries and prefaces to all chapters of the received version of *Chuci zhangju*, even including a seventeenth chapter attributed to Wang Yi himself, have been thought to be written by him. Modern research has rightly called this editorial history into doubt.[14] The *Wenxuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature) though attests that a chapter entitled "Jiuge" existed at the time of Xiao Tong's 蕭統 (501–531 CE) compilation. It contains "Yunzhong jun" and three other songs from this chapter included in transmitted editions of the *Chuci zhangju*. This selection is preceded by a preface that appears to be quite literally an abridged version of the preface to "Jiuge" contained in *Chuci zhangju*, as exemplified by the highlighted characters in the citation below (*Wenxuan* 1981, 464).[15] The preface to "Jiuge" has been essential in providing the background against which "Yunzhong jun" and the other works contained in the chapter were read:

> The Nine Songs were created by Qu Yuan. In ancient times, in the Southern capital of Ying of the State of Chu, between the rivers Yuan and Xiang, its common people believed in ghosts and consequently were fond of sacrifices. For their sacrifices, they needed to perform songs,

Jiangxi province, Nanchang (Tan 1982, II: 49–50).

[10] For additional information see Jiang (1982, 105f); Li (1988, 414f); Xu (2011, 4f). A critical summary of existing research on Wang Yi is contained in Schimmelpfennig (2005, 28–40).

[11] For a complete translation and analysis of the postface see Schimmelpfennig (2005, 339–374).

[12] Indicators for the existence of such a work are the prefaces by Ban Gu preserved in *Chuci buzhu* with the sub-commentary by Hong Xingzu. Compare *Soji sakuin* (1979, 21–22 [83–87]). There is no other evidence apart from Wang Yi that Ban Gu's contribution had the form of a Section and Sentence commentary.

[13] Jia Kui appears only once in the postface. Wang's criticism is entirely directed against the position of Ban Gu.

[14] Later editorial interventions into the original *Chuci zhangju* have been significant. These include the re-arrangement of chapters chronologically by author and the repositioning of the prefaces which had originally appeared at the end of each chapter. Compare Yu (1980, 1228). The discovery that a substantial portion of commentaries to chapters attributed to Han authors in *Chuci zhangju* do not follow the typical pattern of section and sentence commentaries has given rise to a discussion about the authorship of these commentaries. Compare Miyano (1987); Schimmelpfennig (2005, 650–751); Liao Dongliang (2008, 365–415); Chen (2021, 107–147).

[15] It is assumed that the redaction goes back to the commentator Li Shan 李善 (630–689 CE).

music, drums, and dance to please all spirits. Qu Yuan was exiled, and hid in their regions, stricken by bitter poison with bouts of anxiety surging up strongly within him. Going out, he faced the locals' sacrificial rites and music accompanying the songs and dances, the lyrics of which were crude and vulgar. Owing to this [Qu Yuan] created the tunes of the Nine Songs. On their surface he praised the respectfulness in serving the spirits while underneath he revealed his own resentment against injustice suffered, entrusting the tunes with admonition. For this reason, their lyrics and their message are not the same, their stanzas and the lines of verses are uneven in length, and they set forth distinct meanings.

《九歌》者，屈原之所作也。昔楚國南郢之邑，沅、湘之間，其俗信鬼而好祠。其祠，必作歌樂鼓舞以樂諸神。屈原放逐，竄伏其域，懷憂苦毒，愁思沸鬱。出見俗人祭祀之禮，歌舞之樂，其詞鄙陋，因為作《九歌》之曲。上陳事神之敬，下見己之冤結，託之以風諫[也]。故其文意不同，章句雜錯，而廣異義焉。（*Chuci zhangju shuzheng* 2007, 742–746). [16]

The preface can be divided into four parts: an author attribution that is followed by a general setting of scene in the southern part of the ancient state of Chu. Into this scene the famous poet and author Qu Yuan is inserted as an exile in hiding, who, triggered by the crude sacrificial customs of the indigenous people living there, acts as a bringer of ritual reform. The final two sentences focus on the nature of the songs. The first claims that a surface reading needs to be distinguished from an underlying reading. The latter reveals the poet's resentment against his unjust treatment which results in the songs serving as remonstrances. The second sentence justifies the unevenness of the textual material gathered in the "Jiuge" chapter, the varying length of individual songs, and the differences in lyrics and messages. The author of the preface, most probably Wang Yi,[17] apparently felt it necessary to justify the heterogenous nature of the eleven works contained in the chapter, attributing this heterogeneity to the circumstances of their creation. As will become clear in the commentary survey below, the preface played a normative role in shaping all commentators' overall understanding of the "Jiuge".[18] More

[16] For an indexed version of the preface in the *Sibu beiyao* 四部備要 edition see *Soji sakuin* (1979, 24–25 [96–97]). The characters in grey colour represent the exact sequence of characters of the preface contained in *Wenxuan*. I will refer to it when addressing the commentary of the Five Ministers.

[17] Tim Chan, based on research by Lin Weichun 林维春, suggests that the prefaces to sixteen of the now seventeen chapters in the *Chuci* were created as part of the compilation reports Liu Xiang handed in with the newly compiled editions of texts (Chan 1998, 306f). However, it is evident from the form and content of the prefaces contained in *Chuci zhangju* that their author emulated the small prefaces (*xiao xu* 小序) of the *Shijing* 詩經 (Canon of Songs). This modelling coincides with Wang Yi's intention to present Qu Yuan as an equal to the poets of the *Shijing* who, according to tradition, had been selected by Confucius. In addition, Wang Yi's postface and the shorter preface to the "Lisao" contain interpretative patterns that are crucial for understanding Wang Yi's approach. For an analysis of these patterns see Schimmelpfennig (2005, 362–395).

[18] While Arthur Waley joined the criticism of the misleading and moralising nature of traditional "Confucian" commentaries that arose in China in the late 1920s and subsequently in the West, in his translation of the *Dao De jing* 道德經, the information provided in the preface clearly does lend support to his theory that the remnants of an ancient form of Chinese shamanism underlie the majority of the "Jiuge".

importantly, assuming its origin in Wang Yi, the preface provides us with a blueprint of how its earliest commentator conceived "Yunzhong jun".

In order to gain an idea of the contents of "Yunzhong jun" itself and of what may distinguish Wang Yi's understanding from that of others, let us compare the rendering by Arthur Waley with my own translation of the song's main text extrapolated from the commentary of Wang Yi.[19] There is no specific reason for choosing Arthur Waley's translation over any other aside from its renown and Waley's own conviction that he represented the song detached from traditional interpretations. The point of this initial parallel presentation without Wang Yi's commentary will become obvious immediately:

The Lord amid the Clouds

I have washed in a brew of orchid, bathed in sweet scents,
Many-coloured are my garments; I am like a flower.
Now in long curves the spirit has come down.
In a blaze of brightness unending.
Chien! "He is coming to rest at the Abode of Life;
As a sun, as a moonbeam glows his light.
In dragon chariot and the vestment of a god,
Hither and thither a little while he moves.

The spirit, brilliant and dazzling, descended.
Now he soars up swiftly amid the clouds.
He looks down on the province of Chi and far beyond;
He traverses the Four Seas; endless his flight.
Longing for that lord I heave a deep sigh;
My heart is greatly troubled; I am very sad.
(Waley 1955, 27).

The Lord amidst Clouds

Bathe in orchid broth, purify yourself with fragrances,
and richly adorn your coloured clothes with ginger petals!
The Spirit master still bends and turns when it lingers,
its glare so bright and garish without end.
Lo! It desires to be soothed in the Temple of Longevity,
where it matches sun and moon in radiance.
Carried by a dragon and in Sovereigns' dress,
for the moment it hovers and floats around.
The spirit in great majesty came down.
In a dash it lifts into the distance amidst the clouds.
It overlooks the region of Ji and what lies beyond.
It cuts across the Four Seas. Where are its limits?
Longing for its majesty, I heave weary sighs.
My worn-out heart, pounding, pounding.[20]

From Arthur Waley's anthropological angle (left column), a shamaness herself conducts a purification ritual that entices the spirit to descend into a place he renders as "Abode of Life".[21] After hovering there briefly as brightly shining light, the spirit swiftly ascends back into the clouds. The end of their meeting is indicated by a break between lines. It is followed by observations of the spirit's movements and capabilities, and it concludes with the gloomy final statement of the left-behind shamaness. Waley even notes the quality of a love affair in these encounters.[22]

In Wang Yi's understanding (right column), the agent cannot be the shaman. The commentary confirms the situation described in the preface to the "Jiuge". It is Qu Yuan who orders a "spirit master" – rather a medium than a shaman – to purify him- or herself. In line with Wang Yi's preface, Qu

[19] A full translation of the text with Wang Yi's commentary follows below.

[20] My own translation will be presented in detail with the text in Chinese below.

[21] "I take the speaker throughout to be the shaman, presumably in this case a woman" (Waley 1955, 28).

[22] "In these songs, shamanism assumes a particular form, I think, not known in the classic shamanistic areas–Siberia, Manchuria, Central Asia. The shaman's relation with the Spirit is represented as a kind of love-affair" (Waley 1955, 13).

Yuan brings ritual order to this remote place. In Wang Yi's understanding it is the purified and adorned "spirit master" whose movements announce the presence of the spirit. The light the spirit emanates matches that of sun and moon. The spirit's attire seems to foreshadow Qu Yuan's implied association of the spirit with his king, one underlying meaning that is expressed in the commentary to the final lines of the song, where again it is Qu Yuan, not the medium, who is left in despair.

The juxtaposition with Waley's rendering highlights some of Wang Yi's principal exegetical decisions: Waley assumed that by stripping the song off its supposedly misleading traditional commentary, he would look at a depiction of an ancient shamanic ritual, albeit in literary form. What he may not have realised, however, was that Wang Yi's preface itself provided him with the initial idea of the shamanic origin of the songs contained in "Jiuge".[23] Wang Yi's starting point was different: Due to a lack of any further information about the pre-history of the poem, we can only assume that by the time Liu Xiang compiled the earliest version of what became the *Chuci*, "Yunzhong jun" was regarded as part of Qu Yuan's oeuvre. When Wang Yi wrote his Section and Sentence commentary, he had only what was known about the poet-minister's biography, the "Lisao" and other works attributed to the Chu poet to go by.[24] Judging from the sources available, Wang Yi retrieved the deeper meaning and established the assumed subtext of the "Jiuge" by himself.[25] "Yunzhong jun" thus became part of his effort to show that Qu Yuan's other literary creations shared the characteristics that proved that the "Lisao" and its poet were worthy of canonisation.

Let us now consider the full text of "Yunzhong jun" with Wang Yi's complete commentary in order to distinguish the commentator's main exegetical moves and to present the reading that all later commentators addressed in this article take as their starting point:

> [1–2] 'Bathe in orchid broth, purify yourself with fragrances, and richly adorn your coloured clothes with ginger petals!' 浴蘭湯兮沐芳，華采衣兮若英。
>
> > [Orchid is a fragrant plant.] [26] To richly adorn means to adorn in five colours.[27] [Ginger] means the galangal plant.[28] [Qu Yuan] says: I am about to offer a food offering in service to the cloud spirit for which I have a spirit medium first bathe in orchid broth, clean himself with fragrances, dress in five colours and adorn his clothes and attire richly with ginger petals to purify himself. 蘭

[23] There is a striking similarity between his approach and that of August Conrady (1864–1925) to the "Tianwen" 天問 (Heavenly Questions), the third chapter of the *Chuci*, Conrady (1931). Conrady's idea of reconstructing the images on a temple's walls supposedly described by Qu Yuan in the poem were clearly drawn from the preface to the poem.

[24] Compare Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE) biography of Qu Yuan in *Shiji* (1982, 84: 2481–2491). On other sources pertaining to Qu Yuan and "Lisao" during the Han see Schimmelpfennig (2004, 112–137).

[25] This is suggested by Wang's critique that Ban Gu and Jia Kui did not engage with the other fifteen chapters in Liu Xiang's compilation. See Wang Yi's postface to "Lisao" in Jiang (1993, 20).

[26] Only *Chuci buzhu* contains this gloss. *Soji sakuin* (1979, 26 [101]). Verse lines 1 and 2 of the main text are combined in all other editions. See *Chuci zhangju shuzheng* (2007, 775). In the edition of the Six Ministers even the first four lines are combined. This edition arranges the entire text into sets of four lines. Compare *Liu Chen* (1999, 598).

[27] This annotation is problematic. Compare Jiang (1985, 3: 567).

[28] The type of ginger cannot be defined (Jiang 1985, 3: 564–567).

香草也。華采，五色采也。若，杜若也。言己將脩饗祭，以事雲神，乃使靈巫先浴蘭湯，沐香芷，衣五采華衣，飾以杜若之英，以自潔清也。[29]

[3] The spirit master still bends and turns when it lingers, 靈連蜷兮既留，

Spirit master means a medium. The people of Chu call mediums spirit masters. [Bends and turns] serves as an illustration for [the movement of] guiding when receiving the spirit. [When] means already. [Linger] means to pause. 靈，巫也，楚人名巫爲靈子。連蜷，巫迎神導引貌也。既，已也。留，止也。

[4] its glare so bright and garish, never ending. 爛昭昭兮未央。

Glare serves as an illustration for radiance. So bright and garish means brilliant. Never ending means infinite.[30] [Qu Yuan] says: The mediator carries the insignia in a respectful and reverent manner, greeting the spirit politely while leading it. His facial expression is sincere, his body bending and turning, whereupon the spirit is so delighted that it must linger and pause. Looking at its radiant appearance, it is glaringly bright and brilliant, its extent without any limits. 爛光貌也。昭昭，明也。未央，未已也。言巫執事肅敬，奉迎導引，顏貌矜莊，形體連蜷，神則歡喜，必留而止。見其光容爛然昭明，長無極已也。(*Chuci zhangju shuzheng* 2007, 774–781).

Employing the division into glosses and paraphrases typical for Section and Sentence commentaries, Wang Yi introduces the agent immediately at the beginning of his paraphrase to line 1.[31] The first person pronoun *ji* 己[32] establishes Qu Yuan as the proponent of what is to follow and the song as the description of the ensuing action.[33] Glosses supply information about the fragrance of plants, their purifying role, and their colourfulness, suggesting the cleanliness and good scents that serve both as a reference to what attracts the spirit as expressed in the paraphrase to line 4, and the pure nature of the initiator of the ritual. Wang Yi further points out the presence of terminology specific to the region of Chu, employed here to avoid a reader mistaking *ling* 靈 as another designation for the spirit as in line

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[29] In similar endings of paraphrases in the commentary to “Lisao” *zi* 自 always refer to Qu Yuan. Accordingly, it would be Qu Yuan purifying himself by means of ginger leaves. Here, however, the statement at the beginning of the paraphrase is clear that it is Qu Yuan causing the medium to do the purifying.

[30] Hong Xingzu gives the gloss in abbreviated form as *yang, ji ye* 央已也, *Soji sakuin* (1979, 101).

[31] In using a Section and Sentence commentary, Wang Yi intentionally opted for the standard form of commentary on the Classics at the time. For a description of the genre and the development of Section and Sentence commentaries during the Han dynasty see Schimmelpfennig (2002).

[32] The use of this pronoun as a reference to Qu Yuan is established in Wang Yi’s commentary to the “Lisao”, Schimmelpfennig (2005, 232 [note 22]).

[33] In Wang Yi’s commentary the character *yan* 言 initiates each paraphrase. It is not a technical term that is often rendered as “[In the text above] it says” or simply “it is said” in translation of other commentaries, but a placeholder for the paraphrased statements of the poet, rendered here as “[Qu Yuan] says”.

9. The ritual manner of the medium is refined, which may be taken as another hint at the beneficial influence of Qu Yuan on the ritual practices of the locals.

[5] Lo! It desires[34] to be soothed in the Temple of Longevity, 蹇將憺兮壽宮，

Lo is an exclamation.[35] To soothe means to calm down. The Temple of Longevity is a place for offering sacrifices to spirits. All who perform sacrifices there intend to reach longevity. That is why it is called the Temple of Longevity. [Qu Yuan] says: As soon as the cloud spirit has reached the Temple of Longevity, it happily absorbs the scent and feeds on wine and food, which calms and delights it soothingly to such an extent that it is without intention to leave. 蹇，詞也。憺，安也。壽宮，供神之處也，祠祀皆欲得壽，故名爲壽宮也。言雲神既至於壽宮，歆饗酒食，憺然安樂，無有去意也。

[6] it matches sun and moon in radiance. 與日月兮齊光。

To match means to be alike. Radiance means brightness. [Qu Yuan] says: The position of the cloud spirit Fenglong is so venerable and lofty that it equals the brightness of the sun and moon. Basically, when clouds rise, the sun and moon will be covered; when clouds hide, the sun and moon will be bright. That is why the text says: "matches in radiance". 齊，同也。光，明也。言雲神豐隆爵位尊高，乃與日月同光明也。夫雲興而日月闇，雲藏而日月明，故言「齊光」也。

[7] Carried by a dragon in Sovereigns' attire, 龍駕兮帝服，

Carried by a dragon means the cloud spirit rides on a dragon. That is why it is said in the *Book of Changes*: "The clouds follow the dragon". [36] Sovereign designates the sovereigns of the five cardinal directions. [Attire] means adornment.[37] [Qu Yuan] says: Heaven venerates the cloud spirit, letting it ride a dragon, wearing a thick blue-green and yellow dress with five exquisite colours, attired similar to the sovereigns of the five cardinal directions. 龍駕言雲神駕龍也。故易曰「雲從龍」也。帝謂五方之帝。服，飾也。言天尊雲神，使之乘龍，兼衣青黃五采之色，與五方帝同服也。

[8] for the moment it hovers and floats around. 聊翺游兮周章。

For the moment means for the time being. To float around is like circulating. [Qu Yuan] says: The cloud spirit will not stay in any place for long. Moving, it hovers, goes around in circles, goes

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[34] The character is understood to read *qiang* here in accordance with the paraphrase to line 5.

[35] This expression occurs rather often at the beginning of lines in the *Chuci*, which led Jiang Liangfu to render it as "then" or "thereupon" (Jiang 1985, 4: 392–393). Since these translations are unable to adequately reproduce Wang Yi's understanding of this as an exclamation, note that I take the character as an expression of incredulous astonishment at the lingering time of the spirit whose fickle nature becomes obvious in the following lines.

[36] Citation from the *Wenyan* 文言 commentary to the *yang* line in the 5th position in the Qian 乾 hexagram (*Shisanjing* 1980, 16).

[37] Only *Chuci buzhu* does not contain this gloss (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 102). In Wang Yi's paraphrase, the gloss is not taken up.

away, comes back, both wandering around and hovering.[38] 聊，且也。周章猶周流也。言雲神居無常處，動則翱翔，周流往來，且遊戲也。 (*Chuci zhangju shuzheng* 2007, 781–786).

To line 5 Wang Yi adds an explanation for the name of the temple at which the ritual takes place, explaining its function as a site for sacrifices to the spirit of longevity.[39] Here we can only assume that we are looking at a cross reference to Qu Yuan's statements about the passing of time and the shortness of lifespan in "Lisao". Wang's addition at the end paraphrases that the spirit, once appeased by the steam of food and wine has no intention of leaving, which posits a special connection between the one sacrificing and the spirit. At the same time, it creates tension about what will happen next.

By adding that the cloud spirit is Fenglong, Wang Yi inserts a cross-reference to the spirit mentioned in "Lisao". There, Qu Yuan commands Fenglong to ride on clouds in search of the goddess Lady Fei (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 13 [51–52]). The rank of the spirit is not only underlined by its attributes in the paraphrase. Wang Yi adds a general rule of the ability of clouds to block the light of sun and moon to further highlight the song's juxtaposition of the spirit's brightness with that of sun and moon. Following his glosses to line 7, Wang Yi cites the *Yijing* 易經 (Canon of Changes). In his commentary to "Lisao" Wang Yi links these citations to characters in the main text to suggest the poet's deliberate and meaningful reference to canonised texts (Schimmelpfennig 2005, 460–485). As the sole citation in the entire commentary to "Yunzhong jun" the reference is evidently significant. The passage deals with correspondences between entities. Accordingly, clouds and dragons have an immutable relationship with one another.[40] Especially with citations from the *Yijing* it is not always easy to understand the implied connection. The point made here, however, seems rather obvious: the nature of the relationship between clouds and dragons is emblematic of the relationship between Qu Yuan and the cloud spirit, or at least the ideal nature of this relationship. Readers of Wang Yi's commentary who knew the *Wenyan* commentary by heart would have immediately remembered its concluding statement: "What originates in heaven is related to what is above, what originates from earth is related to what is below, each following its kind" 本乎天者親上，本乎地者親下，則各從其類也 (*Shisanjing zhushu* 1980, 16). Qu Yuan's implicit reference to a statement by Confucius, inserted by Wang Yi, points to a natural separation of belonging that was upended by the poet-minister's banishment to a place not of "his kind". The following paraphrase elaborates on this point by postulating the cloud spirit's equality with the rulers of the five cardinal directions, expressed in the colours worn. This mention of colours points to the medium in line 1–2, who, almost in anticipation of what is to come, has been dressed by Qu Yuan in "sovereign colours" corresponding to those of the spirit. Wang Yi elevates the status of the

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[38] In editions of *Wenxuan*, the end of the paraphrase is different: "... both wandering and hovering" 且遊且翱也. See *Liu Chen* (1999, 598); *Wenxuan* (1981, 464).

[39] For other sources on the existence of such temples during the Han and earlier compare Jiang (1985, 1: 181).

[40] Compare Richard Wilhelm's rendering: "The nine in the fifth position means, 'Flying dragon in the sky. It is beneficial to see the great man'. What does that mean? The Master said: 'Whatever corresponds in tone resonates with one another; what is congenial in the innermost being seeks one another'. Water flows towards the damp; fire turns to dryness; clouds follow the dragon; winds follow the tiger. The wise man arises, and all beings look to him. What comes from heaven feels related to what is above. What comes from the earth feels related to what is below. Each one follows its kind" (Wilhelm 1976, 352f, translated into English by author).

cloud spirit further by suggesting its veneration by heaven itself. We may not push our interpretation too far in suggesting that Wang Yi appears to conceive Qu Yuan's words as sublime associations of the cloud spirit with a ruler.

> [9] The spirit, brilliant and dazzling, descended. 靈皇皇兮既降，
>
> Spirit refers to the cloud spirit. Brilliant and dazzling serves here as an illustration of beauty. To descend means to come down.[41] [Qu Yuan] says: The cloud spirit has come down, his appearance brilliant and dazzling, possessing a radiant pattern. 靈謂雲神也。皇皇，美貌也。降，下也。言雲神來下，其貌皇皇而美，有光文也。
>
> [10] In a dash, it lifts into the distance amidst the clouds. 猋遠舉兮雲中。
>
> In a dash serves here as an illustration for leaving in great hurry. In the midst of clouds is where the cloud spirit resides. [Qu Yuan] says: The cloud spirit's coming and going away takes place in great haste, no sooner has it satisfied itself with drinks and food then it dashingly lifts into the distance again returning to its residence. 猋去疾貌也。雲中，雲神所居也。言雲神往來急疾，飲食既飽，猋然遠舉，復還其處也。
>
> [11] It overlooks the region of Ji and what lies beyond. 覽冀州兮有餘，
>
> To overlook means to gaze into the distance. The region between the two rivers is called Region of Ji.[42] What lies beyond is [to be understood here] like other areas.[43] [Qu Yuan] says: The place where the cloud spirit is located is so high and remote that it looks [not merely] into the distance at the region of Ji but it even sees the other realms beyond. 覽，望也。兩河之間曰冀州。餘猶他方也。言雲神所在高邈，乃望於冀州，尚復見他方也。
>
> [12] It cuts across the four seas. How could it be limited? 橫四海兮焉窮。
>
> Limit means endpoint. [Qu Yuan] says: The cloud spirit comes and goes in an instant; within a moment it moves horizontally across the four seas. How could there be ultimate endpoints [to its movement]? 窮，極也。言雲神出入奄忽，須臾之間，橫行四海，安有窮極也。 (*Chuci zhangju shuzheng* 2007, 786–791).

The glosses and paraphrases to lines 9 to 12 expand on the abruptness of the spirit's return, its "regular location" which became part of the song's title, and the oversight this elevated position allows that goes way beyond the region associated with Chu. Note that Wang Yi employs glosses like that on the Region of Ji and others in his commentary that also appear in the *Erya* 爾雅 (The Glossary) (Schimmelpfennig

[41] This gloss is contained in *Erya* 爾雅 and *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (*Shisanjing zhushu* 1980, 2582.3; Xu 1981, 732, respectively). The possibly deliberate use of Xu Shen's dictionary by Wang Yi is discussed in Schimmelpfennig (2005, 403–407).

[42] This statement is contained in *Erya*. Compare *Shisanjing zhushu* (1980, 2614.3). In the *Shang shu* 尚書 (Venerable Records), the expression denotes the northernmost of the Nine Regions into which the empire was divided under the legendary Great Yu 大禹 (*Shisanjing zhushu* 1980, 146, 2). The region is located north of the Yellow River.

[43] The *Chuci buzhu* edition does not contain the character fang 方 (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 102).

2005, 402–403). While the status of this work canonised later during the Han is unclear, its use may indicate another technique that points at the relationship between Qu Yuan's poetry and the *Shijing*. Wang Yi understands line 12 as Qu Yuan's statement on the ultimately capricious and indeterminable movement of the cloud spirit that triggers the pain described in the last lines of the song.

> [13] Longing for His Majesty, I heave weary sighs. 思夫君兮太息，
>
> His majesty refers to the cloud spirit. 君謂雲神也。
>
> [14] My worn-out heart, pounding, pounding. 極勞心兮忡忡。
>
> Pounding, pounding serves as an illustration of a troubled heart. When Qu Yuan becomes aware that once moved, the clouds travel thousand leagues and circle the [area of] the four seas, he imagines succeeding in following them to gaze at [the areas in] the four cardinal directions to forget his melancholy longings, but, when he realises that he can never achieve it, he (thus) heaves weary sighs and the inside of his heart,[44] afflicted and worn, pounds and pounds. (Someone else said: His Majesty refers to King Huai. Qu Yuan arranged his presentation of the cloud spirit in a way that his sorrowful thoughts reach him again as the words near the end. He bemoans King Huai's dark delusion and incomprehension, which is why he consequently heaves weary sighs and moans, unable to stop his heart from frequently pounding and pounding.)[45] 忡忡，憂心貌。屈原見雲一動千里，周遍四海，想得隨從，觀望四方，以忘己憂思，而念之終不可得，故太息而歎，心中煩勞而忡忡也。或曰，君謂懷王也。屈原陳敘雲神，文義略訖，愁思復至。哀念懷王暗昧不明，則太息歎喟，心每忡忡而不能已也。(*Chuci zhangju shuzheng* 2007, 791–793).

While the only gloss to line 13 clearly states that "His Majesty" (*fujun* 夫君) refers to the cloud spirit, the second paraphrase to line 14 highlights the idea triggered by the preface to the "Jiuge" to understand *jun* as a reference to King Huai of Chu, the king who banished Qu Yuan. However, it stands to question whether this second paraphrase was part of Wang Yi's original commentary, and if so, where Wang Yi could have sourced this alternative reading from. Its initial character *huo* would generally imply that someone else presented an alternative reading. However, with a gloss of identical syntax with the gloss to line 13 at its beginning that contradicts the previous annotation, the second paraphrase gives the impression of an alternative version of the final paraphrase added by a later editor.

Both paraphrases are distinct from the previous commentary. Suddenly there is an interlocutor telling the reader how the poet's emotional reaction at the end of the song should be understood. Though the first paraphrase speaks about clouds and not a cloud spirit, its interpretation is striking. It leaves Qu Yuan as the initiator of a sacrifice in exile, who upon contemplating the spirit's rapid departure

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[44] In *Wenxuan* editions the characters 心中 appear in reverse order (*zhong xin* 中心). While Wang Yi uses this expression in his commentary to "Lisao", its meaning of "impartial mind" does not make sense in the context of this commentary to line 14. Compare *Liu Chen* (1999, 617); *Wenxuan* (1981, 465).

[45] This part is absent in *Wenxuan* editions.

into the clouds — or rather the rapid movement of clouds into which the spirit disappeared — develops a longing to go elsewhere, followed by the realisation that he can't leave, which makes his heart pound heavily. Understood in this way, "Yunzhong jun" echos "Lisao". Though the paraphrasing does not specify King Huai, the poem nevertheless becomes a protest of Qu Yuan against his wrongful treatment by the king, whom he nevertheless cannot leave.

The second paraphrase which takes His Majesty in line 13 as a reference to King Huai seems twice removed in that it claims to know why the poet arranged the work in the manner he did. Here Qu Yuan's heavy sighs triggered by his longing for King Huai are understood as returning thoughts that criticise the king's delusion and foolishness. This understanding is less convincing because it rests on a reading that essentially disconnects the last two lines from the rest of the poem.[46] It may therefore be no accident that the editors of the *Wenxuan* did not include this second paraphrase in their text, provided they were aware of its existence at the time.[47]

Wang Yi's commentary to "Yunzhong jun" is a complex and sophisticated reading that posits the work firmly within the "historical" context claimed by the preface to the "Jiuge". The historicising alignment of his reading of the poem with the preface follows the conventions established by the Mao commentarial tradition to the *Shijing* (Zoeren 1991). It supports Wang Yi's claim in the postface that Qu Yuan's other poetry beyond "Lisao" must be included in any evaluation of him, as it attests to his true status as the poet equal to those of the Songs in the *Shijing* (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 110 [79]).

2. Revision of Wang Yi — the Five Ministers

The following commentary is an oddity regarding its composition. In the year 718 Lü Yanzuo 呂延祚 (n.d.), vice president of the board of public works, submitted a commentary to the *Wenxuan* to the Tang emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756). It consisted of the "notes" of five scholars about whom we hardly know anything beside their names. These commentaries by Liu Liang 劉良, Zhang Xian 張銑, Lü Xiang 呂向, Li Zhouhan 李周翰, Lü Yanji 呂延濟 were supposed to supplement an earlier commentary to the anthology by Li Shan 李善 (630–689 CE). Li Shan's commentary was considered tedious because it mainly consisted of citations from other texts including terms that appeared in the *Wenxuan* with a similar meaning (Knechtges 1982, 52f). According to scholars Li Zhonghua and Zhu Bingxiang, Li Shan abbreviated Wang Yi's prefaces, introduced some errors and misunderstandings, and apparently also cut short some of Wang Yi's commentaries (Li and Zhu 1996,

[46] A slightly more sophisticated version of this interpretation can be found in the sub-commentary by Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1090–1155 CE). Accordingly, with the cloud spirit Qu Yuan hinted at King Huai. In saying that its virtue equalled that of sun and moon in brightness and enabled it to overlook the entire realm, he compared it to King Huai who would never be like this and consequently felt deeply sad. Compare *Soji sakuin* (1979, 103).

[47] The comment of one of the Five Ministers contains an interpretation that *jun* 君 also refers to the lord, namely King Huai. *Liu Chen zhu wenxuan* 1999, 617. Perhaps this is an indication that this commentator knew of the other interpretation.

81–86). Against this background it is difficult to imagine the editorial process that led to *Wu chen zhu* 五臣注 (Commentary of the Five Ministers). Could Lü Yanzuo have chosen from five different commentaries? Or are we to think of the Five Ministers as members of a literary salon who jotted down notes during discussions which went on to be compiled by Lü? Remarkably, in some versions of the text their commentaries precede Wang Yi's reading (*Riben zuli xuexiao Liu Chen zhu Wenxuan* 2014, 508 [2030–2032]). In others they follow his reading, resembling a sub-commentary. Something all editions have in common is that their commentaries follow each couplet of a song, rather than each line. The Five Ministers even comment on the first two couplets of "Yunzhong jun" as one unit, doubling down on Wang Yi's arrangement which had affixed a joint annotation to the first two lines as a couplet but to each individual line of "Yunzhong jun" thereafter. Judging from the sporadic nature of their entries, each of the annotations by the Five Ministers seem almost like independent commentaries. It is evident that many of their annotations aimed to clarify and shorten the commentary of their predecessor. Though Li and Zhu regard Li Shan's and their work as somewhat flawed attempts to make Wang Yi's commentary more readily understandable to a wider reading audience, their claim that the Five Ministers did not divert from Wang Yi's understanding is incorrect (Li and Zhu 1996, 83f).

A comparison of the preface to the "Jiuge" in *Chuci zhangju* with the *Wenxuan* version illustrates the considerable degree of redaction.[48] The commentators kept the authorial attribution, cut short the geographical description but retained the statement that Qu Yuan made the "Jiuge" to improve the ritual customs of the locals. They further removed all information pertaining to Qu Yuan's emotional state as well as the sentence on surface and subtext understandings, leaving only the final remark that Qu Yuan "entrusted the tunes with admonition" (Liu Chen 1999, 597). The fact that neither the sequence nor the position of any character was changed, and that the remaining excerpts were merely strung together, is indeed indicative of a process of redaction seeking to shorten the text.

Possibly owing to the fact that the *Wenxuan* contains only a selection of songs from the "Jiuge" chapter, the Five Ministers supply comments to individual song titles. Lü Yanji's annotation to the first song "Donghuang Taiyi" (東皇太一) refers to all of them:

> [In the notes by Lü Yan] ji it is said: The title of each of the pieces are all designations of spirits of Chu. The reason the titles follow each song at the end, is yet again like the preference in title arrangement of the Mao version of the *Book of Songs*. 濟曰：每篇之目皆楚之神名；所以列於篇後者，亦猶毛詩題章之趣。 (*Liu Chen* 1999, 597).[49]

[48] The characters highlighted in grey in the citation of the "Jiuge" preface in *Chuci zhangju* represent Li's redacted version. Compare citation linked to note 16.

[49] The combination of Li Shan's commentary with that of the Five Ministers *Wu chen zhu* 五臣注 occurred only during the Song dynasty. Editions that solely contain the commentaries by the Five Ministers like the Chen Balang 陳八郎 edition of 1161 are very rare (Knechtges and Chang 2014, 1322–1323; 1335). The version used for the present study is a photomechanical reprint of *Liu Chen zhu Wen xuan* 六臣注文選 from *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊.

All titles are identified as the names of spirits or deities in Chu. The statement about the position of the titles demonstrates the commentator's awareness of Wang Yi's intention to present the *Chuci* in the format of the *Shijing*. The statement can also serve as indirect evidence for the layout of Wang Yi's commentary used by Lü Yanji. The *Wenxuan* commentators preferred to place the titles at the beginning of each song instead.

To the title of "Yunzhong jun" Liu Liang adds that the deity with this name is the Cloud master Bingyi" 雲中君，雲師屏翳也. [50] This may be another reference to Wang Yi's annotation to a deity by the name of Fenglong 豐隆 in line 112 of "Lisao" which mentions Bingyi as an alternative designation for the cloud deity. We may wonder though why Wang Yi should have added her alternative name, since Bingyi is not mentioned elsewhere in the *Chuci*. It is clear, however, that historically the gloss triggered an endless debate about the possible role of the deity, ranging from its association with clouds, rain, or thunder, that has continued up to the present day.[51]

Liu Liang's next commentary follows line 4 of the song. He reuses a range of glosses from Wang Yi's commentary:

> [3/4] "Spirit master, bend and turn very carefully, for [the spirit's] glare is bright and garish without end!" 靈連蜷兮既留，爛昭昭兮未央。
>
> > [According to] Liu Liang [(Spirit) master] means mediator. [Bend and turn] serves as an illustration for [the movement of] guiding the spirit. Glare means radiance. [Bright and garish] means brilliant. End means limit. [Qu Yuan] says: During the preparations for a coming sacrificial offering, [I] first make the spirit mediator bathe in orchid fragrance, dress in garments of five colours, and striving to make his scent pure, further adorn him with ginger petals. Regarding guiding the Lord Amidst Clouds, [I] let the [spirit mediator] go about this very carefully, [for] the spirit's radiance is glaring, shining so bright it is limitless. 劉良：靈，巫也。連蜷，導引神貌。爛，光也。昭昭，明也。央，極也。言將祭祀之事，先使靈巫沐浴蘭芳，衣五色之服，務其芳潔，又飾若英也。導引也雲中君，使留心與此，神光爛然，明明無極。 (*Liu Chen* 1999, 558).

A comparison of the glosses with those from Wang Yi's commentary shows that Liu Liang copied the glosses from Wang Yi but redacted most of them in a similar fashion to what we have observed in the preface. Information that he considered redundant or that could be integrated in the following paraphrase is left out. Liu's paraphrase reproduces the understanding of Wang Yi but disagrees as to the interpretation of the final character of line 3. Wang Yi had understood the meaning of *liu* 留 as expressing the spirit's lingering. This reading would require a change of subject within one line of verse. Liu Liang instead understands the character to refer to the spirit master's going about his business

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[50] In *Wenxuan* editions this annotation appears at the end of Liu Liang's commentary to line 3. Compare *Liu Chen* (1999, 598).

[51] *Chuci jijiao jizhu* (2003, 1: 743–745). Jiang Liangfu has demonstrated that both spirits are mentioned in relation to clouds, thunder, and rain (Jiang 1985, 1:245–246).

carefully. He thus maintains the subject and conceives the second half to be about the danger posed by the spirit's radiance.

The commentary by Zhang Xian to the next couplet (lines 5–6) follows a similar pattern. The glosses from Wang Yi are either quoted verbatim or slightly modified. Zhang avoids Wang Yi's obvious additions like his mention of the spirit's nourishment or the explanation of the aim of the sacrifices performed at the temple of longevity. He also modifies the reading of Wang Yi, arguing that the pacification of the spirit in the temple is responsible for an even brighter display of its innate power (*de* 德) and that this leads to its matching sun and moon in brightness.

In his annotation to lines 7 and 8 Lü Xiang discards Wang Yi's complex rendering based on a reference to *Yijing* which appeared to be a cornerstone for Wang's interpretation. It stands to question whether Lü was aware of Wang Yi's rationale behind adding that citation. Later commentaries note that dragons ride on clouds and not the other way around as Wang Yi suggested, which may explain Lü's decision. Lü's own reading of both lines consists of one short paraphrase that introduces the dragon-pulled vehicle in which the spirit is driven, reduces Wang's complex colour explanation to the colours of the rulers of the five directions, and adds swiftness to the movement of the spirit: "This means: the spirit rides in a cloud dragon chariot, draped in the attire of the emperors of the five directions, it hovers and floats around in a swift come-and-go manner" 言神駕雲龍之車，為五方帝服，翱游，周章，往來迅疾貌. In comparison it is evident that Lü intends to "rationalise" Wang Yi's understanding, aiming at a plainer reading of these lines.

Liu Liang's understanding of carefulness in engaging with the spirit as well as Zhang Xian's remark about the spirit's increased brightness lays groundwork for the interpretation of the final lines of "Yunzhong jun". The paraphrases by Lü and Liu are complex and merit a detailed examination:

> [11/12] Looking over the region of Ji to what lies beyond, [its view] goes straight across the four seas to the realms' limits. 覽冀州兮有餘，橫四海兮焉窮。
>
> > [Lü Yan] ji [comments]: [Limit] 窮 means endpoint 極. [Qu Yuan] says: The place where the spirit abides is high and separated, below it looks over the region of Ji, gazes across the [region between the] Four Seas, and all which lies beyond that is without end. The region of Ji is the space which [Emperor] Yao oversaw. Since he longed for a lord with principles, he looked over it. 濟：窮，極也。言神所居高絕，下覽冀州，橫望四海，皆有餘而無極也。冀州，堯所都也。思有道之君，故覽之。 (*Liu Chen* 1999, 598).

The spirit as the subject from line 10 is maintained in lines 11 and 12. Its exalted position in the clouds allows it to have a view of the entire realm. Here the paraphrase is followed by another gloss explaining the name Jizhou. It suggests that Qu Yuan used the name Jizhou deliberately. Lü's annotation points to an analogy between the cloud spirit, Emperor Yao, and Qu Yuan who, as evidenced by the "Lisao", has been searching everywhere for a principled lord. This understanding is corroborated by Liu Liang's following paraphrase to lines 13 and 14. Employing an opening which is syntactically similar to the previous paraphrase by Lü, Liu conceives the last lines as an implicit analogy:

> [13/14] "Out of longing for Your Majesty, I heave weary sighs, as my worn-out heart is pounding sorrowfully. 思夫君兮太息，極勞心兮忡忡。
>
> > [Liu] Liang says: Your Majesty refers to the spirit. With it [Qu Yuan] hints at [his] lord. Pounding and pounding means to grieve. [Qu Yuan] says: [The place] where His Majesty abides is high and distant, below he establishes those in charge of the state. My yearning for the lord [revolves around] never [to be permitted] to have an audience with him again. For this reason, I heave weary sighs being deeply distressed. 良曰：夫君，謂靈神，以喻君也。忡忡，憂也。言夫君所居高遠，下制有國。我之思君，終不可見，故歎息而憂心也。 (*Liu Chen* 1999, 598)

Liu Liang infers the carefulness necessitated when dealing with the spirit's radiance as the first indicator of a subtext. Zhang Xian takes up this topic when he understands the display of the cloud spirit's glare that matches sun and moon as a display of virtue or innate power. Only the commentary to the final couplet by Lü Yanji and Liu Liang reveals that Qu Yuan conceived the cloud spirit as a representation of a ruler, first as an analogy between its divine abilities with those of the legendary emperor Yao, then in Qu Yuan's distance to the spirit that returned into the clouds, and finally in the reaction of the banished poet to the distance between him and his king that is ultimately as insurmountable as the distance between him and the spirit or the sky. The loftiness of the spirit denotes the distance between the king who is in control of those he appoints to oversee the state and Qu Yuan who, facing his final banishment, will not be considered for office again.

It should be noted that Liu Liang avails himself of a technical term for implicit readings "to hint at" (*yiyu* 以喻), which is employed frequently in Wang Yi's commentary to "Lisao". Whether Liu's use of this technical term might suggest that in the source material available to him, Wang Yi's paraphrasing of these final lines differed from the two paraphrases that presently conclude his commentary remains an open question. What can be said is that the Five Ministers made explicit a connection between the Cloud Spirit and the king of Chu that was only hinted at in Wang Yi's commentary.

Even though the Five Ministers make frequent use of Wang Yi's annotations, the composition of their commentaries to "Yunzhong jun" suggests that their readings would not necessarily need to appear in tandem with Wang Yi's commentary. According to David Knechtges, in distinction from Li Shan, the Tang commentators "wrote a new commentary that consists of a paraphrase that in effect 'translates' *Wenxuan* into Tang Chinese. (Knechtges and Chang 2014, 1322) However, the above example reveals that they did much more. In contrast to what Stephen Owen observed for Music Bureau poetry when he argued that there is good evidence that the literary men at the Qi and Liang dynasty courts at Jiankang "'fixed' texts according to their own standards of taste",[52] the interventions of the Five Ministers, in addition to a clear incentive to reduce the verbosity of *Chuci zhangju*, represent a thorough revision of Wang Yi's interpretation, expressing their own understanding of the song.

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[52] Compare Owen (2006, 4–5). Owen attributes their approach instead to the quality of the manuscripts they were copying.

3. Against Over-Interpretation – Zhu Xi

Zhu Xi's *Chuci jizhu* (Variorum of Commentaries on the *Songs of Chu*) represents a new stage in the commentary history of the *Chuci*. By the time he engaged with the anthology, Zhu Xi had spent a lifetime on the re-interpretation of the *Shijing* and other Classics. He had founded his own school within the Song philosophical tradition of True Way Learning (*Dao xue* 道學), and he had developed his own reading techniques of texts that, put simply, aimed to achieve an intuitive understanding through repeat and out-loud reading, a technique he also used in his re-assessment of the understanding of earlier commentators. Though Zhu Xi appears to have developed an interest in the *Chuci* at an early age, he came back to the anthology late in life. Sources suggest that he began his work during the period of fierce factional struggle at the late Southern Song court, shortly before he was ousted and stripped of his official titles when his teachings were declared heretic in 1197.[53] Scholars have argued that given this backdrop his return to the *Chuci* can hardly be coincidental: the anthology and the lore of its presumed author Qu Yuan provided a mirror image of the happenings at the imperial court, the treatment of Zhu Xi himself, and a platform for implicit critique.[54] We should, however, not misconceive Zhu Xi's engagement with the *Chuci* as a straightforward act of protest. Rather, Zhu Xi's commentary aimed to position Qu Yuan and the poems ascribed to him within the history of Chinese poetry.[55] He decided to achieve this through a critique of the approach of Wang Yi and Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1090–1155 CE), the author of a sub-commentary on Wang Yi's interpretation.[56] By showing that his own reading techniques of "tasting" and "emphatic recreation" could retrieve the meaning of poems without construing underlying allegorical meanings, Zhu Xi not only demonstrated the superiority of his own approach, but also claimed that he truly understood that Qu Yuan's "aspiration and conduct ... altogether arose from a sincere heart-mind [of a man] loyal to his sovereign and patriot of his country".[57] Thus if we want to conceive of *Chuci jizhu* as a work of protest against the desolate state of the Southern Song government or his own demise, Zhu Xi takes the rather subtle approach of letting Qu Yuan speak for himself instead of having the poems serve to vent his own grievances.

Zhu Xi's criticism of the previous commentators is straightforward:

> "When I look at what Wang [Yi's] book accepts and rejects in combination to what it points out in between [the poet's] separations and reunions,[58] there is a lot that can be debated, and

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[53] See the introduction by Jiang Lifu to *Chuci jizhu* (2001, II).

[54] Introduction by Jiang Lifu 蔣立甫 in *Chuci jizhu* (2001, II–III). The most detailed engagement with the question of Zhu Xi's possible motivations for writing his commentary is contained in Yi (1991, 292–298). See also Li and Zhu (1996, 119–122).

[55] According to Zhu Xi, Qu Yuan's effusive behaviour and unrestrained expressiveness made him unsuitable as a model. However, the power of his poetic works to improve relations and thus foster the bonds between superiors and inferiors in families and beyond, distinguished the poet from the rhapsodes of the *fu* 賦 tradition. Compare *Chuci jizhu* (2001, II–III). Another rendering of this passage is contained in Lynn (1986, 347).

[56] For information about Hong Xingzu and his commentarial approach see Li and Zhu (1996, 111–118).

[57] "At a quick glance, [Qu] Yuan as a person was someone who, even though his aspirations and conduct at times transgressed the right mean and must not be taken as a model, they altogether arose from a sincere heart-mind [of a man] loyal to his sovereign and patriot of his country" 竊嘗論之，原之為人，其志行雖或滴於中庸而不可以為法，然皆出於忠君愛國之誠心 (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 2).

[58] Reference to an expression twice used in the "Lisao" for Qu Yuan's failing matches (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 49, 52).

> even Hong [Xingzu] has been unable to revise at least some of that. When it comes to the overall meaning, again both never thoroughly pondered, sighingly lamented,[59] and intoned [the poems] in song to find out where hints to the meaning become apparent, but they hurriedly wished to fetch allusions to make up their own explanations, to quote copiously and provide detailed evidence to forcefully attach them to events construed by them. This is whereby they, either by being insensitive, distanced themselves from human nature and feelings, or, by their urging of points, did harm to [the poems'] reasoned argumentation, failing to express to their contemporaries what is unique about [Qu] Yuan's melancholy, and further obscuring it so that it remained unclear for later generations. I have been increasingly troubled by this! 顧王書之所取舍，與其題號離合之間，多可議者，而洪皆不能有所是正。至其大義，則又皆未嘗沈潛反復，嗟歎咏歌，以尋其文詞指意之所出，而遽欲取喻立說，旁引曲證，以強附於其事之已然。是以或以迂澤而遠於性情，或以迫切而害於義理，使原之所為壹鬱而不得申於當年者，又晦昧而不見白於後世。予於是益有感焉。 (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 3).

Zhu Xi maintains that Wang Yi twisted the meaning of Qu Yuan's poetry by construing allegorical readings where there were none and by combining these with other evidence to attach it to events that did not take place. He further holds that even the sub-commentator and contemporary of Zhu Xi, Hong Xingzu, had been unable to correct at least some of Wang Yi's bias. With his reference to *Liji*, Zhu Xi suggests in passing that if both exegetes had used its technique of deep reflection combined with repeat-recitation — a shorthand for Zhu Xi's approach — they could have avoided such over-distancing and overinterpretation. His most scathing critique is that both commentators failed to express what is unique about Qu Yuan's melancholy, implying that his own re-reading would deliver precisely that.

Despite his strong criticism of Wang and Hong, Zhu Xi's own interpretation draws largely on the work of both predecessors. One reason for this approach appears to be Zhu's own deteriorating health at the time.[60] Zhu Xi maintains the order of the works attributed to Qu Yuan in *Chuci zhangju* and organises them into five chapters, with "Lisao" being the classic (*jing* 經) and the rest relegated to being a part of its tradition, labelled as "Lisao Jiuge 離騷九歌", etc. Following these is a selection of works attributed to other authors, called "Continuations of Lisao" (續離騷九辯), etc., which he combined into three chapters (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, I–II). For additional observations that would have bloated the commentary and distracted the reader from its essential meaning,[61] Zhu added another chapter of investigations and verifications "Chuci bianzheng" 楚辭辯證 in two parts. He completed his anthology

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[59] Reference to the "Yue ji" 樂記 (Record on Music) chapter in the *Li ji* 禮記 (Records of Rites) (*Shisanjing zhushu* 1980, 1545.3). James Legge renders the expression as "sigh and exclamation".

[60] "During a period of leisure caused by an agonizing disease, merely relying on the old chapters, I crudely bent and drew together what I lay down as the Variorum of Commentaries in eight chapters" 疾病呻吟之暇，聊據舊篇，粗加櫽括，定為集注八卷 (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 3).

[61] The initial remark to the chapter paraphrased here is dated to April 1199 (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 167).

with a selection of 52 later works in the *Chuci* tradition based on a now-lost collection of rhapsodic poetry compiled by Chao Buzhi 晁補之 (1053–1110).[62]

In "Chuci bianzheng" Zhu Xi presents his general understanding of "Jiuge". He states that Qu Yuan had indeed literarily refined now lost, crude sacrificial songs (*wen zhi* 文之), whose derogatory and lascivious words would have been unspeakable, by lightly and tenderly imbuing them with his loyalty to his lord and his patriotism to the state (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 180). He repeats this point of light and tender imbuement when he argues that, taking the correct relationship between lord and minister into consideration, Qu Yuan took the act of serving the spirits in "Jiuge" as a way of comparison (*bi* 比) and did not confuse it with any other form of poetic expression. While he did make accurate use of all three poetic forms of expression (*fu* 賦, *bi* 比, *xing* 興) befitting each song, later readers, i.e. the earlier commentators, missed the main intention (*ben zhi* 本旨) of the songs, imposing comparisons or forced meanings onto them (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 180).

Zhu Xi arranged his commentary to the "Jiuge" to principally follow each couplet of the songs. In keeping with his emphasis on correctly pronouncing and repeat-reciting the text, each commentary begins with phonetic glosses, either of the reverse cutting (*fanqie* 反切) or the pronunciation (*yin* 音) type. Glosses, mostly selected from the commentaries by Wang Yi and Hong Xingzu, follow. Zhu Xi partly modified these and combined them with paraphrases, at times adding further explanations at their end:

> [1–4] "Bathe in orchid broth, cleanse yourself with fragrance, colourfully variegate your dress like flower petals!" The possessed stretches and flexes when it rests, glaringly bright and garish without end. 浴蘭湯兮沐芳，華採衣兮若英。靈連蜷兮既留，爛昭昭兮未央。
>
> > *Hua* [is pronounced like] the initial sound of [the character] *hu* and the final sound of [the character] *hua*.[63] Flower petal means leaf. It [is pronounced like] the initial sound of [the character] *yu* and the final sound of [the character] *jiang*. *Quan* is pronounced [like the character] *quan*. Fragrance means scent of Angelica. To colourfully adorn means to adorn in the Five Colours. The showy part of the flower that is not the ovary, is called the petal.[64]
> >
> > In other words: I [Qu Yuan] first let a spirit medium bathe in orchid broth, wash himself with fragrant aromas, dress in a composite dress like the petals of flowers to purify himself. A medium is that which the spirit descends into. The people of Chu designate mediums as spirit children, as if calling them descendants of spirits. [Stretch and flex] serves as an illustration for extending and bending. Due to his dress and ornament having been purified, the spirit delights in him and descends to rely on his body as if staying for long. In a Music Bureau song from the Han dynasty, it is said: "The spirit rests calmly". This is also expressed to refer to a spirit. Glaring is an illustration of radiance. [Bright and garish] means brilliant. 華，戶花反。英，葉，於姜反。

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[62] On Chao Buzhi and his anthology see Li and Zhu (1996, 104–111).

[63] Phonetic gloss also contained in *Chuci buzhu* (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 101).

[64] Explanation from the *Erya* contained in *Chuci buzhu* (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 101).

> 蜷，音拳。芳，芷也。華採，五色採也。榮而不實者謂之英。言使靈巫先浴蘭湯，沐香芷，衣採衣，如草木之英，以自潔清也。靈，神所降也。楚人名巫為靈子，若曰神之子也。連蜷，長曲貌。既留，則以其服飾潔清，故神悅之，而降依其身，留連之久也。漢樂歌言「靈安留」，亦指神而言也。爛，光貌。昭昭，明也。(*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 33).

Zhu Xi's phonetic glosses either support his different understandings of individual characters or clarify the rhyme scheme. Following his idea that Wang Yi's commentary is an over-interpretation, Zhu Xi conceives Qu Yuan's use of a spirit medium and its embellishment and purification as a catalyst for the willingness of the spirit to descend into it. In support of his reading, he adds historical information like the designation for media in Chu.[65] He also uses textual parallels like a line from a Music Bureau poem.[66] The movement of the medium in combination with the expression *jiliu* 既留 becomes central for his understanding that the spirit has already descended and is willing to stay. For the last line of the second verse above, Zhu Xi only provides the reader with an existing set of glosses without further elaboration. It seems that in such cases Zhu Xi recommends readers to resort to Wang Yi's reading or rely on their own understanding. In fact, Zhu Xi's preceding interpretation and the deliberate omission of Wang Yi's interpretation that it refers to the appearance of the spirit leaves the reader with the more natural choice of maintaining the medium as the subject of the entire verse and, consequently, associating the radiance and brilliance with their sophisticated dress.

> [5–8] Lo! Soothed in the Temple of Longevity, it matches sun and moon in radiance. In a dragon rider, draped in a deity's attire, for the moment it hovers and circulates. 蹇將憺兮壽宮，與日月兮齊光。龍駕兮帝服，聊翱游兮周章。

> *Dan* [is pronounced like] the initial sound of [the character] *tu* and the final sound of [the character] *lan*. *Gong* [is pronounced like] the initial sound of [the character] *gu* and the final sound of [the character] *huang*. One edition of the text has [the character] *zheng* (to compete) instead of *qi* (to match). [Lo] *jian* is an exclamation. [To soothe] means to calm down. The Temple of Longevity is a place for offering sacrifices to spirits. In the era of the Han emperor Wu, a Shrine of Longevity for the spirit lords was erected. It also belonged to this kind. In other words: The spirit has already arrived, still and happy in a soothed manner, it has no intention to leave. Dragon rider is a carriage drawn by dragons. Deity refers to the Supreme Deity. [For the moment] means for the time being. To circulate is like floating around. 憺，徒濫反。宮，葉古荒反。齊，一作爭。蹇，詞也。憺，安也。壽宮，供神之處，漢武帝時置壽宮神君，亦此類也。言

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[65] In "Chuci bianzheng" Zhu Xi adds that explaining the character *ling* 靈 as medium *wu* 巫 in earlier commentaries ignores the fact that it receives its name from the spirit that descended into it. That is to say, *ling* means spirit, not medium. He adds though that conceiving it as solely designating a medium in the song's context of its beauty and attire is reasonable (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 180). The rendering as "possessed" above tries to capture the ambivalence of the expression.

[66] Also cited in "Chuci bianzheng", but there stating that it refers to a medium (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 180).

> 神既至，儋然安樂，無有去意也。龍駕，以龍引車也。帝，謂上帝也。聊，且也。周章，猶周流也。(*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 33).

Here the section on phonetics also includes an indication of a textual variant. Five contextual glosses in Zhu's annotations to lines 5 to 8 are from Wang Yi.[67] Zhu Xi replaces Wang Yi's explanation of the use of the Temple of Longevity with a reference to Han emperor Wu who erected a palace by that name for the worship of a range of deities mentioned in "Jiuge".[68] He re-uses Wang Yi's paraphrase except the part that describes the spirit's feeding. He also replaces Wang Yi's annotation on the spirit riding a dragon including the reference to the *Yijing* with a gloss from the Five Ministers from Hong Xingzu's sub-commentary claiming that the line speaks of a carriage drawn by dragons (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 102). The gloss on the supreme deity replaces Wang Yi's statement about the colours of the deities of the five directions.[69] The last two glosses come from Wang Yi's commentary.

Both examples show that Zhu Xi essentially retains those glosses by Wang Yi that support a plainer understanding of the text. He removes explanations he finds baseless or farfetched, and offers corrections supported by additional information from historical or literary sources. He delegates further elaborations and arguments for some of these corrections to his "Chuci bianzheng" chapter.

His commentary to lines 9 to 14 is not presented in full because it almost restates Wang Yi's reading that once the spirit is replete, it returns hurriedly to its abode in the clouds where he generally resides. The spirit's coming and going happens in an instant. Zhu Xi slightly deviates by defining Jizhou as the region between the Yellow River and the Yangzi but makes the same point that the spirit's gaze oversees the region between the Four Seas without any ultimate limits. His final annotations provide evidence for *fujun* 夫君 referring to the spirit and define "pounding, pounding" as an onomatopoetic expression for the heartbeat, removing the element of fear or even panic suggested by his predecessors.

Zhu Xi leaves the explanation of the song's implied meaning to the song title positioned at the end of the song:

> [Yunzhong jun] refers to the cloud spirit. For another mention see the "Treatise on Suburban Sacrifices" in the *Dynastic History of the Han*. This piece speaks about a spirit that, once it descends and stays, enters in close relation with a human being, so that, once it leaves, he longs for it, unable to forget it. This suffices to make evident the profound demeanour of the fond regard of our minister [Qu Yuan] for his lord. 謂云神也。亦見漢書郊祀志。此篇言神既降而久留，與人視接，故既去而思之不能忘也，足以見臣子慕君之深意矣。(*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 33).

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[67] The first three and the last two glosses. Compare section on Wang Yi.

[68] Emperor Wu granted an amnesty and built a shrine for the veneration of these deities after recovering from a serious illness. Compare *Shiji* (1982, 12: 459–460). The deities also addressed in the "Jiuge" are Taiyi 太一 (Supreme Unity) and Siming 司命 (Arbiter of Fate).

[69] In "Chuci bianzheng" Zhu Xi adds that he doesn't see a need for this explanation (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 180).

For Zhu Xi the meaning imbued is captured in the relation between the purified medium and the spirit. Once the spirit leaves, the sadness about the separation from this venerated and ephemeral higher being alludes to the situation between the poet and his overlord. Zhu Xi's summary of "Yunzhong jun" confirms his general point made in "Chuci bianzheng" that Qu Yuan only "lightly and tenderly imbued [the songs] with his loyalty to his lord and his patriotism to the state" (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 180). Zhu Xi adds in his own words why he felt the need to amend the readings of his predecessors:

> Regarding "Yunzhong jun", ancient commentaries maintain that once the services to the spirit have been completed, [Qu Yuan] sighs and agonizes when he remembers King Huai's incompetence. Hong's sub-commentary opines that the cloud spirit implicitly refers to virtue of rulers, and due to King Huai's incompetence, his heart is broken. These are all externally added and superfluous explanations that damage the main idea of this piece. Destroying its meaning by twisting what is intrinsic [to the poem] they distorted the true intent of the original text. Moreover, their eying of the lord, isn't that already too forced? 雲中君，舊說以為事神已訖，復念懷王不明，而太息憂勞。補注又謂以雲神喻君德， 而懷王不能，故心以為憂。皆外增贅說，以害全篇之大指；曲生碎義，以亂本文之正意。且其目君不亦太迫矣乎。 (*Chuci jizhu*, 2001, 181).

Zhu Xi not only challenged his predecessors' reading at the micro level, but he also disputed their basic assumption that each of the "Jiuge" contained a veiled message from Qu Yuan to his king. On the contrary, and perhaps aided by his different way of reading, Zhu Xi extracts the implied message from the depiction of the sacrifice itself, namely in the description of the relationship between the spirit and the one making the sacrifice. For Zhu Xi though, this implied message is neither one of Qu Yuan's agony about his banishment nor of his despair about the foolishness of his king. It is, quite telling for the Song dynastic order of the world Zhu Xi lives in, rather the expression of the fond regard of a minister for his lord.

4. Determining the Song's Ancient Past — Wang Yuan

It is perhaps no coincidence that the title of *Chuci jijie* 楚辭集解 (Variorum of Explanations to the Songs of Chu) differs by only one character from the title of Zhu Xi's commentary. Wang Yuan 汪瑗 (d. 1565) continued a tradition of commentary writing that revised existing readings through re-evaluating parts of earlier commentaries and gathering additional materials to arrive at a new understanding. Although this kind of commentary can be traced way back to *Lunyu jijie* 論語集解 (Variorum of Explanations to the *Analects*) by He Yan 何宴 (ca. 195–249 CE), by choosing *Chuci jijie* Wang Yuan positioned himself within a line of interpretation of the *Chuci* that rested on Zhu Xi, while still discreetly setting himself apart from his influential predecessor.

Wang Yuan was an exceptional student from a young age. He was taught alongside his younger brother Wang Ke 汪珂 (n.d.) by Gui Youguang 歸有光 (1507–1571), an expert in the Classics and *Chuci*, who during his lifetime attracted more than a hundred students. Gui lauded the accomplishments of Wang Yuan in understanding the classics, literature, writing poetry, and as a commentator (Li and Zhu 1996, 143–144). The breadth of his knowledge is immediately apparent in the variety of sources used in *Chuci jijie*. In addition to other commentaries, he often makes use of the classics, glossaries, historical works, and lines from renowned poets (Li and Zhu 1996, 144; Yi 1991, 384). Remarkably, he has no biographical entry in *Ming shi* 明史 (Dynastic History of the Ming) and only one other work authored by himself exists. Whether this dearth of sources may be related to a quite unfavourable review of his commentary by the editors of *Siku quanshu congmu* 四庫全書叢目 (Bibliographical Summaries of the Complete Writings of the Four Repositories) is unclear.

Wang Yuan appears to have been associated with Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1590) and Li Panlong 李攀龍 (1514–1570), members of the so-called Later Seven Masters (*hou qizi* 後七子). Together they were part of a movement of archaism or nativism (*fugu* 復古), which advocated a return to the literary practices of the ancients and the Han dynasty and limited the significant influence of Zhu Xi's ideas on their own era. Apparently, the movement's approach to literature and history endowed Wang Yuan with an unprecedented level of scepticism. This led him to go beyond Zhu Xi and question the supposed background of the creation of Qu Yuan's poetry as well as the supposedly implicit criticism of King Huai in his works, culminating in an assertion that Qu Yuan had not committed suicide by drowning. The editors' concluding comment in *Siku quanshu congmu*, a citation from a commentary by Li Bi 李壁 (1159–1222) to a poem by Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086), well illustrates the extent to which Wang Yuan challenged paradigms that had become well-established by the Qing dynasty: "[He] doubts that which must not be doubted and trusts that which must not be trusted" 疑所不當疑，信所不當信 (*Siku quanshu congmu* 1983, 1269.3).

Contrary to that judgement, his detailed commentary, although never widely published, left its mark. Renowned commentators like Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692) and Jiang Ji 蔣驥 (1678–1745) claimed discoveries as their own that actually go back to Wang Yuan (Yi 1991, 388–389). In his own preface to *Chuci jijie*, Wang Yuan mentions that the commentary was a co-production together with his brother. Wang Ke gathered the materials, Wang Yuan revised them, and Gui Youguang contributed another preface. The commentary was completed in 1548.[70] *Chuci jijie* consists of eight chapters, excluding works not attributed to Qu Yuan. These are followed by two chapters, one entitled "*mengyin*" 蒙引, which contains further explanations to more than 240 names, objects, and expressions from "Lisao", and the other listing textual variants.[71]

[70] Jiang Liangfu states that the first edition was only published by Wang Yuan's son Wang Ke (cognomen Wenying 文英) with a commentary of "Tianwen" 天問 (Questions to Heaven) by Zhu Xi with annotations by Wang Yuan written above his commentary (Jiang 1993, 72f). A reprint of the oldest existing edition dated 1615 is contained in *Chuci wenxian jicheng* (2008).

[71] For a summary of existing editions see Jiang (1993, 75f). The modern edition employed is *Chuci jijie* 2017.

While Wang Yuan's "Lisao" commentary follows Zhu Xi's arrangement of the main text in couplets, Wang Yuan divided the commentary to the "Jiuge" into chunks of text that follow groups of couplets of each song. Aside from the annotation to the title, his commentary to "Yunzhong jun" as well as short line-by-line annotations is divided into two large elaborations which follow line 8 and line 14 of the song. The division supports Wang Yuan's idea that the song consists of two parts, the first describing the descent and the second the farewell of the spirit. Although the commentary proceeds line by line in each unit, it also contains portions that relate to couplets or entire sections which makes it more difficult to assign content to specific lines.[72] The following sample is my assemblage of Wang Yuan's commentary containing all annotations pertinent to the first two lines of "Yunzhong jun": [73]

> 1–2 I bathe it in orchid broth, cleanse it with fragrances. Its richly coloured dress matches petals of blossoms 浴蘭湯兮沐芳，華采衣兮若英.
>
> > Bathe means to wash a body. Orchid is a designation for a fragrant plant. Broth means boiling water, it means to wash its [the effigy's] body with a boiling broth of fragrant plants. Cleanse means to rinse its hair and clean its face. This is not speaking about broth; it continues the previous text. Fragrance is said to generally denote fragrant plants. Someone said: it is mentioned in continuation of orchid flower above, is also coherent. The old explanation [by Wang Yi] that takes scent to be White Angelica is wrong. This [point] rests on [the fact] that most single occurrences of the character for scent in the *Chuci* are general designations. The lines above are also created as inversions, they basically mean to cleanse it with a broth of fragrant plants from scented orchids. [1] Richly coloured speaks about the gorgeous beauty of its colours. To match means to be like. Petals of blossoms is a general way of designating the flowers of grasses and trees. For its colours of gorgeous beauty there is nothing like the flowers of grasses and trees, and this is why they are used in comparison with the dress of the spirit. [2] The sentence from "Bathe it in orchid broth" to "cleanse with scents" speaks about the fragrant purity of the venerated body of the spirit. The sentence from "Richly coloured" to "flower petals" speaks of the bright shine of the magnificent dress of the spirit. [1–2] Since the sacrifices towards spirits in ancient times already involved a shrine where the sacrificial offers took place, it must have been that carved effigies of the spirits served as representations, so that when someone was about to offer a sacrifice, he presented its representation by cleansing and adorning it. In his commentary to "Zhaohun" (Calling back the Soul) Master Zhu says: Upon someone's death it was a custom in Chu to set up their physical remains in a chamber to offer sacrifices to them. Looking at it from expressions like "Yielding a sword" and "gird with Jade" in "Dong huang Taiyi" up to the acts of cleansing, dressing, and adorning, [the fact that] for all the various spirits there were representations [in the form] of carved effigies set up like those made by today's commoners, is evident. The old explanations that all assume that [the lines] are about a medium cleaning and dressing are very misleading. 浴，澡身

[72] The arrangement of Wang Yuan's commentary in the otherwise very useful comparative commentary collection by Cui Fuzhang and Li Daming can thus be misleading (Cui and Li 2003, 743ff).

[73] Numbers in brackets follow the text to indicate to which line the preceding annotations refer.

> 也。蘭，香草名。湯，沸水也。浴蘭湯，謂以香草煎湯而澡其身也。沐，濯髮而靧面也。不言湯者，承上文也。芳，泛指香草而言。一曰承上蘭草而言，亦通。舊說以芳為白芷，非也。按：楚辭中凡單用芳字，多泛言也。此句亦相錯成文，本謂以芳蘭香草之湯而沐浴也。[1] 華彩，言其色之灩麗也。若，如也。 英，凡言草木之花也。 其色之豔麗者，莫如草木之花，故以之比神之衣也。[2] 浴蘭沐芳，言神尊體之香潔。華彩若英，言神盛服之鮮明也。[1–2] 蓋古之祠神，既有宮堂供祀之處所，則必有雕塑之神像以為之尸，故將祭之時而奉其尸以洗飾之也。朱子注招魂曰：「楚俗，人死則設其形貌於室而祀之也。」由東皇言撫劒佩玉及此沐浴衣飾之事觀之，則諸神皆有所設雕塑之尸，如今俗之所為者明矣。舊說俱以為巫祝沐浴而衣也，甚謬。 (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 99–100).

The length of this commentary is substantial, amounting to roughly one third of Wang Yuan's entire annotations to lines 1 to 8. Its length is related to his goal to present a groundbreakingly different view of the ritual practice that, in his opinion, underlies not only this song but all other songs of the "Jiuge", except for "Guoshang", which he conceived as its coda.

Wang Yuan structures his commentary in such a way that annotations to each line are followed by a recapitulative statement of the general meaning of a verse before he turns to an empirical, yet text-based examination of the ritual practice itself. He rejects Wang Yi's idea of the involvement of a shaman. Based on the song's mention of a shrine, a comment by Zhu Xi on the veneration of deceased persons in ancient Chu, and repeated acts of purification and adorning mentioned in "Jiuge", he suggests that the ritual practices associated with the poems involve the use of effigies as representations of spirits.

In advance of his re-conception Wang Yuan uses glosses from both Wang Yi and Zhu Xi, accepting some of their readings while explicitly rejecting others, sometimes by comparison with their general usage in *Chuci* as above in the use of *fang* 芳 (fragrance). My translation of the final sentence of the excerpt above understands *ju* 俱 (all) as a reference to all predecessors of Wang Yuan's commentary who followed the interpretation of Wang Yi regarding the involvement of a medium, Zhu Xi included. In general, Wang Yuan differs from his predecessors in his explicit rejection of previous readings in his commentary (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 99–100).

This different understanding of the ritual process allows Wang Yuan to regard the following lines 3 to 8 as descriptions of the cloud spirit. It is the spirit (*ling* 靈) that has already come to rest in the effigy as indicated by the limitless brightness of the clouds (3–4). The exclamation at the beginning of line 5 becomes an expression of the spirit's intention to rest in the shrine, the shrine's designation as palace of long life an embellishment in praise of the spirit. In contrast to the limitless brightness in line 4, Wang Yuan understands the comparison of the cloud spirit's radiance with sun and moon as pointing to the continued presence of the clouds' brightness. In his commentary to line 6, Wang Yuan further highlights the poet's technique of interlocking lines of the spirit's movement with its effect of bright radiance, suggesting their basic arrangement as line 3 followed by line 5, and line 4 by line 6:

> The four lines above (3–6) form a stanza by inversion. In a smoother arrangement, the lines would read: 'The spirit curls up in it. How it wishes to rest in the palace of longevity! Its glare of brilliant brightness without end, its radiance matching that of sun and moon. 此上四句相錯成章。若順言之， 本謂「靈連蜷兮既留，蹇將憺兮壽宮。爛昭昭兮未央，與日月兮齊光」也。

This point is notable because if it is not just another way of making his reading more understandable, it shows Wang Yuan's consideration of the poet's craft.

For lines 7 to 8, "Driven by dragons in virtue of its sovereign dress, it keeps hovering and going round for the moment" 龍駕兮帝服，聊翱游兮周章, Wang Yuan cites Zhu Xi's correction of Wang Yi — actually going back to Lü Xiang — that since it is dragons that ride on clouds, the line must mean that the spirit is moving in a carriage drawn by dragons, wearing the dress of a sovereign. He further adds that the language used here is an exaggeration.[74] He repeats this point in his comments to line 8 that follow existing understandings of the hovering of the spirit with two additional observations. First, the lines serve as a summary of what has been said before. Second, since this entire section serves as the welcoming part of the song, it is written in an overstated fashion, indicating the joy in and thankfulness for the presence of the cloud spirit (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 100).

The second portion of his elaboration following line 14 begins by reiterating the connection between the second and the first section of "Yunzhong jun" which Wang Yuan sees in the transition from line 9 to line 10. Accordingly, line 9 repeats the brilliantly shining appearance of the cloud spirit that has continued since its descent, "The spirit, brilliant and dazzling, since it descended" 靈皇皇兮既降, to contrast it with its sudden departure in line 10, "In a dash, lifts up into the distant midst of clouds" 猋遠舉兮雲中. An additional explanation for line 10 suggests that by making an offering to the clouds and then speaking of ascending amidst clouds, Qu Yuan is using clouds to hint at (*yu* 喻) the loftiness or grandeur of his own ambitions. In support of his view Wang Yuan cites "Dong jun" 東君 (Lord of the East). He argues that this song is about a sacrifice to the sun and that it contains a line about a spirit covering the sun which he also conceives as an expression of this loftiness. He adds that Wang Yi's conceptualisation of the verse as swift return to the cloud spirit's abode is also correct, an example of an explicitly positive evaluation of an earlier interpretation by Wang Yuan.

In the commentator's understanding of line 11, it is the spirit who oversees the realm. Using a definition from *Huainanzi* 淮南子 for Jizhou as the central region, Wang Yuan argues that with Chu situated in the extreme south and Jizhou in the extreme north the inhabitants of Chu called the central region Jizhou to stress the enormous size of the area. The cloud spirit's radiance reaches beyond even Jizhou. I take his summarizing comment that this line speaks about "the extent of the illumination of the radiance of the clouds" 此句言雲光輝照臨之遠也 (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 101) as pointing at the ambivalence of speaking about a cloud spirit versus clouds as an observable phenomenon or a visible

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[74] Zhu Xi got this idea from Hong Xingzu who mentioned Lü Xiang's divergent understanding in his sub-commentary (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 102).

representation of the spirit. This is confirmed by Wang's comment to line 12. It points out the different perspectives presented by the couplet. Accordingly, line 11 "It overlooks the central region of Ji and what lies beyond" 覽冀州兮有餘 is "particular straightforward in expressing the spirit's outlook" 專而直言之也", whereas line 12 "It expands across the four seas. Where are its limits?" 橫四海兮焉窮 is "expressing it from an encompassing and transverse kind of view" 統而横言之也 (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 101). The reason for his detailed analysis only becomes clear in the commentary on the last lines 13 and 14. Here Wang Yuan argues that the pounding of the troubled heart serves to reveal the extreme degree of the poet's longing: "Since this section of the song is about sending off the spirit, it therefore goes to extremes in its expressions of loftiness and its idea of admiration" 此段蓋送神之曲，故極其高遠之詞，思慕之意也 (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 101).

The concluding remark to his commentary to "Yunzhong jun" first reiterates the structure of the song (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 102). Accordingly, the first two lines describe the setting up and adorning of the effigy, the next six lines welcome the spirit's arrival, and the last six lines, presented from the spirit's point of view, relatively speaking, send it off. Wang Yuan then cites Zhu Xi's core evaluation of "Yunzhong jun" as expressing Qu Yuan's mindset of loyalty to his sovereign and patriotism to his country through depicting his yearning and his inability to forget the intimate relation between spirit and man.[75] He characterises Zhu's standpoint as pervasive adding that there is no need to trivialise its meaning by expressing the poet's reverence for his king. He also rejects an unnamed critic's claim that "Yunzhong jun" is an occasional work without any deeper meaning, arguing instead that the song and the "Jiuge" follow in the tradition of Music Bureau poetry which by virtue of its genre is imbued with deeper meaning. As proof he restates some lines from "Yunzhong jun" and points to a parallel in "Beihuifeng" 悲回風 that likens Qu Yuan's ambition and moral fortitude to the loftiness of floating clouds. This leads to his final suggestion that "Yunzhong jun" might be modelled on this idea, possibly an imitation of Xunzi's Cloud Rhapsody (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 102).

In his second elaboration at the end of "Yunzhong jun" Wang Yuan draws attention to the specific use of expressions and how these serve to create a certain effect. Compared to Zhu Xi, his approach to disclose the song's inherent message is almost surgical. Wang Yuan's commentary differs from that of his predecessor in his keen attention to the structure of the poem, the consistent construction of his annotations, the justification for many of his deductions, and his openly expressed rejection or acceptance of previous interpretations. While Zhu Xi attempted to persuade readers through his eminence, coupled with the supposed superiority of his reading techniques compared to those of his predecessors, Wang Yuan, as evident from the length of his annotations, tried to convince his audience with a carefully arranged series of observations and conclusions. Sharing Zhu Xi's disdain for allegorical readings, he looks instead for intertextual or external evidence related to the supposed origin of the song. But unlike Zhu Xi, his conclusions suggest that he even begins to question the alleged background for the creation of "Jiuge" as described in Wang Yi's preface. Ultimately, it is Wang Yuan's interest in establishing the past of these works, coupled with his extensive knowledge and scepticism,

[75] Compare Zhu Xi's statement in note 50 in this article.

that allows him to reach a new level of interpretive depth. His mention of an unnamed critic who claimed "Yunzhong jun" to be devoid of any deeper meaning is significant, because it indicates that the discussions at Wang Yuan's time had already gone further than the commentaries analysed here would suggest.

5. Clearing the Fog of Misleading Interpretations — Lin Yunming

The title of Lin Yunming's commentary *Chuci deng* 楚辭燈 (The Songs of Chu Illumined) could probably do with a more emphatic translation because Lin described reading through existing "Lisao" commentaries as "like sitting in a dark room for long nights with absolutely nothing to see" 如長夜坐暗室，茫無所睹 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 2). In contrast Lin intended "to be lucid like seeing fire, to give the reader back a text that has a beginning and an end and provides leads and clues" 洞如觀火，還他一部有首有尾，有端有緒之文 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 2).

Lin Yunming 林雲銘 (ca. 1628–1697) was well educated from an early age. He is described as an avid reader in his youth, forgetting to eat while reading and being ridiculed as a bookworm when he didn't take off his clothes while bathing with his siblings (Li and Zhu 1996, 205). Lin received his *jinshi* degree in 1658, took up a post in Huizhou 徽州 (modern Huangshan, Anhui province), but his concern for commoners coupled with difficulties in adjusting to the new Qing administration led to his dismissal. He did not find another appointment until being expelled in 1667. During a rebellion against Qing rule led by the quasi-independent ruler of Fujian, Geng Jingzhong 耿精忠 (d. 1681) that began in 1674, he was imprisoned for eighteen months in Fuzhou 福州 (Yi 1991, 495). Released, he moved to Hangzhou 杭州 where he became a scribe for hire. His introduction to *Chuci deng* indicates that he was an ardent admirer of Qu Yuan and the *Chuci*, and that he identified with the fate of the poet in later life (*Chuci deng* 2012, 1–2).

Two drafts of his commentary were lost to flames during the suppression of the rebellion in Fuzhou and later in Hangzhou; the earliest existing version was not completed until 1697 (Yi 1991, 497). *Chuci deng* consists of four chapters. Focussing exclusively on works attributed to Qu Yuan, Lin Yunming argued that the other authors lacked the poet's skill and ambition (*zhi* 志), essentially producing copies bereft of any spirit or emotion (*Chuci deng* 2012, 4). To these he added "Zhaohun" and "Dazhao" 大招 (The Great Summons) maintaining that the poet created the former as a call to himself, and the latter, as indicated by "great" in the title, to call back the soul of King Huai.[76] Attempting to "date" the poems by Qu Yuan, Lin included the biography of Qu Yuan by Sima Qian followed by a section on the Chu kings Huai and Xiang 襄. He also argued that the last three songs in "Jiuge" referred not to

[76] Lin Yunming was keenly observant and noticed that, for Sima Qian, Qu Yuan and not Song Yu 宋玉 was the author of "Zhaohun". Compare *Shiji* (1982, 84: 2503).

spirits but to ghosts or recently deceased persons. This allowed him to consider them as one set and not only bring the number of songs down to nine as indicated by the chapter’s title, but also to arrive at a total number of twenty-five works, equivalent to the number of scrolls listed in the “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 catalogue of the *Han shu* under Qu Yuan *fu* 屈原賦 (*Han shu* 1982, 30: 1747). Lin Yunming thus addressed questions that have preoccupied *Chuci* scholars ever since.

Lin Yunming divides his annotations into three steps. A highly economical interlinear commentary is punctuated with supporting explanations to each section of a text which are marked by a circle at the beginning (*Chuci wenxian jicheng* 2008, 7427–7428). These are followed by an overview of the entire text, coupled with a review that straightens each poem out (*Chuci deng* 2012, 5). Here follows the overview provided at the end of “Yunzhong jun”. I have divided this lengthy text into three parts:

> Lin Xizhong said: in their distribution across the sky, there is no distance clouds cannot reach, sometimes moving, sometimes resting, they can all be observed by man but not reached, and it is just like this with them as spirits. The two lines in which hands open gently to go out and greet the spirit in a sincere and respectful manner are meant to say that the entering spirit stops in the sky and does not move, and this extends to the conditions that when it moves, it does not come down and when it comes down it does not stay. [If that is the case] then the sincere and respectful manner with which the spirit is greeted cannot but be conveyed as the exhaustion from longing for the spirit, the gist [of the song] is already exhaustively [present], and the many twists and turns entirely evident. 林西仲曰：雲之為章於天，無遠不到，或行或止，皆使人可望而不可即，其為神亦猶是也。開手輕輕提出迎神誠敬二句，即說入[77]神之止於天而不行，及行而不降與降而不留之景。則迎神之誠敬，不得不轉為思神之勞瘁，大旨已盡，層折甚明也 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 35–36).

The overview’s first section states Lin Yunming’s understanding that, though clouds can be venerated, they should not be conceived as a moving spirit-entity that can be enticed to descend to enter a medium or partake in a sacrifice. Thus understood, he maintains, the song more immediately conveys the distance as cause for the poet’s yearning and exhaustion. His viewpoint rests on a variety of observations. In general, he questions the context for the creation of the “Jiuge” as alleged by Wang Yi’s preface. He also tries to dissociate Qu Yuan’s craft from the desolate situation it was supposedly created in. More specifically, he goes on to question several key assumptions made by his predecessors, which sometimes led them to add information not found in the lyrics of the song.

> The first two lines that begin with “Bathe in orchid broth” are spoken by the man in charge of the sacrifice, but older annotations conceive them as orders given to a shaman.[78] If that is the case,

[77] The Huadong shifan daxue version of *Chuci deng* has *ren* here instead of *ru* which makes no sense (Lin 2012, 35). The *Chuci wenxian jicheng* edition of the text has *ru* (*Chuci wenxian jicheng* 2008, 7428).

[78] The translation of shaman for medium in this instance better represents what Lin associates with people of this trade.

> should all those in charge of sacrifices have filthy bodies, messy hair, and wear shabby clothes when conducting rituals?[79] What is expressed as "bending and extending it already rests" means nothing else than remain in the sky above, like the meaning of "resting on the sandbank in the middle" from the song "The Lord of the Xiang River", and yet older annotations take it to mean to stay in the body of a medium. If it would stay in the body of a medium, why would it be able to glare so brilliantly as to compete with sun and moon in brightness? And who is it again that hovers and floats around? Moreover, the two characters "already came down" in the following text border on repetition, the word for flame at the beginning of the line including "raised into the distance" should not be used. 其所云「浴蘭湯」二句就主祭言，而舊註以為命巫之詞。然則主祭皆當垢身蓬頭，着敝衣以為禮耶？所云「連蜷既留」，乃留於天上，即《湘君》「留中洲」之義。而舊註以為留于巫身。若留巫身，何以能爛昭昭與日月爭光？其「翱遊周章」者又是誰耶？且下文「既降」二字，涉於重複。即「遠舉」句亦用不得「猋」字矣 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 36).

The second section essentially highlights contradictions in the readings of earlier commentators like the need for purification of ritual specialists, the meaning of bending and extending that had been either associated with the guiding movements of the medium or its physical reaction after being possessed, or the question of what shines or moves around when the spirit is thought to rest in the body of the medium. Why Lin even critiques parts of the poem itself or whether these criticisms also refer to earlier explanations of these characters is unclear.

> From the piece's beginning to its end their never occur characters of a liquor and delicacies kind, and yet the old explanations largely increase them with sayings like "no sooner has it satisfied itself with drinks and food then it dashingly lifts into the distance". If it had been like that, this spirit would have come down for a long time and on top of that got his pleasure out of it. After a daredevil banquet by world standards, why would the poet yearn and sigh, letting his heart rate go to extremes? This is all absolutely clear and easily intelligible, it also should have been passed down unchanged and not be amended like this, I honestly don't know the reason for this. 篇中自首至尾總未嘗通出酒肴字樣而舊註碩添「飲食既飽」，「猋然遠舉」等語。若然是神降既久，而又得其歡矣。世間無不敢之筵席，何必思而歎，極其心之勞乎？此皆最明白易曉者，亦相沿不改如此，余誠不知其何故也 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 36).

The polemics in the final section are obvious. Lin juxtaposes Wang Yi's additions of sacrificial items, which were essential for his explanation of the sacrificial process and the movement of the spirit, with his own understanding, which is also coherent without them, since he understands all movements as

[79] The sentence could also mean: should all those in charge of sacrifices consider filthy bodies, messy hair, and wearing shabby clothes as ceremonially appropriate?

descriptions of passing clouds. At its end Lin even questions the rationale of the entire exegetical process.

In Lin Yunming's interlinear commentary to "Yunzhong jun", it is Qu Yuan himself, purified not by actual flowers but by their odem (*qi* 氣), who is in charge of the ritual (lines 1–2). He greets the cloud spirit looking up, observing its movement and its borderless brilliance (lines 3–4). The palace of long life becomes the spirit's abode in the sky. The performer of the ritual rejoices in the spirit's glare which contrasts with the shine of the sun and moon and is understood by Lin as that which is at rest and does not move (lines 5–6). The cloud spirit is escorted by dragons as if drawn by a carriage. It displays five colours as if clad in a deity's dress, only moving around in the sky and not descending (lines 7–8). To line 8 Lin adds his first supporting explanation. It says that in the lines "above the poet relates how he greets the spirit by observing what corresponds to his descent" 已上敘迎神而望其降之切 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 35). Its meaning becomes clearer when read in conjunction with his supporting comment to line 12. Accordingly, "[Qu Yuan's] own account of the tardiness of the spirit's descent and the speed of its departure above is not concerned with the [literal] greeting of a spirit by a man" 已上敘神降之遲而去之速，不以人之迎神為念 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 35). Lin's comment to line 11 that the spirit is not ready to stay for even a short time (不肯暫留), once more underlines his idea that though Qu Yuan conceived "Yunzhong jun" as a description of him performing a sacrifice to the cloud spirit, notions of the spirit's descent and return, though part of these rituals, cannot be meant literally. At the end of the song Lin purports that in the final analysis the performer of the ritual was unable to exhaustively display his sincerity during the ritual which is why he expresses his longing with deep sighs and extreme exhaustion, as indicated by his pounding heart (lines 13–14). Lin concludes with a final supplementary explanation: "Due to losing what he observed after receiving the spirit, he is concerned that his longing will never be released from the bond formed" 以迎神既失所望而繫思終不釋作結 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 35). With his final comment Lin Yunming reinforces the idea of the bond between Qu Yuan and this higher being. While Zhu Xi described it as Qu Yuan's inability to forget, Lin understands it as the poet's fear of not being able to free himself from this connection, which takes the inviolability of this bond to an even higher level.

It should be evident that Lin Yunming took the interpretation of "Yunzhong jun" to another level. His final comments at the end of the overview as cited above are particularly striking because he questions the rationale for a complex exegetical process of 1500 years, anticipating criticisms that are generally associated with the critique of the Confucian commentary tradition following the May Fourth Movement in the early 20th century. And yet it was not long before he was criticised by contemporaries such as Zhu Ji 朱冀 (no precise dates) and others,[80] continuing a process of interpretation that lasts to this day.

[80] For his criticism, which is primarily directed against Lin's view of Qu Yuan's behaviour, see Li and Zhu (1996, 210–212); Yi (1919, 501–504).

Conclusion

From the selection of commentaries above, it is evident that the *Chuci* commentators, like their colleagues who interpreted canonical texts, were engaged in an ongoing endeavour to make sense of texts. Under their hands “Yunzhong jun” underwent an astonishing transformation as its interpretation evolved. The commentators gradually, at times involuntarily, detached the poem from the contextual framework provided by Wang Yi’s preface to the “Jiuge”, with the attribution to the author, the idea of the song’s autobiographical nature, the description of a ritual involving a deity, and the poet’s emotional response at the end arguably the only pillars still standing.

Their motivations for challenging existing readings varied. They ranged from raising the status of Qu Yuan’s poetry in the face of prominent critics (Wang Yi), adapting a commentary to a different format, and partly revising it (Five Ministers), or applying new philosophical ideas that came with new reading techniques to a review of existing commentaries (Zhu Xi). Triggered by another philosophical paradigm they attempted to reach even beyond the earliest commentaries (Wang Yuan), or they were personally motivated to enter the challenge (Lin Yunming), as they, like so many officials in China before them, identified personally with Qu Yuan, and disagreed with the interpretations of others.

None of these commentators ignored existing readings. To the contrary, they mostly rested their understandings on a modification or refutation of older interpretations. To disprove earlier understandings, they used a variety of techniques as well as “new” evidence. However, it is not always clear whether the discovery of such evidence — like the effigy that replaced the medium in Wang Yuan’s commentary — was prompted by actual research or should rather be viewed as a reflection of an understanding of the past of their own time. While the toolset of glosses hardly changed over time, different reading techniques heightened the awareness of the relation between sound, rhythm, word-order, and meaning in the main text. Beginning with Zhu Xi and taken to new levels by Wang Yuan and Lin Yunming, the introduction of different arrangements of in-text commentaries and structured levels of interpretational engagement allowed commentators to bolster their exegesis from various angles. Not only did this approach require consistency, but it most likely also increased consistency.

Most commentators, except perhaps the Five Ministers, perceived their different interpretations, if not as significant improvements (Zhu Xi), then as conscious reversals of existing understandings (Wang Yuan, Lin Yunming). As demonstrated by their commentaries, Wang and Lin went to great lengths to prove the validity of their claims. The commentary of the Five Ministers came as a surprise. Perhaps this was because their annotations in the mainstream editions of the *Wenxuan* follow Wang Yi’s commentary, so their contributions were rarely considered more than a sub-commentary. A close reading of their commentaries to “Yunzhong jun” suggests that not only did they offer their own understanding of the song, but that their commentaries may not even have originally been intended to be combined with Wang Yi’s commentary in one work.

My final question, namely whether it is possible to identify what remained controversial in the understanding of this poem, as opposed to what was taken for granted over longer periods of commentary production, requires an answer on the micro level of the text and the macro level of commentary discourse. The idea that the continued use of Wang Yi’s annotations by later commentators indicates

acceptance of his readings, but their modifications or replacements indicate controversy, is refuted by the fact that glosses often produce meaning only in combination. Even when certain glosses are retained, their explanations may gradually change in meaning, pending on the context of the surrounding annotations. However, glosses to certain independent characters, distinct by position or meaning compared to the rest of a line in the main text, may retain their meaning. One example is the exclamation at the beginning of line 5, the other the initial character (*liao* 聊) of line 8. Later commentators, however, may also presuppose understandings without further reference that were previously indicated by glosses.

At the macro-level of debate among commentators, there is more controversy than agreement. What most commentators agreed on about "Yunzhong jun" up until the early Qing dynasty was its authorship, the autobiographical nature of its content, its description of a ritual, and the poet's desolation at its end. What most commentators disagreed on arose from the question of how the action described in the song could be reconciled with the commentators' specific image of Qu Yuan. This ties in with the discussion of how commentators used their commentaries to portray and evaluate Qu Yuan's moral qualities. The question of the extent to which controversies at the level of "Yunzhong jun" reflect broader controversies, such as those over the status of Qu Yuan and his poetry or the issue of loyalty and patriotism, awaits further investigation.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exposing the Authorial Intent? Self-Commentaries in Xie Lingyun's *Shanju Fu*

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One remarkable feature of the early-fifth-century autobiographical poem *Shanju fu* 山居賦 (*Fu* on dwelling in the mountains) by Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433) is that the poet provided his verse with regular annotation in what he called "self-commentaries" (*zizhu* 自註). The *Shanju fu*, composed in the grand *fu* genre, was written after the poet, following his abrupt decision, not sanctioned by the court, to retire from office, settled on his ancestral estate in Shining in Guiji prefecture on the eastern periphery of Song state. The poem provides extensive descriptions of the environment through the eyes of the poet personally observing, discovering, inspecting, managing, and enjoying his estate. These descriptions are framed with brief meditations on the general topic of living in reclusion, the lives of the poet and his ancestors, and his own pursuit of Daoist longevity and Buddhist enlightenment. Unlike previous scholarship about the *Shanju fu*, I discuss the poem from the perspective of its self-commentaries and argue that they are an important structural device enabling the author to mitigate the potentially dangerous rhetoric of political independence and sovereignty subtly expressed in the poem.

新劉宋朝局勢剛剛穩定不久，謝靈運（385 – 433 年）辭官歸隱，回到祖居始寧別墅，創作了著名的自傳體辭賦《山居賦》，展現了作為莊園主的獨立性和高雅風致。在這篇宏大的賦作中，詩人不僅繼承了漢大賦恢弘的結構和磅礴的氣勢，還大膽地融入了創新元素。不同於傳統賦體的誇張與華麗，他以第一人稱生動地描繪家族莊園的細節和自己的山居生活，記錄了個人的親身經歷與細膩觀察。此外，作者在行文中添加了豐富的自註，使《山居賦》在賦史上獨樹一幟。與以往關於《山居賦》的研究不同，本文從自註的角度切入，將其視為一種重要的結構設計。通過對內容的精心註釋，謝靈運巧妙地引導讀者按照他設定的路徑理解作品，避免因誤讀而引發潛在的顛覆性解讀，進而消解關於他"背叛朝廷"或"稱雄鄉裡"的猜測和議論。

Keywords: Xie Lingyun, *Shanju fu*, self-commentary

關鍵詞： 謝靈運，《山居賦》，自註

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Introduction[1]

In the autumn of the first year of the short-lived Jingping 景平 era (423), Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433), disappointed by the failure of his political ambitions during the Jin–Song transition and humiliated by his demotion, decided to leave the official service of the recently enthroned incompetent teenage emperor Shaodi 少帝 (r. 423–424) and "forever" retire to his family estate in Shining 始寧, Guiji 會稽 prefecture, on the south-eastern periphery of Song state.[2] After relocating to his ancestral home, Xie Lingyun composed the *Shanju fu* 山居賦 (*Fu* on dwelling in the mountains), an extensive autobiographical poem of some 9,000 characters in the grand *fu* (*da fu* 大賦) genre.[3] This long composition consists of a short preface (*xu* 序) followed by the *fu* proper in forty-seven thematically distinct stanzas (*zhang* 章)[4] of unequal length that are rhymed and use an elaborate metre.[5] Most of the *fu* is dedicated to a fairly detailed description of the environment, both natural and man-made, around Shining, presenting itself as a factual record based on the poet's personal observations as he roams around the landscape, discovers its beauties, and manages and develops his estate. Here he also practises religious activities, searches for longevity drugs, and above all, as he repeatedly remarks, enjoys himself. Eight stanzas – four in the beginning and four in the conclusion – frame the mostly factual descriptions with more general argumentation and personal statements of values and aspirations. These touch upon the ideas of hermit life (stanzas 1, 2), the wisdom of Buddhist teachings (stanza 43), the Daoist view of the uselessness of book knowledge (stanza 44), and the search for longevity (stanza 46). Part of the framing, also, are stanzas with biographical information: one introducing Xie Lingyun's grandfather, Xie Xuan 謝玄 (343–388; stanza 4), in whose footsteps the poet has decided to retire to Shining (stanza 5), and one about the poet himself and his love for literature and literary talent (stanza 45). In the last stanza, the personal and philosophical merges in a short proclamation of Buddhist enlightenment as the ultimate goal of the poet's reclusive life.

Shen Yue in his biography of Xie Lingyun, before he inserts the full text of the *Shanju fu*, writes: "Each time a poem of his arrived in the city, everybody hastened to copy it, and in a moment it was all around, among nobility and commoners alike. From near and far, all adored it, and his fame resounded throughout the capital" (每有一詩至都邑，貴賤莫不競寫，宿昔之間，士庶皆徧，遠近欽慕，

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[1] I want to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions and comments. I also thank Marie Bizais-Lillig for initiating our discussion about commentaries in early and medieval Chinese literature and for her insights and comments. My thanks also to Alison Hardie for polishing some of my translations.

[2] After two and a half years, he eventually returned to the capital to resume office. In 428 he would retire again for another short period but was forced by circumstances to return to office again in 431, never to go back to his home estate. For a detailed biography see Frodsham 1967.

[3] The text is mostly complete, with several lacunae and one full stanza missing. In this article I used the *Song shu* 宋書 edition (Shen Yue 1974: 1753–1772), occasionally consulting Gu 2004 and Li 1999. I also consulted translations by Westbrook 1973 and Elvin 2008. For translation I use Westbrook as much as possible; if not marked as such, a translation is my own. I have unified transcription, punctuation, and capitalisation in verse in all translations.

[4] For the sake of simple identification, I number the stanzas, as Westbrook 1973 does as well, though he calls them "sections".

[5] For details about the elaborate metre, see the commentaries on the translation in Westbrook 1973.

名動京師; *Song shu* 67.1754). Thus, we can assume that when Xie Lingyun composed the *Shanju fu* he could also expect it would be read, admired, and discussed in the capital like his lyrical poetry. Compared to other poetry of the period, including Xie Lingyun's own *Zhuan zheng fu* 撰征賦 (Record of the Punitive Expedition), composed a few years earlier to celebrate general Liu Yu's 劉裕 (363–422; future emperor Wudi 武帝 of the Song) military campaign to the north, the language of the *Shanju fu* is relatively simple. Though the verse is mostly transparent, particularly in the descriptive stanzas, the poet annotated each stanza with a self-commentary (*zizhu* 自註) in plain prose. Like the stanzas, the commentaries are also of unequal length but put together they occupy more than half of the whole composition. Their considerable bulk and regular occurrence suggest that the poet used the commentaries as a structural device contributing to the overall meaning of the composition. Given the role of commentary in classical texts (Makeham 2003, Cheng 2017), we may assume that the unprecedented literary device of annotating his own verse was motivated by the poet's wish to guide the readers to the "proper" understanding of his poem and reveal his authorial intent. The central question of this article is how these self-commentaries are employed and what they convey. I will argue that Xie Lingyun complemented his verse with commentaries mainly to counterbalance the potentially dangerous implications of the themes of power and independence encoded in his choice of genre and permeating his proud depiction of his life on the family estate. The danger was not negligible given Xie Lingyun's personal record in the power struggles during the recent years of dynastic change.

The Rhetoric of Power

Thus far, scholars have not considered issues of power as central to the *Shanju fu.* The poem is mostly read as a eulogy of Xie Lingyun's Shining estate and as an innovation in the art of landscape literature (Knechtges 2012) or as an expression of a particular way of eremitism (Swartz 2010, 2018). Due to its comprehensive descriptions of both the natural landscape and economic activities on the land, Mark Elvin introduced it to English readers as "the first coherent conception of an environment" in China (Elvin 2008). Cheng Yu-yu 鄭毓瑜 does elaborate the issue of imperial rhetoric present in the poem, as she points out the presence of the genre conventions of the ancient grand *fu*; however, central to her reading is Xie Lingyun's new method of knowledge production through bodily experience recorded in the poem which "heralds a new kind of geographical discourse" (Cheng 2007: 204).

However, we also encounter in Xie Lingyun's comprehensive description of his mountain abode a distinct thread of meaning that is undoubtedly related to power and politics. This connection is signalled by the choice of genre and some of the vocabulary used, as the poet inscribes his family estate and his own person on to the template of Han-dynasty monumental descriptions of "all under heaven" with the omnipotent ruler at its centre.[6] Like the rulers in the grand *fu* of the Han, who travel around

[6] Knechtges also mentions that Xie Lingyun "is surveying his realm in the manner of an ancient sovereign" (2012: 30) and other scholars briefly comment on the grand *fu* template as well, but they do not regard the choice of genre and its conventions as essential for the

the imaginary world they rule over, Xie Lingyun also surveys his ancestral lands in the direction of the four cardinal points of the compass, switches between views of mountains rising upward and waters flowing below, and changes perspective from broad vistas to the "ten thousand things" presented through catalogues of plants and animals. In doing so, he introduces the environment as a self-sustained complete universe with himself in possession of and with full control over his "domain" (*fengyu* 封域; stanza 16).

Xie Lingyun frames the description of his estate with the legacy of his grandfather Xie Xuan, once the most powerful man in the Jin dynasty, whose former house and grave are located there. The poet also encodes power and authority in the key vocabulary of "landscape" (*shanchuan* 山川, mountains and streams, instead of *shanshui* 山水 typically used in recluse poetry), a topos used throughout the poem and originally related to regional administration and government control (Cheng 2008). Unlike in earlier recluse literature, the mountain abode Xie Lingyun depicts is not just a place to hide away from the mundane world. He writes that he also "administers it" (commentaries to stanzas 4, 5, and 29), using the vocabulary known from ancient texts as referring to the power of the ruler determining the borders of his lands (*jing* 經, or *jinglüe* 經略).[7] It is a place "opened by development" (*kaichuang* 開創; commentary to stanza 34), in which all sorts of production are occurring. Thus, the poet can claim economic self-sufficiency and has therefore "established himself" (*li* 立) on his fields (stanza 17), hence has become independent of the power centre at the court, "watering vegetables to provide for myself, not awaiting outside help" (灌蔬自供，不待外求者也; commentary to stanza 40).[8]

Imperial grandeur lingers behind the comparisons of his lands with the famous parks of the ancient feudal lords and rich aristocrats through references to Mei Sheng 枚乘 (d. 140 BCE), Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179–117 BCE), Zhang Heng 張衡 (78–139 CE), Zuo Si 左思 (250–305), and other famous grand *fu* authors. Xie Lingyun claims that his Shining estate is superior to the famous parks of ancient rulers because of its completeness, which in turn is the core quality of the cosmic visions of the grand *fu*. In the preface he assures readers that the estate he is going to describe in his poem is unlike the imperial visions offered by the famous authors of the grand *fu*: "What I sing of on the present occasion is not the splendid appearance and sounds of the palaces or hunting expeditions in capital cities ..." (今所賦既非京都宮觀、遊獵聲色之盛...). Wendy Swartz understands this and a few other similar statements in the poem rejecting the grand *fu* tradition to mean that the *Shanju fu* is "deliberately situated outside the received corpus of *fu*" (2010: 383). However, by explicitly mentioning the themes and authors of the paradigmatic grand *fu*, Xie Lingyun still brings an awareness of the imperial imagination into the discourse. The poet, in a certain way, even compares himself to the

meaning of the poem.

[7] See the *Zuozhuan* 左傳, Lord Zhao 7: "The Son of Heaven determines the borders and the princes rectify the frontiers" (天子經略，諸侯正封。) (*Zuo Tradition* 2016: 1413).

[8] "Watering vegetables" is a variant of a widely used allusion to self-sufficiency in hermit life. It originated in the story of Chen Zhongzi 陳仲子 of the Waring States period, who withdraw from office to "water his garden" (灌园). Xie Lingyun might echo here the usage of this allusion in Pan Yue's 潘岳 (247–300) *Xianju fu* 闲居赋 (*Fu* on Living in Idleness): "I water my garden, sell vegetables in order to supply food for my morning and evening meals" (灌園粥蔬，以供朝夕之膳) (trans. Knechtges 1996: 147).

exemplary rulers of antiquity, the Yellow Emperor 黃帝 and Yao 堯, when alluding to Zhuangzi 莊子 (ca. 4th century BCE), who claims that the ancient sages eventually left the palace to enjoy themselves in the wilderness (see preface and stanza 1, which are from a structural perspective the crucial places setting up the poem's main themes).

The poet, however, counterbalances the rhetoric of power and sovereignty that might potentially be interpreted as subversive of the absolute power of the Song ruler. Unlike the expansive imaginary space typical of the grand *fu* embracing "all under heaven", Xie Lingyun places himself at the centre of a distinct space located on the periphery of the Song state with clearly delineated borders. Beginning with a general view of his "mountain abode" surrounded by waters and mountain ranges (stanza 6), he makes clear that his estate is blocked off from the rest of the country by difficult terrain. When he circles his domain for the second time (stanzas 11–14), he reconfirms the seclusion of his estate, and hence its distance from the centre of power in the capital, by naming mountains and rivers in the distance enclosing Shining on all sides, some inhabited by legendary recluses and immortals who also abandoned official service. Xie Lingyun further reiterates the limits of his domain by describing its concrete and local-specific features, turning the hyperbolic, imaginary visions of the expansive realm of all-under-heaven of the grand *fu* mould into a truthful record of a unique locality personally experienced and transformed by the poet.

Power and politics are present in yet another aspect of the *Shanju fu*, in the topos of a timely retirement from the highest courtly positions. Xie Lingyun first alludes to this in the theme-setting stanza 1 through stories of famous officials of the past, who after accomplishing remarkable deeds in the service of their rulers either withdrew from politics and thus preserved their life (Zhang Liang 張良 and Fan Li 範蠡), or remained in service and were eventually executed (Li Si 李斯 and Lu Ji 陸機).[9] He uses the same topos when writing about his grandfather Xie Xuan, recounting how Xuan, together with his uncle Xie An 謝安 (320–385), distinguished himself in securing the survival of the Jin dynasty and held the highest state positions, but eventually "asked to be released from office in order to avoid the troubles at the court" (於是便求解駕東歸，以避君側之亂; commentary to stanza 4).

The Commentaries

Writing extensive commentaries on one's own poem was an unprecedented literary device. According to Qing scholar Wang Qisun 王芑孫 (1755–1817), Xie Lingyun was the first author to annotate his

[9] Zhang Liang (250–189 BCE) helped to establish the Han dynasty, and Fan Li (536–448 BCE) helped king Goujian 勾践 of Yue 越 defeat Wu 吳. Both distanced themselves from the court of their rulers to practise the art of longevity, and thus avoided later turmoil. On the contrary, Li Si (280–208 BCE), who was instrumental in setting up the power of Qin Shihuangdi 秦始皇帝, and Lu Ji (261–303 CE), who achieved considerable success for his lord in the wars known as the Rebellion of Eight Princes, did not withdraw and eventually misfortune befell them. Both are known for regretting their decisions before being executed. Reference to the negative example of Pan Yue and Lu Ji in a way echoes discussion between Xie Lingyun's cousins Zhan 瞻 and Hui 晦 discussed by Cynthia Chennault (1999, 277–278).

own poem. The next to do so, only one and a half centuries later, was another Six Dynasties author, Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531–591). In Wang Qisun's opinion, Xie Lingyun thus established a new genre of self-commentary in Chinese literature. [10]

For his experiment, Xie Lingyun chose the *zhu* 註 type commentary widespread during the early medieval period and typically used outside the established orthodox commentarial traditions (Makeham, 373–375). The *zhu* (which Makeham translates as "annotation") combines the practice of the *xungu* 訓詁 philological glosses typical of Eastern Han *gu wen* 古文 scholars with the *zhangju* 章句 type of exegesis explaining the overall meaning of each "section and sentence", first employed by Wang Yi 王逸 (fl. 130–140) in the *Chuci* 楚辭 poetic anthology (Schimmelpfennig 2004). Although Xie Lingyun sometimes glosses pronunciations and identifies the sources of intertextual references, he predominantly comments on his verses using a simple narrative, summarising their contents or elaborating upon a select meaning. Thus, the poet does to his own verse what Liu Xie 劉勰 would define in the *Wen xin diao long* 文心雕龍 as the purpose of the commentaries attached to the classics: "To elaborate and praise the meaning expressed by the sages; there is nothing as good as commenting on the classics" (*fu zan shen zhi, mo ruo zhu jing* 敷讚聖旨, 莫若註經; Zhou 1986, 445).

Disambiguation and Judgement

Xie Lingyun's self-commentaries typically remove potential ambiguities contained in his verse. The shortest ones briefly summarise the preceding stanza, restating in a factual way what was expressed in verse, even though the verse may not be difficult to understand. Such redundancy by the fact of repetition also highlights the main point of the prior verse.[11] For example, in stanza 33 about his two mountain residences the poet seeks to emphasise in this way their difficulty of access:

若迺南北兩居，	Now there are two dwellings, south and north,
水通陸阻。	connected by water, blocked by land.
觀風瞻雲，	I observe the wind, look up to the clouds –
方知厥所。	and only then know where they are.

兩居謂南北兩處，各有居止。峯崿阻絕，水道通耳。觀風瞻雲，然後方知其處所。

[10] Quoted from Hu 2013, 43. On the early evolution of "auto-commentary" in Chinese poetry, including in the *fu* genre, see Tian Xiaofei in this volume.

[11] The repetitiveness inspired Zhao Hongxiang (2016) to offer a hypothesis tracing the origins of the format of Xie Lingyun's self-commentary to the *Fojing heben zizhu* 佛經合本子註, i.e., editions of Buddhist sutras in which several different versions of the same text are collected together.

> "Two dwellings" means that the southern and northern sites each has a lodging. The peaks and cliffs block them completely, they are connected just by a water route. Only after I observe the wind and look up to the clouds, do I know where these places are (stanza 33).

Searching for one's way and getting lost in the mountains are reminiscent of a literary motif Xie Lingyun uses in his *shi* 詩 "landscape poetry", which is open to savouring potential meanings "beyond the words". His self-commentary limits the meaning to the factual statement that the places described are remote and difficult to access, and thus precludes a potential figurative reading. The same motif of difficult access and seeking the way by looking to the sky is again elaborated in a longer stanza about the environment of the northern residence. There, in twenty-four verses, the poet records his hikes in the mountains followed by a cross-water journey during which he becomes disoriented in thick bushes and in the end finds his way only by observing the stars (stanza 36). The imaginative verse of this stanza is open to the symbolism of seeking the way, but in the commentary the poet bluntly summarises his experience in one sentence before adding his personal judgement about the landscape:

> 往反經過，自非巖澗，便是水逕，洲島相對，皆有趣也。
>
> My route there and back, if it is not through ravines, proceeds by water; the islets face each other and it is all fascinating (stanza 36).

Laudatory remarks about the scenery like the one concluding the self-commentary to the just quoted stanza is one of the recurring features. Short explicit appraisals of course pale in the face of the vivid verse depictions and thus seem redundant. However, like the repetitive summaries, they function as indicators of what the poet wants to draw his readers' attention to. Through frequent assessments of his estate as fascinating (有趣), beautiful (*mei* 美), marvellous (*qi* 奇), pleasant (*le* 樂), or enjoyable (*wan* 玩), he echoes his initial statement from the preface that he "ventures to indulge his pleasure" (*gan shuai suo le* 敢率所樂), a remark guiding the reader away from the rhetoric of power to the socially sanctioned idea of living a reclusive life in accord with one's "inborn nature and disposition" (*xing qing* 性情).

Authenticity and Realism

The most visible effect of the self-commentaries in the *Shanju fu* is to underscore the authenticity and realism of the poem as a truthful record of the poet's life in his mountain abode. In some cases, the self-commentaries specify what was mentioned in the verse in general terms, whereas in others, they elaborate on the details of what the verse has already mentioned. With the help of the self-commentaries, the poet adds further local specific details and highlights his estate as a place unique in its

physical reality. Xie Lingyun adds or explains local toponyms, precise locations, distances and measurements, and records other factual aspects of the environment. As a result, as scholars have already noted, the commentaries virtually map out the space in which the poet is physically present.[12] Thus, the commentary in these stanzas guides the reader to focus on the factual, limiting metaphorical readings and potential meanings with dangerous implications of personal ambition.

We encounter a recurring pattern here: the poet first captures a beautiful dynamic landscape in verse which could stand on its own as an accomplished piece of poetry, while in the following commentary, he translates his poetic scenery into the factual language of the geographer and naturalist. The longest commentary of this type is attached to stanza 34, dealing with the house the poet had built at South Mountain; it is written as a full essay of more than 400 characters in length.[13]

Shanju fu contains several shorter examples of the same commentarial strategy. In the *fu* proper, in stanza 8 dedicated to the "near south" of the estate, the poet first charts one of his dramatic landscapes of rivers, cliffs, woods, water, and sand, all elements interconnected and interacting in constant motion. In his commentary, he specifies concrete details at the expense of the original dynamic whole. The verse and prose put together give the reader the impression that the poet is initially carried away by experiencing the beauty and dynamism of the landscape, which has unleashed his poetic art. But then he steps back to assure his readers that his verses mean nothing more than a factual recording of the physical reality of his mountain abode in Shining. Remarks about the terrifying wilderness and the remnants of the former administrative seat, now abandoned and overtaken by the forces of nature, highlight this place's isolation from the centre of civilisation and power in the capital:[14]

近南	Near to the south
則會以雙流，	is a confluence of two streams,
縈以三洲。	which coil around three islands.
表裏回游，	Outward and inward they turn and roam,
離合山川。	parting and joining the mountains and rivers.
愕崩飛於東峭，	Crags topple and fly from the eastern cliffs,
槃傍薄於西阡。	immense boulders extend to the western trail.
拂青林而激波，	The dark woods brush [water] and raise waves;
揮白沙而生漣。	The white sands scatter and form ripples.

雙流，謂剡江及小江，此二水同會於山南，便合流註下。三洲在二水之口，排沙積岸，成此洲漲。表裏離合，是其貌狀也。愕者謂回江岑，在其山居之南界，有石跳出，將

[12] Jin & Jin 2009 use the evidence of the *Shanju fu* to identify the original location of the estate on the current map of Shining and surrounding counties in Zhejiang province.

[13] For a translation of the commentary, see Swartz 2015: 23–25.

[14] For a different reading of this stanza, see Knechtges 2012: 24–25.

崩江中，行者莫不駭慄。槃者是縣故治之所，在江之西岸，用槃石竟渚，並帶青林而連白沙也。

The two streams are the Shan River and the Little River, these two rivers conjoin south of the mountain, and then flow down together. The three islets are located at the mouth of the two rivers, which push sand and accumulate it into banks to form these sediment isles. "Outward and inward" and "parting and joining" describe their appearance. As for the crags, this is Huijiangcen ("The peak where the river turns") on the southern bounds of my mountain residence, rocks leap out as if about to collapse into the river, no one walking around here would remain unterrified. The "Great Boulder" in olden times was the seat of government for this district, it is at the river's … [lacuna]…boulders were used to enclose a holm; it is girdled with dark forests and linked to white sands. (Westbrook 1973, 223–224, adapted)

The following stanza about the western side ("nearby west") of the estate is perhaps the most striking example of turning the reader's attention away from the poetic, and hence the ambivalent, to the concrete and straightforward. The concluding two couplets of the *fu* proper stand out for their imagery and poetic language. Through carefully balanced parallelism, the poet brings together colours, light, and sound, and the landscape, seemingly in motion, is merged into one dynamic picture transformed in time through cause and effect explicitly expressed in the syntactic construction with *yi* 以 and *er* 而 repeated in the last couplet.

近西則	In the near west
楊、賓接峯，	Yang and Bin connect peaks,
唐皇連縱。	Tang and Huang join freely.
室、壁帶谿，	The House and the Wall girdle the gorge,
曾、孤臨江。	Zeng and Gu overlook the river.
竹緣浦以被綠，	Bamboo hems the shores, cloaking them in green,
石照澗而映紅。	rocks shine into the torrent, reflecting red.
月隱山而成陰，	The moon hides in the hills, and it turns dark,
木鳴柯以起風。	the trees sound their branches, and the breeze rises (stanza 9).

The last two couplets are difficult to translate due to the ambivalence of the original enabled by Chinese grammar's flexibility and the multidirectionality of the verbs *zhao* 照 and *ying* 映, both of which have the double meaning of "to shine on" and "to reflect." The third couplet does not simply provide evidence of the colours and light of the landscape; it lets the colours and light appear and spread, reflecting off one another; the scenery is in motion, turning green and red. In the following couplet, the landscape's animation becomes even more complex, as the confusing cause-and-effect relationship

suggested by the grammar obliterates what is reality and what is false appearance. Has it become dark because the moon moved behind the hills, which would imply passing time, or is it the hills that hide the moon's rising above the confined space of a narrow valley? And what is the relationship between the "singing" of the trees and the rising wind? Could it be that with the rising wind (again a temporal element), birds — not mentioned in the verse but present in the self-commentary — hid on the tree branches, singing there? This uncertainty and disorientation draw the reader into the landscape, opening the scenery up to his own imagination and potential figurative reading. In the commentary, however, the poet switches to a dry geographical account, providing place names and other factual data, including references to local lore about immortals, implying again the meaning of seclusion and distance from the capital. The poetic image of the concluding couplet is eventually explained away with a rational argument:[15]

> 楊中、元賓，並小江之近處，與山相接也。唐皇便從北出。室，石室，在小江口南岸。壁，小江北岸。並在楊中之下。壁高四十丈，色赤，故曰照澗而映紅。曾山之西，孤山之南，王子所經始，並臨江，皆被以綠竹。山高月隱，便謂為陰；鳥集柯鳴，便謂為風也。
>
> Yangzhong and Yuanbin are both close to the Little River and are linked to the mountain. Tang and Huang then come out from the north. The House is the Stone House, it is on the south bank of the Little River estuary. The Wall is the north bank of the Little River. Both [mountains] are below Yangzhong. The Wall is forty *zhang* high, tinted red; thus I say "shines in the torrent" and "reflecting red." West of Mount Zeng, south of Mount Gu, is where Master Wang started his activities. Both [mountains] overlook a river, which is cloaked in green bamboo. The mountains are high, and the moon hidden, so I say, "it turns dark"; birds come to roost and branches rustle; thus I say "it causes wind" (stanza 9).[16]

Sometimes the poet's commentaries turn into a naturalist's cataloguing and classifying, with a touch of pedantic over-explanation, such as in stanza 23, which is about the abundance of animals flourishing around the mountains and streams in accord with their nature. In the overall arrangement of the poem, this stanza serves as a general introduction to stanzas focusing on fish, birds, and mountain animals, following descriptions of the vegetation. As in the short summarising commentaries quoted above, the main point here is to highlight one idea from the stanza, in this case, the natural order of things expressed through observing the animals behaving "according to what is proper for them". This notion meshes with the Daoist discourse of naturalness raised in other parts of the poem as well and is in accord with the recluse theme:

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[15] One of the reviewers suggested a more positive assessment of the commentary, pointing out how the commentary acts as an intertext for the poem, letting the reader juxtapose the poetic ambiguities with the factual scene as a value of its own. This is a valuable point; however, from the perspective of literary aesthetics, I still perceive the commentary as destructive to the immediacy of the verse.

[16] My interpretation is one of many possible (see, e.g., Knechtges 2012: 25–26); it was also disputed by Tian Xiaofei during the workshop held in Strasbourg in December 2022. The disagreement conforms to the poetic ambiguity of Xie Lingyun's verse, which is eventually narrowed down by the commentary.

植物既載， Once the vegetation was planted,
動類亦繁。 animals also became abundant.
飛泳騁透， Flying and swimming, galloping and bounding,
胡可根源。 how could one identify them?
觀貌相音， Observing their appearance and listening to their sounds –
備列山川。 they are arrayed through the mountains and streams.
寒燠順節， According with the season, cold and hot,
隨宜匪敦。 they follow what is proper for them, not to be compelled.

草、木、竹，植物。魚、鳥、獸，動物。獸有數種，有騰者，有走者。走者騁，騰者透。謂種類既繁，不可根源，但觀其貌狀，相其音聲，則知山川之好。興節隨宜，自然之數，非可敦戒也。

Grasses, trees, and bamboo are vegetation. Fish, birds, and beasts are animals. Among the beasts there are several kinds: those that leap, and those that run. Those that run, gallop, those that soar up, bound. This means the varieties are so numerous one cannot sort them out. Just by watching appearances and listening to their sounds, I can know how perfect the mountains and streams are. Prospering according to seasons is a matter of what is proper to each of them and it cannot be urged or warned off (stanza 23).

The above-quoted examples illustrate how Xie Lingyun adapts the grand *fu*'s cosmic imagination into naturalistic depictions of the unique secluded space of his estate. The self-commentaries further enhance the factuality of the depictions based on personal observations and involvement with the landscape. In some of his commentaries, particularly in stanza 29, the poet is explicit about the empirical basis of his knowledge about the environment, even rejecting reliance on divination (and hence text dependency): "I say that when I started to manage and plan the place, I personally walked around and endured all possible hardships. I completely removed all its imperfections without using yarrow stalks and tortoise shells" (雲初經略，躬自履行，備諸苦辛也。罄其淺短，無假於龜筮。).

Intertextuality

In Xie Lingyun's time, intertextuality was at the core of the poetic style both in *shi* lyrical poetry and *fu* rhapsodies. Allusions and borrowed vocabulary were used both to embellish the verse and to mediate complex ideas by engaging in dialogue with ancient texts. Notwithstanding the prominent factuality of the *Shanju fu*'s descriptions, confirmed and further developed in the self-commentaries,

some stanzas are rich in intertextual references, and the author devotes considerable space in his self-commentaries to identifying their source texts.

In his close reading of Xie Lingyun's landscape *shi* poetry, Stephen Owen points out that his seemingly direct observations of natural beauty are in fact shaped by literary sources and composed in response to them (Owen 2004).[17] Likewise, Wendy Swartz explores how Xie Lingyun's depictions of the landscape in his *shi* poetry were informed by quotations from the *Yijing* 易經 and more generally *Yijing* hermeneutics (Swartz 2010). In her research on the *Shanju fu*, she finds the same primacy of the *Yijing* text behind the themes of building, ornamentation, and representation, elaborated in the preface and stanza 2 with general ruminations about different types of reclusive life. She explores how the poet used this classic to structure his argument about his own concept of life as a recluse throughout the *fu*.

Besides the *Yijing*, in the *Shanju fu* Xie Lingyun refers to a broad variety of Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist texts, as well as poetry (primarily *fu*), yet he mostly does so in a less complex manner than suggested by his use of the *Yijing*. Particularly in the descriptive stanzas, the intertextual references which the poet annotates in his self-commentaries do not so much reveal a structural pattern behind the representation of the landscape as they *ex post facto* provide textual evidence in a particular way confirming the representation of empirically experienced reality. Turning around Stephen Owen's observation about Xie Lingyun's lyrical *shi* poetry, we can say that in the *Shanju fu* the poet does not read the physical world through texts but rather sometimes transplants textual knowledge into the real landscape primarily experienced through his senses.

In his descriptions of the Shining environment, the poet works with intertextual references selectively. There are stanzas without any intertextual references (or at least the poet does not point to them in his self-commentaries), while for example in commentaries to stanzas dedicated to plants and animals, the "ten thousand things" of the Chinese universe, the poet annotates many, but usually without bringing deeper meaning into the poem. Swartz explains similar cases, when references to early texts are mixed up with factual descriptions, from an epistemic perspective as the "reciprocal reinforcement" of book learning and empirical knowledge (Swartz, 2018: 256). However, the abrupt insertion of unmotivated references to the canon into otherwise ostentatiously factual descriptions also suggests playful encoding of the textual authority into the reality of the Shining environment. In this way, the poet suffuses his own land with the aura of the classics and places the Shining periphery at the centre of the orthodox tradition tied to political power since time immemorial. Such elevation of his estate corresponds with his erudition and literary accomplishment which he proudly presents when speaking about himself (see stanza 45).[18]

This strategy of mixing embodied experience and textual tradition is perhaps best exemplified by the commentary to the powerful description of the profusion of water around the South Mountain house. In the *fu* proper, the poet observes with a naturalist's eye how the first springs emerge from the slopes

[17] François Martin also pointed out the intertextuality of Xie Lingyun's *yuefu* poetry (Martin 2000).

[18] An analogy of the technique of elevating his estate by imprinting authoritative texts on reality can be seen in the replica gardens based on records about the life of Buddha which the poet has built to make present the Buddha land in Shining (stanza 28).

of the hills surrounding Taihu 太湖 lake, then gradually gather water and force, forming abundant brooks and rivulets winding into the distance to eventually return and flow into the lake (stanza 35).[19] In the self-commentary, he confirms the factuality of his description, but only after he identifies as of bookish origin four adjectives describing the changing character of the water oozing out from the ground and swelling into streams with abundant water winding around:

因以小湖，	Dependent on small lakes,
鄰於其隈。	close to their coves,
眾流所湊，	there the numerous streams flow
萬泉所回。	and ten thousand springs wind around.
氿濫異形，	Oozing askew, then overflowing, each with a distinct shape,
首毖終肥。	first only dripping, in the end abundant.
別有山水，	This is a unique landscape,
路邈緬歸。	their course is long, from afar they return.

氿濫、肥毖，皆是泉名，事見於詩。雲此萬泉所湊，各有形勢。

"Oozing askew and overflowing," "dripping and abundant" – these all name the springs, see the *Shijing*. I say that it is a place where myriad streams gather, each with a distinct shape (stanza 35).

A similar blending of reality with references to the classics with unclear connotations is prominent in the stanza devoted to fish. It consists first of a catalogue of sixteen species living in Shining's waters. This is followed by a vivid description based on personal observations of their shapes and colours, movements in different types of water environments, and their typical behaviour (with four other species added):

...

輯采雜色，	Gathering and blending colours,
錦爛雲鮮。	embroidered and colourful, cloud-like fresh.
唼藻戲浪，	Nibbling on rushes, frolicking through waves,
汎荇流淵。	drifting among reeds, streaming to the depths;
或鼓鰓而湍躍，	some beat their fins and leap in the rapids,
或掉尾而波旋。	others flick their tails and swirl in the billows.

[19] For reading the stanza as a depiction of factual morphology around Shining see also Jin & Jin 2009: 111, and *baihua* translations. Westbrook 1973: 299–300 reads differently.

鱸鯊乘時以入浦，　Sea-perch and mullet according to season advance upon the shallows,
鰄魮沿瀨以出泉。　roach and speed-fish following the torrent emerge from springs[20]
(stanza 24).

The self-commentary first glosses the pronunciations of fish names (omitted here), some of them apparently of local origin, despite the fact that the poet identifies them also from the ancient dictionaries, *Shuowen* 《說文》 and *Zilin* 《字林》. After the glosses the poet in his commentary repeats in prose a naturalist detail from the penultimate verse ("sea-perch and mullet are seasonal fish," 鱸鯊一時魚), and he concludes with judgement: "all come out on stones in the gorges and always provide amusement" (皆出谿中石上，恆以為翫。).

In between the pronunciation glosses and his concluding appreciation, the poet inserts a reference to the source of some of the vocabulary from his description of the colourful fish. "Embroidered and colourful", the poet says, comes from the *Shijing* verse "How colourful was the embroidered coverlet" (錦衾有爛). The verse comes from "Ge sheng 葛生", a Tang Airs poem mourning a deceased wife,[21] interpreted by Mao as a veiled criticism of the warmongering Duke Xian of Jin 晉獻公 who caused the death of many people (Legge 2000: 186; Prolegomena 57). There is no plausible deeper semantic relationship between the colourful fish swiftly moving in water observed and enjoyed by the poet, and the *Shijing* poem the poet identifies in the self-commentary. In the context of the *Shanju fu*, this type of intertextual reference highlighted in the self-commentaries hardly opens a meaningful dialogue with the source text, but it can infuse the otherwise patently local landscape with the authority of the canon. (A similar uplifting effect results from the pronunciation glosses of the vocabulary, which the poet explains with references to classical dictionaries.)

Animals and other "things" (*wu* 物) were popular *topoi* in early medieval poetry, endowed with conventional symbolic meanings rooted in the canon, mainly the *Shijing* and the *Chuci*. A distinct *yong wu* 詠物 genre developed around them, in which select "things" observed and admired in their materiality simultaneously represent values, characters, and human situations (Kirková & Lomová 2022). In the stanza about water plants (stanza 19), the poet first unobtrusively mixes plants without literary precedence with the *Shijing* and *yuefu* 樂府 vocabulary, while he enumerates all in a single catalogue as a comprehensive record of real vegetation.

水草則　Of water plants, there are
萍藻薀茭，　duckweed, aquatic grass, mare's tail, and sedges,
藿蒲芹蓀，　vine-bean, cat's tails, celery and iris;
蒹菰蘋蘩，　reeds, wild-rice, ferns, and artemisia,
蕝荇菱蓮。　rushes, lilies, water-chestnuts, and lotus.

[20] The fish names, borrowed here from Elvin, are only approximate. See Elvin 2008: 356–358.

[21] In standard *Shijing* editions the verse is slightly different: *Jin qin lan xi* 錦衾爛兮 (Legge 2000: 186).

雖備物之偕美，	Though all these are beautiful,
獨扶渠之華鮮。	the lotus is the most dazzling;
播綠葉之鬱茂，	a profuse scattering of green leaves
含紅敷之繽翻。	midst a riot of budding red blossoms.
怨清香之難留，	I grieve that the pure fragrance cannot remain,
矜盛容之易闌。	and pity the full bloom, that will rapidly die.
必充給而後搴，	One should carefully tend, and then pluck,
豈蕙草之空殘。	it cannot perish in vain like melilotus.
卷敂弦之逸曲，	I love the easy strains of "rapping and bulwarks",
感江南之哀歎。	am moved by the sad plaint of "South of the River".
秦箏倡而溯遊往，	The strings of *qin* sang of "going downstream",
唐上奏而舊愛還。	there was a performance "by the pond" for a lover's return

(stanza 19, Westbrook 1973, 247–248, slightly adapted).

The last four verses refer to poetry with motifs of water plants, a fact the poet explains in the self-commentary. Among all the named or indirectly referred to water plants, lotus stands out as "the most dazzling", and unlike the others it is described in considerable and suggestive detail, such as the emotional response of the poet grieving over the decay of the "pure fragrance", or a suggestion how the plant should be tended before being plucked. The disproportionate attention paid to the lotus and the way it is elaborated raises the expectation of some deeper meaning. The plant, including the poet grieving over its blooming and decay, undoubtedly evokes the frustrated persona of Qu Yuan 屈原 (342–268 BCE) presenting himself in the *Lisao* 離騷 as lamenting his misfortune while decorating himself with fragrant lotus flowers and green leaves. Reference to Qu Yuan and the *Chuci* tradition seems to be implied already by Xie Lingyun's choice of a very unusual name *fuju* 扶渠 for the plant.[22] In the self-commentary, the author first partially fulfils the expectation, glossing the verb "pluck" as of *Lisao* origin, but then he keeps silent about the plant, and lotus is conspicuously missing among the plants for which the poet provides literary sources.

> 搴出離騷。敂弦是采菱歌。江南是相和曲，雲江南采蓮。秦箏倡蒹茄篇，唐上奏蒲生詩，皆感物致賦。魚藻蘋蘩荇亦有詩人之詠，不復具敍。

[22] *Fuju* 扶渠 is a non-standard way of writing 芙蕖, a rare name for lotus used in the 5th poem of the "Nine Regrets" (Jiu huai 九怀) cycle by Wang Bao 王褒 (1st century BCE) and included in the *Chuci* anthology. In the poem Wang Bao mourns "good men of old", among them Qu Yuan, who met with an evil end, and in the spirit of Qu Yuan he laments the troubles of his homeland and himself (for translation see Hawkes 1985: 273–274). In the *Lisao* Qu Yuan uses the more common names *furong* 芙蓉 and *he* 荷.

> "Pluck" comes from the Lisao. "Rapping and bulwarks" is from the "Picking the water-chestnuts" song. "South of the River" is a *xianghe* song; it says "South of the River picking lotus." The strings of *qin* accompanied the "Rush leaves" song. Performance "by the pond" refers to the poem about cat's tails growing. In each case when an object caused emotion it was put to poetry. The fish, grasses, ferns, artemisia, and lilies have also been sung by the authors of *Shijing*, but I won't talk more about them in detail (stanza 19, Westbrook 1973, 248, slightly adapted).

In the self-commentary the poet highlights the symbolic potential of plants as they are directly related to emotions expressed in poetry. Unfortunately the poet remains silent about the kind of emotions he has in mind, and a closer look at the variety of the sources he identifies suggests a mixed picture from which it is hard to construct any coherent meaning relevant within the context of the *Shanju fu*.

When reading this stanza and the attached self-commentary, both suggesting and hiding the meaning potentially mediated by intertextual references, one cannot help but suspect that the poet teases his readers by invoking the Qu Yuan lore only to eventually deny its message. As a result, while the verse opens a variety of associations through intertextual references, the self-commentary both glosses the intertextuality, yet at the same time erases those meanings, which might be regarded as resentful and hence rebellious and dangerous for the poet.

We encounter a similar strategy of both invoking and guiding symbolic meanings away from the Qu Yuan lore in the stanza on the orchards (stanza 39). As in the case of the water plants, the poet first records actual observations about "hundreds of trees standing in rank, some near, some far" (百果備列，乍近乍遠) and enumerates thirteen species growing there. In the self-commentary, he singles out three of them to identify their textual sources: the apricot, the mango, and the orange tree. The annotation of the "apricot platform" (杏壇) as a reference to a place where, according to the *Zhuangzi*, a fisherman met Confucius, and the "mango orchard" (棕園) as a reference to the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*[23] fulfils the educated reader's expectations when reading the living-in-retirement poem.

The reference to the literary origin of the "orange grove" (橘林), however, denies the most obvious expectation of the orange tree as an allusion to "The Ode to the Orange Tree" (*Ju song* 橘頌), another well known part of the Qu Yuan lore. Instead, the poet relates his orange trees to a marginal remark in Yang Xiong's 楊雄 (53 bce–18 ce) *Shudu fu* 蜀都賦 (*Fu* on the capital of Shu), a poem not regarded as a typical source text for the orange tree topos. In fact, the poet could have left the orange trees in his park without identifying any literary source for them, as he did with the majority of the other trees in the stanza. As a result, by his choice of an unusual intertextual reference free of distinct symbolism,

[23] The name refers to the garden of Āmrapālī 奈氏樹苑, a rich courtesan from the city of Vaiśālī, who offered her garden to Buddha to live there surrounded by his followers. Xie Lingyun mentions the garden again using a different transliteration (菴羅之芳園) in the "Buddhist theme park" stanza 28.

he explicitly negates unwelcome associations with the Qu Yuan story and hence implications of discontent and protest, which the court could interpret as an expression of rebellious thought.[24]

Conclusion

The commentaries punctuating the verse at regular intervals disrupt the immediate poetic effect of the *fu* proper and may seem redundant. Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1910–1998) famously criticised the arrangement of verse and prose in the *Shanju fu* as "repeating the same meaning in different forms, drawing legs on a snake" (同意而異體,畫蛇添足; 1999, Vol. 4, 1289). In Qian Zhongshu's eyes, literary aesthetics is a distinct form of cognition and verbal art based on direct expression, and from that perspective, commenting on one's own poem and explaining the meaning of the verse in prose is destructive to the poetry, which is by its very nature indeterminate and open to multiple individualised readings.

However, Xie Lingyun had objectives other than just creating pure art, as Qian Zhongshu would demand of him, and he had good reasons to restrict the potentially dangerous ambivalence of poetic language, particularly if he simultaneously wanted to send to the capital a self-confident message about his living an independent life in freedom and self-sufficiency on his own ancestral land. The *Shanju fu* is as much a literary accomplishment as it is "propaganda" for the poet's own self (Elvin 2008, 336), a personal statement of the noble Xie family celebrity recently enmeshed in the power struggles at court, which brought about the execution of his relatives and friends and his own banishment.

As the proud inheritor of the highest aristocratic title in the state from the once most illustrious man in the empire, Xie Lingyun, even after leaving office, would not renounce his family heritage of power and authority to disappear as a recluse into oblivion, as his twenty-year-older contemporary Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365–427) decided to do. Instead, he turned his failure in his official career into an advantage and in the *Shanju fu* presents himself as the sovereign of his land, distinctly cut off the rest of the state and not dependent on the court in any way, who has all material resources at his disposal and who claims for himself the orthodox culture traditionally attributed to the court as well as superiority in Buddhist spirituality. In other words, in his celebration of Shining as his home, the poet does not simply enjoy his private sphere (Swartz 2015) but carves out for himself an independent domain where he establishes himself (*li* 立) as a supreme ruler over his lands.[25]

Positioning himself in this way legitimated by the extraordinary merit of his ancestors was a dangerous gesture, a potential statement of disloyalty and rebellion punishable by death. To avoid suspicion, the

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[24] Xie Lingyun mentions the story of Qu Yuan as an example not to be followed when he says with approval in stanza 4 that his grandfather "[t]hought it slight of San Lü (i.e. Qu Yuan) to throw himself into the water" (狹三閭之喪江).

[25] Unfortunately, the only stanza missing in the *Shanju fu* is about the "far west," i.e., a place in the direction of the capital. It would be interesting to see if the poet referred in any way to the distant capital.

poet takes great care to provide interpretations of his celebration of independence and cultural superiority as not intended to threaten the power centre in the capital. For this purpose, a new literary technique, self-commentary, invented to disambiguate the verse in an authoritative voice and to explain away any potential subversive meaning was a perfect tool to assure the court that his ambitions did not reach beyond the borders of his family estate on the periphery of the Chinese state. Later in his life, suspicion about his ambitions eventually did prevail, and the poet met a premature death at an execution ground far away from his Shining home.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mastering Meaning: Self-Exegesis in Medieval Chinese Poetic Writings

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Self-exegesis or auto-commentary (*zizhu*) represents the author's conscious, active control over the meaning and reception of their work and blurs the boundary between author and reader, text and paratext. Although not unique to the Chinese tradition, self-exegesis has been prevalent in classical Chinese poetry from the late eighth century onward. Indeed, one of the formal features that distinguish classical poetry from modern vernacular poetry is that the latter is largely devoid of authorial annotations. This article reconstructs a history of auto-commentary in medieval poetic writings through the eighth century and examines the implications of adding exegetical notes to one's own writings.

自註是作者對於其作品的意義和接受所作的有意識的、主動的控制，模糊了作者與讀者、文本和副文本之間的界限。自註並非中國傳統所獨有，但自八世紀晚期起，它在詩歌創作中日益流行，以致中國古典詩歌與現代白話詩歌在形式上的一個主要區別就在於後者缺乏詩人的自註。本文重構中古詩歌傳統中作者自註的歷史，並討論自註對解讀詩人作品的意義和影響。

Keywords: auto-commentary, medieval Chinese poetry, Xie Lingyun, Yan Zhitui, Du Fu, poetry

關鍵詞： 自註，中國中古詩歌，謝靈運，顏之推，杜甫，賦

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A commentary is a verbal construct that purports to aid the comprehension of a text and bridge the gap between the author and the reader. Broadly construed, it may be said to encompass lexical glosses, explanatory paraphrases, intermittent clarifying notes of various sorts, and even paratextual material such as prefaces and colophons. But when an author sets out to write a commentary on their own work, the auto-commentary complicates the simple, clear-cut division of author and reader. It both delimits and expands interpretative possibilities.[1]

The practice of self-exegesis is not unique to Chinese literary tradition. Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) is commonly recognised as the European poet who played a foundational role in the emergence of self-commentary in Western literature (Ascoli, 175–226). Chinese poetic self-exegesis first became prominent in the genre of *fu* 賦 (rhapsody or poetic exposition) in the fourth and fifth centuries. Beginning in the late eighth century, it was increasingly prevalent in the lyric *shi* 詩 poetry, and eventually became so common in classical poetry that it is often taken for granted by a reader or a scholar. The Chinese term is *zizhu* 自註, literally self-annotation, which refers to authorial notes inserted in a text and does not include a poem's preface (*xu* 序). Such notes typically appear in a smaller font size than the text of the poem does; they can be frequently found under the title of a poem (like the *rubriche* or rubrics in Italian Renaissance lyric poetry) or at the end of a poem, because in the vertical format of a premodern manuscript, those are the two places where one can most easily insert a note. There is also the interlinear note, which is inserted between the lines within a poem. These notes usually serve two purposes: 1) they identify the *who*, *when*, and *where* in a poetic line and offer details that cannot be inferred from the text, and 2) they offer lexical and phonological glosses for unusual words or phrases, be it a dialectal usage or some regional flora or fauna. Self-commentary in rhapsodies, as we will see, can also perform an explanatory function to elaborate textual meaning, but generally speaking the auto-annotations in *shi* poetry tend to be informative rather than elucidative.

While *shi* titles, especially the long, narrative ones, can provide crucial background information about the compositional circumstances of a poem, an authorial note inserted into the poem can often explain a local detail in ways in which its title cannot. A note is always composed after a poem is written and speaks strongly to a poet's concern with the audience, whereas one cannot unequivocally claim the same about a poem's title. This point of difference is particularly salient in a social poem addressed to a specific recipient: the addressee needs no notes to understand the references made in the poem, but a reader other than the addressee most likely will. There are numerous social poems in the premodern Chinese tradition, but the existence of auto-commentary in those poems points to a concern going beyond the compositional occasion and beyond the poet's immediate social circle. In all self-exegeses, authors actively insert their voice into a text and insist on a specific understanding—a *proper* understanding—of a line, a stanza, or a work as a whole, through which they attempt to exert authority

[1] The original version of this paper was presented at the international conference on "Du Fu (712–770): China's Greatest Poet," held at Harvard University on October 28–30, 2016. I would like to thank my discussants, Paul W. Kroll and Ding Xiang Warner, as well as the conference participants and audience, for their comments. Subsequently, I presented a revised version of this paper at "Commentary - A Text - A Gesture: A Workshop on Commentarial Traditions in China and Japan," organised by Marie Bizais-Lillig, at the University of Strasbourg, and also at the University of Zurich and Goethe University Frankfurt. I am grateful to the audiences, to Marie Bizais-Lillig, as well as to the two anonymous reviewers, for their helpful feedback. I thank Alison Hardie for her careful editing. All remaining errors and imperfections are solely mine.

over a text and control its meaning, although sometimes, as we will see, self-exegesis complicates a text rather than clarifies it.

Self-exegesis is one of the formal features distinguishing classical Chinese *shi* poetry from modern vernacular poetry, which is largely devoid of authorial notes. It deserves more critical reflection than it has received so far.[2] In this essay I discuss self-exegesis in medieval Chinese poetic writings with these questions in mind: When did self-exegesis first become notable and eventually become a habitual practice in the Chinese poetic tradition, and what does it signify? How does a self-exegesis function in its interaction with the poetic text, and what does that tell us about how the author envisions each form?

In what follows I will first reconstruct a history of auto-commentary in early medieval poetic writings as we know it, with a focus on two famous rhapsodies that come with a self-commentary: Xie Lingyun's 謝靈運 (385–433) "*Fu* on Dwelling in the Mountains" ("Shanju fu" 山居賦) and Yan Zhitui's 顏之推 (531–590s) "*Fu* on Viewing My Life" ("Guanwosheng fu" 觀我生賦). I read the latter in juxtaposition with Yu Xin's 庾信 (513–581) "Lament for the South" ("Ai Jiangnan fu" 哀江南賦), the other well-known autobiographical rhapsody from the late sixth century by an author with similar experiences who nevertheless did *not* choose to add a self-exegesis to his work. The essay concludes with a consideration of Du Fu's 杜甫 (712–770) poetry, which marks the beginning of the popularity of writing self-exegesis for one's *shi* poetry.

Self-Exegesis in the Early Poetic Tradition

In China, commentarial tradition was first developed as a way of teaching and instructing students in a given classic, and the preservation of an early text is often inseparable from the particular version of that text used and transmitted by a certain exegetical tradition, such as in the case of the *Shi jing* 詩經 (Puett 2017, 112–22). Thus, commentaries had started out as a necessity. Yet, as the texts with commentaries acquired canonical status as "classics" *jing* 經, commentaries themselves gained a certain cultural cachet. The difficulty of a text that makes commentary a requisite can thus be turned around and become a pedagogical necessity used to the advantage of the commentator. The existence of a commentary underscores a text's need for commentary, confers authority on the person producing the commentary, and makes the commentator indispensable. At the same time, the judgment of a text as deserving a commentary and the very act of adding a commentary to a text both elevate the text to a noteworthy classic and rescue it from the threat of sinking into oblivion, effectively shining a light on it. Enenkel and Nellen consider an important function of the early modern commentaries in European literatures as "that of awarding *auctoritas* to the source text, upgrading it to the status of an

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[2] My attention was drawn to auto-commentary in classical Chinese poetry when I was working on my book *Visionary Journeys: Travel Writings from Early Medieval and Nineteenth-Century China*. I discussed the striking juxtaposition of the poet's explanatory notes with poetic lines in late Qing poems on travel to foreign countries in a section titled "Tension between Poetry and Prose" in Chapter Five (Tian 2011, 219–24). When I was drafting this article in 2016, while there had been some Chinese-language studies of self-exegesis related to individual poets, and there had of course been quite a few studies of the great early medieval poet Xie Lingyun's 謝靈運 (385–433) auto-commentary in connection with the examination of his "*Fu* on Dwelling in the Mountains" (see below), I was not aware of any study in English dedicated to the general topic of *zizhu*, self-exegesis, in the Chinese poetic tradition, from its first appearance in early medieval China through the late eighth-century when it first became a widespread form.

authoritative text" (Enenkel and Nellen 2013, 15). This observation is pertinent to the Chinese commentarial tradition as well.

It is perhaps only natural that the first belletristic genre that would acquire a commentary was *cifu* 辭賦, rhapsody or poetic exposition, known for its exhaustive, hyperbolic descriptions of an encyclopedic nature and its difficult lexicon. The received version of the *Chuci*, *Chapter and Verse Commentary to the Lyrics of Chu* (*Chuci zhangju* 楚辭章句), was compiled by Wang Yi 王逸 (fl. 130–140) on the basis of an earlier *Chuci* anthology by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE). Following Liu Xiang's model, Wang Yi added his own work, "Nine Longings" ("Jiu si" 九思), at the end of the anthology, which, like other pieces in the anthology, is preceded by a biographical sketch of the author. It also has a commentary appended to it. The commentary adheres to the basic form of annotation established elsewhere in the anthology. That is, the commentator explains the meaning of each line by largely paraphrasing and pointing out the symbolic meanings of plant, animal, and other imageries. For instance, to the line "I long for the numinous moisture so as to apply ointment to my hair" 思靈澤兮一膏沐, the commentary states: "'Numinous moisture' is heaven's nourishing ointment; it is a symbol of benevolent governance" 靈澤, 天之膏潤也, 蓋喻德政也 (*Chuci buzhu*, 17.320).

Wang Yi's anthology became the basis of Hong Xingzu's 洪興祖 (1070–1135) *Supplementary Commentary to the Lyrics of Chu* (*Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補註), which gives us the received *Chuci* texts today. Hong Xingzu made a suggestive comment on the "Jiu si" commentary: "Wang Yi must not have written an auto-commentary. I am afraid that it was composed by someone like his son Yanshou or such" 逸不應自為註解, 恐其子延壽之徒為之爾 (*Chuci buzhu*, 17.314).

Instead of convincing anyone that the commentary was written by Wang Yanshou "or such", Hong Xingzu's speculation merely succeeds in calling attention to the authorship of the commentary. That Hong never explained why he believed Wang Yi "must not" have written an auto-commentary does not help his case. Could Wang Yi be the first known author of an auto-commentary?

"Nine Longings" has a preface, the last part of which reads:

> Since Yi shared the same homeland with Qu Yuan, his feelings of lamentation and sorrow for him differ from other writers. He secretly admired the ways of [Liu] Xiang and [Wang] Bao and composed an ode with the name of "Nine Longings" to expand on [Qu Yuan's] verses. There has been no exegesis for it, and so a commentary about its meaning and intent is given.
>
> 逸與屈原同土共國， 悼傷之情與凡有異， 竊慕向、褒之風， 作頌一篇， 號曰九思，以裨其辭. 未有解說， 故聊敘訓誼焉 (*Chuci buzhu*, 17.314)。

The author of the commentary is unclear: it could be Wang Yi, or it could be "I"—whoever it was who wrote the preface. The modern scholar Huang Linggeng argues that the preface was written by someone from the fifth century or later, and that the commentary was not likely by Wang Yi, either (2002,

54–55).[3] One could take issue with Huang's claim, but ultimately there is no definitive proof either way.

Had Wang Yi indeed been the first author of an auto-commentary, that would have made him an outlier anyway, for *fu* commentary first flourished in the third century, and there is no concrete evidence that writers were annotating their own *fu*.[4] A story claims that Zuo Si 左思 (ca. 250–305), the author of the three famous *fu* on the capitals of the Three Kingdoms, annotated them himself but attributed the annotations to contemporary scholars: "The notes and annotations were all produced by Si himself; he wanted to promote his writings, so he attributed the annotations to contemporaries" 凡諸註解，皆思自為，欲重其文，故假時人名姓也.[5] Though the story is not considered credible, the claim clearly suggests that a commentary, especially when written by prominent scholars, increases the value of a work.

The first known exegesis of *shi* poetry in the five-syllable line, which at the time was still a relatively lowbrow form, was also produced in the third century. This was Ying Zhen's 應貞 (d. 269) commentary on Ying Qu's 應璩 (190–252) "One Hundred and One Poems" ("Baiyi shi" 百一詩), although both the commentary and most of the poems have been lost.[6] Ying Qu's poems supposedly commented on current affairs and were all written in the five-syllable line. His contemporary readers had allegedly found the poems shocking and strange, with some even saying that they should be burned.[7] Considering that Ying Zhen was Ying Qu's son, his commentary might represent an attempt to lionise his father's unconventional writings by evoking Han scholars of the Classics transmitting exegeses to their descendants as part of the "family learning" (*jiaxue* 家學). The next known commentary on five-syllable-line poetry appeared nearly two centuries later; this is the exegesis of Ruan Ji's 阮籍 (210–263) poetic series, "Singing My Cares" ("Yonghuai shi" 詠懷詩), authored by literary luminaries Yan Yanzhi 顏延之 (384–456) and Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513), and partially preserved in Li Shan's 李善 (d. 689) commentary on the literary anthology *Wen xuan* 文選.[8]

We find, however, little evidence that early medieval poets wrote notes for their own poetry, an observation that nevertheless must be qualified by the fact that our sources in this regard are extremely limited. More than ninety-five percent of pre-Tang poets' collections are no longer extant (Lu 1983, 3:2787); pre-Tang literary collections are largely reconstituted from later encyclopedias and anthologies, which would not necessarily include original authorial notes. Judging from the handful of pre-Tang literary collections passed on to us, such as that by Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365–427), we note

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[3] I am obliged to one of the anonymous reviewers for alerting me to Huang's writing on this point.

[4] It is uncertain if the commentary on Yu Chan's 庾闡 (fl. 317) "*Fu* on Yangdu" 揚都賦 was written by himself or by another person (see *Shuijing zhushu*, 14.1249).

[5] From *Zuo Si biezhuan* 左思別傳, cited in Liu Xiaobiao's 劉孝標 (462–521) commentary to *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (Shishuo xinyu, 4.247).

[6] It is recorded as being in eight scrolls in *Sui shu* 隋書 "Bibliography" 經籍志 (Sui shu, 35.1084). See David R. Knechtges' discussion (2010, 173–99).

[7] Zhang Fangxian 張方賢 (fl. late third c.) states this in his *Chuguo xianxian zhuan* 楚國先賢傳, cited in Li Shan's 李善 (d. 689) commentary to *Wen xuan* (Wen xuan, 21.1015). Zhang Fangxian should be Zhang Fang 張方 (Sui shu, 33.974).

[8] See a discussion of this commentary in Stephen Owen, "Introduction" to *The Poetry of Ruan Ji* (Owen 2017, 9–10).

that the function of providing compositional background is often fulfilled by a poem's title and occasionally its preface.

One interlinear note from pre-Tang poetry that looks like an authorial note is from the poet Jiang Zong's 江總 (519–594) poem, "Written upon Entering the Qixia Monastery at She Hill" ("Ru Sheshan Qixia si" 入攝山棲霞寺), preserved in *An Expanded Collection of Propagating the Light* (*Guang Hongming ji* 廣弘明集) compiled by the monk Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) (Lu 1983, 3:2583).[9] In his preface to the poem, Jiang Zong dates the writing of the poem to the sixteenth day of the eleventh month in the *yisi* year (December 12, 585), and reminisces about his annual visit to the monastery between 582 and 584. The poem contains the following lines:[10]

高僧跡共遠	I share the distant tracks with the eminent monks;
勝地心相符	my heart is in tune with the lovely place.
樵隱各有得	Woodcutters and recluses may each have their gains,[11]
丹青獨不渝	cinnabar and blue pigments alone do not change.

An interlinear note appears after the last line: "The monastery still has the portraits of Masters Lang and Quan, Mr. Ming Sengshao the Buddhist layman, and Assistant Governor Xiao Shisu" 寺猶有朗、詮二師、居士明僧紹、治中蕭眎素圖像.[12] It is likely that the poet himself inserted this note to explain what he meant by the line "cinnabar and blue pigments alone do not change".

In contrast with *shi* poetry, we see the first explicitly documented instance of auto-commentary in rhapsodies in the early fifth century. Xie Lingyun, an avid reader of *Chuci*, wrote a self-exegesis for his poetic exposition, "*Fu* on Dwelling in the Mountains". The *fu* text and its lengthy auto-commentary are preserved in *The Song History* (*Song shu* 宋書), which was compiled and presented to the throne in 488 by Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513).[13] It constitutes an important link in the early history of self-exegesis.

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[9] This poem appears in the tenth-century compilation *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 under the title "Expressing My Intent on Visiting Qixia Monastery Again" 再遊棲霞寺言志 (233.1174). The note is missing there, but *Wenyuan yinghua* is not always consistent in including authorial notes.

[10] All translations in this article are mine unless otherwise noted.

[11] This is a reference to a citation in Zang Rongxu's 臧榮緒 (415–488) *Jin shu* 晉書: "He Qi said, 'Hu Kongming once said, 'A recluse is in the mountains; a woodcutter is also in the mountains. With regards to being in the mountains, they are the same; but the reasons why they are in the mountains are different.' Isn't this so!" 何琦曰, 胡孔明有言, 隱者在山, 樵者亦在山, 在山則同, 所以在山則異, 豈不信乎 (Wen xuan, 30.1397).

[12] The Buddhist monk Falang 法朗 (507–581) had studied with the monk Sengquan 僧詮 at She Hill. Ming Sengshao (d. 483) was a recluse residing at She Hill and donated his house there to establish the Qixia Monastery. Xiao Shisu (d. 509) had served as Assistant Governor of South Xuzhou Prefecture and finally retired to live at She Hill.

[13] Shen Yue states, "[Xie Lingyun] composed '*Fu* on Dwelling in the Mountains' and annotated it himself" 作山居賦並自注 (Song shu, 67.1754). An earlier *fu* on astronomy with a commentary that might have been written by the author himself will be mentioned below.

Xie Lingyun's Auto-Commentary

Xie Lingyun was a descendant of an old aristocratic family that had held great power in the Eastern Jin. After Song replaced Jin, he supported the wrong prince in the power struggle at court and was exiled to a provincial post. In 423, he resigned from his post and lived in retirement on his enormous home estate in Shining 始寧 (in modern Zhejiang). It was during this period that he wrote "*Fu* on Dwelling in the Mountains".[14]

Any appraisal of Xie Lingyun's self-commentary must be situated in a discussion of the poetic exposition itself.[15] This poetic exposition is, in many ways, a conscious assertion of the values of private life against the values of public life and celebrates the author's prominent clan lineage and aristocratic identity as opposed to the claims of the state and to imperial power.[16] The estate not only has all manner of mountains and waters in a wide geological variety, but also contains a dizzying array of animals, fish, plants, and trees. Such an exhaustive description evokes the Han imperial hunting parks extravagantly depicted by Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (ca. 179–117 BCE) as a microcosm of the Han empire, even as Xie Lingyun himself is quick to make a distinction between his *fu* and those Han works: "My present rhapsody is not about the splendours of capitals, palaces, hunting expeditions, and beautiful entertainers, but rather mountains and flatlands, plants and trees, waters and rocks, crops and farming" 今所賦既非京都宮觀遊獵聲色之盛，而敘山野草木水石穀稼之事 (*Song shu* 67.1754). Yet, through deliberate differentiation and negation, the author paradoxically constructs a relationship between the Han rhapsodies on imperial parks and his paean to his mountain estate precisely because he explicitly denies it.

Cheng Yu-yu makes a convincing argument regarding the author's physical movement through landscape and his reliance on personal empirical experience to spatially define landscape being fundamentally different from the general, abstract, often imaginary statements about things and spaces in Han rhapsodies (Liu 2009, 77–80). This is undoubtedly true, but physical movement through landscape is also a way of marking ownership over landscape, in much the same way as a monarch displays and asserts authority by journeying through the territories of his kingdom. On a rhetorical level, what is described by Wendy Swartz as an "exhaustive enumeration of things and activities on his estate" cannot but recall the rhetorical device deployed in those grand Western Han poetic expositions

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[14] Francis A. Westbrook translated the entire piece in "Landscape Description in the Lyric Poetry and 'Fuh on Dwelling in the Mountains' of Shieh Ling-yunn", PhD diss., Yale University, 1972. A partial translation by David R. Knechtges is included in his paper, "How to View a Mountain in Medieval (and Pre-medieval) China", delivered at the Workshop on the Kinetic Vision in Medieval China at Harvard University (May 2007). The paper, titled "How to View a Mountain in Medieval China", subsequently appeared in Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry, Vol. 6 (published by Center for East Asian Research at McGill University, 2012). Its Chinese version is entitled "Zhongguo zhonggu wenren de shanyue youguan: Yi Xie Lingyun 'Shanju fu' weizhu de taolun" 中國中古文人的山岳游觀: 以謝靈運山居賦爲主的討論 (Liu 2009, 1–63).

[15] A note should be made about my analysis of Xie Lingyun's auto-commentary in this section, which was first written in 2016. In 2021, after I heard Professor Olga Lomová's presentation on Xie Lingyun's rhapsody at the 23rd Biannual Conference of the European Association of Chinese Studies, I shared my paper with her; however, I did not receive her paper until after I had finalised and submitted mine. Hence, this current section has basically remained what it was without the benefit of Professor Lomová's insight.

[16] See Saito Mareshi's discussion (Saito 1990, 61–92). Cheng Yu-yu 鄭毓瑜 further points out the political and economic power contestation with the state ownership of land inherent in the management of the great aristocratic estates in the Southern Dynasties in "Shenti xingdong yu dili zhonglei: Xie Lingyun 'Shanju fu' yu Jin Song shiqi de 'shanchuan', 'shanshui' lunshu" 身體行動與地理種類: 謝靈運山居賦與晉宋時期的"山川"、"山水"論述 (Liu 2009, 77–80).

(Swartz 2015, 22). For instance, as Westbrook observes, by using the formula of four directions to depict the estate, Xie rhetorically places his mountain dwelling "at the center of the cosmos—the same way the Han *fuh*-writers did the emperor's court" (Westbrook 1972, 218). Indeed, even as the author personally moves among the mountains and streams, many of the activities that put the human agent in an intimate, interactive relation with nature are performed by his retainers and slaves, not by the aristocratic poet himself. This comes through clearly in Xie Lingyun's own words:

山作水役	Work in the mountains and labour on the rivers
不以一牧	take more than one overseer;
資待各徒	I rely on my various retainers,
隨節競逐	who through the seasons compete to outdo one another.
陟嶺刊木	They climb the peaks to fell trees;
除榛伐竹	they remove the bushes and cut down bamboos;
抽筍自篁	they cull the shoots from bamboo clusters;
擿箬于穀	they pick rattan leaves from valleys.

(*Song shu* 67.1766)

The list of the retainers' tasks goes on and on. As Xie Lingyun's *Song shu* biography states, "Because of his grandfather and father's extensive estate, Lingyun enjoyed great wealth. He had numerous slaves, and his family subordinates and retainers numbered hundreds. He had them boring through hills and draining lakes, and engaged them in ceaseless projects" 靈運因父祖之資, 生業甚厚, 奴僮既眾, 義故門生數百, 鑿山浚湖, 功役無已 (*Song shu* 67.1775).

Xie Lingyun also shows his estate as being superior to imperial parks because of his spiritual attainments and his refusal to hunt and kill:

顧弱齡而涉道	I recall that I embarked on the Way from a tender age,
悟好生之咸宜	and I recognized the universal appropriateness of loving life

(*Song shu*, 67.1763–764).

This forms an explicit contrast with the imperial hunting expeditions depicted in Han rhapsodies. Furthermore, in addition to plants and animals in water and on land, his home estate is a resting place for eminent monks. The master of the estate, discussing metaphysical doctrines with the Buddhist clergy or reading and writing in his lodge, is a transcendental figure who infuses his dwelling with profound spirituality and sophisticated culture (*Song shu*, 67.1764–765, 67.1770). When Xie Lingyun says that he does not depend on anything from outside (*budai waiqiu* 不待外求), he means it: his estate is replete with both physical and spiritual resources (*Song shu* 67.1769). In this, his estate is even

better than the imperial parks, but one would do well to keep in mind that its identity is based on its *difference from them*.

Thus, one cannot fully appreciate Xie Lingyun's piece without knowing the tradition it both inherits and departs from. Xie Lingyun is indeed reacting against the earlier *fu* praising the empire, but he does so by applying the imperial rhetorical mode of political sovereignty and ownership to his own family estate. His wide-ranging investigation of the sprawling estate, his measurement and management of local sites and products, are analogous to the kind of land survey performed by an imperial official or, better yet, to the oversight of a peripatetic sovereign on an inspection tour of the empire. I contend that much of his self-commentary should be read in these terms, for one of its most noteworthy aspects is the author's detailed representation of local topography and his supply of specific referents for general, vague, and categorical statements, a rhetorical move to name and map the place and bring out its identity.

Take the following passage for example:

近東則	Near to the east are
上田下湖	Upper Fields, Lower Lake,
西谿南谷	Western Gorge, Southern Valley,
石埭石滂	Stony Barrier, Stony Spurt,
閔硎黃竹	Min Millstone, and Yellow Bamboo.
決飛泉於百仞	Bursting forth are waterfalls cascading for hundreds of yards;
森高薄於千麓	standing in rows are tall groves ranged over a thousand foothills.
寫長源於遠江	The waters pour forth their long flow into a distant river;
派深毖於近瀆	a tributary from a deep spring feeds a nearby irrigation ditch.[17]

Below is a part of the commentary to the above lines:

> Upon entering Western Gorge, one finds Stony Barrier. Stones form an obstruction here, and thus it is called Stony Barrier. Stony Spurt is located east of Western Gorge. If one travels nine *li* south of the county, on both sides there are steep precipices several hundred feet high, and water cascades down from above. Near the outer gorge there is a tiered sluiceway extending ten-plus *li*. The entire way the cascading current swiftly rushes, and all around it are sheer cliff walls and green bamboo.
>
> 入西谿之裏，得石埭，以石為阻，故謂為石埭。石滂在西谿之東， 從縣南入九里， 兩面峻峭數十丈， 水自上飛下。 比至外谿， 封墱十數里， 皆飛流迅激， 左右巖壁綠竹。

[17] Translation by David R. Knechtges, with slight modifications (Liu 2009, 34–35).

The *fu* text lists eight local place names, followed by four lines of landscape description that could easily be applied to many scenic places. The commentary excerpt explains the name of Stony Barrier, pinpoints the specific location of Stony Spurt, and provides details for the couplet about waterfalls and groves, which turn out to be bamboos. By supplying and preserving such detailed local knowledge, Xie Lingyun substantiates and anchors an otherwise general and categorical literary language of the *fu* genre in the specifics of the time-space reality. Commentary becomes a means of individuation.

Individuation does not stop with places and things, for by offering a commentary on his own work, the author is purporting to give the fullness of himself as an individual, an all-encompassing expression of what he experiences, what he means, and what he knows. When adding a commentary to the primary text, what an author does is to create dual voices: one rushes along in lyricism, while the other slows down to elaborate, explain, supplement, and rationalise; *only when the two discourses are combined do we hear the totality of the author*. Together the dual voices form a mutually complementary duet, each having equal importance to the whole piece.

A good example is the opening sentence of the rhapsody and its commentary. The *fu* text begins with the image of reading and recuperating from illness:

> Master Xie was lying indisposed at the top of the mountain. He browsed the books passed down by the ancients, which were in perfect accord with his own mind. With a sense of relaxation and detachment, he smiled and said....
>
> 謝子臥疾山頂，覽古人遺書，與其意合，悠然而笑曰……

The language here is plain and direct. No psychological astuteness is required for any reader to grasp why Master Xie, that is, Xie Lingyun, is smiling, as he finds himself agreeing with the ancient authors he is reading. It thus comes as a surprise that the author deems it necessary to add a commentary here:

> When there is mutual understanding of a principle, one feels comfort and pleasure. <u>The books passed down by the ancients are in perfect accord with his own mind</u>, which was why he smiled. Sun Quan, too, once said this to Zhou Yu: “Gongjin, your mind and Our mind are in perfect accord.”
>
> 理以相得為適。古人遺書，與其意合，所以為笑。孫權亦謂周瑜：公瑾與孤意合。

As we can see, the underlined section of the commentary repeats the *fu* text verbatim and appears quite redundant. The repeated section is framed by a general statement about “mutual understanding” (*xiangde* 相得), and a seemingly random quotation from the Wu ruler Sun Quan (182–252) addressing his general Zhou Yu (175–210).[18] The Sun Quan quotation ends with the phrase “in perfect accord” (*yihe* 意合), marking the third time this phrase appears from the *fu* text to the commentary.

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[18] Cited in Pei Songzhi's 裴松之 (372–451) commentary to Sanguo zhi 三國志 (Sanguo zhi, 54.1262).

Why explain something that needs no explication? The reason is certainly not hermeneutical. Instead, I suggest that it is to add a new layer of meaning to the primary text by underscoring a peculiar relation between the reader (i.e., Master Xie) and the past authors: Master Xie relates to the ancients not only as an equal, but, as he further extrapolates, as a lord to his vassal. In other words, instead of being passively influenced, enlightened, or awed by wisdom from the past, he is in perfect command, his understanding stemming from his own mind. The word *shi* 適 ("comfort and pleasure") used in the commentary contrasts with his indisposition (*woji* 臥疾) in the primary text and echoes the "smile" highlighted through repetition. The self-image thus presented through the text and the commentary is a man in complete control of himself despite his professed ailment, *ji*, a general category for illness that is never specified, mentioned only to be ostensibly elided.

Ironically, if an auto-commentary offers the reader the fullness of meaning intended by the author, then it is in fact the auto-commentary that renders the primary text inadequate, for, as the above example demonstrates, the reader would not know that the primary text requires an explication until the author obligingly provides it. Thus, strangely, *an author's self-commentary produces a lack in the primary text that would otherwise not have been there*, and in this way Xie Lingyun's auto-commentary constitutes an essential part of the whole work rather than being secondary to a primary text.

Below is another superb example of Xie Lingyun's innovative use of the commentarial form:

近西則　　To the near west:
楊賓接峯　　Yang and Bin touch the peaks;
唐皇連縱　　Tang and Huang are connected to the tracks;
室壁帶谿　　the Chamber and the Wall surround the ravine,
曾孤臨江　　Ceng and Gu overlook the river.
竹緣浦以被綠　　Bamboos grow along the riverbanks,
　　covering them with green;
石照澗而映紅　　rocks shine forth in the stream,
　　a reflected red.
月隱山而成陰　　The moon is concealed by the hills, forming darkness;
木鳴柯以起風　　trees sound their branches, a wind rising.

The commentary to this section reads:

楊中、元賓，並小江之近處，與山相接也。唐皇便從北出。室，石室，在小江口南岸。壁，小江北岸。並在楊中之下。壁高四十丈，色赤，故曰照澗而映紅。曾山之西，孤山之南，王子所經始，並臨江，皆被以綠竹。山高月隱，便謂為陰；鳥集柯鳴，便謂為風也。

> Yangzhong and Yuanbin are both close to the Little River and touch the mountains.[19] Tang and Huang emerge from the north. The Chamber refers to Stone Chamber, which is to the south at the mouth of the Little River; the Wall is the north bank of the Little River. They are both below Yangzhong. The Wall is forty zhang high and has a ruddy hue, hence I say, "[rocks] shine forth in the stream, a reflected red." The place to the west of Ceng Hill and south to Gu Hill is where Master Wang had started building.[20] Both hills overlook the river and are covered with green bamboos. The hills are tall and conceal the moon, and one mistakenly thinks that it is dark and cloudy; birds come to roost and branches rustle, and one mistakenly thinks that a wind is rising.

The first part of the commentary locates, like a GPS system, Yang and Bin, Tang and Huang, Chamber and Wall, as well as Ceng and Gu. Then the author proceeds to explain what he means by "a reflected red". The explanation exposes a potential misunderstanding on the part of the reader that the red might be the colour of some flowers or vegetation. This is a misunderstanding that would not have been recognised as such and thus could be said not to have existed had the poet not provided the commentary.

A similar move is made in the commentary to the last line, "trees sound their branches, a wind rising" 木鳴柯以起風. It is possible to understand this line as simply saying that a rising wind rustles the branches and causes the trees to sing. The commentary, however, disrupts the easy, commonsensical reading by offering a new element, namely birds. How do birds fit in the picture here? It turns out that birds alighting on the branches cause a rustling noise, which the poet has mistakenly thought to be the sound of wind (*wei wei feng* 謂為風). One could say that the commentary *clarifies* what the poet really means; but one could also say that the commentary *creates* a misunderstanding that would not have been there, by adding a wrinkle to the primary text. In fact, the commentary gives rise to new confusion, for many scholars seem to have misconstrued the commentary and are led to believe that the sound from the trees is of birds singing.[21] Nowhere, however, does the poet ever state that the birds are singing. The original text states simply and clearly: "birds roost, and branches sing" 鳥集柯鳴. In other words, birds coming to roost on the branches cause a rustling noise, leading to the poet's misperception of a rising wind.

Xie Lingyun's sleight of hand encourages us to reconsider the writing process and the relationship of a text and its commentary when the commentary is composed by the same author. Normally, we

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[19] The Xiao River or Little River is the Sheng Stream 嵊溪.

[20] Westbrook believes that it might be Wang Hongzhi 王弘之 (365–427) (Westbrook 1972, 226). Wang Hongzhi, a member of the Langye Wang clan and a well-known recluse of his day, built his house in Shining and was befriended by Xie Lingyun (*Song shu*, 93.2282). Later in the fu commentary Xie Lingyun also mentions that Wang Jinghong 王敬弘 (360–447), a cousin of Wang Hongzhi, had built a Buddhist monastery to the far south of Xie's estate (*Song shu*, 67.1759).

[21] Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1910–1998), who is largely critical of Xie Lingyun's auto-commentary, even suggests that *mu ming ke* 木鳴 ("trees sound their branches") be emended to *niao ming ke* 鳥鳴柯 ("birds sing on the branches") (Qian 1979, 4:1289). But that is clearly not what the commentary says. Westbrook's translation of the commentary likewise betrays a misconstruction of what is making sound: "Birds gather on branches and sing; I say the wind rises" (Westbrook 1972, 220). Also see Knechtges (Liu 2009, 39).

assume the secondary nature of a commentary, which is always written *after* the primary text. But in the case of a self-commentary, we must ask: which is primary, and which is secondary? Can the two be adequately distinguished in their composition? Would the poet have written the *fu* text the way he did if he did not know he could deploy a self-commentary to complicate and enrich the meaning of the primary text? What Xie Lingyun's self-exegesis shows is that, when an author gives an auto-commentary, the author finds two equally important voices performing a duet together, each playing its own part in the totality of the whole work.

An Important Precursor and a Negative Model

An older contemporary of Xie Lingyun, Zhang Yuan 張淵 (fl. 383–429), a northern astronomer, wrote a "*Fu* on Viewing Celestial Phenomena" ("Guan xiang fu" 觀象賦), which is preserved in his *Wei shu* 魏書 biography along with a commentary (*Wei shu*, 91.2107–117).[22] Unlike in Xie Lingyun's case, the authorship of the "Guan Xiang fu" commentary is not clearly stated, although Zhang Yuan himself is the most likely candidate. The commentary contains glosses of words and interpretive paraphrases of lines, but most of the notes explain the constellations and astronomical lore in the *fu* text. At the beginning of the *fu*, Zhang Yuan makes a reference to *The Classic of Changes* (*Yi jing* 易經) to demonstrate the importance of observing celestial objects. The citation from *The Classic of Changes* finds a later echo in a landmark work in the self-exegetical tradition, namely Yan Zhitui's "*Fu* on Viewing My Life". Yan's title is taken from the "Viewing" ("Guan" 觀) hexagram in *The Classic of Changes*: "Here the viewing is of my life: a noble man will be without misfortune" 觀我生, 君子無咎 (*Zhou Yi zhushu*, 3.60).

A descendant of a northern émigré family who had fled the non-Han invasion to south China in the early fourth century, Yan Zhitui grew up under the peaceful reign of Liang Emperor Wu 梁武帝 (r. 502–549) but was caught up in the devastating Hou Jing 侯景 Rebellion in the mid-sixth century. After the new Liang capital Jiangling (in modern Hubei) fell to the army of the Western Wei in 555, he was taken to the capital Chang'an in the north as a captive. Upon hearing that the Northern Qi court allowed detained southern courtiers to go home, he risked his life escaping to Qi in 556. But soon after he arrived, his former home state Liang was replaced by the Chen regime, and he ended up staying at the Qi court. In 577, the Qi fell to the Northern Zhou, and Yan Zhitui was taken back, once again as a captive, to Chang'an, where he wrote the autobiographical "*Fu* on Viewing My Life".[23]

Yan Zhitui's self-commentary forms a sharp contrast with Xie Lingyun's, because it is strictly limited to annotating events large and small, both in national political life and in his own life, in what may be

[22] Zhang Yuan is also known as Zhang Shen 張深 (such as in Bei shi 北史) or Zhang Quan 張泉 (such as in Li Shan's commentary to Wen xuan) to avoid the taboo name of the Tang founding emperor Li Yuan 李淵.

[23] The rhapsody along with its self-commentary is included in Yan Zhitui's biography in Li Baiyao 李百藥 (564–648), comp. Bei Qi shu 北齊書 (Bei Qi shu, 45.618–26). For a recent English translation with collated Chinese text, on which the text and translation in this article are based, see Family Instructions, 462–515. Subsequently I will identify the citations by line numbers.

called a historical mode. For instance, when narrating the beginning of his public career, an important moment in the life of an early medieval male elite member, he writes:

> 未成冠而登仕 Before reaching the age of capping, I had already entered service;
>
> 財解履以從軍 having just "taken off the shoes," I joined the army (ll. 77–78).[21]

To these two lines he appends a note:

> At the time I was nineteen *sui*. My first appointment was Right Attendant of the princedom of Xiangdong [Xiao Yi, later Emperor Yuan or Xiaoyuan]. Later, I was additionally appointed Adjutant to the Defender-general of the West in the Section of Justice due to military merit.
>
> 時年十九，釋褐湘東國右常侍，以軍功加鎮西墨曹參軍。

The information in this note, as well as in the preceding one, is not crucial for understanding the primary text. It is *extra* content added to provide a fuller portrait of the author, and it is crucial for a work of autobiography. Indeed, one's place of origin, the age at which one enters service, and the name of one's first office are exactly the sort of information that constitutes essential elements in a standard biography in a dynastic history—and, as we will see below, Yan Zhitui's *Bei Qi shu* biography made good use of such information from the *fu*. Previously, the most obvious type of autobiographical writing is the authorial self-account (*zixu* 自敘/序) included in a work of history, a work of "masters' literature", or a literary collection. Yan Zhitui manages to write an autobiography in a rhapsody by utilising self-commentary to provide prosaic biographical details, which would not have been possible to give in the *fu* genre.

If Yan Zhitui explicates a phrase, it is not to gloss the meaning of a lexically difficult term but to explain why he chooses to use it. For example, when offering an account of how the Jin ruling house and the elite, including his own ancestors, were driven south by non-Han invaders in the early fourth century, he writes: "Thereupon my Lord and King moved east; / thereupon my ancestor soared to the south" 吾王所以東運, 我祖於是南翔 (ll. 15–16). He finds it necessary to clarify the reference "my Lord and King", so he inserts a note here:

> Jin Zhongzong [Jin Emperor Yuan, r. 322–324] crossed the Yangzi River to the south as the Prince of Langye. I, Zhitui, am originally from Langye, therefore I refer to him as "my Lord and King."
>
> 晉中宗以琅邪王南渡，之推琅邪人，故稱吾王。

[21] "Taking off the shoes" refers to becoming an official, as one must take off one's shoes when entering the palace to see the ruler.

Yan Zhitui's ancestors were from Langye (in modern Shandong), and he considered himself as a native of Langye, even though by his time his family had resided in the south for many generations.

Sometimes Yan Zhitui provides details to substantiate the categorical language of the *fu*. For instance, in ll.197–98 Yan describes the captives' journey to the Western Wei capital Chang'an after the fall of Jiangling:

牽痾疻而就路	Debilitated by illness, I embarked on the journey,
策駑蹇以入關	whipping on the lame nag, I entered the pass.

To the first line above he appends a note saying, "At the time I was suffering from beriberi" 時患腳氣; to the second line, "The officials were given feeble donkeys and emaciated horses" 官給疲驢瘦馬. In ll.289–92, narrating the fall of the Northern Qi, he writes:

六馬紛其顛沛	The Six Steeds stumbled and fell into disorder;
千官散於犇逐	as a thousand officials dispersed in flight.
無寒瓜以療饑	There were no cold melons to cure hunger;
靡秋螢而照宿	nor autumn fireflies to illuminate camping at night.

To the last couplet he appends a note saying, "It was in the last month of winter, so we had none of those things" 時在季冬, 故無此物. Without the notes, it is possible for the reader to read "illness" (*ezhi*) and "lame nag" (*nujian*) as broad, categorical references, and "cold melon" (*hangua*) and "autumn firefly" (*qiuying*) as mere poetic hyperboles. Yan Zhitui, however, wants to ensure that we understand these terms as pointing to real referents in the physical world external to the text. The poetic images and rhetorical gestures in the *fu* text are thus actualised and specified by the notes.

Some of the details provided in the self-commentary are Yan Zhitui's personal experiences that would not have been known to anyone but himself and those immediately involved. For instance, in ll.113–168, he relates how he was captured and almost executed by Hou Jing's army, but was saved unexpectedly by a stranger:

幸先主之無勸	Fortunately there was no Former Ruler to urge my execution,
賴滕公之我保	instead I had a Lord of Teng who preserved my life.[25]

> I was a captive in Hou Jing's army and was supposed to be executed. Wang Ze, the Director of Hou Jing's Branch Department of State Affairs, with whom I had had no

[25] The Former Ruler refers to Liu Bei 劉備 (161–223), who had urged Cao Cao to kill the captured general Lü Bu 呂布 (d. 199). The Lord of Teng was Xiahou Ying 夏侯嬰 (d. 172 BCE); he saved Han Xin 韓信 (d. 196 BCE) from execution, who was to play a crucial role in the founding of the Western Han.

prior acquaintance, intervened on my behalf more than once. Thus I was able to escape death, and was taken back to the capital as a prisoner.

之推執在景軍，例當見殺。景行臺郎中王則初無舊識，再三救護，獲免，囚以還都。

剟鬼錄於岱宗	From the register of ghosts at Mount Tai my name was taken off,
招歸魂於蒼昊	my soul was summoned back from the gray heavens.[26]

At the time I had already taken off my robe [i.e., was getting ready to die], but was saved at the last minute.

時解衣訖而獲全。

荷性命之重賜	I owed to that man my second life,
銜若人以終老	I will be grateful to him till the end of my days.

Yan Zhitui makes two textual references in ll.113–14, but instead of identifying the allusions, he uses the self-commentary to re-narrate the incident in plain prose and, most importantly, gives the name and office of the person who saved his life. Once again, this is an *additional* piece of information that is not crucial to the general narration of events but to the history of an individual: the identity of his benefactor had a great deal of significance to Yan Zhitui, and, in his eyes, deserved to be recorded. Yan's biography in *Bei Qi shu* duly makes a note of this incident and mentions Wang Ze's name, a piece of information that is almost certainly gleaned from Yan's self-commentary to his rhapsody (*Bei Qi shu*, 45.617).

If Wang Ze's identity is something that could have been known only to Yan Zhitui and a small circle of people directly involved, Yan's *fu* also relates many national events that would surely have been part of public knowledge. In the latter case, one is compelled to ask why Yan Zhitui considers it important to incorporate them in his *fu*. For instance, ll.67–70 describe the internal feuding of the Liang princes:

子既殞而姪攻	A son was destroyed, and a nephew was assaulted;
昆亦圍而叔襲	the elder brother was besieged, and the uncle was attacked.
褚乘城而宵下	Chu climbed over the city wall and descended in the evening;
杜倒戈而夜入	Du turned their halberds around and surrendered at night.

The commentary reads:

[26] It was believed that the souls of the dead would go to the underworld at Mount Tai.

> Because [the Commandery Prince of] Hedong [i.e., Xiao Yu 蕭譽] did not provide warships, Emperor Xiaoyuan [Xiao Yi 蕭繹, Liang Emperor Yuan] sent his son and heir, Fangdeng, to replace him as governor of Xiangzhou. When the heir's army arrived, Hedong did not have time to mount a defense. Trusting the counsel of crooked advisors and coveting Hedong's women and wealth, the heir planned to launch an attack. Hedong became desperate and fought back, and the heir was killed. Emperor Xiaoyuan was so enraged that he sent Bao Quan to besiege Hedong. Subsequently [the Commandery Prince of] Yueyang [i.e., Xiao Cha 蕭詧, Xiao Yu's younger brother] declared he would go on a great hunting trip, leading his army to attack Jingzhou in hope of lifting the siege of Xiangzhou. At the time, Du An of Xiangyang and his brothers resented that they were being coerced and had not been told the truth, nor did they approve of this campaign, so they surrendered to Xiaoyuan with eight thousand soldiers in the middle of the night. Thereupon Yueyang fled. Chu Xianzu on Hedong's staff went to join Yueyang, and Xiangzhou fell.
>
> 孝元以河東不供船艎，乃遣世子方等為刺史。大軍掩至，河東不暇遣拒。世子信用羣小，貪其子女玉帛，遂欲攻之，故河東急而逆戰，世子為亂兵所害。孝元發怒，又使鮑泉圍河東。而岳陽宣言大獵，即擁眾襲荊州，求解湘州之圍。時襄陽杜岸兄弟怨其見劫，不以實告，又不義此行，率兵八千夜降，岳陽於是遁走。河東府褚顯族據投岳陽, 所以湘州見陷也。

These events, complicated as they were, would have been known to many of Yan Zhitui's contemporaries, not only because some lived through the chaotic times themselves as Yan himself did, but also because many historical accounts were circulating at the time.[27] One may argue that Yan Zhitui, writing his rhapsody in Chang'an after 577, was thinking of his northern audience who may not have been familiar with what had transpired in the south almost a quarter of a century before; but it is equally likely that he was thinking of the younger generation such as his own sons, to whom he addressed book-length "family instructions", and of a future readership.

The concern with readership in a self-commentary can be demonstrated by a negative example and a counterpart of Yan Zhitui's "*Fu* on Viewing My Life": the famous autobiographical rhapsody from the late sixth century, "Lament for the South", composed by the great writer Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581). Like Yan Zhitui, Yu Xin was a former Liang courtier; he was sent on a diplomatic mission near the end of the Liang, was detained in the north, and never returned to the south. One of Yu Xin's best-known and most influential works, "Lament for the South" is a long, elegiac rhapsody relating the events around the fall of the Liang and Yu Xin's experience through these chaotic times. It is just as filled with national and personal events as Yan Zhitui's *fu*, and at the same time is much more densely allusive. Indeed, it is so packed with textual references that the erudite scholar Qian Zhongshu opines

[27] Several eye-witness accounts were in circulation at the time, such as Xiao Shao's 蕭韶 *Taiqing ji* 太清紀, and Xiao Dahuan's 蕭大圜 *Huaihai luanli zhi* 淮海亂離志. There was also Liu Fan's 劉璠 *Liang dian* 梁典 and He Zhiyuan's 何之元 work of the same title, detailing Liang history (*Sui shu*, 33.958).

that Yu Xin ought to have written a self-commentary for it (Qian 1979, 4:1287). But Yu Xin never did. Instead, we learn that, not long after Yu Xin's death, Yang Yong 楊勇 (568–604), the ill-fated crown prince of the Sui, ordered Wei Dan 魏澹 (ca. 540s–600s) to produce a commentary on Yu Xin's literary collection, from which the exegesis of "Lament for the South" eventually went into circulation independently in a single scroll (*Sui shu*, 58.1416).[28] Two more commentaries on "Lament for the South" were written in the eighth century, showing how popular the *fu* was and how much it was in need of a commentary for an average reader to fully appreciate its content.[29] This does not necessarily mean that Yu Xin was indifferent to his readers; rather, I suggest that he was writing with a special audience in mind: namely, his fellow members of the southern diaspora who shared his traumatic experience and his language of southern court literature.[30] This audience did not need a commentary to understand the rhapsody. Yu Xin, however, does not seem to have been particularly concerned with future readership.

Yu Xin's *fu* must have struck a chord in Tang readers after the An Lushan Rebellion shattered the peace and prosperity of the empire and many were displaced in the ensuing civil wars. Cui Lingqin 崔令欽, the author of a commentary on "Lament for the South", wrote that in his post-Rebellion sojourns he reminisced about his former life in the capital "that was nevermore" 不可復得.[31] One of Yu Xin's most avid readers was Du Fu, who famously wrote, "Yu Xin's life is the most dismal of all: / in twilight years his poems and *fu* stirred the River Pass" 庾信生平最蕭瑟, 暮年詩賦動江關.[32] In the last poem he wrote before his death, Du Fu describes himself as "a man of sorrow, just like Yu Xin" 哀傷同庾信.[33] Yet there is a profound difference between the two poets: while Yu Xin might not be writing with a future audience in mind, Du Fu certainly was. Du Fu would not have failed to notice the need for a commentary in reading Yu Xin's poetic works, and he clearly did not want to leave it to others to provide notes for his writings. Thus, he took Yan Zhitui to be his model and largely adopted the historical mode of Yan's auto-commentary. In what follows I will turn to Du Fu's authorial notes, many of which, as we will see, are crucial to the interpretation of the poems.

[28] Recorded as one scroll with Wei Yanyuan's 魏彥淵 commentary in Zheng Qiao's 鄭樵 (1104–1162) *Tong zhi* 通志 (70.826). Yanyuan was Wei Dan's courtesy name.

[29] The commentaries were by Zhang Tingfang 張庭芳 (fl. 718), who also wrote a commentary on the 120 "poems on objects" 詠物詩 by Li Jiao 李嶠 (ca. 645–714), and Cui Lingqin 崔令欽 (fl. 710s–750s), the author of *Jiaofang ji* 教坊記, a nostalgic memoir about court music before the An Lushan Rebellion of 755 (*Xin Tang shu*, 60.1622).

[30] I discuss this point in fuller detail in my article, "Yu Xin's 'Memory Palace'" (Tian 2018, 124–57).

[31] Cui's preface to "Jiaofang ji" (*Quan Tang wen*, 396.2962).

[32] "Singing My Feelings at Ancient Sites" 詠懷古蹟 No. 1 (*Du Fu quanji*, 7:3842). English translation is Owen's, with slight modification (Owen 2016, 4:360–61). Du Fu's poems and their titles in this article are Owen's translations with occasional modifications.

[33] "Fengji zhouzhong fuzhen shuhuai sanshiliu yun fengcheng Hu'nan qinyou" 風疾舟中伏枕書懷三十六韻奉呈湖南親友 (*Du Fu quanji*, 10, 6093; Owen 2016, 6:232–33).

Annotating the Self

Xie Lingyun and Yan Zhitui are important precursors in annotating their own rhapsodies, but prior to Du Fu, self-commentary in *shi* poetry had not been, as far as we know, a widespread practice. Scholars have noted that Du Fu was a unique case in habitually adding notes to his poems that are, furthermore, not limited to identifying people and places or glossing terms (Wei 2013, 152–53; Xu 2010, 32–38). From the late eighth century on, authorial notes in *shi* poetry became increasingly common. Du Fu, whose posthumous fame was first established by the mid-Tang or the turn-of-the-century generation, had no doubt played an important part in the phenomenon.[34]

The *Songben Du Gongbu ji* 宋本杜工部集, based on Wang Zhu's 王洙 (997–1057) edition (with 1039 preface) and printed by Wang Qi 王琪 in 1059, is the oldest Du Fu edition we have and includes the largest number of authorial notes. Xiao Difei 蕭滌非 (1906–1991) collected 148 notes from the edition, which are published as "Du shi zizhu jilan" 杜詩自註輯覽 (Xiao 2006, 487–98). Xie Siwei 謝思煒 gives a detailed discussion of these notes in his article, "*Songben Du Gongbu ji* zhuwen kaobian" 宋本杜工部集註文考辨, confirming Du Fu's authorship (Xie 2003, 98–113).[35]

Many of Du Fu's poems are addressed to family members, friends, and acquaintances on social occasions. In more than one case we see that the notes were added long after the poems were composed, and we realise that in doing so he was, like Yan Zhitui, not thinking of the poems' immediate recipients, but thinking of readers at a distance and/or from the future who would be unfamiliar with the compositional circumstances. For example, the poem "The Misery of the Rains: Respectfully Sent to the Duke of Longxi, and also Presented to Summoned Scholar Wang" ("Kuyu fengji Longxigong jiancheng Wang zhengshi" 苦雨奉寄隴西公兼呈王徵士) has a note: "The Duke of Longxi is [Li] Yu, [later] Prince of Hanzhong; the Summoned Scholar is Wang Che of Langya" 隴西公即漢中王瑀，徵士瑯琊王澈 (*Du Fu quanji*, 1:476; Owen 2016, 1:163). This poem is dated to 754, but Li Yu, a member of the royal family, was made Prince of Hanzhong in 756. "Lament for Spring" ("Shangchun" 傷春), dated to 764, has a note: "Langzhou in Ba is remote, and only after I finished lamenting for spring did I learn that the palace had been recovered before spring began" 巴閬僻遠, 傷春罷始知春前已收宮闕 (*Du Fu quanji*, 6:3047; Owen 2016, 3:318).

Du Fu's auto-commentary can be roughly divided into three kinds. The most common kind is to actualise and specify a general poetic term or image in the same way as Yan Zhitui does, by which means he weaves an intricate picture of poetic representation and the external world. Just to cite one example: in the poem "On the Same Topic" ("Chongti" 重題, i.e., "A Lament for Director Li" 哭李尚書), he writes, "Again I look at the Crown Prince of Wei, / of Advisors he is short Ying and Liu" 還瞻魏太子, 賓客減應劉 (*Du Fu quanji*, 10:5607; Owen 2016, 6:6–7). The Crown Prince of Wei

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[34] Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) and Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) were both prolific in producing self-annotations (see Yu 2016, 148–56; Zha 2015, 85–93).

[35] Xu Mai's article, cited above, also gives a focused discussion of the methods of distinguishing authorial notes from editorial notes.

was Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), and Ying Yang 應瑒 and Liu Zhen 劉楨 were well-known writers on his staff who both died in the great plague of 217 and were famously mourned by Cao Pi. It is conventional to use "Ying and Liu" as a poetic designation of talented men of letters, but an authorial note appended to this couplet says, "His Excellency [Li Zhifang 李之芳, d. 768] had served as Director of the Ministry of Rites and passed away in the post of Advisor to the Crown Prince" 公歷禮部尚書, 薨於太子賓客. That is, instead of taking "Ying and Liu" as a general reference to eminent writers, Du Fu makes sure we know it is a *precise* reference. Such gestures at the world outside the text constitute an intriguing rhetorical move that insists on the precision and verisimilitude of the poetic language. The notes scattered throughout the poet's corpus thus serve as constant reminders that the poems are inextricably woven into the fabric of the life lived by the poet.

A poem "Sent to Supernumerary Li Bu the Fourteenth: Twelve Couplets" ("Ji Li shisi yuanwai bu shieryun" 寄李十四員外布十二韻) urges a friend to postpone going to an official post (*Du Fu quanji*, 10:5517; Owen 2016, 3:388–91):

	名參漢望苑	Your name was included in Han's Bowang Park,
	職述景題輿	your office continues Jing's writing on the coach.[36]
	巫峽將之郡	In the Wu Gorges, on your way to your district,
4	荊門好附書	please send a letter at Jingmen.
	遠行無自苦	Aren't you letting yourself suffer on your far travels?
	內熱比何如	How has your "inner heat" been recently?
	正是炎天闊	Right now the blazing weather is widespread,
8	那堪野館疏	how can you bear rustic inns being few and far between?
	黃牛平駕浪	At Yellow Ox Gorge you will ride level on the waves,
	畫鷁上淩虛	your painted cormorant prow will mount up over the void.
	試待盤渦歇	Wait until the whirlpools end,
12	方期解纜初	only then plan to unmoor your boat.
	悶能過小徑	If in your doldrums you stop by my little path,
	自為摘嘉蔬	I'll pick some fine vegetables for you.
	渚柳元幽僻	The willows on the isle have always been secluded,
16	村花不掃除	I won't sweep away the village flowers.
	宿陰繁素柰	Long cloudiness has made the pale crab-apple flourish,

[36] Bowang Park was established for the Crown Prince by Han Emperor Wu and subsequently used as a reference to the crown prince's establishment, to which the Remonstrance Secretary belonged. The "coach with Jing's writing on it" is a reference to the office of vice-prefect.

	過雨亂紅蕖	passing rains have made a tangle of red lotuses.
	寂寂夏先晚	In silence the summer wanes early,
20	泠泠風有餘	cool and brisk, there is plenty of breeze.
	江清心可瑩	When the river gets clear, it can polish the mind,
	竹冷髮堪梳	when bamboo grows chill, the hair can be combed.
	直作移巾几	Just transfer your headband and armrest here,
24	秋帆發弊廬	then in autumn you can set sail from my humble cottage.

The poem is a seductive letter inviting a friend to spend the summer with the poet at a place where things are cool and leisurely, in glaring contrast with the "blazing weather" (*yantian* 炎天) and "inner heat" (*neire* 內熱) that beleaguer the business traveller. "Inner heat" evokes a quotation from a *Zhuangzi* story: Lord Zhuliang of Chu, upon being sent on a mission to Qi, said, "I received the king's command in the morning, and I am drinking icy water in the evening—how I suffer from inner heat" 今吾朝受命而夕飲冰, 我其內熱與 (*Zhuangzi jishi*, 2.152). Here "inner heat" describes Zhuliang's feelings of anxiety about his mission and seems quite pertinent to Li Bu's circumstance. But Du Fu appends a note to the poem: "Recently [Li Bu was] appointed Remonstrance Secretary and Vice-Prefect of Wanzhou; although he has been bedridden, I have heard that he has already readied his baggage" 新除司議郎兼萬州別駕, 雖尚伏枕已聞理裝. Thus, instead of being a mere allusion to an earlier text and a reference to the stress of a government job, the "inner heat" turns out to be used also as a medical term for an imbalance of the humours in Li Bu and, in light of the real-life situation, becomes a double entendre. This further brings home the witticism of line 20, "Cool and brisk, there is plenty of breeze" 泠泠風有餘, which, once we learn of Li Bu's ailment, becomes resonant with a line from the well-known "*Fu* on the Wind": "Clear and pure, cool and brisk, [the breeze] heals disease and cures hangover" 清清泠泠, 愈病析酲.[37] The poem thus very much depends on the authorial note to be turned from a verse epistle serving the immediate social function of persuasion into a literary work whose full meaning can be sustained for a broader audience.

The second kind of Du Fu's self-annotations serves to contextualise the humour of a poem. In contrast with the poet's stereotypical image as someone weighed down by the fate of the dynasty or the sufferings of the people, many of Du Fu's poems are social pieces that are light-hearted and playful: *xi* 戲, a word that is often featured in the poem title. Yet one of the most context-bound social phenomena is humour, which is socially, culturally, and linguistically determined, and often proves difficult or impossible to explicate. Some of Du Fu's notes are designed to provide the necessary context to sustain the humour of the poem for readers beyond the direct recipients. In a series of three poems, entitled

[37] Attributed to Song Yu 宋玉, anthologised in the canonical Wen xuan (13.583).

"Playfully Written, Presented to the Prince of Hanzhong" ("Xiti jishang Hanzhong wang" 戲題寄上漢中王), each contains lines about drinking (*Du Fu quanji*, 9:2674–680; Owen 2016, 3:152–57).

From #1:

忍斷杯中物 How can one bear to break off that thing in the cup,

祇看座右銘 and just look at the inscription right of the seat?

不能隨皂蓋 I cannot follow the black carriage awning,

自醉逐浮萍 I will get drunk alone, going with the duckweed adrift.

From #2:

蜀酒濃無敵 Shu ale has no competition,

江魚美可求 River fish are tasty and easy to get.

終思一酩酊 In the end I just want to get dead drunk,

淨掃雁池頭 and to sweep clean your Wild Goose Pool.

From #3:

尚憐詩警策 You still love my poems' daring lines,

猶記酒顛狂 but do you still recall my wildness in ale?

The poet appends a note to the poem explaining, "At the time the Prince was in Zizhou. When he first arrived, he had stopped drinking, and the poems playfully give an account of this" 時王在梓州, 初至, 斷酒不飲, 篇中戲述. The constant mention of drinking in these poems may seem innocuous to a casual reader, but when we learn of the prince's decision to quit alcohol, we realise that the poet is teasing the prince relentlessly—hence the "playfulness" (*xi*) in the title. The note thus produces a gap between what we understand and what the note suggests we *should* understand.

For the following poem written in Chengdu, "To Office Manager Cui of Qiongzhou" ("Ji Qiongzhou Cui lushi" 寄邛州崔錄事; *Du Fu quanji*, 6:3172; Owen 2016, 3:372–73), the poet's self-exegesis proves instrumental for us not only to appreciate the humour of the poem but also to comprehend its meaning altogether.

邛州崔錄事 Office Manager Cui of Qiongzhou

聞在果園坊 I have heard is in Fruit Garden Ward.

久待無消息 Long have I waited, but have had no news,

終朝有底忙　what keeps you so busy all day long?

應愁江樹遠　You must worry that my river trees are too far

怯見野亭荒　or fear seeing the wildness of my rustic pavilion.

浩蕩風煙外　Beyond the surging turbulence of smoke in the wind

誰知酒熟香　who knows of the fragrance of my mature ale?

The opening couplet is abrupt and unusual, its function being merely to highlight the contrast of the two place names: Qiongzhou vs. Fruit Garden Ward. A note to "Fruit Garden Ward" states: "Name of a ward in Chengdu" 坊名, 在成都. Unlike Xie Lingyun in his self-commentary, Du Fu does not always explain a local place name in his poems, and when he does take the trouble to do so, there is a reason for it. The point of the first couplet is that, though an official of Qiongzhou, Mr. Cui has taken a break from his duty and come to Chengdu—and he is right there in Fruit Garden Ward—but he has not visited Du Fu, who sends him this poem to tease him affectionately: "What has been keeping you busy all this time?"[38] Without knowing where the ward was, one would not be able to understand the opening couplet, and the rest of the poem would become equally incomprehensible.

Sometimes humour is produced through the note itself. For instance, ll. 13–20 in "Song of Leyou Park" ("Leyou yuan ge" 樂遊園歌) read (*Du Fu quanji*, 1:214; Owen 2016, 1:68–69):

卻憶年年人醉時　I think back on the times that I was drunk year after year;

只今未醉已先悲　today, though not drunk yet, I've already grown sad.

數莖白髮那拋得　These several strands of hair turned white,
how can I get rid of them?

百罰深杯亦不辭　a hundred forfeits of full cups,
and still I don't refuse.

聖朝亦知賤士醜　I also know that in this sagely reign
a low scholar is repulsive,

一物自荷皇天慈　when each single creature in its own right
receives the grace of Sovereign Heaven.

此身飲罷無歸處　Finished drinking, this body of mine has nowhere to go,

[38] Gu Chen 顧宸 (1607–1674) believed that Mr. Cui was a native of Qiongzhou and had been living in Chengdu at the time (*Du Fu quanji*, 6:3172). This is not likely. For one thing, whenever a person's provincial post is given, it is customary to give the prefecture or commandery where he was serving before giving his surname and the title of his office (e.g., Vice Prefect Jia [Zhi] of Yuezhou 岳州賈司馬, or Prefect Yan the Eighth of Bazhou, 巴州嚴八使君). For another thing, had Mr. Cui been a long-term resident of Chengdu, it would make the second line "I have heard you are in Fruit Garden Ward" sound strange.

獨立蒼茫自詠詩	I stand alone in a vast expanse chanting a poem to myself.

The poem derives its power from the poignant contrast of a boisterous partying crowd and the melancholy figure of the poet standing alone and chanting poetry. However, a note under the title—"On the last day of the first lunar month, at Administrator Helan Yang's feast, I composed this poem while drunk" 晦日賀蘭楊長史筵, 醉中作— forms an amusing juxtaposition with the line, "today, though not drunk yet, I've already grown sad." It undercuts the poet's melancholy, which, now that we know he wrote the poem while drunk, seems more of a sentimental outpouring under the influence. Without entirely taking away the moving power of the image of the solitary poet, it nonetheless injects a gentle self-irony.

The third kind of Du Fu's self-annotations functions as the key to an interpretation that the reader might not have otherwise arrived at without the poet's note. When this happens locally, the poet, reminiscent of Yan Zhitui, uses *gu* 故 ("therefore") or *gu yun* 故云 ("therefore, I write") to explain the couplet in question, such as in "Wang Unexpectedly Brings Ale and Gao Drops By with Him; We All Used 'Han' as the Rhyme Word" ("Wang jing xiejiu Gao yi tongguo gongyong han zi" 王竟攜酒高亦同過共用寒字; *Du Fu quanji*, 4:2442; Owen 2016, 3:74–75). But often a note helps explain the entire poem, not just one couplet. Take for example the poem entitled "To My Nephew Zuo" ("Shi zhi Zuo" 示姪佐; *Du Fu quanji*, 3:1597; Owen 2016, 2:188–89):

多病秋風落	I was very sick as the autumn wind was waning,
君來慰眼前	you came to console me with your presence.
自聞茅屋趣	Since I heard of the enticements of the reed-thatched house,
只想竹林眠	all I can do is to fantasize resting there in the bamboo grove.
滿谷山雲起	Mountain clouds rise, filling the valley,
侵籬澗水懸	soaking the hedge, a stream hangs in a little waterfall.
嗣宗諸子姪	Of all the sons and nephews of Sizong
早覺仲容賢	it was early recognized that Zhongrong was most worthy.

Sizong was the courtesy name of the poet Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263), known as one of the "Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove", and Zhongrong was the courtesy name of his nephew Ruan Xian 阮咸, another of the Seven Worthies, here representing Du Zuo. Reading through this poem, we may think of it as a simple thank-you note to a sweet nephew for coming to visit the sick poet, who expresses a desire to live a leisurely life in a rustic setting. But an appended note to the poem changes this perception. The note says: "Zuo's thatched cottage is in Eastern Bough Valley" 佐草堂在東柯穀. Such a note is certainly not intended for the poem's addressee, Du Zuo. Instead, it is for the benefit of the reader. It enables the reader to realise that the thatched house, the bamboo grove, the valley, and the

hedge in the two middle couplets all describe Du Zuo's property.[39] In other words, the poem expresses a wish to move in with his nephew! With this realisation we can see how the poet's praise of the nephew in the final couplet is double-edged: it both expresses appreciation of the nephew's visit and functions as an exhortation of him to live up to the "worthy" image of Ruan Xian.[40]

A more extreme case of the third kind of auto-commentary is the note appended to the title of the poem, "Departing from Qinzhou" ("Fa Qinzhou" 發秦州): "In the second year of the Qianyuan era [759], I left Qinzhou to go to Tonggu County and recorded the journey in twelve poems" 乾元二年自秦州赴同谷縣紀行十二首 (*Du Fu quanji*, 4:1699; Owen 2016, 2:232). This note is crucial in the establishment of the twelve ensuing poems as an interconnected set (*zushi* 組詩) whose overarching structure and meaning entirely depend on the grouping together of the poems (Tian 2020, 93–108). Without the note, it would have been unnatural to treat the poem "Phoenix Terrace" as the final poem of a poetic set recording the poet's journey from Qinzhou to Tonggu, for Phoenix Terrace is a mountain to the southeast of Tonggu and would be out of the poet's way on his journey from Qinzhou to Tonggu (see Yan 1986, 836; Li 2003, 44–51). Indeed, a poem on another Tonggu site, "Myriad Fathom Pool" ("Wanzhang tan" 萬丈潭), seems to match the "Phoenix Terrace" poem so well that some scholars have discussed the two poems together as a "pair" (for example, Huang 2005, 83–128). However, in the early editions of Du Fu's collection, "Myriad Fathom Pool" is always strikingly placed *before* "Departing from Qinzhou," with a note saying, "Composed at Tonggu County" 同谷縣作.[41] The unusual placement of the poem in the collection and its appended note show that the author wanted to ensure the reader knows "Myriad Fathom Pool" was composed at Tonggu and yet would not confuse it with the set of twelve Qinzhou-Tonggu poems.

The note for the Qinzhou-Tonggu series is an explicit instruction for reading; that is, by circumscribing his record of the journey to twelve poems, the poet calls the reader's attention to the range of the poetic travel account and encourages the reader to conceive of these twelve poems *as a whole*. This, however, is not the most typical of Du Fu's auto-commentaries. Nor does Du Fu perform what Sherry Roush describes as "ostensibly interpretive prose intervention" (Roush 2002, 5), such as paraphrasing or glossing. Rather, Du Fu more often than not tends to use authorial notes to offer clarification to the compositional circumstances and, by doing so, promote a reading of the poems, not as self-contained in themselves, but as connected to the world external to the poems, which is nonetheless constructed

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[39] Owen's translation uses "your reed-thatched house" and "your hedge" to make it clear that the poet fancies Du Zuo's house (emphasis added). The original Chinese text, however, has no such possessive pronouns and so the reader could easily misunderstand but for the authorial note. I have modified Owen's translation above to preserve the ambiguity of the poem.

[40] The poet's disappointment with Du Zuo, who did not invite his uncle to come and live with him, can be seen in the three poems "Sent after Zuo Returned to the Mountains" 佐還山後寄三首, in which Du Fu chides Du Zuo for being slow in sending grain and asks for "frosty chives" (Du Fu quanji, 3:1600; Owen 2016, 2:188–91). If the reader reads on, just one poem later there is a poem "On an Autumn Day the Recluse Ruan Brings Thirty Bunches of Chives" 秋日阮隱居致薤三十束, in which the poet thanks Ruan for giving him a basket full of chives and says in an apparently pointed manner, "[Ruan] didn't wait for me to send a letter asking" 不待致書求 (Du Fu quanji, 3:1614; Owen 2016, 2:192–93).

[41] See Song ben Du Gongbu ji, 144; Xinkan jiaoding jizhu Du shi, 6. This is contrasted with the ordering of these poems in major Qing dynasty editions, which usually place "Myriad Fathom Pool" after "Phoenix Terrace" and the "Seven Songs Written While Residing in Tonggu County in the Qianyuan Reign" 乾元中寓居同谷縣作歌七首, which mechanically follows the place (and presumed time) of composition but neglects the author's intent.

out of nothing but the poet's auto-commentary. The notes are indices of the fullness of, and a "gesturing to", an unrecoverable "real world". This historical mode of auto-commenting, a legacy of Yan Zhitui's autobiographical *fu*, became the most important type of poetic self-exegesis after Du Fu.

Conclusion

In this article, I review the early history of *zizhu* in the Chinese belletristic tradition, pinpointing important landmarks in the trajectory of self-exegesis for rhapsodies and *shi* poetry, while attempting to delineate some characteristic features of poetic auto-commentaries. From its primary function of glossing, explaining, and generally facilitating comprehension, an author's self-commentary can be used as a powerful tool to add layers of meaning to a text; it can neutralise the generality of categorical poetic language by endowing a text with individuating details, and it can help an author actualise their particular vision for how a text could or should be read. A commentator is, first of all, a reader; but when an author personally takes on the role of a commentator, the boundary between primary text and commentary becomes blurred. Indeed, like in Xie Lingyun's case, a self-commentary might very well impact how the primary text is written.

Chinese poetic auto-commentary became prevalent from the late eighth century on. One of the longest extant Tang dynasty poems, Zheng Yu's 鄭嵎 (fl. 838–859) "Jinyang Gate" ("Jinyang men" 津陽門), has a lengthy self-commentary. As Paul W. Kroll observes, it totals more than 2,200 characters, exceeding by far the poem's 1,400 characters, and "outdoes all its forerunners of any sort" (Kroll 2003, 291, 292). Since most of Zheng Yu's poem is cast in the words of an old man recollecting his youthful experience at the height of the dynasty, the poet's commentary, which is restricted to the old man's lines, strikingly possesses a double identity: it is both an auto-commentary to his own poem and a commentary ostensibly on someone else's words.

The origin of commentaries as attempts to illuminate the classics, *jing*, confers the appearance and status of authority on a text with commentary. The subsequent expansion of exegetical practice from the classics to an author's own belletristic writings indicates the changing ways in which literary self-representations were regarded as well as the increasing importance being attached to them. Prosaic self-exegesis to poetry and rhapsodies is a peculiar mode of self-reflection offered by an author who attempts to read and consider their own work as a reader. It produces a distance from the author within the author, a split of the self. The widespread practice of adding contextualising notes to one's own poems, from Du Fu onward, bespeaks a particular penchant on premodern Chinese poets' part to embed lyric poetry in a historical framework. Instead of being an art separate from life, classical Chinese poetry is itself turned into a self-commentary on the poet's life.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Reading Yan Lianke’s Fiction through the Lens of *Shijing* Exegesis

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Yan Lianke is one of the most prominent contemporary writers in China and worldwide. This study reaches beyond the established masterpieces of Yan’s oeuvre and concentrates on works that have received less critical attention—namely the satirical novels *Hard Like Water* and *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*. The former work is a “revolution plus love” story set in the early People’s Republic of China, while the latter is an account of the travails of a contemporary Chinese professor. This essay focuses on the recurring motif of the protagonists rendering the world around them in ways that resemble different aspects of the *Shijing* exegetic tradition. While some elements of this tradition may appear dated and of limited value, this essay argues that Yan is interested in exegesis as a practice of unconstrained literary imagination. Yan’s characters, who are either feverishly devoted to a single interpretive framework or are stumbling in search of an innermost meaning, serve as metaphors for trials and tribulations experienced by intellectuals in their quest for truth and knowledge. Thus, the close reading presented in this essay explores the focal point of Yan’s fiction and the long-lasting tradition of interpreting *Shijing* poems that is manifested in the inquisitive intellectual spirit of the protagonists of *Hard Like Water* and *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*.

本文通過對閻連科長篇小說《風雅頌》和《堅硬如水》的分析，探討其作品中主人公觀察和解讀世界的方式與《詩經》詮釋傳統之間的內在聯繫。文章首先簡要回顧《詩經》詮釋史中的關鍵流派，尤其是“毛詩”的解讀傳統。在《風雅頌》中，主人公楊科以知識份子的身份詮釋世界，其關鍵的詮釋轉變過程映射了《詩經》詮釋的發展脈絡，特別是對“淫詩”的註釋。《堅硬如水》則展現了文革時期高愛軍如何借助“毛體”語言將日常生活政治化為革命寓言，這與“毛詩”對《詩經》愛情詩的政治化解讀異曲同工。通過對這兩部作品的對比分析，本文揭示了閻連科作品中人物形象與藝術風格的發展軌跡，為深入理解其後期創作提供了重要參照。

Keywords: Chinese literature, Yan Lianke, *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*, *Shijing*, interpretation, fiction

關鍵詞： 中國文學，閻連科，《風雅頌》，詩經，詮釋，小說

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Yan Lianke's 閻連科 (1958–) satirical novel *Fengyasong* 風雅頌 (*Ballads, Hymns, Odes*, 2008) stirred up considerable controversy in mainland Chinese academic circles immediately after its publication. The sometimes quite intense debates over this work are covered at length in extensive studies in English by Xie Haiyan 謝海燕 (2022) and Fang-yu Li 李方瑜 (2015). In addition to exploring the critical reception of *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*, Li concentrates on the autobiographical and confessional narratives in the novel, whereas Xie addresses the connection between the work and the ancient poetry anthology *Shijing* 詩經. Both studies trace how Yan's self-proclaimed artistic style, *shenshi zhuyi* 神實主義 ("mythorealism" or "divine realism" in Li's translation), is reflected in the novel.[1] Indeed, both English-language and Chinese-language studies comment extensively on *Shijing*'s role in *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*. However, I believe that there is still room for further inquiry on the subject.

This essay does not concentrate on Chinese literary scholars' hostility toward Yan's portrayal of academia or the role of mythorealism in his fiction, as both of these aspects are covered extensively in existing scholarship. Instead, it considers from a different angle several aspects of *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* that have previously received scholarly attention, such as the role of *Shijing* and its exegetical tradition and the portrayal of intellectuals.[2] To demonstrate that these aspects are not an outlier but have a significant and lasting presence in Yan's fiction, I also focus on the instances of exegetic-esque narrative in Yan's early work *Jianying ru shui* 堅硬如水 (*Hard Like Water*, 2001), which has received much less critical attention than *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*. The essay opens with a short outline of the history of *Shijing* exegesis and reflects on why it can be a significant source of inspiration for a writer such as Yan. This is followed by an analysis of the exegetic-esque narratives in *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* and *Hard Like Water* that links these narratives with certain aspects of *Shijing*'s exegetic tradition. The goal is to explore how the theme of exegesis and interpretation reflects Yan's stance on the issue of intellectuals' precarious place in contemporary Chinese society.

Portrayals of downtrodden intellectuals and of academia as an institution, as well as the importance of interpretation, are indispensable parts of Yan's later works, such as *Sishu* 四書 (*The Four Books*, 2011), *Suqiu gongmian* 速求共眠 (*Urgent Wish to Sleep Together*, 2018), and *Xinjing* 心經 (*Heart Sutra*, 2020). *The Four Books* consists of four narratives—a clandestine denunciation, an autobiographical novel, a quasi-biblical narrative, and a philosophical parable—that offer drastically different interpretations of tragic events that unfold in a re-education camp for political prisoners. *Urgent Wish to Sleep Together* is a *Rashomon*-like metafictional novel—Yan's fictional double attempts to adapt into a film script the impossible love story of a young researcher and a migrant worker that takes place on the Peking University campus. Intertwined yet contradictory accounts of the event render this task extremely challenging and their interpreter prone to falsification. Finally, *Heart Sutra* probes the boundary between faith and ideology in telling the story of a religious training centre at the fictional National Political University 國政大學 and its students, who are clergy torn between the teachings of their sacred scriptures and the doctrines of the party-state.

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[1] For a detailed account of mythorealism, see: Yan 2011b or Yan 2022.

[2] Beside studies by Xie and Li, see for instance: Yao 2009 and Kan 2016.

It is evident that intellectuals, interpretation, and interpretation's effect on the world are areas of focus in the majority of Yan's mature works. In turn, *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* and *Hard Like Water* are important but often dismissed precursors of the writer's celebrated style.[3] Thus, this essay challenges previous perceptions of *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* and seeks to bring due critical attention to *Hard Like Water*, highlighting the novels' status as significant milestones in Yan's oeuvre as well as more generally in Chinese academic fiction and fiction concerned with the intelligentsia.[4]

Shijing Exegesis and Literary Creation

In this section, I revisit *Shijing* and its exegetic tradition and consider how they resonate with Yan Lianke's artistic work. *Shijing* is an anthology of verses composed between approximately the tenth and seventh centuries BCE. Its poetic pieces are divided into three sections—*Feng* 風 (Airs of the States), *Ya* 雅 (Court Hymns, further divided into *Xiaoya* 小雅 or Lesser Hymns and *Daya* 大雅 or Greater Hymns), and *Song* 頌 (Eulogies)—which also serve as the title of Yan's novel. Although the graph *jing* 經 in *Shijing* means "classic," and, indeed, it became an integral part of the Confucian canon's Five Classics 五經 during the Western Han period (206 BCE–9 CE), its almost sacred status was not undisputed throughout history. The history of this ancient anthology's reception is marked by multiple instances of interpretation, as well as re- and misinterpretation.[5] These permutations were caused by the complex exegetical tradition that through the centuries grew inseparable from the anthology proper. Commentators have ascribed different readings to *Shijing* poems in accordance with their philosophical, scholarly, and aesthetic standpoints. The more straightforward the text of a poem was, the more effort it took for the commentators to force it into the exegetic paradigm. Such a commentarial approach is a seminal trait of *Maoshi* 毛詩 (*Mao Tradition of the Poetry* or *The Poems in the Mao Tradition*, hereafter Mao tradition), an exegetic tradition that enjoyed canonical status alongside the anthology proper for almost a millennium.

The Mao tradition of *Shijing* exegesis, named after its supposed founder, a certain Mr. Mao 毛公, was one of several prominent commentarial traditions that flourished both before and during the Han period.[6] It ultimately triumphed over its rivals and became the predominant way of interpreting the

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[3] Since *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*, Yan has increasingly chosen canonical texts as focal points of his fiction. See, for instance, such later works as Yan 2015; Yan 2023a; Yan 2023b; Yan 2024a.

[4] Yan himself laments that his novel *Wei renmin fuwu* 為人民服務 (*Serve the People*, 2005) received much more publicity and praise than *Hard Like Water*, primarily because it was the first of his works to be translated into English. Both works focus on the relationship between revolution and sex, as well as that between the official and the illicit. However, according to the author's own evaluation, the former novel is a somewhat insignificant part of his oeuvre, while the latter is a much better yet undeservedly neglected work. See: Yan 2024b, 53.

[5] See: Loewe 1993, 418–20.

[6] The commentary is attributed by different scholarly traditions either to Mao Heng 毛亨 or Mao Chang 毛萇 (both Warring States Period [c. 475–221 BCE] to Early Han, exact dates unclear). See: Kern 2010; Loewe 1993.

ancient poetry anthology for centuries to come, although other interpretations continued to exist alongside it.[7] Reaching this high status by the Eastern Han period (25–220), it was practically canonised alongside its source text during the Tang period (618–907), when the ultimate work of exegesis, *Mao shi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (*The Correct Meaning of the Poems in the Mao Tradition*) was compiled. The signature trait of this tradition is to read every poem as a political or ethical allegory featuring prominent historical figures of the past, no matter how forced such an interpretation might be. The disjunction that this approach creates between a poem's text and its interpretation is particularly egregious for love poems. Mao's interpretations de-emphasise the aesthetic dimension of the poetry, instead reinventing the anthology as a textbook of proper conduct. However, Zong-qi Cai 蔡宗齊 sees another side of the reductive exegetic tradition: "True, the ethico-sociopolitical readings of *Shijing* love poems in these three texts are implausible, boring, and hard to defend. But these readings hide an ironic, completely overlooked fact: the interpretive process that yields such readings is itself an admirable exercise of literary imagination" (Cai 2018, 68). Up to the present day, this literary phenomenon continues to fascinate and inspire scholars and writers alike. For instance, the scholar He Xuan 何軒, a compiler of a commentated anthology of migrant workers' poetry, explicitly mentions that his work aims to mediate between poets and scholars inspired by the Mao tradition (Klein 2019, 207). Naturally, the possibility of the fusion of tightly interwoven lyrical and political discourses that the Mao tradition presents was also bound to catch the interest of a writer like Yan Lianke, whose works often feature a close mix of the personal and the official. As Carlos Rojas puts it: "[T]hemes of destruction and censorship are inextricably intertwined with corresponding motifs of creation and appreciation, and it is precisely in the interstices of these two sets of tendencies that Yan's own contemporary work is positioned" (Rojas 2024, xv).

Thus, the Mao tradition can be perceived as a source of inspiration for Yan. One can also draw parallels between his fiction and the arch-rival of Mao's canonical exegesis—Song dynasty (960–1279) scholars' interpretations of *Shijing*. At a certain point, the long-standing tradition of shoehorning beautiful poems into the rigid framework of didactic allegories could no longer satisfy new generations of scholars. The anti-canonical movement in *Shijing* exegesis peaked when the stalwart of neo-Confucianism, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), composed his *Shi jizhuan* 詩集傳 (*Collected Commentaries on the Poems*), attempting to rediscover the original voice of the ancient poems, free from the Procrustean bed of Mao exegesis. However, the same issues that had centuries before perplexed Han erudites-*boshi* 博士 proved just as confusing for Song iconoclasts. For instance, *Shijing*'s love poems, at last unbound from their allegoric shackles, astonished scholars with disturbingly straightforward depictions of feelings and sexual desire. Thus, the history of *Shijing* exegesis is characterised by the constant struggle of, as Steven Van Zoeren (1991, 11) puts it, "'two readings': one proper and apologetic; the other secret, pleasurable and dangerous." Stephen Durrant (1995, xv) extrapolates this dichotomy to Chinese culture en masse. Indeed, the intertwinement of state ideology and personal passions within

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[7] The Mao tradition's eventual triumph over the initially more influential and officially backed traditions of Lu 魯, Qi 齊, and Han 韓 is due in great part to the Eastern Han (25–220) scholar Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200), who based his orthodox Confucian interpretation of the anthology on the Mao tradition rather than the other three. For a detailed history and analysis of *Shijing* exegesis, see the monograph-length study of the subject: Van Zoeren 1991.

an individual has always been one of Yan's main artistic interests, as this manifests itself in one form or another in most of his works. It is thus somewhat safe to say that while working on such novels as *Hard Like Water* and *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*, Yan also familiarised himself with the *Shijing* exegetic tradition and may have drawn on it to portray the protagonists' constantly changing relationships with sex and power, both legitimate and illicit. For instance, Xie (2022, 39) views the representation of *Shijing* in *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* as a "disenchanted" classic, connecting it to the disenchantment with the lofty image of intellectuals in the contemporary commodified world. In the following analysis, I approach *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* and *Hard Like Water* as directly inspired by controversies in *Shijing*'s exegetic tradition, with their protagonists going through multiple paradigm shifts akin to those experienced by different generations of scholars interpreting the ancient classic.

Ballads, Hymns, Odes: A Classic-Inspired Controversy

Although Xie (2022, 33) argues that *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* does not suffer from a lack of interest on the part of Western scholars, it is still among Yan's somewhat neglected works. It has been criticised mainly for its flat characters, an overly harsh treatment of modern intellectuals and higher education institutions, Yan's lack of exposure to the current academic setting, and his inability to fully utilise *Shijing*'s potential as the narrative frame.[8] Alessandra Pezza (2022, 162), in a study of the intellectual turn in Yan's writings, views this novel as being deservedly overlooked because of its low artistic value. This impression is bolstered by the absence of an English translation—a glaring gap in Yan's otherwise formidable English-language bibliography. However, simply viewing *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* as a mediocre novel and as one of Yan's artistic failures is somewhat misguided. David Der-wei Wang 王德威 (2009, 80) posits that the novel is an essential example of the recent trend of fiction exposing the vices of contemporary academia. Now, more than a decade after the novel was published, it has become a classic in its own right as a seminal work in the burgeoning genre of Chinese campus fiction.

The novel's structure is based entirely on *Shijing*, with every chapter titled after a poem in the ancient anthology. In turn, the protagonist Yang Ke 楊科 experiences several significant shifts in his worldview that in my reading somewhat mirror the stages in *Shijing* exegesis, with every shift connected to the role that the anthology plays in the narrative. At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist is a tenured professor at the elite Qingyan University (Tsinghua 清華 and Peking (formerly Yenching 燕京) Universities' fictional stand-in), who has managed to build a successful academic career despite his humble peasant background. However, a series of personal and public events turn the university elite against Yang, and he is forcibly sent to a psychiatric hospital on the Chinese capital's outskirts. He escapes these oppressive institutions for the safe haven of his rural hometown at the foot of the Balou *shanmai* 耙耧山脉 (the Balou Mountains)—the signature topos of Yan's fiction—and returns to pre-

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[8] For a representative example of such critiques, see: Shao 2008.

academic life. However, during his prolonged absence, this remote place has become a local centre for adult entertainment, with numerous restaurants, karaoke rooms, and brothels.

Yang eventually succumbs to and even finds solace in abundant sensual temptations. However, near the novel's end, he leaves the town following an altercation with other residents and wanders deep into the wilderness of the Balou Mountains. There, he eventually discovers an ancient settlement abundantly decorated with quotations from a previously unknown edition of *Shijing*. Yang dubs it Shicheng 詩城 (Poetry Town) and starts a utopian commune there, welcoming other exiled scholars—as well as sex workers—to establish a harmonious society away from the world that wronged them. Although brief, this sequence is even more absurdist than the rest of the novel, with scenes such as one in which members of the commune hold a literal pissing contest for the right to choose sexual partners.

Several scholars emphasise the phasic nature of the novel in their discussions. Xie, for instance, divides *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* into two main parts. The first takes place in the urban setting of the university and psychiatric hospital, while the second takes place following the transition to the protagonist's rural hometown (Xie 2022, 34). However, this two-part division based on Yang's relocation from the hostile environment of the capital to his rustic roots neglects the protagonist's last major spatial and spiritual shift—his escape into the unknown world of utopia.

Yao Xiaolei 姚曉雷, in contrast, sees Yang's wanderings as indicators of his inner shifts—in other words, as milestones mapping the novel's structure. He takes every significant change in Yang's personality—in the Freudian sense—as a new stage in the character's development. The first stage, in Yao's discussion, occurs when the protagonist enters the psychiatric hospital. The second stage is his escape to the Balou Mountains and the death of his first love, Lingzhen 玲珍. The third is the rampage that Yang goes on after seeing the marriage between a fellow villager and Lingzhen's daughter, for whom he has developed an affection, and the fourth and final stage is Poetry Town's utopian commune (Yao 2009, 111–13). However, following this structure, the first fourth of the novel, set in Qingyan University, appears somewhat irrelevant, because the protagonist has not yet done anything worth discussing. This essay argues that there is more to this part than just a critique of academia; rather, it is crucial for understanding Yang's initial way of interpreting the world, which subsequently changes because of his travels and travails. The spatial dimensions of *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* and the protagonist's personality are indeed heterogeneous and in flux. The novel's setting is perpetually changing—first a capital-city university and psychiatric hospital, then a brothel in rural China, and finally a commune established on the site of an ancient settlement. At the same time, the protagonist goes from peasant to scholar and professor, back to peasant, and then to leader of a bizarre utopian community. Thus, this essay's reading of *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* is based on treating Yang's spiritual and spatial shifts as equally significant, linking them, where reasonable, to *Shijing* exegesis.

The Exegetic Journey: Yang Ke's Transition from Traditionalism to Iconoclasm and Beyond

Now, bearing in mind that Yan's interest in exegesis and interpretation is a continuous and recurring theme in his artistic creation, as shown in this essay's introduction, I read *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* as a narrative of the protagonist's re-interpreting the world through exegetic practices. In *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*, as in *Hard Like Water*, bodily love and desire are catalysts for the protagonist's exegetical endeavours. Probably the most discussed episode of the novel with a connection to *Shijing* is the first chapter, which is named after the anthology's opening piece—"Guan Ju" 關雎 ("*Guan guan* Cry the Ospreys").[9] In this episode, Yang comes home from the university after finishing his magnum opus of *Shijing* exegesis. Upon entering his apartment, he discovers his wife in flagrante delicto with the university's vice president. Surprisingly, instead of acting like a cheated husband, Yang acts like a wronged scholar. He implies that he is not jealous because all of his carnal desires have supposedly been quenched through his scholarly work: "My *Odes of Fengya: A Study of the Shijing's Spiritual Roots* is completed. With this monograph, I've everything I need. I don't need anything anymore" (我的《風雅之頌——關於〈詩經〉精神的本根探究》寫完了，有了這部專著，我什麼都有了。什麼都不再需要了。) (Yan 2008, 32).[10] While asking the adulterers not to carry on their affair, he also implicitly blames himself for being too prejudiced and narrow-minded: "First, my mind is not liberated, so please, don't make what you did with Zhao Ruping a precedent, would you? Second, I'm old-fashioned in my thoughts, so don't do it again, I beg you!" (一是我思想不解放，你和趙茹萍的事情你們下不為例好不好？二是我觀念還不新，求你們下不為例好不好？) (Yan 2008, 32). Finally, Yang kneels, pleading for them to respect him as an intellectual and to end the affair. In this bizarre sequence, a betrayed husband ends up kneeling and begging to be excused for not being modern and open-minded enough to accept the affair.

Yang's interpretation of the affair is thus drastically different from what the reader would expect. Li (2015, 90) reads this as a sarcastic invocation of the political allegory, which is the poem's true meaning according to the Mao tradition. The tradition's interpretation of *Shijing*'s opening piece transforms a touching song about a male lover longing for his beloved into a king's principal wife's appraisal of the virtues of the concubine she has selected for her royal husband (Legge 1960, 3). This opening scene can also be interpreted as Yan's condemnation of the self-censorship plaguing contemporary Chinese literature, including his own works. Indeed, one of the readings that Li (2015, 98) proposes for *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* is a confessional narrative: the portrayal of the repentant protagonist going through a process of spiritual redemption in an attempt to "return home" is based on both Chinese intelligentsia in general and Yan in particular.[11] In this light, Yang is at his lowest point at the beginning of his journey,

[9] Here and elsewhere in the essay, English titles of the poems are listed following Waley's translation (1996). More straightforward translations are provided in brackets when necessary.

[10] Here and elsewhere in this essay, all translations from *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* are my own. For other writings by Yan, I use existing English-language translations.

[11] In the afterword to the novel, Yan states that *Huijia* 回家 (*Return Home*) was the working title of the novel (Yan 2008, 422).

finding himself in a position of moral superiority but refusing to accept reality and resorting to an elaborate self-deception. According to the author himself, such self-deception is one of the main obstacles to the development of Chinese literature (Yan and Flagg 2008, 43). Yang is purging the bodily and illicit aspects from his assessment of the situation, presenting himself as a noble—if wronged—scholar, although what has taken place has nothing to do with his intellectual identity or academic endeavours. In a sense Yang's worldview in the section of the novel that takes place in an urban setting is the closest in the narrative to the Mao tradition of exegesis.

At the beginning of his journey, Yang interprets the world in a way akin to the Mao tradition. He is feverishly devoted to his own reception of *Shijing* as a guide to salvation, and he finds lofty explanations for unbecoming circumstances. However, his sexuality is still tightly repressed by his self-perception as a wronged sage. Yang sees himself as a worthy but unjustly treated person, and he gives vent to his frustration by composing his magnum opus.[12] This puts him among the great thinkers of the past, including the authors of the *Shijing* poems, who, according to the historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145–c. 86 BCE), used their anger and frustration to create literary masterpieces: "For all these men resentment and sorrow knotted their minds and they could not get through their own way. Therefore, they recounted past events in order to think of the future" (van Ess and Ssu-ma 2019, 330). In the same vein, through his interpretation of the millennia-old poetry anthology, Yang strives to correct the ways of contemporary Chinese society.

Later in the novel, Yang describes the university leaders' appraisal of his work, which supposedly can help Chinese people rediscover their spiritual roots (Yan 2008, 103). However, at this point, the reader has strong reservations about Yang's reliability as a narrator, and the leaders' subsequent decision to banish him to the mental hospital hints that these words of praise are most likely just the protagonist's own thoughts (Li 2015, 102–3; Xie 2022, 44).[13] Thus, in the campus-based part of the novel, Yang is an ardent advocate of a didactic exegetic tradition akin to the Mao tradition, although this is actually a façade that he desperately struggles to maintain. The scene of banishment marks Yang's end as a scholar who sees his life as an allegory of the wronged sage.

Another crucial *Shijing* scene appears in the middle of the book. Yang's exegetic standpoint changes from a virtuous but unappreciated intellectual who lives to write for posterity to a happy-go-lucky propagator of bodily love and desire. At this point, Yang has fled the psychiatric hospital for the hometown he had left long ago to attend the university, only to find this backwater turned into a hub of adult entertainment. In this region, which thousands of years ago served as the cradle of Chinese civilisation and was home to people who composed *Shijing* poems, Yang sheds his identity as an upright scholar who scorns all worldly matters. He is fascinated by the town's adult industry but refuses

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[12] At the beginning of the novel, the reader learns that Yang's teaching and scholarship are largely frowned upon by his peers and students alike, which causes the protagonist a great deal of frustration. This frustration eventually pushes him to complete a supposedly ingenious *Shijing* monograph. On frustration and creativity in Chinese traditional culture, see Ing 2017, 112–42.

[13] Li, in her analysis of narrative inconsistencies, elucidates that Yang, despite his self-proclaimed worthiness, likely resorts to the petty act of hiding the vice president's underwear that he left in Yang's apartment. Yang's unreliability as a narrator thus becomes a recurring theme in the novel. Xie, in turn, considers the possibility that Yang suffers from a nascent schizophrenia-like mental illness, which undermines the credibility of his narration.

to admit to his fascination, continuing to use the poetry anthology to interpret the world around him. In one of the most vivid scenes in the novel, Yang spends Lunar New Year's Eve in a brothel surrounded by a group of young prostitutes who look up to him as an intellectual and urban dweller and who are willing to entertain him as he pleases. Instead, he turns a night in the brothel into an impromptu *Shijing* seminar, giving the excuse that he misses lecturing at Qingyan University. On the surface, this decision seems noble, as Yang abstains from satisfying his sexual desire and instead provides spiritual nourishment to an underprivileged part of the community. However, in reality, this is only a cover for Yang to realise his sexual and scholarly fantasies merged together:

> They said, "Do your students also sit there without any clothes on during seminars? Are they also completely naked?" I said, "People are happily celebrating New Year with their families, and we, who are away from home during this holiday, must also have some happiness. Haven't you said that I could have any of you that I fancy, and if I fancy two, I could have two, and if I happen to fancy every one of you, you all have to listen to me? It's time to begin our class, so sit still. I will enter the lecture hall now." Having said that, I stepped into the back room, leaving them there completely naked. One girl pulled up a piece of clothing to cover between her legs and breasts, so I glared at her and said, "Class is in session and you're still fidgeting? This is the capital city's higher education institution, don't you know that?"
>
> 他們說你的學生上課都不穿衣服，都光著身子嗎？
>
> 我說人家過年在家，有人家高興的事，我們過年在外有我們高興的事。說你們不是說，我看上一個就要一個，看上兩個要兩個，全都看上了，就全都聽我的。現在上課了，誰都不要動，我要從教室門外進來了。說著我退到裏屋去，讓他們十二個端端裸裸地坐在那兒時，有人拉過衣服把她的雙腿之間和乳房遮住了，我回頭瞪了她一眼，說上課了，你還做什麼小動作？這是京城的高等學府你知不知道？
>
> (Yan 2008, 249)

This farcical "class", which is also sexualised entertainment for Yang, resonates with the chapter title, which is named after one of the Song hymns of the *Shijing*: "Jiong" 駉 ("Stout"). This poem plays a seminal role in the history of *Shijing* exegesis, as Confucius used a line from it to characterise the magisterial feature of the whole anthology: "The Master said, 'The *Odes* number several hundred, and yet can be judged with a single phrase: 'Oh, they will not lead you astray'" (子曰："《詩》三百，一言以蔽之，曰：'思無邪'。") (Slingerland 2003, 8; *Lunyu* 2018, 19). This line is *si wu xie* 思無邪, which has been translated and interpreted in many ways throughout history. The general meaning of the line is "without swerving." The graph *si* 思 serves as an exclamative word without meaning, yet the graph's meaning of "thinking" or "thought" gives another dimension to the line's interpretation as the key to the reception of *Shijing*.[14] In the context of the brothel scene, the use of "Stout" as the

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[14] For a comprehensive overview of *si wu xie*'s numerous interpretations, see: Broughton 2016.

chapter's title has an overtly satirical meaning. On the surface, Yang does not swerve in his thoughts, choosing culture and restraint over debauchery. In truth, though, he is still pursuing his own satisfaction. Only now, instead of being an upright scholar who only cares about his writings and their didactic effect on the Chinese nation, Yang tries on another persona. In this scene, he appears as an adept of love and sexuality, which are transmitted through the *Shijing* love poems. In the culmination of the chapter, Yang even goes as far as inscribing these love poems on the girls' naked bodies, further blurring the line between a seminar and an orgy (Yan 2008, 252).[15] This hypocritical treatment of *Shijing* is somewhat reminiscent of the Song exegetic tradition's approach to the same subject matter in the anthology.

With the retreat of the Mao tradition, Zhu Xi and other Song scholars desperately tried to find another proper way to read *Shijing*'s love poems. In his discussion of *si wu xie*, Zhu offers an excuse for Confucius' decision to extrapolate this principle of *Shijing* reception over the entire anthology, despite the questionable nature of some of the poems. He posits that even though a poem might be outright wicked, one can still enjoy it without blemishing one's thoughts by reading it as a warning against moral degradation (Wong and Lee 1985, 215). In this exegetic endeavour, Zhu tried to free the beauty of *Shijing* verse from the Mao tradition's constraints but ended up inventing a new restrictive framework for the text. In the same vein, Yang's behaviour in the adult entertainment district is reminiscent of Song scholars' approach to *Shijing*'s "licentious" poems *yinshi* 淫詩. Yang enjoys the bodily pleasures that he discovers after escaping to his hometown, mingling with female sex workers and spending much of his time in brothels. Still, he interprets his own behaviour as an attempt to save a vulnerable part of the community. Even the death of his first love, Lingzhen, does not change his new mindset. Yang grows affectionate toward Lingzhen's daughter and puts on a show of looking after the orphaned girl just to get closer to her. When she marries a fellow villager, Yang, crazed with anger, breaks into the nuptial chamber and attacks the groom. This scene of unprovoked rage contrasts sharply with the beginning of the novel, when he kneels and pleads with his wife and the university's vice president despite them rightfully anticipating his anger.

The history of *Shijing* exegesis also has no shortage of dramatic twists and turns. For instance, the Mao tradition tried to delicately maintain the anthology's canonical status and mitigate controversy over "licentious" poems by hiding them behind didactic allegories. In contrast, adepts of the exegetic tradition during the Song period ultimately attempted to resolve the same problem in a somewhat brutal way—the scholar Wang Bo 王柏 (1197–1274), for instance, purged all of the "licentious" pieces from his edition of *Shijing*.[16] Still, both ways largely failed to produce a universally accepted approach to the anthology. In a sense, Yang retraces these historical convolutions of *Shijing* exegesis, only to go through yet another shift—beyond iconoclasm, preceded by traditionalism, to the tabula rasa of exile.

Yang's utopian commune in Poetry Town can be interpreted as an attempt to finally break free of all of the exegetic shackles and to enjoy *Shijing* poems as their readers and listeners did thousands of

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[15] This scene is depicted on the cover of the Taiwan edition of *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*, perhaps chosen as capturing the gist of the entire novel.

[16] On Wang Bo's *Shijing* scholarship, see: Cheng 1968.

years ago. However, this attempt to establish a primitive yet harmonious *Shijing* society leads nowhere, and Yang leaves again, this time willingly, setting out on a journey for more lost poems. As Stephen Owen sums up the relationship between ancient poetry and the modern reader: "The poem can still address us; however, we also recognize we can no longer accept such an invitation with simple delight, nor could we ourselves be able to offer such an unself-concious invitation. A poetry as simple and open as his is somehow beyond our capacities" (Owen, foreword to Waley 1996, xii). In the same vein, Yang's escape to the imagined utopia of Poetry Town's ancient denizens is an unfulfillable dream. Such a world exists only in poetry, and Yang's attempt to interpret reality again through *Shijing* (even if freed from all of the constraints brought by its exegetic traditions) is bound to fail.

In Li's reading of the novel's finale, Yang is ultimately denied salvation and is bound to carry on the Sisyphean task of searching for lost poems. Still, Li pinpoints the question: if the protagonist is bound to fail, what is the meaning of his arduous journey (Li, 2015, 110–11)? Indeed, one might ask whether all of Yang's travails as an intellectual, scholar, and interpreter of *Shijing* are in vain and whether he is another Sisyphus eternally struggling with the weight of his exegetic delusions. In the final section of Yan's award-winning novel *The Four Books*, one of the central characters, named simply "The Scholar" 學者, presents his version of the Sisyphus myth, possibly alluding to Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* (*Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, 1942), and rethinks the nature of the recurring punishment:

> 人一旦對懲處結果出的苦難、變化、無聊、荒誕、死亡等等有了協調與從適，懲處就失去意義了。懲處就不再是一種鞭刑和力量，而從適會從無奈和不得一中轉化出美和意義來。
>
> (Yan 2020, 382)
>
> As soon as someone develops a sense of familiarity and comfort with respect to the difficulty, change, boredom, absurdity, and death resulting from their punishment, the punishment thereby loses its meaning. As a result, the punishment ceases to be an external force, and instead can be transformed from a form of passive acceptance to a beautiful significance.
>
> (Yan 2015, 335)

Following the same logic, Yang is not pursuing a definitive goal such as a destination that is "home" or a monograph containing the sole correct interpretation of *Shijing*. His salvation lies instead in committing sins, failing, casting away some views and adopting others—all to keep moving forward in search of "lost poems". In addition, the enormous weight of the multi-millennial tradition that every Chinese intellectual is bound to carry and unable to cast away may be perceived as a metaphorical Sisyphus' boulder. Every trip to the mountain-top—that is, every adoption of a particular perspective—is unavoidably replaced by another act of disillusion, and vice versa. Hence, this essay reads *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*, and particularly the sequence of the protagonist's hermeneutic shifts, as a testimony to the fact that for Yang (and, similarly, for Yan himself, along with every other contemporary intellectual), salvation lies in punishment—that is, in continuing to constantly reinterpret the world even if it is evident that a single definitive reading does not exist.

Hard Like Water: Mao Tradition Meets Mao-Style Language

Having discussed how *Shijing* exegesis directly influenced the structure, narrative, and style of *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*, it is crucial to pay attention to Yan's interest in reshaping the world through exegetic practices as reflected in his other works. Indeed, Yan's fascination with hermeneutical interpretations of familiar worlds did not start with *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*. In *Hard Like Water*, the connections to *Shijing* exegesis are, if they exist, implicit. Still, the focus on interpretation and exegesis-like practices reshaping the reality of everyday life is firmly in place. In the novel, the protagonist, Gao Aijun 高愛軍, is peculiarly fond of revolutionary struggle as represented by Mao-style language 毛體—the officialese ubiquitous in China during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). For instance, the generic lyrics of revolutionary songs are the only thing able to awaken Gao's sexual drive. But most illustrative of the transformative power of Mao-style language are the scenes in which Gao and his lover Xia Hongmei 夏紅梅 find supreme pleasure through engaging in exegesis-like verbal competitions, composing revolutionary slogans. Gao and Xia are unwaveringly devoted to their revolutionary hermeneutics throughout the novel. By interpreting the world around them through the lens of ideological discourse, they see everyday items and situations as vivid illustrations of class struggle and the communist movement. In a sense, for these two ardent revolutionaries, the whole world becomes a mere backdrop for expressing their ideological passion, which verges on mania, as in the following scene:

> 我指著洞房牆角扔的鐵鍬說：「抓革命，促生產；一張鐵鍬把地翻。」她說：「一張鐵鍬鬧革命，嚇得敵人心膽顫。」我說：「鐵鍬翻地又反天，億萬人民笑開顏。」她說：「鐵鍬可做槍，英雄鬥志昂。」我說：「喜看稻菽千重浪，遍地英雄下夕煙。」她說：「高愛軍，高鎮長，你的話裡沒鐵鍬，我的背癢了，罰你給我撓一遍。」我說：「夏紅梅，夏支書，沒有鐵鍬翻地，哪有稻菽千重浪的大豐收？我的腳心癢了，罰你輕輕替我撓十遍。」
>
> (Yan 2007, 153)
>
> I gestured at the shovel lying on the ground, and said, "Pursue revolution, promote production; use a shovel to overturn the earth." Hongmei replied, "By using a shovel to incite revolution, we can terrify the enemy." I said, "A shovel can overturn not only the earth but also the heavens, and a billion people will burst into smiles." She said, "A shovel can be used as a rifle, with a heroic fighting spirit." I said, "I like to look at endless waves of grain, and in all directions there are heroes in the sunset mist." She said, "Gao Aijun, Mayor Gao, in that last statement you didn't refer to a shovel. My back itches, so your punishment is to scratch it." I said, "Xia Hongmei, Party Branch Secretary Xia—without a shovel, how would you harvest the endless waves of grain? The sole of my foot itches, and as punishment you must scratch it ten times."
>
> (Yan 2021, 240–41)

Numerous allegorical meanings are extracted from a simple farming tool, as Gao and Xia turn it from a prosaic appliance into a glorious symbol of both revolutionary labour and warfare. In his final statement, "I like to look at endless waves of grain, and in all directions there are heroes in the sunset mist," Gao ascends to pure allegoresis. Initially serving as a starting point for this exegetical competition, at this stage, the shovel has effectively fulfilled its purpose and can be discarded. This approach resembles the Mao tradition's treatment of *Shijing* poems, where the original text is sometimes exploited as a frame for sociopolitical commentary. The coincidental pun—the progenitors of Mao tradition and Mao-style language share a surname—strengthens the resemblance.

Discarding initial objects and situations in favour of far-flung allegories allows Gao and Xia to strike a balance between two seemingly incompatible things: their clandestine affair, which causes the deaths of their legitimate spouses, and their self-perception as model revolutionaries. In the same way that the Mao tradition turned passionate love poems into conventional didactic tales, the two lovers interpret the illicit nature of their relationship as a revolutionary struggle. As Gao exclaims:

> 我們因為不是夫妻而超百倍的體會到男歡與女樂。我們每一次事後躺在床上，都說：「革命值了哩，死了也值啦！」
>
> (Yan 2007, 150)
>
> In fact, precisely because we weren't yet married, we were able to enjoy several hundred times more pleasure than an actual couple. Every time we did that thing, we would lie on the bed afterward and exclaim, "The revolution is certainly worth it, and even death itself would be worth it!"
>
> (Yan 2021, 236)

Another noteworthy aspect of *Hard Like Water* related to *Shijing* exegesis is that the novel's action mainly unfolds in the hometown of prominent neo-Confucians of the Northern Song period (960–1127): the brothers Cheng Yi 程頤 (1032–1085) and Cheng Hao 程顥 (1033–1107). Gao is obsessed with destroying their historic estate, where the scholars' entire textual legacy is preserved. What draws our attention here concerning the novel and *Shijing* exegesis is that the anthology was one of the persistent intellectual interests of the Cheng brothers as scholars of the Classics. Their innovative *wanwei* 玩味 approach to the anthology promoted ignoring the abstruse allegoresis of canonical exegetic tradition to study the poems as they appear to a reader, "playing with and savoring" the texts (Van Zoeren 1991, 211–12). No wonder Gao, whose entire worldview is buttressed by the rigid interpretative framework of Mao-style language, considers them his sworn enemies. In addition, being adept at revolutionary hermeneutics, Gao rapidly climbs the cadre ranks, becoming the town's deputy mayor despite lacking actual managerial skills. Such a career path somewhat resembles the stereotypical image of an imperial official—a dogmatist obtaining governmental appointments based on the results of examinations that primarily tested his knowledge of the Classics. However, the power of Mao-style language has its limits, and the higher-level party cadres eventually discover Gao and Xia's misdeeds. Even under detention and awaiting prosecution, the lovers turn to revolutionary exegesis as their last

hope—and their devotion is indeed rewarded. Thanks to Gao's excellent command of the Chairman's literary oeuvre, he cracks the prison security system based on the famous "Changzheng" 長征 (The Long March, 1935) poem, thus escaping the cell to make a final desperate attempt to destroy the Cheng brothers' estate.

In a sense, the pervasive Mao-style language in *Hard Like Water* functions for the protagonist and his lover in the same way as Mao poetic exegesis, turning everything around the couple into revolutionary allegories. While some prominent Chinese writers and scholars have been accused of inadvertently embracing Mao-style language, Yan is fully conscious of the power it still retains over modern Chinese literature.[17] His ironical treatment of this otherwise oppressive discursive regime opens an unexpected dimension of literary experimentation. Following the Mao tradition's path of first being canonised, then fought against, and finally acknowledged as a unique phenomenon in the history of Chinese literature, under Yan's pen, Mao-style language is separated from its ideological burden and presented instead as a tour de force of literary and linguistic imagination.

Conclusion

Prompted by Chinese scholars' multiple inquiries into the image of the intellectual in Yan Lianke's oeuvre and by English-language studies by Li and Xie, this essay operates on the margins of these studies in an attempt to elucidate some under-explored aspects of Yan's less studied works. It intentionally avoids discussing Yan's mythorealist theoretical framework, as this aspect is covered exceptionally well in Xie's essay, as well as in the recent monograph *Ideology and Form in Yan Lianke's Fiction* (Xie 2023). Similarly, the autobiographical element of *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* is comprehensively analysed in Li's dissertation. Instead, this essay focuses on Yan's interest, which began in his early work *Hard Like Water* and reached its peak in *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*, in interpreting and re-interpreting the world in an exegetic-esque manner.

Over the course of his writing career, Yan has established himself as a member of various academic circles, and he holds professorial positions at Renmin University of China and The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Such status grants him great authority, enabling him to speak not only as a storyteller but also as a scholar, as well as to engage in debates regarding the Chinese intelligentsia with an insider's perspective. As Yan's fictional double in one of his recent novels reasons, somewhat tongue-in-cheek: "You're a student at Peking University, I'm a professor at Renmin University. You don't trust a writer, but can you distrust a teacher?" (你在北大讀書，我在人大教書，你不相信作家，你不會不相信一個老師吧？) (Yan 2018, 115). However, Yan, like his characters Yang Ke and Gao Aijun, hails from a peasant and military background and had to carve out for himself the new persona of a knowledge worker. In this sense, the two novels discussed in this essay represent

[17] For examples of Mao-style language debates, see: Klein 2016 and Shen 2009.

a formative stage in the development of the writer's views concerning intellectuals, and the convoluted history of *Shijing* exegesis probably provided the writer with food for thought on the matter.

While Chinese-language studies of *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* continually emphasise Yan's highly critical assessment of modern Chinese intellectuals, this essay approaches the work in question as a more ambivalent assessment of this social stratum. In other words, instead of simply giving up on intellectuals, Yan draws the reader's attention to their positive traits, such as their inquisitive spirit, which manifests in intellectuals' interactions with the world despite all the hypocrisy of contemporary society. Similarly, some episodes in *Shijing*'s exegetic history that appear somewhat far-fetched to a modern reader, illustrate, in the context of tradition, the unrestrained power of literary imagination. In the case of Yan's fiction, the journeys of the protagonists of *Hard Like Water* and *Ballads, Hymns, Odes* appear as collections of episodes that range from awkward to outright disgraceful and repulsive. However, if read through the lens of *Shijing* exegesis, their misdeeds and travails suddenly appear to represent transformative if painful intellectual endeavours.

Such an intellectual quest is a double-edged sword that may bring as many insights as obstacles. Yet as Yan's works imply, it is something in which every intellectual must take part to retain this lofty title. If intellectuals give free play to their interpretative faculties, this will probably push them to the margins or even into exile. Whether to treat it as a punishment or a blessing in disguise is up to them. According to Liu Zaifu's typology of exiles, it appears that in *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*, Yan also implies that the final push must bring one beyond these margins-turned-boundaries to a new metaphysical reality (Liu 2021, 185–96). Such a push might be the same type of breakthrough as the act of shedding the limitations of causality, praised by Yan as an outstanding literary achievement (Yan 2022, 58).

The close reading presented in this essay explores alternative understandings of *Hard Like Water* and *Ballads, Hymns, Odes*—that they are not entirely satirical narratives, but also examples of the tremendous subversive power of interpretation, akin to the power that permeates the history of *Shijing* exegesis. Such power can either lead one to a dead end, as happens to Gao Aijun, or grant a chance for salvation, as in the case of Yang Ke. Liu notes that a writer who attains and embraces the position of "exiling the state" can benefit from it immensely:

> 作家既不是被國家放逐的歷史受難者的角色，也不是躲進小樓的心靈避難者的角色，而是恢復作家本來應有的日神精神，自由地、冷靜地觀照一切,包括觀照國家。
>
> (Liu 1994, 284)
>
> The writer plays neither the role of a historical victim exiled by the state nor the role of someone who takes sanctuary of the heart in a small abode, but resumes his original Apollonian spirit to observe and shed light on everything—including the state—freely and serenely.
>
> (Liu 2021, 186)

Such an enlightened state is possible for Yang, who is a writer and, to a certain degree, a fictional representation of Yan himself. More importantly, Yang's unwavering faith in interpretation and readiness to discard old paradigms to embrace new ones hints that against all odds, Yan retains hope in contemporary intellectuals.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Textuality and Performance: Citations of Personal Literary Collections in Liu Xiaobiao's Annotations to *Shishuo Xinyu*

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Shishuo xinyu is a collection of anecdotes about prominent historical figures of the Eastern Han, Wei, and Jin periods (ca. 3rd–4th centuries CE). Its contents are concerned with social discourse, and have often been analyzed in relation to the practice of character evaluation among the Wei-Jin elite. Several decades after its completion, *Shishuo xinyu* was expanded with a lengthy commentary by the Liang (502–557) scholar Liu Xiaobiao (462–521), in which Liu annotates the text with excerpts from nearly five hundred other works. This study focuses on the seventeen instances in which Liu cites the contents of the personal literary collections (*bieji* 別集) of individuals who appear as characters in *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes, a sample of Liu's annotations which highlights the role literary compositions play in *Shishuo xinyu*'s narratives of character evaluation. I argue that these annotations contribute to the base text an interest in the literary and material properties of written texts that is at times quite different from *Shishuo xinyu*'s interest in conversation and embodied performances. This pronounced interest in the textuality of social exchange and character evaluation not only changes the reader's perspective on the base text, it also reflects literary and scholastic concerns specific to the manuscript culture of the Southern Dynasties period in which Liu Xiaobiao lived.

《世說新語》彙集了東漢至魏晉時期士人的軼事趣聞，並記錄了魏晉名士的言行風貌。在《世說》成書數十年後，梁朝學者劉孝標為其作註。劉註長期以來被學界視為中國中古時期目錄學的重要資料來源。本文通過分析劉註中十七次引用《世說》人物所撰的別集，探討這些文學作品如何擴展《世說》人物風評的敘事。研究表明，劉註對文本性和文學性註入了更強的關註，這與《世說》原文重在記錄人物言行的取向形成了對比。此外，劉註對人物風評別集的引用，不僅改變了讀者解讀《世說》原文的視角，還反映了在劉孝標所處的南朝手稿文化特有的文學和學術意涵。

Keywords: *Shishuo xinyu*, Liu Xiaobiao, Manuscript culture, Personal literary collections, Southern Dynasties literature, history

關鍵詞： 世說新語，劉孝標，手稿文化，別集，南朝文學，史

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Most scholarly editions of the fifth-century anecdote collection *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*) contain the annotations added to the text by Liu Xiaobiao 劉孝標 (aka Liu Jun 劉峻, 462–521). These annotations more than double the length of the text, and offer crucial assistance decoding *Shishuo xinyu*'s often confounding references to the same historical figures with multiple epithets, nicknames, and titles. But the annotations are not just explanatory notes: They complicate *Shishuo xinyu*'s representations of historical figures by quoting from nearly 500 other sources, which often greatly expand and even contradict the anecdotes to which they are appended.

The potential for Liu Xiaobiao's scholarship to supplement and correct errors in *Shishuo xinyu* was acknowledged early on, with Tang scholar Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721) noting the way the annotations "pluck out the faults and illuminate the falsifications" (摘其瑕疵，偽跡昭然) of the text (ST, 17.446). In doing so, and by mentioning the text at all in his sweeping historiographic critique, he also presumes that the reason one would consult *Shishuo xinyu* would be for its potential to provide historical knowledge. And yet, Liu Zhiji remains critical of the annotated *Shishuo xinyu*. He chastises Liu Xiaobiao for using such a flawed work as the foundation for his scholarship. Rather than annotate a work of history proper like *Hanshu* 漢書 or *Shiji* 史記, he "became attached to petty tales told in winding alleyways, narrowing his focus on a trivial and vulgar work." (留情於委巷小說，銳思於流俗短書) (ST, 5.123). For Liu Zhiji, the problem is not with the annotations, but with the text they are appended to.

Translator Richard Mather notes, "The writing of history seems not to have been the intention of the author" of the text (Mather 2002, xiii). Jack W. Chen similarly points out that the text "is not actually interested in historiographic representation" of the same sort that can be seen in works of standard historiography (Chen 2021, 9). If we accept that *Shishuo xinyu* is not a work of traditional historiography, and yet do not simply dismiss it as the work of a bad, unorthodox historian, what is it? The text is long and idiosyncratic — this is not a question that can be answered quickly and comprehensively. Mather stresses how the anecdotes, fictionalised or embellished as they may be, highlight the contrast between historical figures who displayed contrasting ideals of "naturalness and conformity", and that the text tends to endorse the former, those whose actions and words exhibit "peace, tranquility, withdrawal, freedom, and unconventionality" (Mather 2002, xviii). Others have stressed the way the characters in the text embody these traits, and the way they are narrated and described. Nanxiu Qian explains, "Most episodes focus not so much on recounting the details or progression of an event as on capturing the emotional and personal characteristics of the participants," and notes the way this interest in emotion and personality is also reflected in the titles of the text's thirty-six chapters (Qian 2015, 296). Chen elaborates on the way this structure highlights what the hundreds of characters who appear in it have in common, creating an inventory of traits shared across members of elite society in the early medieval period (Chen 2021, 13–14). He also connects the text's interest in personality types to the early medieval practice of character evaluation. This practice informed bureaucratic appointments and promotions and, perhaps more importantly, also greatly affected one's social standing. Such evaluations were made on the basis of talent for conversation and rhetorical performance: talent for debate, wit, and, indeed, even the ability to evaluate the performance of others eloquently and succinctly could greatly affect one's reputation within what Chen refers to as the "ongoing community of

conversation" (Chen 2021, 17). *Shishuo xinyu*, then, does not just document historical evidence about the individuals who participated in this community. Rather, it manifests a representation of the community itself, and presents it as a multi-generational network that connects the past to the present. The focus of the text on traits and talents demonstrates a shared set of rhetorical techniques and discursive practices. Its organisation into chapters based on these traits — and not according to chronology or geography — allows this community to transcend time and space.

Liu Xiaobiao's annotations fill in the ephemeral moments captured in *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes with voluminous additional information. Though these annotations push the text closer to what Liu Zhiji and other medieval readers might have recognized as historiographic, this is not all they do. Rather than using the annotations to transform *Shishuo xinyu* into something it is not, the goal of this study is to think through the ways in which Liu Xiaobiao's notes work with the text, enhancing and augmenting a reading of the text as an extended engagement with the dynamics of social performance and character evaluation. In the long history of scholarship on Liu's annotations, many have concentrated on their bibliographic value, studying how they preserve information about countless texts that would have otherwise been lost, a practice which largely disassociates the contents of the annotations from the anecdotes to which they are appended.[1] Others, such as contemporary scholar Qin Zhen, have shown that there is great value in reading the annotations in context, as they often provide details that are fundamental to understanding the nature of the rhetorical performances captured in the base text (Qin 2017). My study of the annotations is in some ways a continuation of this project, closely examining the contents of individual annotations in relation to the anecdotes to which they are appended. Here I aim to showcase instances in which these anecdotes do not just provide helpful information, but actually draw the reader in to the text's engagement with social performance and character evaluation, allowing the reader to participate in the same acts of discernment and evaluation performed by the historical figures who appear in the pages of *Shishuo xinyu*.

To do so, I focus on a narrow cross-section of Liu's annotations, those which quote directly from the collected literary writings (*bieji* 別集) of historical figures. Most of the other texts Liu cites in his annotations are narrative historiography.[2] That is to say, the annotations expand the base text of *Shishuo xinyu* by quoting from what we may call "secondary sources": biographies, dynastic histories, and other materials composed "after the fact" by historians or, perhaps, the family members or associates of the individuals they describe. These narrative sources include alternative versions of the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes to which they are appended, but also other information and stories. Citations from *bieji* are distinctive for the way they use "primary source" content, that is, texts presented as the compositions of those who appear as characters in *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes. These quotations often grant the reader access to compositions that are either briefly quoted or alluded to within the anecdotes themselves. While distinct from many texts Liu cites, citations of *bieji* are not unique: some of the narrative historiographic sources Liu quotes may themselves quote literary compositions, and Liu occasionally also

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[1] On the earliest examples of this practice, see Nicoll-Johnson 2018, 220–222.

[2] For an overview of texts Liu cites, see Zhao 2013; For a "distant reading" of some patterns in Liu's citation practice, see Nicoll-Johnson 2018, esp. 230–239.

quotes individual literary compositions, such as a *fu* 賦 or *shi* 詩, without indicating whether it came from a *bieji* or any other container text. Moreover, as we shall see, the *bieji* Liu cites also contained biographical details about the authors whose works they collect. My focus on *bieji* citations is thus not intended to suggest that Liu uses this small corpus to do something radically different from his other annotations. Rather, this small group of citations may be considered a representative sample of Liu's annotations, but one which highlights the role literary compositions play in *Shishuo xinyu*'s "community of conversation". Although my first goal is to demonstrate how these excerpts draw the reader into this community, I also argue that the annotations' focus on textuality is transformative. As Cheng Yu-yu has noted, the anecdotes of *Shishuo xinyu* are intensely concerned with the details of embodied physical performance. They capture not only speech and conversation, but also gesture, facial expression, and physical activity, with narrative description serving to represent the ephemeral details of embodied performance not captured through dialogue alone (Cheng 2006). By shifting the readers' focus away from these details of embodied performance towards textual matters, and by drawing attention to the important function of reading and material texts elided in the base anecdotes, Liu's annotations encourage a very different form of evaluative practice.

I will begin with an overview of all citations of personal literary collections in Liu's annotations, which will also provide the opportunity to describe the way these annotations draw from both the literary compositions contained within the collections as well as their prefaces and other paratexts. The next section focuses on the most common form of literary collection citation, in which a lengthy excerpt from a composition is quoted in order to provide the reader access to a text that is referred to within an anecdote. Some anecdotes not only refer to literary texts, they also dramatise the act of composition, or otherwise describe the activity of writing. The next section focuses on these cases. Here I demonstrate that, by granting readers access to more information about the texts at the centre of each anecdote, Liu's annotations reverse the relationship between text and commentary, transforming *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes into supplemental comments on the literary pieces themselves. In the final section, I turn my attention to the clearest examples of the annotations' pronounced interest in textuality in contrast to *Shishuo xinyu*'s focus on orality and physicality: cases where the annotations illuminate the role of textual compositions and exchanges in events that *Shishuo xinyu* represents as embodied performances or oral exchanges.

Text and Paratext: Personal Literary Collections as Sources of Biographical Information

Liu Xiaobiao refers to seventeen personal literary collections throughout his annotations to *Shishuo xinyu*. Although these texts would now be referred to as *bieji*, the word *bieji* itself does not appear in the annotations. Instead, these texts are identifiable as such thanks to a simple, consistently applied naming format: Liu labels each such text he cites with the name of the person whose writings it contains, followed by the word *ji* 集 ("collection"). Liu sometimes provides both family name (*xing* 姓) and

personal name (*ming* 名), but in most cases his citations provide only the personal name (*ming* 名). These abbreviated references are intelligible only because in each case the full name of the person appears in the text preceding the citation of the collection, whether in another of Liu's annotations or in the text of the anecdote to which it is appended. This is an important reminder that these annotations are meant to be read in the context of the anecdotes to which they are appended.

For simplicity's sake, I will refer to the individuals whose writings are gathered in these collections as their "authors." But these figures were not necessarily the authors of all writing that appears in these collections, nor can we presume them to have been responsible for their compilation and editing. In fact, many of Liu's citations of literary collections do not quote literary pieces by the "authors" of each collection, but biographical details *about* such authors, and other metatextual details about the literary pieces themselves. The annotations make this distinction explicit. They will indicate, for example, that they are drawing from the "preface" (*xu* 敘) to a collection before quoting it, and will similarly identify either the title or the genre of the piece when quoting from one of the "author's" writings. Although *xu* is used most frequently, annotations also refer to contents labelled *xu* 序 and *lu* 錄. These are likely to have referred to different paratexts. For example, one citation of the literary collection of Xi Kang refers to its *xu* 序, while another refers to its *xu* 敘, suggesting two different paratexts contained within the same collection. But the portions of these paratexts that are cited all contain biographical details about the "authors" of their collections, or other historical information about the pieces they contain. The presence of these additional components has been confirmed in other studies of *bieji* history, which have also shown that the writing of these paratexts were often closely related to the composition of biographies in dynastic histories (Zhao 2019). I use the term "paratext" as a collective reference to all such materials to distinguish them from the "contents" of each collection, that is, the texts that we can understand to have been composed by the authors of these collections.

Shishuo xinyu annotations cite biographical details from the paratexts of literary collections of five authors: Xi Kang 嵇康 (ca. 223–ca. 262), Xiahou Zhan 夏侯湛 (243–291), Cai Hong 蔡洪, Liu Jin 劉瑾, and Gao Rou 高柔. While Xi Kang is one of the most famous poets of the era, and Xiahou Zhan is also known from several other historiographic sources, the other three are today very obscure. In Xi Kang's case, both *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Record of the Three Kingdoms) and *Shishuo xinyu* annotations quote from paratexts to his literary collection alongside a variety of other literary and biographical material, creating a confusing and often contradictory account of Xi Kang's life. This has been the subject of much scholarship, as has the study of the transmission of his literary works to the present.[3] For Cai Hong, Liu Jin, and Gao Rou, the problem is not the abundance of contradictory biographical sources, but the opposite: these fragments are the only known sources of biographies for each of these three figures.

The citations from Xiahou Zhan's collection, which will be discussed in greater detail below, suggest that Liu Xiaobiao would have cited other sources of general biographical information if they were available to him. Liu's annotations quote a short biographical narrative about Xiahou Zhan from

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[3] See, for example, Liu 2018, Chan 1996, and Cui 1999.

Wenshi zhuan 文士傳 ("Biographies of litterateurs"), a collection of biographical narratives he cites frequently throughout the annotations, immediately before quoting additional biographical details from the preface to Xiahou Zhan's literary collection (SSXY 4.71).[4] Other annotations demonstrate that Liu Xiaobiao had access to dozens of other historiographic works, including dynastic histories, collections of biographies, and independently circulated biographies of individuals (*biezhuan* 別傳). It is thus likely that biographical data for Cai Hong, Liu Jin, and Gao Rou was scarce even in Liu Xiaobiao's time, necessitating the use of these paratexts for even basic biographical details. Even so, the particular biographical details quoted from these paratexts relate to the contents of the anecdotes to which they are appended. The paratexts are thus likely to have contained other information, but because Liu Xiaobiao did not find it relevant to any of their appearances in *Shishuo xinyu*, it has been lost.

The biographical details contained in the paratexts to literary collections are not always directly related to literary composition, but each detail Liu cites is always relevant to the anecdote to which it is appended. The information provided about Liu Jin, for example, is genealogical, but provides details that allow readers to understand relationships among figures only alluded to in the base anecdote (SSXY 9.87). Occasionally, citations illuminate social relationships affirmed through textual composition, in addition to providing biographical detail relevant to figures who appear in anecdotes. This is the case for Gao Rou. All surviving biographical details derive from the citation of a paratext of his literary collection in *Shishuo xinyu* annotations. The collection is cited in the annotations to an anecdote in which Gao Rou's failure to receive a positive response for any of the numerous memorials he has submitted is blamed on the fact that he has taken up residence far from the capital and lacks a high-ranking title (SSXY 26.13).

The biographical details from the paratext confirm his estrangement and eventual return to the public sphere. The most fascinating detail in this annotation, however, is not biographical, but bibliographic: the quotation clarifies that the preface to Gao Rou's collection was written by Sun Tong 孫統 (fl. 4th cent.), the brother of the relatively well-known poet Sun Chuo 孫綽 (314–371). This kind of information, about who was actually responsible for compiling a literary collection, is rare. *Sanguo zhi* and its annotations provide examples of collections personally compiled by their authors, as well as Chen Shou's role in compiling a collection of Zhuge Liang's writings long after the latter's death (Li 2014). It is also known that several versions of Tao Yuanming's 陶淵明 (365–427) collected writings circulated in the early medieval period, and that prefaces were drafted for two of these posthumously created collections by their compilers, Yang Xiuzhi 楊休之 (509–582) and Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531) (Tian 2005, 10; 209; 289). Gao Rou's own dates of birth and death are not known, but details in *Shishuo xinyu* confirm that he was a contemporary of Sun Tong. In this anecdote he is discussed as a contemporary by Xie Shang 謝尚 (308–357), and in his only other appearance in the text, he converses with Sun Chuo. Whether Sun Tong was also responsible for compiling Gao Rou's collection,

[4] Citations of *Shishuo xinyu* refer to the chapter number and number of the anecdote in sequence within that chapter across all standard editions. References to details contained only in a single edition or translation of SSXY will cite that edition. All translations are my own but have been made with reference to Mather 2002. I will note where my interpretations differ significantly from Mather's in footnotes.

and whether this occurred during Gao Rou's lifetime or shortly after his death, cannot be known. But this incidental reference to Sun Tong as author of the preface to his collection confirms that such pieces could be composed by an author's contemporaries. This also suggests that, like obituaries, letters, and other social genres, the composition of a preface offered another way to perform and solidify social bonds.

In this particular case, Sun Tong's role as author of the paratext of Gao Rou's literary collection also casts Gao Rou's conversation with Sun Chuo in a new light. In another anecdote, Sun Chuo writes a text that articulates his commitment to living as a recluse and describes building a rural estate in Zhejiang, and spending time tending to a pine tree there. Gao Rou appears again in this anecdote. He chides Sun Chuo, observing that the pine tree may be "elegant and charming" (楚楚可憐), but it will never be sturdy enough to be useful as a pillar or beam (SSXY 2.84). Not only can Gao Rou's comments on the pine tree be interpreted as a jab at Sun Chuo's decision to live as a recluse rather than making himself useful to the state, Yu Jiaxi has observed that he may have chosen his words deliberately, to call to mind the name of Sun Chu 孫楚 (d. 293), Sun Chuo's grandfather (Yu 1984, 141). As Mather notes, Gao Rou's own reluctance to be of use to the state already renders this criticism somewhat less cutting (Mather 2002, 73). But the added detail of the presumably amicable relationship between Gao Rou and Sun Chuo's brother Sun Tong offers additional encouragement for readers to treat this exchange as light-hearted mockery rather than genuine contempt.

Although the biographical details cited from the paratext of Gao Rou's literary collection are immediately relevant to his appearances in *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes, it is also worth noting why such details were recorded in the paratext of his literary collection in the first place. The excerpt quoted in the annotations to this anecdote focuses on the fact that Gao Rou was able to live contentedly in his estrangement from the capital thanks to the company of his wife, a beautiful and erudite daughter of the Huwu 胡毋 family. It goes on to explain that when Gao Rou finally did leave for the capital, the two sent letters to one another that were "elegant and touching" (清婉辛切) (SSXY 26.13). This suggests that the letters had reached a broader audience, and perhaps even that this preface was written to explain the presence of these letters in Gao Rou's literary collection. The citation of these details in connection to this anecdote, however, gives them the new purpose of justifying Gao Rou's refusal to leave home, presenting his apparent reclusion and lack of ambition in a more sympathetic context.

Engaging the Reader in the Evaluation Process

Citations from the literary collections of Liu Jin and Gao Rou are appended to anecdotes which do not even mention, let alone quote from, texts composed by their authors. This is not the case for most other citations from literary collections in Liu's *Shishuo xinyu* annotations. In the majority of such cases, literary collections are cited to provide longer excerpts or summaries of pieces that are mentioned or quoted in brief in *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes. Space does not permit full consideration of all such cases, but two examples will help to demonstrate the way they invite readers to participate in the

process of evaluation. Xiahou Zhan's literary collection is cited in the annotations to a *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote that concerns the evaluation of a set of poems he composed, but which does not actually quote these poems (SSXY 4.71). In the anecdote, Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300) praises Xiahou Zhan's attempts to "recreate" the poems from the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shi jing* 詩經) that had been lost long before his lifetime.[5] The same event is also described in Xiahou Zhan's *Jinshu* biography (JS 55.1491–1499). The details quoted from the paratext of Xiahou Zhan's literary collection elaborate on his efforts to "complete" the *Classic of Poetry*, listing the titles of the poems and explaining that Xiahou Zhan's compositions were collectively referred to as his "Zhou poems" 周詩, which is what they are called in this anecdote.[6] An additional annotation quotes one of the poems of the set in its entirety.[7] When Xiahou Zhan's *Jinshu* biography addresses his composition of the "Zhou poems", it does so only by recounting Pan Yue's admiration of them in a passage that closely follows the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote (JS 55.1499). The two excerpts from Xiahou Zhan's collection are thus the oldest extant source of this information.

Both *Shishuo xinyu* and *Jinshu* are interested in Xiahou Zhan's "Zhou poems" only for their ability to elicit praise from Pan Yue. His comments are the true focus of this anecdote, the poems themselves serving merely as their inciting incident. The nature of Pan Yue's praise is also important, as it treats the poem as a conduit to understanding Xiahou Zhan's personal character. Pan Yue exclaims that Xiahou Zhan's poetry is "Not merely gentle and elegant — it also reveals a nature of filial and fraternal concern" (非徒溫雅，乃別見孝悌之性).[8] Liu Xiaobiao's annotations return the focus to Xiahou Zhan's literary creations. The inclusion of the poem allows the reader to become the evaluator. With access to the text of this piece, not only can readers appraise Xiahou Zhan's composition and see for ourselves the personal qualities it calls to mind, we can also evaluate the merits of Pan Yue's evaluation.

Even in anecdotes in which written texts appear, *Shishuo xinyu* still tends to focus on the ephemeral, embodied aspects of textuality, by examining the ways literary texts are composed, recited by their authors, and received by their audiences. In these cases, the annotations again recentre readers' attention on the more durable presence of the text itself. This is certainly the case in a brief anecdote found in the "Speech and Conversation" ("Yan yu" 言語) chapter of *Shishuo xinyu* (SSXY 2.72). In it, Wang Tanzhi 王坦之 (330–375) requests a debate between the historians Fu Tao 伏滔 (fl. 364) and Xi Zuochi 習鑿齒 (d. 384?) on the topic of the historical figures of their respective home regions,

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[5] On discussions of these poems in other texts, see Rusk 2012, 42–43, 99.

[6] While other citations of paratexts treat *xu* as part of the text's title, e.g. *Hong ji lu yue* 洪集錄曰, "the *lu* of [Cai] Hong's *ji* says…", this citation reads "Zhan's collection contains their *xu*, which says…" 湛集載其敘曰. But the *qi* 其 here is somewhat ambiguous—this could thus either be a preface written specifically for the Zhou poems, or the preface to Xiahou Zhan's collection in its entirety.

[7] This annotation does not cite Xiahou Zhan's collection by name, reporting instead only "*qi shi yue*" 其詩曰, which could be interpreted as referring to "a poem [from his aforementioned collection] says…," "a poem [of Xiahou Zhan] says…" or "a poem [from the aforementioned Zhou poems] says…"

[8] Mather (2002, 138) reads the first part of this comment as a critique of the potential derivativeness of imitative poems such as these: "These are no vain rewarmings of the 'Court Songs'."

Qingzhou 青州 and Chu 楚. When their arguments and rebuttals are complete, Wang Tanzhi presents the essays to Han Kangbo 韓康伯 (d. ca. 385), and asks for his thoughts. Han Kangbo at first says nothing. When asked why he has nothing to say, he remarks, "There is no one to endorse, and no one to reject" (無可無不可).[9] Here again the focus is on the evaluation of the text rather than the text itself. In this case, *Shishuo xinyu* showcases Han's diplomatic, if enigmatic, response, which can be appreciated even without any information about the debate he is evaluating. Nevertheless, the annotations draw from Fu Tao's collection to provide a lengthy summary of both sides of the debate. Even in abbreviated form, the annotation is several hundred characters long, many times longer than the anecdote. As in other cases, this allows readers to participate in the evaluation. Here, there are even more layers of evaluation, because the debate itself turns out also to involve character evaluation, in which the names and accomplishments of dozens of historical figures are marshalled in order to advocate for the superiority of each historian's own region. Readers of the excerpt can draw their own conclusions about the relative merits of the figures listed and use them to evaluate the quality of each participant's response as a whole. In so doing, they may also judge whether Han Kangbo's response is appropriate. But, perhaps most importantly, the overwhelming length of the cited text creates a contrast with Han Kangbo's spoken response that makes its piercing brevity stand out all the more, making it clear that the debate's true victor is neither Fu Tao nor Xi Zuochi, but Han Kangbo. By granting readers access to portions of the text that *Shishuo xinyu* mentions but does not reveal, the annotation only enhances the impressively succinct and witty oral performance that is the centrepiece of the anecdote.

Scenes of Composition and Recitation

Two additional anecdotes not only allude to texts quoted in the annotations, but also dramatise the composition of these literary works. In the first of these two, literary composition is itself a social activity, and the evaluation of the piece and its author begins before the writing is finished. In it, Huan Wen 桓溫 (312–373) commissions Yuan Hong 袁宏 (ca. 328–ca. 376) to compose a piece on his campaign in the north (SSXY 4.92). Yuan Hong completes a draft, then shows it to Huan Wen and a few others. Though all are moved by the composition, Wang Xun 王珣 (349–400), a member of the audience, remarks that it could be improved with the addition of a pair of lines that ended with the

[9] Han Kangbo's response is challenging to interpret and translate because it makes use of a passage of *The Analects* whose original context demands a different reading. In *The Analects* 18.8, Confucius distinguishes himself from historical figures who made decisions based on fixed moral principles, opting instead to remain flexible. Thus in Arthur Waley's translation *wu ke wu bu ke* 無可無不可 becomes "I have no 'thou shalt' or 'thou shalt not.'" (Waley 1989, 222). Han seems to be using it simply to comment on a situation in which neither a positive nor a negative response can be made.

word *xie* 寫 ("express"), to continue the rhyme scheme of the previous lines. Yuan Hong begins immediately, grabbing a brush and extemporaneously composing the final two lines, complete with the requested final word.

The first of two passages appended to this anecdote in the annotations cites several lines of the piece from Yuan Hong's literary collection, including the two lines added at Wang Xun's request:

> I have heard in legends passed down, it is said that the Lin was captured in this field.[10] / A numinous creature whose birth portends good fortune, how could its corpse have been given to the warden? / I lament the anguished tears of Confucius, which were truly anguished and not feigned. / How could a single creature be worthy of such pain? / Indeed, this pain was felt on behalf of all the world. / Emotions endlessly stir in my mind, facing the flow of the wind I express them alone.
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> 聞所聞於相傳，云獲麟於此野。誕靈物以瑞德，奚授體於虞者。悲尼父之慟泣，似實慟而非假。豈一物之足傷，實致傷於天下。感不絕於余心，遡流風而獨寫。

The added *xie* 寫 rhymes with words ending each of the preceding couplets.[11] And yet, the couplet that precedes it feels conclusive enough to have marked the original end of the stanza. Providing the entire passage allows readers to judge whether the added euphony justifies the addition.

A citation of an alternative version of this anecdote appears immediately after the passage from the piece itself.[12] This version preserves the same conclusion — the quickly improvised addition of a new pair of lines — but changes nearly everything that leads up to this event. While *Shishuo xinyu* mentions only Yuan Hong, Huan Wen, and Wang Xun, this version also places Fu Tao at the scene, and even has Huan Wen instruct Fu Tao to read Yuan Hong's composition. From there, the alternative version continues to deviate from the *Shishuo xinyu* text:

> Yuan Hong once sat with Wang Xun and Fu Tao in attendance upon Huan Wen. Wen ordered Tao to read his poem. Upon reaching the line "Indeed, this pain was felt on behalf of all the world," the rhyme changed. He [Huan Wen?] said, "The profundity of what you have recited in this stanza shall last a thousand years. Now, the rhyme shifts after 'all the world', but what it is conveying (*xie song* 寫送) seems to have not yet been completed." Fu Tao then

[10] The capture of the mythical Lin 麟, typically translated as "unicorn," refers to the final event chronicled in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, signifying both Confucius' completion of the text as well as his sorrow at the appearance and capture of the creature. Although thought to appear as an omen foretelling the rise of a great ruler, the injury and capture of the creature causes Confucius to conclude that there is no such golden age to come.

[11] The rhyme is apparent in reconstructed Middle Chinese (MC): *ye* 野 (MC yaeX), *zhe* 者 (MC tsyaeX), *jia* 假 (MC kaeX), *xia* 下 (MC haeX), and *xie* 寫 (MC sjaeX). MC pronunciation drawn from Kroll, *A Student's Dictionary of Classical Chinese*.

[12] The text credits this version to *Jin yangqiu* 晉陽秋 ("Annals of the Jin"), attr. Sun Sheng 孫盛 (302–373), but this is likely an error. *Jin yangqiu* documented events of the Jin dynasty only up to the reign of Emperor Ai 晉哀帝 (r. 361–365) (SS 33.958). Huan Wen's campaign to the north occurred in 370. An annotation to an earlier portion of this anecdote cites the sequel to this text, *Xu Jin yangqiu* 續晉陽秋 ("Continued Annals of the Jin"), compiled by Tan Daoluan 檀道鸞 (fl. 5th cent.); it is likely that this citation also refers to this text, rather than the *Jin Yangqiu* of Sun Sheng.

> remarked, "The addition of a line ending with 'express' (*xie* 寫) would perhaps be a slight improvement." Lord Huan said to Hong, "Sir, try to think of a way to add this!" Hong immediately added the lines, and Wang and Fu both proclaimed their excellence.
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> 宏嘗與王珣、伏滔同侍溫坐，溫令滔讀其賦，至「致傷於天下」，於此改韻。云:「此韻所詠，慨深千載。今於『天下』之後便移韻，於寫送之致，如爲未盡。」滔乃云:「得益『寫』一句，或當小勝。」桓公語宏:「卿試思益之。」宏應聲而益，王、伏稱善。

In this rendition, Huan Wen and Fu Tao provide the most important input to Yuan Hong, while Wang Xun merely admires the result. The initial comment on the "incompleteness" of the line seems most likely to have been made by Huan Wen, although the speaker is not explicitly identified. When Fu Tao encourages Yuan Hong to make the addition, he seems to draw inspiration from these comments to suggest the rhyme word *xie* 寫, and Yuan Hong likewise uses the notion of unending thoughts and unfinished expression in the new lines he composes. The anecdote presents poetic composition as a truly collaborative activity, and one that is carried out in lively conversation rather than through solitary, silent composition. Members of the audience of the text, not its author, are responsible for its performance. Their conversation about the piece not only prompts its revision, it also provides the inspiration for the content of the new lines, a detail that only becomes apparent when this anecdote is read alongside the text of the poem drawn from Yuan Hong's collection.

There are many differences between the two versions of this anecdote. Different people appear in each version, the poem is presented in writing in one and read aloud in the other, and the feedback and praise of the poem are delivered by different people in slightly different ways. The base anecdote emphasises the brilliance of Yuan Hong's extemporaneous composition, and the alternative version details the role of evaluation and critique in the process of collaborative composition. One does not need to read the composition itself to understand the events of either anecdote, especially if one is primarily interested in the delivery of praise, dialogue, and social performance typical of *Shishuo xinyu*.

The citation of the poem from Yuan Hong's literary collection draws the reader away from the scene of the composition and recentres our attention on the textual artifact of this event — the literary composition itself. As with earlier literary collection citations, this allows us to decide for ourselves whether the extra lines improve the poem. Here, it also establishes evidence to which either of the two conflicting accounts can be anchored. The common element is the advice to add additional lines to extend the rhyme with the word *xie*, a detail that is "confirmed" through the evidence provided in the text of the piece itself. Although the anecdotes contradict one another, either one would be a plausible explanation of how Yuan Hong's piece *might* have been completed. If the preservation of the alternative account of the piece's composition destabilises the historicity of the *Shishuo xinyu* base anecdote, the inclusion of the text of Yuan Hong's composition restores a sense of balance. The two anecdotes may no longer be acceptable as a historiographic account of a social gathering, but they retain their value as explanations of why Yuan Hong's piece ends the way it does, albeit potentially apocryphal ones. Moreover, when read as such, these explanations also enable another layer to the final lines of Yuan

Hong's composition: in light of the possibility that Yuan Hong's composition was completed only thanks to the meddling of well-intentioned but unsolicited co-authors, it is hard not to read the final lines of the poem, "Emotions endlessly stir in my mind, facing the flow of the wind I express them alone", as a light jab at his companions.

Another dramatisation of textual composition in the same chapter features Huan Wen's son, Huan Xuan 桓玄 (369–404). Huan Xuan ascends a tower on the Jiangling city wall, and, whether soliloquising or addressing an unmentioned audience, declares his intent to compose a dirge (*lei* 誄) for Wang Gong 王恭 (styled Xiaobo 孝伯, d. 398). He begins to vocalise, then puts brush to paper and composes the dirge in a single sitting (SSXY 4.102). Here, although writing is portrayed as a solitary activity, it is still a kind of performance. Unusually, the anecdote ends here. There is no discussion of any reaction to this performance, nor any evaluation of the dirge itself. The annotations make up for this, first with a quotation from *Jin An di ji* 晉安帝紀 ("The Annals of Emperor An of the Jin") to assure readers that "the beauty of Huan Xuan's literary writings towered above his generation" (玄文翰之美，高於一世), then with an excerpt from Huan Xuan's literary collection. As with the citation of Yuan Hong's collection above, this excerpt serves the basic purpose of corroborating key details from the anecdote, namely, that Huan Xuan indeed composed a dirge for Wang Gong. Curiously, the text cited in the annotations is not the dirge itself, but its preface. The passage quoted in the annotation begins by announcing Wang Gong's bureaucratic titles and the date of his death in plain prose, then shifts into rhymed couplets of four-character lines. The metrical portion of the passage may represent either the dirge itself or another part of its preface.[13] In the seventh and final couplet quoted, the author restates his intent to compose a dirge. The quotation ends here, followed by a remark from the annotator that states, "The text is long, and will not be recorded in full" (文多不盡載). While the anecdote focuses readers' attention on the theatrical display by the dirge's author, the annotations once again draw attention back to the textual remnant of this performance.

Although the excerpt is too short for a full evaluation of the piece on its own merits, it is certainly enough to remind readers that a literary text is something that can be distinguished from the circumstances in which it was composed. But with access to both the piece itself and the anecdote's description of its inspiration and composition, new interpretive possibilities are created. The quoted passage speaks of "streams and hills" (川嶽) and laments the death of its subject as "A mountain pass stripped of its tall trees, a grove razed of its old bamboo" (嶺摧高梧，林殘故竹). Having just read an anecdote describing how the author was inspired to write the dirge after climbing to the top of a tower, it becomes possible for readers of the annotated *Shishuo xinyu* to imagine a connection between the sights the poet surveyed and the words he then rushed to put to paper. In both of these

[13] Dirges in *Wen xuan* (WX 56.2433–57.2482) routinely include prefaces (*xu* 序), which often end with similar declarations of intent. The preface to Cao Zhi's dirge for Wang Zhongxuan 王仲宣 also uses four-character lines. It is thus likely that the excerpt here does not quote any text from Huan Xuan's dirge itself, only its preface.

cases, the quotations from the subjects' literary collections encourage readers to reverse the relationship between base text and commentary, reading the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes instead as the explanatory comments that add depth to our understanding of the literary texts they quote.

Oral Performance and Textual Exchange

In another case, a citation from a literary collection encourages further consideration not just of the immediate circumstances of the text's composition, but also of the broader social and political circumstances under which it was created. The anecdote consists of a single short statement about the contents of a written text: "Huan Wen said in a memorial, 'Xie Shang is straightforward and direct in spirit and emotion, and achieved a great reputation among the people at a young age'" (桓宣武表云：「謝尚神懷挺率，少致民譽。」) (SSXY 8.103). The annotation supplies additional bibliographic detail. It identifies the text as a memorial Huan Wen wrote after conquering Luoyang, then quotes a longer portion of the memorial that includes text before and after the short statement of praise included in the anecdote. From this context, it is clear that Huan Wen's memorial was written to recommend that Xie Shang 謝尚 (308–357) be given political and military control over the newly acquired territory. Without the annotation, this anecdote resembles many other entries in this chapter of the text, devoted to "Appreciation and Praise" ("*Shang yu*" 賞譽): a prominent individual praises the personality or accomplishments of another, with no further dialogue or consequences mentioned. Annotations like this one, attributed to the very documents in which the praise was first articulated, provide a unique window into the textual dimension of praise and evaluation in the early medieval period. This annotation also makes explicit the notion that character evaluation was directly connected to both military and bureaucratic career advancement. Comments that in another context might have been mere flattery or rhetoric are here revealed to be part of a text composed to perform a specific function, intended for the attention of those with the power to accept or reject Huan Wen's recommendation. But the presence of this memorial in Huan Wen's collection also demonstrates the potential for such texts to serve additional functions for other readers, whether as historical evidence, models for future compositions, or objects of aesthetic appreciation.

Two final cases similarly highlight the role of texts as material objects and tokens of social and political exchange in the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes to which they are appended. These cases are unique in that they complicate our perspective on the events described in the base anecdotes by revealing the textual dimension of events that *Shishuo xinyu* presents as embodied performances and oral conversations. The first of these two interesting cases appears in the annotations to an anecdote in which the statesman Yu Liang 庾亮 (289–340) encourages the recluse Zhou Shao 周邵 (d. 335) to return to officialdom. Classified among other examples of "Blameworthiness and Remorse" ("*You hui*"尤悔), the anecdote details the immense regret Zhou Shao experiences after returning to public service, which causes his death. The first half of the anecdote, however, is much lighter, with elements that are almost farcical:

> Yu Liang wanted to recruit Zhou Shao, but Zhou Shao steadfastly refused him with increasing stubbornness. Whenever Yu would visit Zhou he would enter from the southern gate of his house, so Zhou would leave through the back. Once, Yu was able to sneak inside, and Zhou had no chance to escape. They ended up talking all day long. When Yu asked for some food, Zhou served him some simple vegetables, which Yu forced himself to eat with an air of extreme eagerness. The two talked over recent events, discussed Yu Liang's recommendation, and agreed to share the burdens of their era with one another.
>
> 庾公欲起周子南，子南執辭愈固。庾每詣周，庾從南門入，周從後門出。庾嘗一往奄至，周不及去，相對終日。庾從周索食，周出蔬食，庾亦彊飯，極歡；並語世故，約相推引，同佐世之任。
>
> (SSXY 33.10)

The anecdote ends with Yu Liang's persuasion but, unlike many others, no details about their conversation are provided. Instead, the narrative emphasises the physicality of their encounter, and its embeddedness in the interior, domestic space of Zhou Shao's estate.

The two annotations appended to this passage both address Yu Liang's attempted persuasion of Zhou Shao, but because the anecdote implies that Yu Liang made multiple attempts it cannot be said that either actually contradicts the information provided in *Shishuo xinyu*. The first, drawn from the geographic treatise *Xunyang ji* 尋陽記 ("Record of Xunyang"), also emphasises the physicality of their encounter:

> Zhou Shao, styled Zinan, accompanied Zhai Tang of Nanyang to live as a recluse on Mount Lu in Xunyang. When Yu Liang was appointed to Jiangzhou, he caught wind of Zhai and Zhou's reputations, so he tightened his belt and donned his walking shoes to pay them a visit. When they heard that Yu had arrived, they turned and fled to avoid him. Later, Yu Liang went out secretly. He proceeded directly to a grove of trees where Zhou Shao was hunting birds, then approached Zhou Shao to talk to him. After he returned, he said "This person can be recruited."
>
> 周邵字子南，與南陽翟湯隱於尋陽廬山。庾亮臨江州，聞翟、周之風，束帶躡履而詣焉。聞庾至，轉避之。亮後密往，值邵彈鳥於林，因前與語。還，便云：「此人可起。」

In this excerpt, Zhou Shao's reluctance to consider offers of appointment is again made literal through his avoidance of any face-to-face contact with Yu Liang. After this, the *Xunyang ji* text diverges from the base anecdote in describing an outdoor encounter. But by portraying Yu Liang visiting Zhou Shao during a leisurely hunting excursion, the text reiterates the remoteness and rusticity of Zhou's estate in a way that complements the simple fare he offers Yu Liang in the *Shishuo xinyu* version. Both texts eschew dialogue and instead use narrative details to illustrate Zhou Shao's comfort in rural isolation, and Yu Liang's dogged commitment to luring him out of retirement.

The citation from Yu Liang's collection, an excerpt from a letter addressed to Zhou Shao, appears immediately after the text from *Xunyang ji*. It presents their interaction instead as a one-sided textual exchange, a textual performance by a writer for a readerly audience of one. The letter is brief, but it reiterates the same themes as the anecdotes that precede it:

> Within the commandery of Xiyang, the population registry does not reflect reality. Without one who is pure and honest, how might this roaming and evasive populace be pacified? I have inquired about this both within the court and among the commoners, and all say that it must be you, sir. I offer up this message to you today and humbly request that you accede to the post, and do not decline.
>
> 西陽一郡，戶口差實，非履道真純，何以鎮其流遁？詢之朝野，僉曰足下。今具上表，請足下臨之，無讓。

In his letter, Yu Liang appeals to Zhou Shao's "purity and honesty" (*zhen chun* 真純), qualities that his principled life of reclusion demonstrates. His claim that both members of the court and the local population were clamouring for Zhou Shao to leave retirement suggests that Zhou Shao had managed to establish a reputation for himself within the court as well as among the local populace. Considering Xiyang was nearly two hundred kilometres away from his estate on Mount Lu perhaps this is mere flattery. The specific issue in Xiyang that Yu Liang notes appears to refer to the issue of inaccurate census numbers that plagued Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties tax collection efforts.[14] Yu Liang here sees Zhou Shao's retreat to his rural estate as an asset. Zhou Shao's immense, fatal regret for having abandoned his principles to accept an official position suggests that his commitment to reclusion was genuine, but in this letter, Yu Liang is counting on the possibility that Zhou Shao was fashioning himself as a recluse precisely to demonstrate the moral refinement required of high officials.[15] The existence of this letter does not necessarily contradict the *Shishuo xinyu* or *Xunyang ji* accounts of Yu Liang's personal visit to Zhou Shao's estate. It is easy to imagine Yu Liang sending a letter before visiting in person, and just as easy to imagine Zhou Shao ignoring it, prompting Yu Liang's later visit. But while the anecdotes dramatise Yu Liang's pursuit and Zhou Shao's resistance through conversation and physical interaction, the letter reminds us that the exchange of texts was also a part of Eastern Jin social and political activity, and its appearance in Yu Liang's collection testifies to the preservation and broad circulation of the documents produced in this written discourse.

The second is another case in which the annotations reveal the presence of a text in an event *Shishuo xinyu* represents as an in-person conversation. In doing so, it not only draws our attention to the easily overlooked role of material texts in early medieval social discourse, it also illuminates the peculiar consequences of the transmission of these documents within the flux of manuscript culture. It concerns Cai Hong 蔡洪 (fl. late 3rd cent.), an obscure figure from the Kingdom of Wu. Upon the

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[14] On these census issues, see Crowell 1990. Mather's translation suggests it may instead refer to a generally unruly populace: "The inhabitants of the one commandery of Hsi-yang fall short of the truth." Mather, 512.

[15] On affectations of reclusion by those seeking bureaucratic appointments, see Berkowitz 2000, 118–125.

conquest of Wu by Jin, Cai Hong travelled to Luoyang to seek employment with the new regime. Cai Hong is known only from his appearances in two *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes and their annotations, along with a single brief mention in the *Jinshu* biography of one of his contemporaries (JS 92.2383). As was the case with other obscure figures discussed above, Liu Xiaobiao relies on the paratext of Cai Hong's literary collection to provide basic biographical details, which are consistent with his sole appearance in *Jinshu*. The cited excerpt from the paratext of Cai Hong's collection provides his style name and place of origin, then reports that he was talented and skilled in discourse. Most importantly, it then explains that he served the Wu court prior to its conquest by Jin in 280, upon which he then became a retainer in the government of his home region, and was nominated to the rank of *xiucai* 秀才 (SSXY 2.22). Both Cai Hong's talent for debate as well as his status as a former subject of Wu are immediately relevant to this anecdote, which depicts Cai Hong as a visitor to Luoyang, during which he is referred to as a "remnant of a fallen kingdom" 亡國之餘. This insult prompts him to offer a spirited defence of the virtues of men of the south. As is the case for other biographical details appearing in other annotations, they have not been preserved randomly, but were selected precisely because of the context they provide for the anecdote to which they are appended.

Cai Hong's status as a "remnant of a fallen kingdom" is relevant to his second appearance in the text as well. Here, Liu quotes from one of Cai Hong's compositions rather than the preface to Cai Hong's collected works. The passage he quotes provides an alternative version of a conversation in which Cai Hong advocates for greater attention to men from the fallen state of Wu. In the base anecdote, an unnamed interlocutor asks Cai Hong to describe the prominent figures of Wu kingdom. He responds with a lengthy monologue that addresses the accomplishments and reputations of seven figures. Among them are Gu Rong 顧榮 (270–322), the noted poet Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303), and his younger brother Lu Yun 陸雲 (262–303), all relatively well known figures. The other four, Wu Zhan 吳展, Zhu Dan 朱誕, Yan Yin 嚴隱, and Zhang Chang 張暢, are all obscure, with no appearances in any other extant text. Based on Cai Hong's comments, however, all were held in high esteem in his time. In the base anecdote, Cai Hong concludes his list with an extended sequence of compliments emphasising their talents for writing and conversation (SSXY 8.20). Cai Hong's lecture is delivered in parallel prose: it follows strict metrical patterns, introducing each figure with a phrase eight characters in length, and completing each introduction with a five-character expression of praise of its subject, each with the function word *zhi* 之 in the middle of the phrase. He ends his speech with a concluding summary that follows an even stricter pattern, consisting of twelve six-character lines that each use the verb *wei* 為 ("to be" or "to treat as") as the fourth character. The intricacy of his composition, presented here as a spontaneously delivered speech, lends his comments the tone of elegant oratory in a way that plain unmetred prose would not.

Citing a letter contained in Cai Hong's literary collection, the annotations provide an alternative version of his lecture. In the letter, addressed to the regional inspector of an unnamed area named Zhou Jun 周俊, Cai Hong describes a gathering in the Jin court in which the participants discussed men of Wu. His letter then reports that what he actually said in this conversation was not written down. Instead, after the event concluded, he was instructed to organise his thoughts in writing. What follows is clearly a version of the evaluations that appear in the anecdote, with numerous additions and omissions. Most

notably, there is no mention of Gu Rong, Lu Ji, or Lu Yun, and it does not include the twelve-line conclusion that emphasises the literary and rhetorical talents of the figures listed. Moreover, while the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote is pithy and lyrical throughout, Cai Hong's letter includes details in plain prose that elaborate on each person's bureaucratic posts under the Wu, and explains how each person listed avoided service to the new regime after the fall of the kingdom: Wu Zhan "closed his doors to guard his integrity, receiving no guests" (閉門自守，不交賓客), while Zhu Dan "has now returned to reside at home" (今歸在家), and Yan Yin "left his post after the conquest of Wu" (吳平，去職). His discussion of Zhang Chang makes no reference to official service to Wu or otherwise, saying only that he "dwelt among whetstones and black soil, and yet was neither ground down nor stained" (居磨涅之中，無淄磷之損). After each of these unique comments, however, the letter repeats the same aestheticised, politically neutral descriptions as the base anecdote. But these additions make the absence of Gu Rong, Lu Ji, and Lu Yun in the letter all the more conspicuous, as all three of these men did join the Jin bureaucracy after the conquest. Though they share many details, the cited letter emphasises service to Wu in contrast to subsequent refusal to join the Jin court, while the anecdote version focuses only on literary talent and moral character.

As he does throughout the text, Liu Xiaobiao intervenes here to offer commentary on the discrepancy between the cited source and the base text. His comment does not mention this more nuanced shift in emphasis between the two versions, but it does address the absence of both the brothers Lu as well as the twelve lines of praise that conclude the anecdote, which Liu Xiaobiao suspects have been added to *Shishuo xinyu* from an unnamed source. Moreover, his comment makes no mention of the omission of Gu Rong, instead noting that the cited letter in fact named sixteen individuals.

There is another factor that complicates efforts to untangle the details recorded in these various texts to create a single coherent historical narrative. *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 preserves a text that combines Cai Hong's list of talented men of Wu with Cai Hong's first appearance in *Shishuo xinyu*, in which he offers an erudite retort in defence of Wu after being mocked as a "remnant of a fallen kingdom" (TPGJ 173.1276). Here, Cai Hong first confronts stereotypes about southerners with examples of legendary figures from antiquity who hailed from marginalised regions as he does in his first *Shishuo xinyu* appearance, and then responds to another remark from the same unnamed interlocutor with the same list of more recent Wu figures he provides in the second anecdote. The text of this section follows the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote rather than the longer account quoted from the letter in Cai Hong's collection. *Taiping guangji* attributes this narrative to a text called *Liu shi xiaoshuo* 劉氏小說 ("Minor tales of Sir Liu"), which may refer to another text compiled by *Shishuo xinyu* compiler Liu Yiqing.

This narrative adds a layer of complexity to Cai Hong's already confusing set of appearances in *Shishuo xinyu*. Despite annotating the passage with biographical details from Cai Hong's collection, Liu Xiaobiao adds another comment to the end of the anecdote that casts doubt on the factuality of the entire exchange. This comment notes that the same response is attributed elsewhere to another

former Wu subject, Hua Tan 華譚, and concludes by saying that he finds the *Shishuo xinyu* attribution of this exchange to Cai Hong is implausible.[16] The existence of the *Taiping guangji* narrative offers a possible explanation of the source of this alternative version of the story, especially if one accepts the attribution to Liu Yiqing. But it does not explain why a speech attributed to one southerner sojourning in the north could be attributed to another, and then combined with details from an unrelated letter to form a new hybrid narrative. Though Liu Xiaobiao himself does not believe this attribution, someone else must have, or, in the very least, would have had some reason to repurpose this anecdote, and on these possibilities Liu Xiaobiao is silent.

In some cases, correlating the details from the various sources cited throughout the annotations can create surprising coherences, and provide answers to questions that readers might not have otherwise thought to ask. In others, however, it only creates further confusion. These confusions illustrate the problem with attempting to read *Shishuo xinyu* as history, at least if one presumes that the historical record should provide a single narrative of "what really happened". To contemporary readers armed with the expectation that all history told through narrative involves creative, inventive choices, the existence of multiple accounts of the same events invites a different kind of comparison — not to determine which account represents the truth, but to better understand the purposes these varying accounts served, and the effects their differences create for readers. While Tang readers like Liu Zhiji may have seen the many discordant accounts of Southern Dynasties history as a failure to produce a single authoritative historical record, these alternative accounts have provided contemporary scholars with many opportunities to perform this kind of analysis. Examining the construction of historical narratives and selective preservation of historical materials is particularly illuminating when it comes to matters of great political or ideological significance, and such an approach would certainly be fruitful in a deeper examination of the varying depictions of the exchanges between Wu remnants and Jin officials in these accounts.[17]

Liu Xiaobiao does not question the historicity of Cai Hong's speech about Wu luminaries in his second *Shishuo xinyu* appearance. Nevertheless, the details provided in his annotations further complicate any attempt to read the anecdote as an account of a historical event. To read any narrative anecdote as a historical record requires one to assume the existence of a transcription or other record produced by an eyewitness or participant in the original event. But such anecdotes rarely describe the means by which they were documented. At first glance, Liu Xiaobiao's inclusion of Cai Hong's letter appears to do just that. But the letter explicitly states that, although Cai Hong first delivered these comments orally, no transcription of this event was produced, and the letter was instead prepared from memory after the event. If our goal was to get to the bottom of "what really happened", this detail, along with the substantial discrepancies between the speech in the anecdote and the contents of the letter in the annotation, would all present insurmountable challenges. Instead, it is more productive to consider the way these differences allow each text to perform different functions. There is both a

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[16] As above, the source of this conflicting passage is not named. But a story featuring Hua Tan that closely resembles this *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote is preserved in JS 52.1452, as well as a citation of *Wenshi zhuan* in TPYL 464.2263b.

[17] On the possibilities afforded by critical readings of contradictory accounts of early medieval figures, see, for example, Wells 2015. On the importance of recovering the perspectives of Wu historians, see Tian 2016.

political and an aesthetic dimension to these differences. While Cai Hong's letter provides the perspective of a defiant Wu loyalist eager to demonstrate the principled reclusion of his contemporaries, the version in the anecdote, in keeping with focus of the chapter on "Appreciation and Praise", highlights only their literary talent and cultivated personalities. Aesthetically, the condensed, patterned language of the speech makes it a more impressive example of oratory. Likewise, the extended prose commentary offered in the letter version allows Cai Hong's pronouncements on each individual to function as a *zhuan*-style biography in miniature, providing the conventional biographical details of each person's style name, history of bureaucratic appointments, and a brief statement of praise illuminating the distinctive traits of each. Although Liu Xiaobiao either overlooks or politely ignores the political and historiographic implications of the discrepancies between the two letters, by providing both texts side-by-side the annotations allow readers to evaluate examples of both oral performance and written composition, reminding us that the "paper trail" linking embodied interactions to their representation in textual anecdotes is often missing from the historical record.

Conclusion: The Annotated *Shishuo Xinyu* as a Liang Text

Liu Xiaobiao's citations of personal literary collections allow readers to participate in the acts of appraisal performed by the historical figures that appear as characters in *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes. However, the kinds of evaluation such annotations enable are limited. The annotations enhance our ability to interpret and evaluate the textual traces left behind by these figures, but, by drawing our attention to the documents in which these traces are preserved, cannot help but bring us further from the ephemeral, embodied performances that are captured in *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes. To conclude, I would like to reflect on how this transition — through which a text concerned with the nuances of social performance becomes one almost overburdened with attention to the production and preservation of documents — reflects the literary and scholastic culture of Liu Xiaobiao's own era.

Historian Hu Baoguo has characterised the Southern Dynasties as a period during which the accumulation of textual knowledge became paramount among the elite. As evidence for this development, he notes the steadily growing sizes of private and imperial book collections, the increasing importance of breadth of erudition across multiple fields of discourse and scholarship, and increasing preference for the honorific title *xueshi* 學士 ("learned gentleman") over *mingshi* 名士 ("renowned gentleman") (Hu 2009). Xiaofei Tian has traced a concurrent intensification of attention to literary collections, beginning around the fifth century and continuing through the end of the Southern Dynasties. As Tian writes, during this period literary collections usurped the "masters text" (*zishu* 子書) as the predominant textual form through which an individual's reputation was established (Tian 2006, 475–477). This expansion of attention to literary collections and literary writing can also be seen in the field of character evaluation.

This is most visible within *Shi pin* 詩品 ("Gradings of poets"). That text evaluates the poetry of 123 writers, many of whom also appear in *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes, and assigns each to one of three

rankings. Importantly, though the text is focused on pentasyllabic poetry and includes many nuanced observations and judgments about literary style, the evaluations also address other aspects of each figure's life, personality, and accomplishments. They do so using terminology derived from the longer tradition of character evaluation, *Shishuo xinyu* included. This lexicon also serves as a foundation for the text's new language of literary criticism as well (Wixted 1983, 232–233). *Shi pin* evaluates and ranks writers according to characterological and literary critical analysis. The *Shishuo xinyu* base text is primarily interested in recording details related to the former, while also showcasing scenes in which literary evaluation is performed by others. By supplementing this with longer excerpts from the writings themselves, the annotated *Shishuo xinyu* allows readers to move from evaluating the performances and personality traits of its characters towards evaluating literary writing. It is thus not insignificant that *Shi pin*'s compiler, Zhong Rong 鍾嶸 (469–518), was a contemporary of Liu Xiaobiao.

As we have seen, however, Liu's annotations do more than just provide the basis for future literary evaluations. They consistently draw attention to the presence of texts in *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes, illuminating not just the literary qualities of the texts they contain, but also their performative capacity as functional documents, their ability to convey messages across great distances, and, perhaps most importantly, their potential to either record information for future generations or to distort and complicate it through the creation of divergent manuscripts. The results of these complications are also on display in the annotations, but when such variation occurs it is significant that the versions preserved in texts cited in the annotations tend to emphasise the presence of material texts, where the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote either diminishes it or elides it completely. This preoccupation with textuality is also very much a part of the annotations' status as a late Southern Dynasties composition, when the culture of "textual knowledge above all" described by Hu Baoguo gave rise to a generation of scholars, Liu Xiaobiao among them, devoted to organising, rewriting, and reassembling the contents of earlier texts into a host of new compendia, anthologies, bibliographies, and encyclopedias.[18]

It is in this regard that Liu's choice of *Shishuo xinyu* as a base text becomes particularly poignant. It is not the case that *Shishuo xinyu*'s preoccupation with the ephemeral social performances of Wei-Jin figures meant that those in the period it covers had no interest in the textual legacy of the past, far from it. As Robert Ashmore has shown, investigation of the ways in which texts facilitate (or hinder) their readers' ability to connect with figures of the distant past was a major current of Wei-Jin thought (Ashmore 2010). Likewise, Wendy Swartz has shed light on the complex intertextuality of literary compositions produced in this period (Swartz 2018). And, as Jack W. Chen notes, not only is *Shishuo xinyu* itself the product of an ambitious compilation enterprise, the anecdotes it contains also address nostalgia and the challenges of establishing a connection with the past through the preservation and creation of new texts, the conversations they describe often capturing "the beginnings of a textualized nostalgia that anticipates the compilation of the *Shishuo*" (Chen 2021, 229). Indeed, Hu traces the beginnings of the trend towards the accumulation of textual knowledge to the Eastern Jin. It is the

[18] On this culture of textual production, see chapters two and three of Tian 2007.

annotations' pointed interest in the practical matters of textual creation, dissemination, and preservation that makes them feel particularly in line with Liang scholastic interests. But the texts Liu cites often originate much earlier, as Liu draws from the historiographic and compilational efforts of those from the era documented in *Shishuo xinyu* to his own present in the Liang. This is why it remains difficult to say whether the addition of these elements to *Shishuo xinyu* via annotation should be understood as the product of a scholarly culture unique to the Liang, or if it may be seen as another way *Shishuo xinyu* manifests a multi-generational community, one defined by a shared interest in scholastic and bibliographic pursuits in addition to character evaluation and social performance.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Visible and Spectacular: Commentary on Geographical Writings in Medieval China

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Since the *Book of Songs*, commentary has been a crucial tool for interpreting and understanding previous literary works. In medieval China, commentary extended beyond the interpretation of classics to various genres, demonstrating diverse purposes and effects. This paper investigates the perspectives and techniques of commentators in two geographical writings in medieval China, Li Daoyuan's *Shuijing zhu* and Yang Xuanzhi's *Luoyang qielan ji*. It illustrates how these commentators represent landscape in a way distinct from the original text, offering a fresh approach to the study of commentary. By establishing organisational structures that differ from the main text, selecting words and citations from previous documents, supplementing this with their personal sensory experiences, and even extracting keywords from the main text for elaboration, commentators on geographical writings expand and deepen the descriptions of landscapes in the main text. This enriches the meaning of a location's scenery, constructing a more profound interpretation and thereby a distinctive landscape belonging to the commentators. As such, commentary functions not only as an analytical tool but also as a unique mode of representing landscapes.

自《詩經》以來，註疏一直是理解和解讀前代文獻不可或缺的輔助工具。到了中古時期，註疏不僅用於儒家經典的詮釋，還呈現出體裁跨越和功能多樣性的趨勢。本文以中古地理書寫中的兩部註疏——酈道元《水經註》和楊衒之《洛陽伽藍記》為例，嘗試為註疏研究提供新的視角。這兩部作品雖然依循正文的文句順序進行註解，卻呈現出獨立的文本架構。註疏者有意識地依照新的架構選擇詞彙和引文，融入個人的直觀體驗，並從正文中挑選出關鍵字進行補充和詮釋。這種註疏方式不僅擴展和深化了原有的景觀描寫，還塑造了註疏者對地景獨特的解讀。換言之，中古地理書寫的註疏不僅詮釋了地志文獻，還提供另一種地景再現的形式。

Keywords: geographical writings, Northern Dynasties, landscape, representation, history

關鍵詞： 地理書寫，景觀，再現，北朝，史

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Introduction[1]

Sometime before 527, a Northern Wei official named Li Daoyuan 酈道元 (d. 527) wrote a commentary on an anonymous gazetteer, the *Shuijing* 水經 (*The Classic of Waterways*), creating a new work known today as the *Shuijing zhu* 水經註 (*Commentary on the Classic of Waterways*). Twenty years after Li's death, Yang Xuanzhi 楊衒之 (fl. 528–547), another Northern Dynasties official, wrote a record of Buddhist monasteries in Luoyang, the *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 *(The Records of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang*, hereafter *Records)*, to which he appended his own commentary. Although Li Daoyuan annotated the works of others, while Yang Xuanzhi annotated his own work, both of these works employ commentary to facilitate readers' understanding of geographical writings. Their choices illustrate how commentary contributes to the original text's meaning, creating a text appended, rather than subordinate, to the original text, providing an alternative rather than secondary geographical discourse.[2] Additionally, Yang's choice to annotate his own work indicates his awareness of the distinct effects of the main text and the commentary. His decision to express his thoughts through separate forms provides a valuable example for examining the crucial differences and fundamental impacts of original text and commentary.

As two of the few relatively well-preserved books from early medieval China, *Shuijing zhu* and the *Records* are important monuments in literary history, and have been the subject of considerable discussion. Due to limited historical records about Li and Yang, their works have also been crucial sources for understanding their lives and literary contribution.[3] *Shuijing zhu*, as a key work in both Northern Dynasties literature and in the genre of geographical writing, has had an impact on historical

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[1] This paper is part of my postdoctoral project at ICLP, Academia Sinica, discussing the interaction between geographical writings and their genre. I would like to thank my advisor at ICLP, Dr. Zeb Raft, for his thoughtful suggestions, as well as the helpful feedback from peer reviewers and the editorial assistance that significantly enhanced the clarity and language of this paper.

[2] Perhaps due to the different authors of the original texts, scholars have held opposite attitudes to Li's and Yang's commentaries. Because most of the scholarship recognises Li Daoyuan's innovation and unique ideas as a commentator on landscape description, Xiaofei Tian emphasises the constraints of the genre. She reminds her readers that the discussion of Li's inheritance and innovation should be based on the features of commentary. On the contrary, most scholarship does not separate Yang's commentary from his original text. Manling Luo suggests that the original text and the self-commentary in the *Records* should not be treated differently, as these two texts have been integrated for a long time. Luo further argues that the commentary is neither secondary nor supplementary. However, the combination of the original text and the commentary is not unique to the *Records*. For example, the original text and commentary of *Shuijing zhu* were not separated until the Qing Dynasty; such integration of texts was common in medieval China. Although, as Luo argues, we cannot definitively determine which parts of the *Records* belong to the original text and which to the commentary, what we regard as the distinct separation between *Shuijing zhu* and its original text is merely the result of rigorous scholarly examination from the High Qing period onward. See Xiaofei Tian, "Empire's Blue Highways: Li Daoyuan's Commentary on the *River Classic*," *Asia Major* 35, no.1 (June 2022): 75–120. Manling Luo, "The Politics of Place-Making in the *Records of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang*," *T'oung Pao* 105, no.1–2 (2019): 43–75.

[3] Qiaoyi Chen 陳橋驛 considers *Shuijing zhu* as part of Li Daoyuan's biography. Distinct from the crucial official portrait by Wei Shou in *Wei Shu* 魏書 (*Book of Wei*), Chen believes Li was more of a patriot dedicated to the glory of a unified empire. See Qiaoyi Chen, *Li Daoyuan pingzhuan* 酈道元評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1994). Wang Meishiu 王美秀 explores Yang Xuanzhi's self-identification and cultural preferences during the disunion. See Meishiu Wang, *Lishi, kongjian, shengfeng: Luoyan qielan ji de wenhua lunshu* 歷史、空間、身份——洛陽伽藍記的文化論述 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2007).

geography, literary aesthetics, and textual scholarship.[4] The *Records*, as both a personal memoir and a record of the capital, has long been noted for its duality (Lin 1985).[5] More significantly, scholars have recognised the substantial impact that form has on Li's and Yang's representation of landscapes. Jörg H. Hüsemann illustrates Li Daoyuan's pessimistic views on history and memory through decayed and obscure ruins Li referred to annotate the waterways in the original texts, while D. Jonathan Felt highlights the *Shuijing zhu*'s decisive role in shaping the genre of medieval geographical writings. This underscores the value of *Shuijing zhu* as a commentary in depicting geographical landscapes (Hüsemann 2017, Felt 2021). Manling Luo views Yang Xuanzhi's landscape descriptions as a means to reveal the subtle dynamics of power between individuals and between people and their time (Luo 2019, 53–55, 65–69). After bringing together the discussions of both *Shuijing zhu* and the *Records*, it becomes evident that the effective utilisation of the form is not merely a matter of the authors' personal creativity or preference. Xiaofei Tian uses the metaphors "riverine traveler" and "blue highway" to illustrate how Li Daoyuan effectively employs the commentarial genre to showcase his literary and textual knowledge, as well as his historical and imperial concepts, in his geographical writing (Tian 2022a, 84–89, 98–107). Her findings shed light on the interaction between genre and content, highlighting how commentaries serve as a method of geographical writing.

The transformative influence of commentary on the original text can be traced back to centuries before Li and Yang. The Confucian classics all came with commentaries, glossing their words and explaining their significance. Yet even there, commentary—as we see, for instance, in Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄(127–220) commentary on the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Book of Songs*)—is not subordinate to the text, but guides its interpretation in certain directions (Nylan and Rusk 2021, 149–152). Commentary also gave texts authority, as (reportedly) in the case of Zuo Si's 左思 (fl. 250–305) "Sandu fu" 三都賦 ("Fu on the Three Capitals"), which reveals a scenario where, when a work struggles to gain widespread recognition, the inclusion of commentary from notable figures can affirm and elevate its perceived value. Commentators were also innovative, exploring diverse possibilities through their practices.

During the time of Li and Yang, commentary served as an essential means to collect, manipulate, and even reinterpret knowledge. As a result, commentaries on classics and contemporary anthologies

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[4] Qiaoyi Chen's series of studies on *Shuijing zhu* provides an abundant resource for examining its contribution to historical geography. See Qiaoyi Chen, *Shuijing zhu yanjiu* 水經注研究 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1985). To explore Li Daoyuan's rhetorical representation of his political, aesthetic, and humanitarian concerns, scholars such as Michael Nylan, Yuanju Liu 劉苑如, and Peipei Chang 張蓓蓓 analyse his choice of locations and critique of former records to demonstrate his intentions. See Michael Nylan, "Wandering in the Ruins: The *Shuijing zhu* Reconsidered," in *Interpretation and Literature in Early Medieval China*, ed. Alan K.C. Chan (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), 63–102; Yuanju Liu, "Visible and Invisible War: Records, Rhapsodies, and Liu Yu's Expeditions to the North" 見與不見的戰爭——論記體與賦體及劉裕北伐, *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* 中國文哲研究集刊 49 (September 2016): 1–40; Peipei Chang 張蓓蓓, "Li Daoyuan's Humanistic Concerns in *Shuijing zhu*" 由水經注看酈道元的人道人文關懷, *Chengda Zhongwen xuebao* 成大中文學報 29 (2010): 23–50. Yuanhang Bao 鮑遠航 collects and analyses Li's citations, especially from the southern gazetteers and travelogues, to remind his readers that much of what we praise in Li's contribution today should be credited to the southern writers. See Yuanhang Bao, *Shuijing zhu yu Wei Jin nanbei chao dili wenxue wenxian yanjiu* 水經注與魏晉南北朝地理文學文獻研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chunbanshe, 2019).

[5] Both Wenjin Wang and Meishiu Wang divide Yang's work into different layers, such as historical, literary, and religious. See Wenjin Wang, *Jingtu shang de fengyang: Luoyang qielan ji* 淨土上的烽煙——洛陽伽藍記 (Taipei: Shibao wenhua,1982) and Meishiu Wang, *Lishi, kongjian, shengfeng: Luoyan qielan ji de wenhua lunshu.*

flourished (Cheng 2017, 123–130). In the case of "Sandu fu", we can also observe the distinctiveness of commentary on geographical writings. While geographical writings serve to introduce and explain landscapes, why is there a need for an additional layer of introduction and explanation––the commentary?

The tradition of geographical writing exhibits a different approach to commentary. Commenting on the "Sandu fu," the Western Jin (266–316) scholars Zhang Zai 張載 (fl. 280–391) and Liu Kui 劉逵 (d.301) annotated geographical descriptions by aligning them with the grand context of astronomy, corresponding to the cosmological framework established in the pre-Qin period. Concentrating on the interpretation of the account, they meticulously annotated almost every word in the main text, explaining every term, location, and cited material. In contrast, Li Daoyuan and Yang Xuanzhi prioritise human experiences of interacting with the environment over the cosmological framework. Rather than adhering to the structure of the main text, they construct an organisational structure that reflects their perception of the landscape. Within the structure, they organise selected quotations and offer their own interpretations, guiding readers through emotional and sensory perceptions. Moreover, they opt to focus on "keywords" instead of explaining each word in the main text. This choice signifies their shift in focus from the account to the external landscape. Ultimately, their efforts yield a landscape that is distinct from what is portrayed in the main text, creating a multi-layered view when the text and commentary are read together.

How Commentaries Structure Geographical Writing

In their pursuit of a fitting and orderly geographical image, both Li and Yang employed specific structures to systematically list and organise landscapes within their works. The *Shuijing zhu* expands the range of the original *Shuijing* from 137 rivers to over 1000 waterways, extending coverage to modern India, Korea, and Southeast Asia. When discussing Li's innovation and purpose, Xiaofei Tian reminds readers to be cautious when referring to "Li's choice" as a commentator, observing that Li Daoyuan must have followed the structure of the original text (Tian 2022b, 709–710). However, by interconnecting rivers, Li Daoyuan constructs a structure that originates from the main text but extends beyond its boundaries. Li demonstrates that the expansion of the number of rivers and the scope of the countries serves not as a supplement but as an alternative representation of the landscape.

Unlike the *Shuijing*, which overlooks relationships among rivers, Li Daoyuan connects river channels through their confluences and branching points. He labels the intersection of two waterways with the term "mouth" 口 (*kou*), which signifies both the specific geographical location and a marker within the systematic landscape description. Li initiates the description with the main river first, halting at the "mouth" of the river that merges there and describing it from origin to terminus. Consequently, the description of the conjoined river begins and ends with the term "mouth." This method exhibits a methodical presentation, transforming the waterways into a hydrological network. On the top of that,

he organises different geographical facts from different categories, with a focus on river channels, structuring, interpreting, and defining these landscapes in his commentary. For example, because of a river flowing between them, Li refers to two mountains beside the river as *jia'an* 夾岸 ("banks that enclose the river") (*Shuijing zhu*, 138, 282, 364, 524, 782, 1210, 1764, 1954, 3057). By doing so, two individual mountains are connected to the river and to each other (Chu 2021, 4–7). In a sense, all the features connected with the riverbank, including trees, steles, cities, buildings, and stories, acquire new identities which are a part of the description of the river. In this new structure, Li Daoyuan's commentary incorporates additional geographical facts and reorganises the landscape with a framework centred around the river.

Moreover, Li also establishes an order for organising materials collected from textual sources, such as the Confucian classics, histories, and literary works. Li thereby creates a pattern for introducing each location's origin, important events, figures, and the emotions inspired by these landscapes (Chen 2008, 11–50). The final element in this pattern is Li Daoyuan's personal judgment. Li Daoyuan concludes the geographical description with his personal judgment, analysis, experience, and feelings. Li thereby creates a framework for organising the landscape that exceeds the original structure of the main text and moves from information toward the reader's response to information.

Li organises the quotations in his commentary not only to structure the descriptive framework but also to create the impression that the entire empire (all under heaven) belongs to the same cultural sphere.[6] The documents he cites remain consistent throughout the book—he especially favours cultural touchstones such as the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Book of Songs*), *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo's Commentary*), or *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Grand Historian*). Although the frequency of citations of these sources varies across different volumes depending on the region, the works known to Han-ethnicity literati still permeate the entire work. This strategy transforms the river from a mere geographical element in the main text into a metaphor of cultural and political unity in the commentary. Even when discussing the region of remote Southeast Asia formerly known as Linyi 林邑, in today's central and northern Vietnam, Li Daoyuan tries to integrate descriptions of the region into a unified cultural context. Despite the lack of official historical records for Linyi, Li anchors this distant exotic land within the traditional framework of the Central Plains, quoting works compiled in the north such as *Linyi ji* 林邑記 (*Record of Linyi*) and *Jiaozhou ji* 交州記 (*Record of Jiao Region)*, as well as letters from sojourning literati (*Shuijing zhu*, 2984–3023).

Furthermore, in narrating the conflicts between the Liu-Song dynasty and Linyi, Li Daoyuan uses terms such as Linyi's "invasion" 進侵, refers to local customs that are "gradually becoming more akin

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[6] Referring to the concept of *Tianxia* 天下, Michael Nylan translates it as "all under heaven," and argues that it plays a central role in Li's work. This is evident in Li's site selections, choice of names, and the interpretation of historical sites. In comparison with two other works from a similar time period, *Huayangguo zhi* 華陽國志 (*Gazetteer of the Region South of Mount Hua*) and the *Records*, Li's choice clearly reflects his conception of landscape. Nylan also refers to Li's attempts to interpret conflicts over land as part of a unified tradition. See Nylan, "Wandering in the Ruins: The *Shuijing zhu* Reconsidered," 68. It is important to note, however, that *Tianxia* is more likely a political rather than geographical term. It implies that "all under heaven" belongs to the empire, more a theoretical concept than a factual representation.

to those of barbarians" 染同夷化, notes the people's "ferocity" and "stubbornness" 頑凶 and the difficulty of "civilising" them through the ages 歷代難化, and speaks of the general Tan Hezhi's attack on Linyi to "cultivate culture to pacify distant people" 脩文服遠. These expressions convey a viewpoint: that the Liu-Song represented justice, while Linyi represented rebellion. Surprisingly, as a Northern Wei dynasty official, Li expresses his cultural affinity for the Liu-Song, a politically opposed regime. In the dispute between Liu-Song and Linyi, he unhesitatingly chooses the side of Liu-Song. This choice is not only based on the greater cultural gap presented by Linyi but also reflects how Li Daoyuan is influenced by the documents he cites. When the materials he refers to are all composed by Han-ethnicity literati, the landscape he represents reflects a specific perspective. This also demonstrates how commentary as a method of presenting geographical landscapes differs from the authors' direct description.[7]

The purpose and impact of commentary in geographical writing is even more manifest in the *Records*, where both main text and commentary were written by a single author. Yang Xuanzhi fashions a systematic design for its main text, introducing the temples within the city of Luoyang according to the orientation of city gates. Following this order, Yang manipulates the materials in his book to represent the landscape. By placing each temple at a certain spot inside the city, the stories that unfolded in the past gather according to the region of the temple. Yang categorises every event according to different locations, enabling the systematic introduction of important events and people. Thereby, he connects monasteries dispersed throughout the city, creating an ordered and harmonious landscape.

Yang's self-commentary adds to this structure. According to the Tang historian Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721), self-commentary was uncommon, mainly resulting from an author with too much material who has been unable to make a selection (*Shitong* 史通, 322–323). However, it appears that Yang, like Li, used commentary as a part of his representational strategy. Yang's self-commentary transforms excess information into an example of how annotations and the main text can present different facets of a landscape.

Within the systematic order of his text, Yang divides selected materials into the main text and commentary to deliver different messages. In the main text, Yang usually focuses on the temple and the landscape. In the commentary, he concentrates on the story and events. In the main text, he diligently describes every architectural detail, vividly rendering the Buddhist temples' grandeur and allure to the

[7] As regards landscape beyond the Central Plains, Li's surprisingly extensive discussion of India in the first *juan* stands out. Felt offers an innovative and inspiring explanation of the description, suggesting the *Shuijing zhu* presents two different cosmologies, those of China and India, by highlighting Mount Kunlun 崑崙山 as the centre of the world and the border between two civilisations. See Felt, *Structures of the Earth: Metageographies of Early Medieval China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2021), 19, 170–172. While Felt highlights the impact of Li's extension on readers, the India section also reflects his primary objective of debating the precise location of Mount Kunlun. While examining India's unique culture, which is closely tied to Buddhism, Li challenges the association of Kunlun with Anavatapta, as proposed in several Buddhist travelogues. Instead, he underscores the long-standing connection between Kunlun and the Queen Mother of the West, citing a range of works from Chinese literary tradition, reminding his reader that Kunlun has been long rooted in Chinese history and the traditional pantheon of immortals. In this sense, his description of India is more a textual examination of the term "Mount Kunlun" in the main text than a deliberate attempt to extend his writing to a broader world. Consequently, although the description of India takes up a substantial and seemingly more prominent portion than the Southeast Asia section in *Shuijing zhu*, it still reveals how the commentator employs his citation to construct a *tianxia* that belongs to a unified cultural sphere.

nobility and common people of that time. The order of the gates in the preface is a typical example. Yang lists the gates' location, order, and names in the main text, while in the commentary he adds the history of every gate, including its origin and whether the Northern Wei Dynasty reconstructed it, carrying the history of the gates from the Western Han (206 BC–25) to the Northern Wei (386–535). His commentary adds historical depth to every spot in Luoyang, creating an organised contrast between the present and the past, as well as between time and space.

With a clear division of historical and geographical writings between the annotations and main text, Yang's commentary appears intentionally crafted to resemble biographies in official histories. Many commentary passages start with a name, usually of an important character in the main text. Yang then introduces the person's life story. Such a consistent structure and repetitive terminology might make the commentary appear rigid, but this feature also provides a sense of coherence across the commentary passages (Wang 1982, 170), while at the same time it differentiates commentary and the original text despite the shared author. For instance, in the original text, Yang states that Jingning temple 景寧寺 was sponsored by Yang Chun 楊椿, then gives his official title. In the commentary, Yang introduces Yang Chun's family by the form of "Chun's younger brother Shen" and "Shen's younger brother Jin", then gives their official titles (*Records*, 88). The repetitive rhetoric, which resembles what is found in historical books, is differentiated from and complements the original text with landscape descriptions.

The repetitive rhetoric expands the main text's landscape focus, which is centred on Buddhist temples: where the main text is largely restricted to events within the spatial confines of the temple, primarily associating them with aristocratic religious activities, the annotations, adopting the tone of a historical narrative, detail the individuals appearing in the temple and the causes and consequences of the events. For example, in the account of Yongning Temple, the main text mentions the powerful minister Erzhu Rong leading troops into the temple, while the annotation introduces a biographical form: "Rong, styled Tianbao, a native of Xiurong in the Northern Territory" 榮字天寶，北地秀容人也, narrating his rise and the tragic Heying Incident (*Records*, 13). This transformation renders the temples in the main text not merely standalone structures but military camps dominated by Erzhu Rong, extending to become the final scene where the empress dowager and the courtiers resist Erzhu Rong, engaging in a fierce battle with devastating casualties. Yang Xuanzhi's approach associates the temples with other locations and periods, thereby expanding and enriching the depicted landscapes to accommodate more events, intricate actions, and intense emotions.

By incorporating these historical accounts, it can be said that Yang intentionally reverses the positions of history and geography. In the origins of geographical writing, a geographical treatise was typically one section within an official history. Consequently, in most Chinese bibliographies, geographical treatises are traditionally classified as a subgenre of history. However, in Yang's approach, he positions historical facts within the commentary to complement and elucidate geographical descriptions. Moreover, Yang, as geographer-historian, acts as the ultimate arbiter of events in the commentary. He strategically places his own opinions at the conclusion of his commentary passages. In certain segments, he delivers a judgment reminiscent of the "discussions" (*lun* 論) that typically conclude chapters in the official histories. For example, in his treatment of the Yongning temple, Yang notes that the rebellious

general Erzhu Zhao imprisoned Emperor Zhuang in the temple. In the annotation, Yang then elucidates the entire saga involving the royal family and the Erzhu clan, exposing the power struggle between the emperor and the influential generals and revealing the conclusion of the entire narrative: Emperor Zhuang's counterattack and its subsequent failure. Ultimately, he delivers his judgment:

> Xuanzhi (I) says: in the past when Emperor Guangwu [of the Eastern Han] assumed his royal duty, the icy bridge was frozen in the Hu River. During Emperor Zhaolie's ascent, his horse Dilu leapt from the muddy channel. All of these tales align with the laws of heaven, blessings bestowed by the gods to aid the entire universe and shelter its people. As for [Erzhu] Zhao, in contrast, with waspish eyes and wolfish voice, he displayed actions resembling the most rebellious and cruel beasts. Relying on the army, Zhao massacred members of the royal family. If the gods possess consciousness, they should ponder such heinous conduct! How could the gods allow the Meng River to run so low, barely reaching Zhao's knees, encouraging his rebellious heart? The *Book of Changes* maintains that the rule of heaven will punish the arrogant and bless the humble. Regarding the event between Zhao and Emperor Zhuang as a test of this principle, I consider it sheer nonsense!
>
> 衒之曰：「昔光武受命，冰橋凝於滹水；昭烈中起，的盧踴於泥溝；皆理合於天，神祇所福，故能功濟宇宙，大庇生民。若兆者，蜂目豺聲，行窮梟獍，阻兵安忍，賊害君親，皇靈有知，鑒其凶德！反使孟津由膝，贊其逆心。《易》稱天道禍淫，鬼神福謙，以此驗之，信爲虛說。」(*Records*, 29–30)

Yang refers to himself in the third person, adopting a historian's stance to assess historical events. With this tone, he imparts historical depth to his examination of the conflict between Emperor Zhuang and Erzhu Zhao within a broader framework. By juxtaposing the tragic failure of Emperor Zhuang with two emperors from the Eastern Han (25–220) and the Three Kingdoms (220–280), Yang effectively draws on precedents to evaluate the historical event under discussion. He questions whether the lessons from history can be applied to contemporary challenges. The perceived ineffectiveness of history leads Yang to question the wisdom of the classic, transforming Yang's *lun* from a simple historical judgement into a nuanced reflection on history. This shift embodies Yang's emotional response to the historical narrative. Consequently, Yang's annotation not only alters the relationship between history and geography but also provides a place for him to include judgments, reflections, and emotions within the landscape description. Yang's organised and functional main text and self-commentary create different structures to place time and space, cause and effect, events and emotions in various sections of the entire text. This allows readers to extract relevant information more effectively and facilitates a comparative analysis between different narrative categories. Together, these elements contribute to the representation of the landscape.

The examples above demonstrate how commentary creates a structure that transforms or extends the landscape representation in the main text. Li's and Yang's commentaries, as paratext, by providing a changed structure, changed the perception of the original text. By adeptly manipulating various types

of information, they organise relationships among diverse natural and man-made features, align documents from various periods and genres, and incorporate personal experiences and judgments about historical events occurring in specific locations. In this way, landscapes are no longer just visible scenery but also encompass events, as well as the emotions and thoughts they provoke.

Making the Unseen into the Spectacular: Commentary as a Medium for Sensory-Related Personal Experience

Attention to emotions and thoughts also influences the way Li Daoyuan and Yang Xuanzhi "see" the landscape. Ways of viewing in the commentaries are divided into two patterns: "seen" (*jian* 見) and "spectacular" (*guan* 觀 "observed"). These respectively refer to visible objects and extraordinary scenes that evoke emotions. For example, Li Daoyuan introduces the story of Bu Zhi 步騭 in the late Eastern Han in the section on "Yin River":

> During the Jian'an era, Wu dispatched Bu Zhi to serve as the governor of Jiaozhou. Upon Bu Zhi's arrival in Nanhai, as he saw (*jian*) the topography and observed (*guan*) the previous administrative centre of Yu Tuo, he found the land nestled between mountains and seas, vast and expansive, with towering mulberry trees on the heights and fertile fields below. The woods and hills teemed with various birds and beasts. What wonders and creatures did not exist in such a place? In the sea, there were strange fish and turtles, rare alligators, and an abundance of extraordinary and unique items—manifold in variety, too numerous to be counted.
>
> 建安中，吳遣步騭爲交州。騭到南海，見土地形勢，觀尉佗舊治處，負山帶海，博敞渺目，高則桑土，下則沃衍，林麓鳥獸，於何不有。海怪魚鼈，黿鼉鮮鰐，珍怪異物，千種萬類，不可勝記。(*Shuijing zhu*, 3099)

In this passage, "seeing" and "observing" point to distinct phenomena. The former refers to the restricted and objective thing that Bu Zhi "saw", while the latter emphasises the more evocative and exuberant subject experience of "observation". In this way, Li incorporates both objective scenes and thrilling wonders into Bu Zhi's vision, revealing not only the landscape within Bu's sight but also his emotional response to it. Bu's exhilarated reaction to Nanhai illustrates that the landscape does not merely exist objectively but has evolved through generations of human observation, discovery, perception, and even utilisation. Therefore, after emphasising that he "observed the previous administrative centre of Yu Tuo," Li presents a strange and abundant place beyond the imagination of people who lived in central China. In other words, a spectacular place.

Yang Xuanzhi also uses "see" and "observe" to refer to separate actions of people. Again, seeing is the reflection of an objective fact, while observation incorporates emotions. For instance:

> In the second month of the third year of the Yongxi era, a fire broke out and engulfed the pagoda. The emperor ascended the Lingyun Terrace to look at the fire and sent Baoju, the Prince of Nanyang and Concurrent Prime Minister Zhangsun Zhi to lead one thousand troops from the Yulin army to go to the fire. All were sad, shedding tears as they went. The fire had originated at dawn on the eighth level and quickly spread. At that time, thunderstorms shrouded the sky, mixed with hail and snow. People from all walks of life gathered to witness (*guan*, "observe") the fire, and the sounds of sorrow and lamentation reverberated through the capital. At that time, there were three monks who rushed into the fire and died.......In the middle of the fifth month of the same year, someone from Donglai reported that he had seen (*jian*) the pagoda in the middle of the sea, shining brightly as if renewed. The people on the sea all saw it (*jian*). Suddenly, a mist arose, and the temple disappeared.
>
> 永熙三年二月，浮圖爲火所燒，帝登淩雲臺望火，遣南陽王寶炬、錄尚書長孫稚將羽林一千就赴火所，莫不悲惜，垂淚而去。火初從第八級中平旦大發，當時雷雨晦冥，雜下霰雪，百姓道俗，咸來觀火，悲哀之聲，振動京邑。時有三比丘，赴火而死。.......其年五月中，有人從東萊郡來云：「見浮圖於海中，光明照耀，儼然如新，海上之民，咸皆見之。俄然霧起，浮圖遂隱。」(*Records*, 33)

Here, "observing" refers to a spectacular disaster in the capital while "seeing" implies an emotionally detached report from other regions months later. When the fire arose, people in the capital flocked to observe it. The action of "observing" connects to the emperor's anxious command, the soldiers' fearless commitment to the mission, and the martyrdom of the three monks. These intensely evocative and impactful actions stirred all the ordinary people in the capital, and they responded to the grand destruction with tears, their cries echoing throughout the city. A reciprocal and resonant cycle formed between humans and the environment, making what is "observed" in the text a doubly spectacular scene.

In contrast, three months later, people who lived far from the capital reported "seeing" a vision of the temple's phantom. People who lived in Donglai county had not witnessed the tragedy of Yongning temple. Nor had they felt the pain of watching people crying, working to save and in the end dying for the place. This distance is reflected in the report when they "see" the temple floating on the sea. The temple suddenly appears, is then covered and finally disappears behind the fog. The narrative has little emotion, merely reflecting a fact. In both places, Yang speaks of "all" 咸 the people, but the experiences of "all" who witnessed the fire in Luoyang and "all" who saw the phantom in Donglai were different in terms of time, space, and emotions.

Li Daoyuan and Yang Xuanzhi also use commentary to emphasise that some unseen places are spectacular and worth knowing about. For example, Li mentions a secret place connected with his childhood in his account of "Juyang River":

> Formerly, during the Taihe era, my late father served as an official in Shandong. I was a child so I followed him to the eastern province. In the scorching heat of summer, feeling fatigued at my residence, I invited friends with a zither, indulging in merriment all day long. We sought fragrant bamboo shoots amidst the bamboo waves. The light forest swayed with the billows. With harmonious music playing on the zither, joyous feelings would flow freely. It is in such moments that I found my refuge, truly a place of comfort. In the east, there is a small lake abundant with fresh bamboo shoots, not just fragrant like herbaceous peonies, but indeed pure, like leaping fish.
>
> 先公以太和中作鎮海岱，余總角之年，侍節東州。至若炎夏火流，閒居倦想，提琴命友，嬉娛永日，桂筍尋波，輕林委浪，琴歌既洽，歡情亦暢，是焉棲寄，實可憑衿。小東有一湖，佳饒鮮筍，匪直芳齊芍藥，寔亦潔竝飛鱗。(*Shuijing zhu*, 2206–2207)

The previous discussion of the visible and the spectacular demonstrates that the term "spectacular" involves the observer's emotions. Through Li Daoyuan's childhood experience of playing by the water, we can see how private lyricism and sensory elements make landscapes spectacular. By describing sound, fragrance, and tactile sensations, Li resurfaces his childhood memories for readers. Yu-yu Cheng's study of Xie Lingyun's 謝靈運 (385–433) rhapsodies and poems observes that Xie began to explore the natural landscape through human agency (Cheng 2007, 193–219). She further posits that Xie's self-commentary on "Rhapsody on the Mountain Dwelling" 山居賦 served as inspiration for Li's commentary (Cheng 2017, 129). Despite Xie's evident influence, Li's commentary introduces two innovative elements: an emphasis on an obscure location in a gazetteer and a shift in focus from explicating the author's intent to describing the landscape itself. On one hand, while Xie experiences places by human action within a specific literary context, Li diverges significantly by incorporating his personal experience to introduce an unknown location in an "all-under heaven" geographical treatise. Li's decision not only introduces a specific locale but also establishes a unique connection between a localised site and the broader topography of the entire realm. On the other hand, unlike Xie's self-commentary, which aims to elucidate the motive behind his main text, Li's commentary concentrates on highlighting the distinctive features of the places. In other words, Xie's self-commentary helps readers understand the author better, while Li's commentary helps readers understand the landscape better.

By doing so, a previously unknown water area becomes worthy of inclusion in geographical writing, creating a shared and joyful spectacle for readers. This location is invisible to the readers because it is not a grand sight; rather, it is Li Daoyuan's personal spot. Even if someone could follow the directions precisely, they could never return to that moment of Li Daoyuan's carefree days. It belongs to the past, born from memory, making it impossible to revisit or replicate. Therefore, in this description, Li integrates personal memories and emotions into the commentary, distinguishing them from the public river courses in the main text. Through the classification of information between main text and commentary, he transforms the invisible into the spectacular.

Where Li relates a private experience, in Yang's case, a scene is unseen because of the power of the imperial court. Again, in his account of Yongning Temple, Yang recalls the memory of ascending the tower:

> After the decoration [of Yongning temple] was completed, Emperor Ming and the empress dowager climbed it [the temple] together, viewing the palace as if in the palm of their hands, overlooking the capital as if their own home. Because they could see into the palace, they forbade anyone from ascending. [Note:] Xuanzhi once ascended it together with Hu Xiaoshi, the Intendant of Henan. It overlooked the clouds and rain – truly a view not to be doubted!
>
> 裝飾畢功，明帝與太后共登之。視宮內如掌中，臨京師若家庭，以其目見宮中，禁人不聽升之。衒之嘗與河南尹胡孝世共登之，下臨雲雨，信哉不虛！

Yang creates a parallel between the observation of the royal family and his own experience. Yang, once an official of the Northern Wei, left the capital when the Northern Wei was divided into the Eastern Wei in Ye City and the Western Wei in Chang'an. Serving the Eastern Wei court, Yang returned to Luoyang in the course of his duties thirteen years later. There, witnessing the ruins in Luoyang, Yang decided to recreate the grand landscape in this work, taking monasteries sponsored by the royal family and aristocratic as representative icons, based on his memory.

As one of the most spectacular temples in Luoyang, Yongning Temple was established with the support of the Northern Wei imperial family. Yang concludes his description of its ornate details with the passage cited here, when Emperor Ming and the empress dowager climbed the tower. The grand ceremony showcased the towering splendour of Yongning Temple, while a royal edict simultaneously annexed this temple into the imperial domain. For ordinary people, the temple is spectacular yet forbidden. By inserting his own experience of ascending the tower in the annotation, Yang validates the visibility and spectacular landscape for readers. By using the same word, "overlooking" 臨, Yang parallelises two experiences, but slightly alters what is observed. In the main text, the royal family overlooks the capital. They enjoy the power to control everything and forbid the lower class to share their pleasure. However, when Yang ascends the tower, he overlooks cloud and rain. What he sees is the height of the temple. What he feels is freedom and boundlessness. Yang even uses the word "truly" 信 to confirm the message in the main text. The term *xin* 信 is often used in geographical writings to verify that what the authors saw on the ground corresponded to what they had read in the books. In this passage, Yang uses this term to confirm a scene that in fact has slightly changed from its original implication. It shows Yang's witty manipulation of his roles as author and commentator of geographical writings. This manipulation demonstrates the division between the public and the private, royal and minor officials, and the powerful and the lyrical. Regarding the transcendence of time and space, while the main text describes the peak of the Northern Wei through its grand temple, highlighting imperial control, Yang's commentary, by offering a contemporary witness to desolation and decay, reflects on the experience of the past to create temporal depth.

Therefore, Yang Xuanzhi helped many of his readers to overcome restrictions. Whether these readers were restricted by imperial decrees or were unable to visit Yongning Temple due to geographical and temporal differences, they had the opportunity to confirm the landscape documented in the literature, which was exclusive to the royal family, through Yang's personal experiences in the commentary. The ultimate destruction of Yongning Temple by fire made the spectacular view from the temple's summit a thing of the past. Thus, Yang Xuanzhi's ascent did not just break through authority but also transcended time and space.

Li's and Yang's commentaries complement their main texts' public voice with descriptions of personal sensations and emotions. By distinguishing between the public and private, objective knowledge and subjective experience, Li and Yang strategically place distinct events and experiences in the annotations. This enables mutual supplementation when the main text and the annotation are read together, enriching the landscape, and allows readers to conceptualise the information in the commentaries more effectively. By using sensory, personal experiences, the authors turn something that authority or time has rendered unseen into something spectacular. This includes the eye-opening experience of exotic wonders, such as strange flowers and mythical beasts, or the heartbreaking shock when a centre of faith inexplicably suffers a calamity. These descriptions demonstrate how commentators integrate two ways of viewing, allowing them to interact with and thereby enrich the meaning of landscape.

Keywords: Making the Spectacular Visible

A primary function of annotation is to explain terms in a text, and commentary undoubtedly serves this purpose in both *Shuijing zhu* and the *Records*. When the annotators explain terms in the original text, they draw readers' attention to them. However, Li's and Yang's annotations are distinct in also representing the landscape, making the spectacular visible. They classify and organise quotations and personal experiences, allowing readers to better understand the differences in information and the focal points of the narrative. By capturing, emphasising, and highlighting certain terms in the main text through explanation, Li and Yang transform the general effect of annotations into an approach to describing the landscape.

In other words, Li's and Yang's commentaries use keywords for both explanation and representation. Sometimes, the landscapes the commentaries highlight, the viewpoints they take, and the points they emphasise differ from those in the main text, creating contrasts or even contradictions. This showcases the commentators' subjectivity and agency in representing landscapes, introducing variations and tensions between the descriptions in the main text and annotations, making the portrayal of landscapes more subtle.

By highlighting keywords, commentators distinguish "information" from "noise", extracting content that proved helpful for their documentary explanations and landscape representations (Chen et al.

2021, xxiv–xxviii). In Li's and Yang's works, they comment on certain words in the original text; therefore, they help the readers capture their emphasis and the main points in the text. The distinction between noise and information separates the location, the event, and the figure from all other things to be presented to the readers. For example, when depicting the Yellow River, Li Daoyuan focuses on Longmen:

> Heading south from Longmen Gate, the Fen River merges with it [the Yellow River] flowing from the east. [Note:] This is where, in ancient times, Great Yu guided the river, piled stones, and excavated Liangshan. It is the same place as the *Classic of Waterways* here calls Longmen. The *Record of the Wei Land* states that to the north of Liangshan, there is Longmen Mountain, which was excavated by Great Yu. It connects to the mouth of the Mengjin River, is eighty paces wide, with traces chiselled into the rock, the remnants of his achievement still enduring. Temples and shrines line the bank, with three stone steles in front. Two of the steles have illegible and faded inscriptions, impossible to decipher, while one stele was erected in the Taihe era.
>
> 又南出龍門口，汾水從東來註之。昔者，大禹導河積石，疏決梁山，謂斯處也。即《經》所謂龍門矣。《魏土地記》曰：梁山北有龍門山，大禹所鑿，通孟津河口，廣八十步，巖際鐫跡，遺功尚存。岸上竝有廟祠，祠前有石碑三所，二碑文字紊滅，不可復識，一碑是太和中立。(*Shuijing zhu*, 288).

Originally, the main text states, "Heading south from Longmen Gate, the Fen River merges with it flowing from the east," aiming to explain the direction of the Fen River and its later convergence with the Yellow River. However, when Li Daoyuan highlights "Longmen", he introduces the history, records from previous documents, and the landscape description, shifting the original text's focus from the direction of the river to an introduction to the site. By choosing to explain Longmen's meaning, relating it to the surrounding landscape visible at the time, Li decides that Longmen will be the main point of the original text. That is, Li proposes that the essence of the main text lies not in the Yellow River's direction (as the main text suggests), nor in the relationship between the Yellow River and Fen River, nor in the explanation of water-related terms like "coming" and "confluence". Instead, it focuses on the origin of Longmen and the scenery at this moment. To relate his commentary to the scenery, Li, constrained by the limited information in the original text, needed to employ more techniques to guide the discussion towards the stone steles on the bank of the river. Thus, he expands the main text's term "Longmen" to include the Longmen landscape, then focuses on the stone tablets on the ground and their eroded inscriptions. By focusing on Longmen, Li Daoyuan transforms the term from a spot that the Yellow River passes to a place that is full of stories, human actions, and memorial structures. Li's annotation describes the local scenery, providing an opportunity for readers to visualise the three stone steles. This suggests that the "visibility" of the scenery is in the commentators' hands. They determine the focus of the original text, distinguishing between noise and information, and determining the extent and detail of the landscape––in other words, what it includes or excludes.

In the example of Yang Xuanzhi, we can further observe the annotator's ability to extract keywords from the main text according to his own writing purposes. The following example illustrates how the intention of the original text and that of the commentary can be opposed. When Yang comments on a detail, he draws readers' attention to a particular point in the original text, making the readers believe that term is the fact they should not miss:

> To the south of Nai Forest, there is a stone monument erected by Emperor Ming of Wei. It is titled "The Monument of Miaoci." The High Ancestor [of the Northern Wei] built a Miaoci Hall to the north of the monument. [Note:] During the Yong'an reign, Emperor Zhuang was holding a mounted archery competition in Hualin Park. All the officials came to read the inscriptions, and they suspected that the character *miao* was erroneous. Erudite of the National University Li Tonggui said, 'Emperor Wen of Wei was talented, renowned as one of the Three Ancestors. (The famed writers) Liu Zhen and Wang Can were his top aides. We don't know the meaning, but we cannot declare it erroneous.' At that time, Xuanzhi (i.e., I) was a court attendant, so I immediately explained, 'They thatched the roof of the temple with mugwort, thus the term "sprout (*miao*) temple." What error is there?' Everyone praised my explanation, acknowledging that it had captured the intended meaning.
>
> 柰林南有石碑一所，魏明帝所立也。題云苗茨之碑。高祖於碑北作苗茨堂。永安中，莊帝馬射於華林園，百官皆來讀碑，疑苗字誤。國子博士李同軌曰：「魏文英才，世稱三祖。公幹、仲宣，爲其羽翼。但未知本意如何，不得言誤也。」衒之時爲奉朝請，因卽釋曰：「以蒿覆之，故言苗茨。何誤之有？」衆鹹稱善，以爲得其旨歸。(the *Records* 52–53)

When discussing "Jinglin Temple", Yang mentions a "Nai Forest", and his commentary includes the stele and the palace of Miaoci. The original text's focus is the stone stele, yet the commentary concentrates on a detail, finding a problem that is not apparent in the original. Yang thereby leads his readers to focus on the term in the main text instead of the stele and palace.

Of course, the main text also involves the two emperors who commissioned the construction of the stone tablets and palaces: the Emperor Wen of Cao Wei and the Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei.[8] Coincidentally, although the main text refers to Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei as the "High Ancestor", using his temple name, both emperors actually shared posthumous titles which included the word "Wen", which is the word meaning literary, and the debate about characters (*wen*) arises from this.

In the annotations, the focus is on whether the term "Miaoci" is used correctly. Yang highlights that Emperor Zhuang, the nephew of Emperor Xiaowen, led the courtiers in discussing the Miaoci Stele's origin, much as in many Confucian and literary gatherings historically led by emperors. This shifts the

[8] According to Zhou Zumou's 周祖謨 commentary, through comparison with other references in the *Shuijing zhu* and an understanding of the context, "Emperor Ming" of Wei mentioned here should be a mistake for Emperor Wen of Wei (Cao Pi). (*Records*, 53)

focus from emperors' achievements to the knowledge and competition among literati. Yang's annotation even elevates Emperor Zhuang. As a puppet of powerful generals, Emperor Zhuang does not deserve to be mentioned with Emperor Wen and Emperor Xiaowen, the founders of their respective empires. However, by highlighting the discussion, Yang celebrates not only Emperor Zhuang but also the group of literati who became the central figures in this setting.

Ultimately, the commentator emerges victorious. In this annotation, Yang Xuanzhi becomes a character in the historical scene. As both a commentator and a character in the story, he speaks about the inscriptions. His remarks, quoted in the annotation, along with the audience praising his explanation, become the conclusion to this account of the inscriptions, demonstrating Yang Xuanzhi's scholarly expertise. This scholarly prowess, in turn, substantiates Yang's qualification as a commentator. The emphasis on this term turns the observable scenery into tangible knowledge and experience for the readers. In this way, the Miaoci Stele is not just a scene beside Jinglin Temple; it serves as a carrier of inscriptions and involves the use of words and phrases reflecting the dialectical scrutiny and interpretation of language and classics by literati throughout the ages. The term "Miaoci" also encapsulates a crucial moment witnessed by Yang Xuanzhi during a gathering of Emperor Zhuang with his courtiers, marking the significant occasion when Yang Xuanzhi's talent surpassed that of his peers. From Jinglin Temple, Nai Forest, and Miaoci Stele to the term "Miaoci", Yang Xuanzhi moves the focus by layers, capturing the deliberately interpreted, expanded, and supplemented keywords. This renders prominent within the main text the term "Miaoci" and the associated memories it refers to, not only forming a connection between the past and the present but also shaping how readers perceive the emphasis in the related accounts.

A comparison of the steles mentioned in Li's and Yang's commentaries clearly reveals that annotators provide information with their own emphasis and purposes in mind. Li Daoyuan describes the stone steles as material carriers of inscriptions rather than emphasising the inscriptions themselves. Among the three stone steles, two of the inscriptions have disappeared, and Li summarises the inscription on the surviving one only briefly, mentioning just the year of its erection. By contrast, Yang especially focuses on the language of the inscription. In doing so, he creates an arena for literati, allowing court officials to highlight their knowledge (or lack thereof) through attention to the origin and evolution of a single word. This served as a response to similar situations that happened many times in history: within the confines of the imperial court, led by the emperor, they engaged in literary reviews, comparing the merits and shortcomings among literati.

Li's and Yang's annotations show how annotators capture keywords, organise quotations from previous documents, and set up contexts and characters to engage with the concepts of spectacle, visibility, observability, and appearance. Annotators not only make the spectacular visible but also make the spectacular take on distinct dimensions. Through their annotation, Li and Yang transform people, events, and scenes they consider spectacular or noteworthy into the most prominent phrases and focal points within the text.

Conclusion

Imagine a totally different situation: Li Daoyuan might have composed an entirely new treatise on China's waterways, and Yang Xuanzhi could have integrated his experience into his book without self-commentary. Yet, both authors chose to employ commentary as a means to structure information, record personal experience, emphasise concepts within the geographical description, and ultimately, represent the landscape. Their choices not only enhance the readers' understanding of the main text but also underscore the potential of commentary, particular in the context of geographical writing. Li's and Yang's commentaries reveal a shift in focus for commentators, from merely explicating the main text to proposing alternative ways of experiencing the landscape. The role of commentary evolves from being a mere supplement to becoming a formidable counterpart to the main text.

The most distinctive feature of commentary becoming a competitor to the main text lies in the fact that Li's and Yang's commentaries both establish a descriptive structure that varies from the main text, adding nuance to the meaning of these places. Through the structure of commentary, Li and Yang offer an organised description of landscape, coherent citation of documents, and personal judgments. Ultimately, they reveal a cultural framework. Thus, rivers interact with one another, defining the landscapes along their banks. Similarly, temples transform into prisons, military camps, or scenes of disaster due to historical events. The personal perspectives supplied through annotations contribute to a more diversified valuation of these places.

A more diversified valuation of landscape involves how people perceive and observe it. As the definitions of natural and human-made features were continuously transforming, it reflects the way people view and respond to them. Two ways of viewing, *jian* and *guan*, demonstrate how commentators redefine visual perceptions. The definitions of vision contribute to the representations of landscape in the commentary that differ from those in the main text. By adding sensory experience and emotional expression, the commentary enables scenes unseen due to time or distance to appear vividly before the readers, becoming the spectacular. By capturing keywords from the main text, the commentary guides the reader's attention and influences how they understand and interpret the main text, making the spectacular become visible. In doing so, commentators skilfully employ the commentarial genre, creating a representation of the landscape that is not only closely intertwined with its competitor, namely landscape description in the main text, but also able to stand independently, complementing and defining its counterpart.

In the Chinese tradition, commentary represents a crucial category of document that serves different functions and achieves distinct effects across various genres, making it an indispensable tool for interpreting historical texts. In the case of medieval geographical commentary, we can observe how commentators such as Li Daoyuan and Yang Xuanzhi, while maintaining the traditional forms and employing shared techniques, transform their commentaries from functional to fictional. Instead of merely aiming for an efficient introduction of a place, their writings aspire to evoke sensory and emotional responses to the landscape. They distinguish themselves by utilising contrastive formats for the main text and annotations. In doing so, they create a convergence and dialogue between time and

space, individual and collective, private and official, knowledge and emotion, all within the same geographical location. This results in a broader and deeper geographical representation. Li Daoyuan's and Yang Xuanzhi's works highlight the more flexible and diverse functions and forms of commentaries during the medieval period. Their innovative commentaries allow people to reconsider the various possibilities of commentary in medieval China and the uniqueness of commentary on geographical writings, enriching the field of commentary studies.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Continuity in Zhangian Ontology

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In the shadow of the prolific Wei and Western Jin periods of Chinese philosophy, the Eastern Jin (*dongjin* 東晉, 317–420 CE) contributions of Neo-Daoist Zhang Zhan 張湛 (fl. 370 CE) are easily overlooked. Nevertheless, from his commentary on the Daoist classic *Liezi* 列子 emerges a compelling story of how the world works, and ontological continuity comes to the fore as a valuable topic for reconsideration by readers from early medieval China to the present day. This paper presents three distinct types of continuity that can be discerned from Zhang Zhan's comments on the metaphysically rich first chapter of the *Liezi*, “Heaven's Gifts” (*tianrui* 天瑞).

在中國哲學史上，魏晉時期的豐碩成果使東晉玄學家張湛的貢獻容易被忽視。然而，在他對道家經典《列子》的註釋中，可以看到一個引人入勝的世界觀故事。其中，本體論的連續性成為一個中國從中古早期至今一直值得重新思考的問題。本文從張湛對《列子．天瑞》篇的註釋中提煉出三種不同類型的連續性，並進行深入討論。

Keywords: Zhang Zhan, Liezi, Daoism, Neo-Daoism, Chinese metaphysics, thought

關鍵詞： 張湛，列子，道家，魏晉玄學，中國形上學，子

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Introduction

One of the few works of Chinese philosophy composed during the century of the Eastern Jin dynasty (*dongjin* 東晉, 317–420 CE) is the commentary by Zhang Zhan 張湛 (fl. 370 CE) on the Daoist classic *Liezi* 列子. Produced in the afterglow of a prolific Neo-Daoist (*xuanxue* 玄學) era sparked a century earlier by He Yan 何晏 and Wang Bi 王弼, the *Zhang Zhan Commentary* (*zhangzhanzhu* 張湛註, hereafter *ZZC*) not only accompanied the initial release of the *Liezi*, but also advanced the relatively metaphysical Neo-Daoist tradition it inherited. Furthermore, this insightful commentary joined an *Yijing* 易經 commentary by Han Kangbo 韓康伯 and a pair of works by Ge Hong 葛洪 to help offset this period's well-known Buddhist expansion under Kumārajīva, Sengzhao 僧肇, and others.

ZZC uniquely approaches issues of ontological continuity, and its novelty derives in part from the text it expounds. A compilation of documents from various periods, the *Liezi* manages to tell a compelling story about the world, not just developing ideas found in other Daoist classics, but also introducing elements all its own. Described by the renowned scholar A. C. Graham as "the most important Taoist document after the *Tao-te-ching* [*daodejing* 道德經] and the *Chuangtzŭ* [*zhuangzi* 莊子],"[1] Daoism's "third great document" (1990, xiii), as he calls it, emerged late enough to make it "the only one of the three books whose author would actually be thinking of himself as a philosophical Taoist" (ibid., 1). Regardless of the benefit it may have derived from these two other classics, the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, and even later Neo-Daoist and Buddhist literature, the *Liezi* distinctively advances Chinese and Daoist thinking, particularly in the metaphysics of its first chapter, "Heaven's Gifts" (*tianrui* 天瑞).[2] Thomas Michael thus highlights this chapter's "fairly sophisticated presentation" of cosmogony (2011, 108), and June Won Seo declares that its "proposition that contradictory conditions exist in dichotomy may be the most invaluable contribution of the *Liezi* to the methodology of the ontological discourse in early China" (2015, 456).

Like Wang Bi with the *Daodejing* and Guo Xiang 郭象 with the *Zhuangzi*, Zhang Zhan leverages his source text to promote a distinctly Neo-Daoist interpretation of the world for readers extending from early medieval China to the present day.[3] Of the many contributions made by the *Liezi*'s inaugural

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[1] This quotation (1990, 1) refers only to seven of the eight chapters of the *Liezi*, as Graham at this earlier point had not yet come to accept the authenticity of the *yangzhu* 楊朱 chapter. Much remains unknown about the number and dates of the *Liezi*'s authors and editors.

[2] For his part, Zhang Zhan describes the *Liezi* as "much the same as the *Laozi* (道德經) and the *Zhuangzi*, belonging to a citation genre, and especially similar to the *Zhuangzi* (大歸同於老莊，屬辭引類，特與莊子相似)," also claiming that "frequently it and the Buddhist scriptures are comparable (往往與佛經相參)" (Xiao 1990, 6). In this paper, all citations of *ZZC* are from this text and will generally be cited simply with a page number; all English translations of this text are my own. Chow Ta-hsing 周大興 notably disputes Zhang Zhan's claim of the *Liezi*'s similarity to Buddhism (2017, 84-90). Despite belonging to the Daoist canon, the *Liezi* says little about such concepts as non-effort (*wuwei* 無為) and the five phases (*wuxing* 五行).

[3] Although Seo may be correct that "using of the terms that caused cumbersome arguments such as *wu* (non-being), *you* (being) or *wanwu* (myriad things) has been deliberately avoided in the *Liezi*" (2015, 456), the *Liezi* does occasionally broach such topics, and *ZZC*, for its part, not only frequently cites Wang Bi, Guo Xiang, and other Neo-Daoists of the previous era, but also poses familiar Neo-Daoist questions such as "Since somethingness and nothingness aren't produced of each other, and the principle is as such, from what are things produced? (故有無之不相生，理既然矣，則有何由生?)" (17), answering that "there is nothing from which heaven and earth are

commentary *ZZC*, some of the most interesting concern ontological continuity, especially that transcending lifespans. Through hundreds of comments spanning the *Liezi*'s eight chapters but particularly concentrated in "Heaven's Gifts", a novel Zhangian ontology emerges, and although issues of identity and persistence unsurprisingly appear *vis-à-vis* the physical and non-physical aspects of objects, they somewhat surprisingly surface in contexts transcending existence as well. A distinctly Daoist form of reincarnation underpins Zhangian ontology such that one conceivably encounters a perpetual cycle of iterations, waning reversions into non-existence followed by waxing reversions into existence.[4] Three distinct kinds of continuity focus the attention of the following study. The first is intra-iterative continuity, that exhibited throughout a single iteration. The second is inter-iterative continuity, that exceeding the boundaries of existence and non-existence. The final is trans-iterative continuity, that which links consecutive iterations like the beads of a necklace.

Admittedly, modern sensibilities may judge Zhangian ontological claims fanciful—more like astrology than astronomy—and deserving critical treatment, if any. Such a third-person approach to *ZZC* would allow one to maintain a safe distance from its claims while profitably examining its arguments and their connections to both the *Liezi* and their common tradition. That, however, is not the approach adopted in this paper. Instead, on the dual assumptions that the merits of a conceptual framework derive mostly from its capacity to agreeably sort experience and that *ZZC* adequately does so,[5] this paper purposes to faithfully articulate the scheme underpinning Zhangian thinking. For this reason, the default voice driving argumentation throughout this paper is that of *ZZC* itself, or more precisely, that of a *ZZC* adherent. At the very least, consistency with this paradigm is attempted, and although far more textual support could be presented for many of the points made in this exposition, it is believed that the most substantial have been selected.

Intra-Iterative Continuity

From its inception to its termination, a thing maintains a degree of sameness. The persisting sameness of non-existing things is arguably a thornier issue than that of existing things and is best considered in

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produced; they are produced self-naturally (天地無所從生而自然生)" (17).

[4] Chow Ta-hsing cautions against the tendency to identify the *ZZC* position with Buddhist reincarnation, stating of a comment on the *yangzhu* chapter that "I hold that the phrasing of 'life is really temporary coming, and death is yet again temporarily going' in this chapter actually still doesn't allow one to discern traces of having received Buddhist influence (筆者認爲，本章之中「生實暫來，死復暫往」的說法，其實仍然看不出受佛家影響的痕跡)" (2017, 88), adding that "the words here 'the exchange of life and death is not commencing and annihilation' is only the traditional Daoist thesis regarding the perspective on transforming things (the transforming of all *qi*) that 'the reciprocation of existence and loss is the continuous transformation of *qi*-forms' (這裏的「生死變化，未始絕滅」之說，只是傳統道家主張「存亡往復，形氣轉續」的物化（一氣之化）觀點)" (88) because "it lacks the religious background of Buddhist karma reincarnation and incurring recompense for good and evil, and instead derives from the main idea of the *Liezi* and the *Zhuangzi* about the self-natural transformation of things that is 'perpetual termination and commencement without grasping any clue' (其中並無佛家因果輪迴、善惡招報的宗教背景，而是回歸《列子》與《莊子》書中自然物化的「反覆終始，不知端倪」的宗旨)" (89).

[5] Admittedly, the eclectic nature of the *Liezi* source text complicates Zhang Zhan's attempt to forge coherence, and the *ZZC* worldview is not easily discerned from those worldviews expounded.

the context of trans-iterative continuity, but the lifelong sameness of an actual entity is also no simple matter, especially when both its physical and non-physical properties are in view. The sense in which something undergoing change maintains coherence is a perennial metaphysical concern, yet four factors seem to account for this sameness, three of which belong wholly to the familiar realm of heaven and earth (*tiandi* 天地) and one of which does not.

This division of realms into the familiar and the unfamiliar, ours and the other, should be recognised at the outset as ontologically fundamental. From its opening lines, "Heaven's Gifts" itself declares:

> There are the born and the Unborn, the changing and the Unchanging. The Unborn can give birth to the born, and the Unchanging can change the changing. (Graham 1990, 17)
>
> 有生不生，有化不化。不生者能生生，不化者能化化。(1)

Chow accordingly refers to "two different types of existence (兩種不同的存在)" (2017, 30), and Seo indicates that "the theoretical grounds explored in the beginning section outline an ontological schema based in the distinction between the transcendental and the present realms, as well as the ontological conditions that determine each realm" (2015, 454), further indicating that "the ontological theory in the *Liezi* is built on the notion that present beings and the transcendental being are subject to conspicuously distinct ontological conditions" (ibid., 456). In commenting on the *Liezi*, Seo uses the terms "transcendental being" and "transcendental entity" nearly fifty times in a dozen pages, corresponding with a second notable feature of the *Liezi* and *ZZC*, a reluctance to directly mention the *dao* 道 of Daoism. Michael too notes that throughout an "in-depth discussion of cosmogony that is anchored by and revolves around the notion of the pristine Dao,...the *Liezi* hardly mentions it," partly attributing this to "the text's recognition of the views of the *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi* concerning the idea that the Dao is beyond language and is something not accessible to human thought" (2011, 109–11). "*Liezi* really is talking about the pristine Dao," he notes, "but in a somewhat devious way because he does not use the term directly" (ibid., 110). Accordingly, only reluctantly will the ineffable be mentioned herein and, in the interest of preserving its otherness, most often simply as "the *other*."[6]

The first of the three worldly factors bringing continuity to the tangible and intangible aspects of each object of this realm is *qi* 氣. The myriad things (*wanwu* 萬物) of this domain are neither fully material nor fully non-material, but rather, each is a persisting amalgam of physicality and non-physicality.[7] A wholly material object is impossible:

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[6] That such reticence in mentioning the *dao* is a break from earlier Daoist tradition has also been noted by Michael: "The *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi* exerted a lot of effort in establishing this usage of their notion of the Dao in relation to cosmogony, where they often directly name the Dao" (2011, 109). The term "the *other*" derives from a *ZZC* citation of Neo-Daoist progenitor He Yan in which he refers to the unborn, unchanging *dao* as "distinct from things (*yiyuwu* 異於物)" (12). I have chosen to italicise rather than capitalise the *other* to indicate a non-standard use of this word while discouraging objectification.

[7] Although one may distinguish between the relatively material and non-material aspects of people and things, these distinctions do not readily map on to *qi*, which, despite consisting of relatively heavy and light varieties, resists such clear-cut distinctions.

What actuation is there without a form, what form is there without *qi*, and what *qi* is there without spirit?

何生之無形，何形之無氣，何氣之無靈？(59).

Each of the myriad things bears a form (*xing* 形) involving both actuation (*sheng* 生)[8] and *qi*, which is never exclusively material. The myriad things of this realm invariably bear such a mixture of *qi* from their inception to their dissolution:

Accumulation bringing about a form and dispersion constituting termination, this is the world's so-called lifespan; as such, an accumulation takes formation as its commencement and takes dispersion as its termination.

聚則成形，散則為終，此世之所謂終始也。然則聚者以形實為始，以離散為終。(55)

Any accumulated form, presumably even that of a creature awaiting birth or a corpse awaiting dissolution, ranks among the myriad things and necessarily consists of not just that which occupies three-dimensional space—bricks and bark and bones—but also of an element which does not.

For intelligent beings, this merger of the physical and non-physical seems relatively intuitive. My thoughts and emotions are both non-spatial and uniquely mine. My childhood memories somehow belong to me, and resentment and anticipation may accompany one throughout life much as shoes and feet do. Nevertheless, inanimate objects likewise share this persisting non-physical component:

The spiritual *qi* of humans is not distinct from that of the multitude of actuated things; [it is only that] roles are discrete, so appearances are not identical.

人之神氣，與眾生不殊，所適者異，故形貌不一。(66)

A harmony of relatively unsubstantial, clear heavenly *qi* and relatively substantial, murky earthly *qi* accompanies all actuated beings until dissolution, when each kind returns to its source:

What is this 'heaven and earth'? It is simply a natural apportionment between the unsubstantial and the substantial, between the clear and the murky.

天地何耶，直虛實清濁之自分判者耳。(23)

The heavenly portion returns to heaven, and the earthly portion returns to earth; each returns to its source.

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[8] The frequent choice in this paper to translate *sheng* 生 with variations of the verb "actuate" rather than forms of "birth" or "life" stems from *ZZC*'s broad application of this term to all formed things, including inanimate objects and, presumably, fetuses and corpses, which have not been born in the first case and are not alive in the second. Where this translation seems too forced, more conventional terms are chosen.

天分歸天，地分歸地，各反其本。(58)

The terminal stop on the waning journey is invariably nothingness. From the moment of inception, existents are reverting to the non-existence from which they emerged.

That which has formed is already diminishing from the moment it is called formed, and that which has actuated is already latently dying from the moment it is called actuated.

成者方自謂成而已虧矣，生者方自謂生潛已死矣。(84)

A persisting object's *qi* endures "myriad forms and myriad changes (*wanxing wanhua* 萬形萬化),"[9] yet while on any individual assignment, it provides to its host a degree of sameness.

In addition to persisting *qi*, a second factor present in the world of objects that likewise bestows a measure of continuity is the manipulation of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽. Although the respiration-like contractions and expansions of *yinyang* 陰陽 also effect change, without them the universe would consist only of a nondescript *qi* that Graham translates as "confusion,"[10] much as in the cosmological beginning:

Yinyang hadn't yet drawn distinctions, thus the so-called confusion [of the next sentence (of the *Liezi*)]; on account of distinguishing by *yinyang*, itemized things bear forms.

陰陽未判，即[下句]所謂渾淪也。陰陽既判，則品物流形也。(19)

The delineating effects of *yinyang* are undoubtedly most noticeable in the empirical arena, yet the intangible aspects of a thing—for example the discrete desires of an intelligent being or the mere "something more" of an inanimate object—likewise yield to the sorting processes of *yinyang*. In light of the previously asked rhetorical question, "What *qi* is there without spirit? 何氣之無靈" (59), how could it be otherwise?

The mind and wisdom, a form and anatomy, these are one body of *yinyang*, one amassing of *qi*.

心智形骸，陰陽之一體，偏積之一氣。(59)

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[9] This phrase with its immediately preceding content more literally reads, "The changing of all *qi* is that which adapts to ten thousand forms. Ten thousand forms and ten thousand changes (一氣之變，所適萬形。萬形萬化)" (46).

[10] "Breath, shape and substance were complete, but things were not yet separated from each other; hence the name 'Confusion.' 'Confusion' means that the myriad things were confounded and not yet separated from each other" (Graham 1990, 19), "氣、形、實具而未相離，故曰渾淪。渾淪者，言萬物相渾淪而未相離也" (16).

Both terrestrial and celestial *qi* comply with the movements of *yin* and *yang*, with the result that each body making up this universe preserves a measure of each, a portion of relatively non-empirical mind and wisdom (*xinzhi* 心智) with a portion of eminently physical form and anatomy (*xinghai* 形骸).

Human life provides a ready demonstration of such bipartite collocation:

> As *yinyang* brings *qi* from all places into convergence, *qi* finds harmony, and harmonious *qi* constitutes human life. On this basis is human life established.
>
> 陰陽氣遍交會而氣和，氣和而為人生；人生則有所倚而立也。(23)

Humans have long viewed themselves as more than their bones and skin. Through the blending of *qi*, human life also consists of love and prudence, fears and regrets. None of these human experiences is confined to a moment, and any continuity they exhibit derives largely from the undulations of *yin* and *yang*.

Interestingly, *yinyang* consolidates while dividing. Divisions produce spatiotemporal unity, a sameness extending through space and time. Actuated things thus take on "discrete forms (*kuairanzhixing* 塊然之形)" (5):

> A body fits a space, making extraneous matter a boundary.
>
> 夫體適於一方者，造餘塗則閡矣。(27)

As long as *yin* and *yang* maintain an object's discrete form, it persists. The physicality and non-physicality of a *qi* body cohere until dissolution returns *qi* to its source:

> When it departs from form and returns to its source, reverting to its true abode, I am no longer a thing.
>
> 及其離形歸根，則反其真宅，我無物焉。(59)

In harmony, then, *qi* and *yinyang* guarantee the myriad things a degree of sameness on their lifelong slide back to nothingness. This realm still comprises one other factor that helps to ensure persistent sameness.

The nature of natures (*xing* 性) is not obvious, yet they assuredly correspond to persisting sameness as well. In fact, a nature is one of "the three (*sanzhe* 三者)" (20), together with *qi* and *form*, which is present at inception. Although "Heaven's Gifts" refers to them as "*qi*, form, and quality (*qi*, *xing*, *zhi* 氣、形、質)" (16),

> "Quality" refers to nature. As objects, whether square or round, hard or soft, still or moving, deep or shallow, each has a nature.
>
> 質者，性也。既為物矣，則方員、剛柔、靜躁、沈浮，各有性。(19)

These natures and the various properties they instantiate, whether material or non-material, accompany an object throughout its course. They are irreversible.

> Each of the actuated entities has a nature, and each nature has its capacity… Everything has its essential place, and this cannot be resisted.
>
> 生各有性，性各有所宜者也… 皆有素分，不可逆也。(27)

Due to the permanence of its nature, a chair remains a chair throughout its existence. Although one may reasonably question the point at which the dismantling of a chair negates its "chairness," the guiding principle is that today's chair and tomorrow's chair are the same chair by virtue of an incorrigible nature that one must simply accept.

This realm then seems to consist of three primary factors granting each of its members a degree of sameness during its iteration here: *qi*, *yinyang*, and a nature. Both their tangible and intangible components hold together under these three influences. Nevertheless, one other contributor would seem to play a hand as well, but because this fourth factor cannot be said to belong to this realm, it is best discussed in the context of trans-iterative sameness.

Given the firm bifurcation of realms, one might anticipate an equally firm aversion to its violation. One would expect no doorways connecting the two domains, no prospect of entry or exit, and no hope of cycling in and out. Rather, one anticipates an impervious wall or chasm preventing any sort of continuity; everything should be confined to one side or the other. One might even expect the magnification of birth and death, or perhaps actuation and termination, as terminal points of embarkation and debarkation. This, however, is not how things are.

Inter-Iterative Continuity

Notwithstanding the stark ontological contrast between realms, two transition events are frequent occurrences. The first is the shift from existence to non-existence and the other is the shift from non-existence to existence. The first terminates a waning iteration and initiates a waxing iteration, while the second terminates a waxing iteration and initiates a waning iteration. A transition event—a crossing from realm to realm—is thus simultaneously an end and a beginning. As previously mentioned, "an accumulation takes formation as its commencement and takes dispersion as its termination (聚者以形實為始，以離散為終)" (55), yet correspondingly,

> A dispersion takes desolation as its commencement and takes the realisation of a form as its termination.
>
> 散者以虛漠為始，以形實為終。(55)

Analogous to a lifespan that begins with accumulation and ends with disintegration is a span that begins with disintegration and ends with accumulation. What exactly a dispersion is like no one can know, nor can one ascertain the obscure phase it launches, yet it seems that transition points are both endings and beginnings. Dispersion-induced desolation marks a new start, and the realisation of a form spells doom no less than does dispersion.

The first of the two transition events to be discussed is the culmination of a waning iteration. Bidding farewell to existence and activity, one reverts to long-awaited nothingness and rest. With Zhang Zhan, we may note two passages in which the *Zhuangzi* effectively makes this point:

> The *Zhuangzi* states, "death is rest."
>
> 莊子曰: 死為休息也。(73)
>
> The *Zhuangzi* states, "The universe has encumbered me with a form, burdened me with life, disregarded me with old age, and rested me with death."
>
> 莊子曰: 大塊載我以形，勞我以生，佚我以老，息我以死耳。(74)

Death initiates a period of respite. Crossing from an existence iteration into a non-existence iteration affords precious rest:

> Only after death can one rest fully prostrate.
>
> 唯死而後休息寢伏之。(76)

Notwithstanding the inscrutability of any experience "after death (*sierhou* 死而後)," one could hardly imagine looking forward to dissolution were there not some relief beyond it. Accordingly, Graham summarises two of the arguments in "Heaven's Gifts" as "life is perpetual toil, and death is a well-earned rest" and "perhaps we shall enjoy death more than life" (1990, 15), pointing to an inter-iterative continuity in which an experiencer of life becomes an experiencer of death.

The other transition event is the culmination of a waxing iteration. Bidding farewell to nothingness and cherished rest, one reverts to engagement with an active world.[11] Through a formation event, something that had belonged to the nondescript other realm "steps into (*sheyu* 涉於)" this variegated one.

> Even that as large as heaven and earth or as numerous as the multitude of items, upon stepping into the portion of actuation and upon involvement with the realm of action and use, throughout alterations of existence and loss complies with what naturally occurs.
>
> 雖天地之大，群品之眾，涉於有生之分，關於動用之域者，存亡變化，自然之符。(1)

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[11] Hence, "suffering a form, one can't help but nurture it, and incurring actuation, one can't help but indulge it (遭形則不能不養，遇生則不能不歡)" (36).

> Stepping into the portion of activity, there is no acquiring momentary nothingness.
>
> 涉於有動之分者，不得暫無也。(5)

Not only do all things "exit non-existence to enter existence, as well as disperse from existence to return to non-existence (出無入有，散有反無),"[12] but in freely stepping across boundaries, they diminish—rather than magnify—the significance of transition events:

> All stepping into shifting soil entails that I actuate and that another perishes; taken to the extreme, the principle is that since there is no actuation, neither is there perishing.
>
> 俱涉變化之塗，則予生而彼死，推之至極之域，則理既無生，亦又無死也。(36)

Immunity to death and birth is the ultimate boon to continuity.

In reality, the two transition points—stepping into and out of existence—erect no barrier to continuity.

> Due to the perpetual undergoing of termination and commencement, in principle there is actually neither termination nor commencement.
>
> 故迭相與為終始，而理實無終無始者也。(55).

To whatever the *Liezi*'s central figure Master Lie was speaking when he told his student Baifeng "you were never born and will never die (未嘗生未嘗死也),"[13] the two transition events are quite irrelevant. Something is born and dies, but it is not Baifeng. Notwithstanding the confinement of *qi*, *yinyang*, and natures to a single realm, inter-iterative movement would seem to pose no challenge.

Trans-Iterative Continuity

"Perhaps we shall be reborn elsewhere," Graham presents as a message of "Heaven's Gifts" (1990, 15), highlighting the prospect of continuity across multiple iterations. Something currently waning toward non-existence may eventually reemerge to do so once again, albeit in a different form. Just as one's life is temporary, so is one's death:

> The sages knew that life is not eternal existence, and that death is not eternal annihilation.

[12] In full, this passage reads as follows: "Exiting non-existence to enter existence, dispersing from existence to return to non-existence, there is nothing that does not derive from this (出無入有，散有反無，靡不由之也)" (47).

[13] The full statement in Graham reads, "Only he and I know that you were never born and will never die (唯予與彼知而未嘗生未嘗死也)" (1990, 21; Xiao 1990, 35).

聖人知生不常存，死不永滅。(46)

The authoritative knowers of the past apparently indicated that a life phase not only precedes a death phase but also succeeds it.[14] Death eventually yields to life. Just as the day begins with waking up and ends with falling asleep, the night begins with falling asleep and ends with waking up. One does little more than consecutively sleep and wake, understandably minimising the significance of transition events. Although the *Liezi* states that regarding issues of life and death "only the sage knows whom to side with and whom to reject (唯聖人知所與，知所去)" (Graham 1990, 26; Xiao 1990, 73), it is nonetheless advisable to view death as sleep, rather than as permanent loss:

> The one taking life and death as sleep, side with this one. The one bereaved and forgetting return, reject this one.
>
> 以生死為寢寐者，與之。溺喪忘歸者，去之。(15)

The *ZZC* promise of linking iterations one after another—continuity across iterations—effectively accomplishes the "reconciliation with death" which Graham encapsulates as "the theme of this chapter" (1990, 15). Despite the difficulty in imagining the intra-iterative continuity that a formless sleeper might preserve, the *other* provides some parallels, both within and across iterations.

The *other* depicted in the "Heaven's Gifts" source text plausibly bears some resemblance to one's own trans-iterative throughline:

> The Unborn is by our side yet alone,
>
> The Unchanging goes forth and returns.
>
> Going forth and returning, its successions are endless;
>
> By our side and alone, its Way is boundless. (Graham 1990, 18)
>
> 不生者疑獨，不化者往復。往復，其際不可終；疑獨，其道不可窮。(1)

This eternal one that, according to the "Heaven's Gifts" source text, "goes on and on, something which almost exists (綿綿若存)" (Graham 1990, 18; Xiao 1990, 1), is both "by our side" and, as Graham may have understood it, in close enough relationship with something to merit the translation "its Way" for *qidao* 其道.[15] Whether one follows Graham's translation—as below—or not, it is no less clear that something endures the churning of *qi*:

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[14] Chow Ta-hsing considers such *ZZC* passages that diminish death as assuming a collective viewpoint according to which death is not eternal annihilation for the totality of *qi*. Nevertheless, it is unclear why a sage would be required to confirm such an obvious truth, and it also seems unlikely that the first half was intended collectively. A mid-sentence shift of perspective from the individual to the collective also seems unlikely and would likewise not require a sage's confirmation. See Chow 2017, 86-88.

[15] Michael likely articulates a more appropriate reading of the term *dao* in this text: "This usage of the term *dao* is very interesting, because

> Through unceasing successions and *qi*-form transformations, its Way never ends.
>
> 代謝無間，形氣轉續，其道不終。(8)

Both collectively and individually, the myriad things are always changing, yet something is not.

The *other* remains so near at hand that it pervades all things, even one's own body. Like the thread-like element linking the beads of one's consecutive iterations, it too latently accompanies, and even occupies, each of the myriad things:

> The actuator of the actuated is unactuated, and the former of the formed is unformed. Therefore, it is able to actuate and form the myriad things, within my body immutable.
>
> 夫生生物者不生，形形物者無形。故能生形萬物，於我體無變。(56)

"Within my body," the *other* resembles that latent interlocutor of Master Lie that was both present in his *qi*-based student Baifeng and incapable of birth or death.

The nature of the relationship between oneself and one's temporary *qi*-based assignment is opaque. An accumulation of *qi* is neither a person nor a possession, but an expression of the *other*. Were a body a person, dispersion would equal annihilation and cause for bereavement, which it does not. As for the prospects of possessing a body,

> If a body belongs to you, then beauty, ugliness, death, and life are under your control. That *qi* has presently accumulated and actuated is something you could not forbid. The dispersion of *qi* and perishing is also something that you cannot prevent. This makes it clear that it is entrusted, forms of itself, and is not your possession.
>
> 若身是汝有，則美惡死生，當制之由汝。今氣聚而生，汝不能禁也。氣散而死，汝不能止也。明其委結而自成，非汝之有也。(94)

One neither *is* a *qi* form nor *owns* a *qi* form. A *qi* form merely expresses the *other*; the myriad things are expressions, like sentences or dance moves. Using the more literal term "ten thousand" in referring to the myriad things, Rudolf Wagner thus articulates a Neo-Daoist perspective that the *other*

> "shines forth" and "comes about" in and through the manifold specifications of the ten thousand kinds of entities. In a sense, it "depends" on the specificity of the specific entities in order to be as their "negative" "That-by-which"; without the specific entities, it "would have nothing" in which to "shine forth" and "come about." (Wagner 2003, 61)

---

it is in some ways just like a typical *dao* pertaining to some particular way or method, like the *dao* of the king or the *dao* of warfare. In other words, in the single instance in Liezi's cosmogony where he uses the term *dao*, there is nothing particularly cosmic about it in relation to the notion of the source from which all things come" (2011, 109).

Just as a musical expression or a verbal expression alters while cohering as a single expression, an object through its expression gains the last of the four previously discussed sources of intra-iterative continuity. Nonetheless, that latent associate which neither *is* nor *owns* a temporary form persists unobserved.

Not only is the nature of the relationship between bodies and anything transcending them obscure, but so is the practical outworking of this affiliation. Objects are constantly coming and going, yet something immutable accompanies them.

> Actuation and change mutually derive, and existence and perishing go in turn; the sequence is uninterrupted.[16]
>
> 生化相因，存亡復往，理無間也。(8)
>
> Who can fathom the alternations of birth and death? That which is born here perhaps dies there, or that which dies there perhaps is born here.... Despite myriad forms and changes, the immutable persists and returns to immutability.
>
> 夫生死變化，胡可測哉? 生於此者，或死於彼。死於彼者，或生於此。...... 萬形萬化，而不化者存歸於不化。(46–47)

It is easy to see that for anything besides the fleeting forms of the myriad things, birth and death are as negligible as previously asserted. In the entirety of both this realm and the other one, only *qi*-based forms come and go. Only *qi*-based forms are locked into a single iteration.

Under these circumstances, not only are the gaining and losing of existence rather negligible, but objects themselves have no great value, as legendary ruler Shun seemingly desired to reveal:

> Shun wanted to show that all existing things without exception are as nothing.
>
> 舜欲現群有皆同於無。(94)

Seeing that iterations are of so little significance, one should remain unsurprised when noting with Zhang Zhan the distance that both Laozi 老子 and Zhuangzi 莊子 felt from these temporary bodies:

> Laozi states, "that which causes me great harm is that I have a body." Zhuangzi states, "One hundred bones and six organs, which one do I take as intimate?"
>
> 老子曰：「吾所以有大患，為吾有身」；莊子曰：「百骸六藏，吾誰與為親？」(100)

---

[16] The choice to translate *li* 理 as "sequence" here derives from the temporal context.

Waking from sleep again and again to discover one's temporary partner, as well as bidding farewell to body after body while fading into nothingness, could be expected to blunt the novelty of births, deaths, and forms.

Unfortunately, however, trans-iterative continuity does not yield trans-iterative knowledge:

> The living do not know death, yet the dead likewise do not know life. Since at its formation, it doesn't know its termination, at its termination, how could it know its formation?
>
> 生之不知死，猶死之不知生。故當其成也，莫知其毀。及其毀也，亦何知其成？(90)

Neither the living nor the dead know what awaits. The living do not know of the demise that will cap off their waning reversion and the dead do not know of the formation that will close out their waxing reversion, but presumably they also lack knowledge of past iterations. It is the sages who assure us of that which we could not otherwise know: death is as fleeting as life.

Trans-iterative continuity, like inter-iterative continuity, rests on the authority of others. Still, there is no great cause for doubt. No one knows better than the sages. While persisting within any single iteration, all things maintain an affinity with that which exceeds all iterations:

> The mind and the great void alike are empty; fleshly forms and the myriad things all possess them.
>
> 方寸與大虛齊空，形骸與萬物俱有也。(100)

The source of one's trans-iterative continuity is opaque, but it could not be otherwise. Such metaphysical postulates are necessarily non-empirical. What it is that has survived its past forms and will eventually survive its present form is hard to say, yet remains worthy of contemplation:

> Evidence of this coming and going and proof of this formation and destruction, I am it; since sentiment is neither that nor this, where does a heart reside?
>
> 此去來之見驗，成敗之明徵，而我皆即之，情無彼此，何處容其心乎？(90)

What one is surely exceeds what one can know.

Conclusion

In Daoist folklore, Master Lie was said to have ridden the wind, and in the fourth-century publication of the *Liezi* he can be heard reporting,

> I drifted with the wind East or West, like a leaf from a tree or a dry husk, and never knew whether it was the wind that rode me or I that rode the wind. (Graham 1990, 37)
>
> 隨風東西，猶木葉幹殼，竟不知風乘我邪？我乘風乎？(127)

For some, such a claim may bolster the story that "Heaven's Gifts" tells about the world, while others will undoubtedly see it as further evidence of irrelevance. For them, even the *Liezi*'s erudite first commentator Zhang Zhan would seem incapable of usefully contributing to contemporary metaphysical discussion. His Eastern Jin Chinese posits about continuity and other matters seem charming, but groundless.

Nevertheless, the human desire to make sense of a fundamentally senseless universe is irreproachable. Modern people and premodern people alike have needed to sort through the data available to them in order to figure out what's what and to navigate the world day after day. Metaphysical speculation is unavoidable, and we simply need to posit more than our observations can concretely reveal.

Neo-Daoist Zhang Zhan operated with a whole set of presuppositions that the world will never know. Nevertheless, some aspects of his thinking peek through. There are two realms. The *dao* (or the *other*) belongs to one realm and nearly everything else inhabits the other. The objects of this realm persist for a time, but they are not the main show. The main show is whatever may survive their constant cycling into and out of existence. Furthermore, continuity—within, between, and across iterations—is both possible and plausible.

These are all things that one may believe. Zhang Zhan may have believed them. Even if he didn't, theories are little more than attempts to make sense of the universe, and seen in this light, a relatively overlooked commentary from a relatively overlooked era can offer an important service. It can provide handles by which an otherwise unintelligible world can be grasped.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Between Cooperation and Competition. A Comparative Reading of Eastern Han Commentaries to the *Liji* 禮記

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This study explores the "conspicuous disconnect" between different commentarial writings from the Eastern Han dynasty. Using Zheng Xuan and Lu Zhi as examples, it advances a comparative reading, noting the relative lack of engagement with other commentators' opinions in commentaries to the classics despite evidence of intellectual exchange. One key reason for this is that such discourses seem to have been consciously excluded from commentaries, giving rise to a discursive sphere reflecting the author's personal readings. Instead, more direct engagements with contemporaneous scholarly opinions took place in separate "opinion texts" rather than in commentaries. This study thus urges scholars to reconstruct the intellectual discourses surrounding the respective textual traditions and the genesis of commentaries, treating these as an integral part of them. It is crucial to shed light on the historical and personal influences that motivated commentary-writing and informed the way the practice was conducted. Finally, this study reflects on the phenomenon of the "survival of the fittest commentary", observing that some contemporaneous commentarial writings enjoyed greater popularity than others. This effectively suppressed the other commentaries, which has meant those surviving commentaries came to be regarded as paradigms of textual scholarship, despite the fact that in their own time they represented but singular, and sometimes outlying, voices.

本研究聚焦於東漢時期不同經註之間的“脫節”現象。以鄭玄和盧植為例，本文通過比較分析發現，儘管當時存在思想互動的證據，但在他們的註釋中卻很少回應或討論同時期其他註釋家的觀點。同輩學者的觀點似乎被有意回避，這可能是為了在註釋中為個人見解的表達創造獨立的空間。值得註意的是，當時學術上的互動更多出現在非經註性質的作品而並非直接呈現於註釋文本之中。基於這一觀察，本文主張結合經註生成的歷史背景和學術脈絡，重新建構圍繞這一特定文本傳統的思想辯論。

Keywords: Zheng Xuan, *Liji*, commentaries to Chinese classics, intellectual discourse, Han China, thought

關鍵詞： 鄭玄，禮記，經典註釋，思想話語，東漢，子

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Introduction[1]

Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200 CE) and Lu Zhi 盧植 (?–192) are among the most prominent intellectuals of the late Eastern Han era (Dong Han 東漢, 25–220). Having studied under the renowned scholar Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166), they prolifically authored commentaries on the canonical classics and beyond. Both individuals, alongside many other scholars of their time, had the potential to shape classical scholarship—Lu Zhi perhaps even more so than Zheng Xuan, given his employment in the prestigious Eastern Pavilion office (Dongguan 東觀). And yet, while the lion's share of Zheng Xuan's commentaries to the three *Mores* (*Li* 禮) classics[2] has survived to this day, of Lu Zhi's commentaries only fragments remain, which are collected in the *Compilation of Lost Writings from the Jade Envelope Mountain Studio* (*Yuhan shanfang ji yishu* 玉函山房輯佚書) by Ma Guohan 馬國翰 (1794–1857).[3] While Zheng Xuan is hailed as an emblematic classical scholar and commentator of the late Eastern Han period and praised for having "tied shut the bag of the great canons" (*kuonang dadian* 括囊大典),[4] before long Lu Zhi apparently no longer enjoyed a reputation on par with Zheng. This was despite his writings not being structurally dissimilar from, let alone "inferior", to Zheng's. Why?

Seeing that historiography suggests Zheng and Lu were in close contact, the present study will advance a comparative reading of their commentaries to the *Notes on Mores* (*Liji* 禮記) as examples. It will endeavour to carve out indicators of intellectual exchange, asking whether this consisted in cooperation, in different conclusions drawn based on a shared intellectual view of passages in the classics, in "conspicuous disconnects", or in straight-up disagreement. It will be noted that Zheng Xuan's contemporaries almost never feature in his writings explicitly, and that this is similarly the case for other Eastern Han commentaries: it is generally the case that ongoing intellectual discourses are not explicitly reflected therein. Possibly for this reason, Zheng's connections to other scholars have hitherto not received much attention.[5] In the case of Zheng and Lu, this may result from their writing the commentaries at roughly the same time. In other cases, the "conspicuous disconnect" found in Eastern Han

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[1] The research for this study was conducted as part of the International Doctorate Programme "Philology. Practices of Premodern Cultures, Global Perspectives, and Future Concepts" (IDK Philologie) based at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU) and funded by the Elite Network of Bavaria. A part of it was carried out during a research visit to the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy of Academia Sinica in Taipei, supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). I am indebted to Jennifer Reynolds-Strange (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Markus Samuel Haselbeck (KU Leuven) for proofreading my draft, as well as to the anonymous reviewers and the Young Scholar Award jury of the EACS for their comments. I am honoured and humbled to have received the award.

[2] The *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮), the *Ceremonial Rites* (*Yili* 儀禮), and the *Notes on Mores* (*Liji* 禮記). The translation of *li* 禮 differs due to the connotations of this concept in the different texts. It ranges from concrete ritual procedures to a philosophical notion, which is commonly translated as "ritual propriety", but might be best rendered as "morality" when it comes to the philosophical concept, which applies beyond the sphere of ritual.

[3] *Yuhan shanfang* 902a–911b.

[4] *Houhanshu* 35: 1213.

[5] For some notable exceptions published in recent years, see Hua Zhe 2018 (esp. chapter 2) and Morgan 2022. Some scholars have focussed on comparing different commentarial writings but without trying to reconstruct the discourse of which they were part. For instance, see the comparison between Zheng Xuan and Wang Su 王肅 (195–256) by Shi Yingyong 2007.

commentaries may speculatively be explained by historical and personal factors pertaining to the practical dimension of commentary-writing—to distinguish oneself as a scholar, amongst other sociopolitical factors. The present study will thus argue that commentaries were used to highlight the readings of their author, whereas what I will call "opinion texts"[6] served to weigh into broader discourses and engage with other opinions.

In research on Eastern Han scholarship of the classics, but especially the *Mores* classics, Zheng Xuan's readings have long tended to dominate, as many other commentarial voices from the same period had gradually been drowned out. It has thus become increasingly tempting to consider his commentaries to be paramount, and moreover, as representative of how Eastern Han scholars read the classics. On the other hand, a personal essentialism has prevailed: Qing 清 (1644–1911) scholars praised Zheng's genius,[7] and contemporary Chinese-language research has perpetuated this tendency to depict him as towering over the intellectual life of the Eastern Han.[8] In some respects, Zheng seems to have propounded opinions that were different from his peers, as if actively trying to set himself apart from his predecessors. But on many other levels, his writings were not the only ones of their kind, and the attention he has received is mainly warranted by his having been favoured in the later transmission process of his work, rather than by any particular individual excellence.[9] Yet, as this study sets out to demonstrate, Zheng Xuan's commentaries should not be conceived of in isolation from contemporaneous intellectual and societal discourses. There are indicators that Zheng Xuan cooperated with others such as Lu Zhi as he wrote his commentaries, though, for reasons I will discuss, this is only very rarely explicitly noted in his writings. In order to better understand the trajectory of commentarial writings, it is thus necessary to further situate their commentators in the intellectual milieu within which they operated and into which they contributed.

Mentorship and Cooperation: The Relationship between Zheng Xuan and Lu Zhi

The main historiographical source on the Eastern Han era, the *Book of Latter Han* (*Houhanshu* 後漢書) by Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445), mentions that Zheng Xuan made his way into the private school of

[6] For a list and discussion of writings by Zheng, see chapter 2 in Liu Qiuzeng 2003.

[7] Compare Pi Xirui 2021: 278–384.

[8] This is not only a question of individual scholars' appraisals but may also be inferred from the sheer amount of research dedicated to Zheng compared to other Eastern Han scholars. Notable publications include but are not limited to Wang Zhenmin 1999, Yang Tianyu 2007, and Honey 2021. These examples, from three different decades, also illustrate how consistently Zheng Xuan has received attention in research.

[9] Only more recently have some scholars started to discuss the issue of Zheng's reputation being constructed by tradition. While acknowledging Zheng's great influence, Shi Yingyong even sums up his impression of Zheng's commentaries as "a heap of trivia" (*suoxie douding* 瑣屑飣餖), Shi Yingyong 2007: 122. Andrew Plaks likewise labels Zheng's commentary to the *Rites of Zhou* as "disappointing" to "all but the most pedantic philologists" in chapter 5 of Elman and Kern 2010: 156.

Ma Rong "owing to" (*yin* 因) Lu Zhi.[10] This may mean that Lu recommended that Zheng join Ma Rong to further his studies, or, more likely, that he persuaded Ma to take Zheng on as a disciple. It thus seems that the two were connected by a bond of friendship or mentorship between peers (Lu being the more advanced in his studies) and had acquired a comparable education. Judging by their death dates, they may also have been of roughly the same age, though it is unknown when Lu Zhi was born.[11]

Ma Rong's attention extended to a wide range of texts, as did those of Zheng and Lu, though each is known to have been particularly interested in a certain set of writings and to have exhibited greater talent in certain areas.[12] Zheng is said to have left an impression on Ma on account of his capabilities in calculations based on "apocryphal" writings[13] and diagrams (*chenwei* 讖緯 or, in this case, *tuwei* 圖緯).[14] Nowadays, he is best known for having positioned the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮) and the *Mores* canon (*San Li* 三禮) in general at the centre of his worldview,[15] culminating in the expression "The *Mores* canon consists in Zheng scholarship" (*Li shi Zhengxue* 禮是鄭學) by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648).[16] The nowadays less familiar Lu Zhi, on the other hand, is depicted in the *Book of Latter Han* with a greater emphasis on his political career. Regarding his textual work, his time at the Eastern Pavilion is foregrounded, during which he and Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132–ca. 192) worked on emendations to commentarial notes on the classics, as well as the historiographical *Notes on the Han from the Eastern Pavilion* (*Dongguan Hanji* 東觀漢記).[17] Still, what has been referred to as their synoptic interests (or "comprehensive scholarship", *tongxue* 通學)[18] may present a major unifying factor in the profiles of both Zheng and Lu.

Given their supposedly close relationship and their similar formation as "generalist" text scholars and commentators, is it to be assumed that Zheng and Lu exchanged on their readings of the classics or cooperated in their commentary-writing? A longstanding claim concerning Zheng Xuan's commentary to the *Notes on Mores* as well as other classics has been that he relied on editions by Ma Rong and

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[10] *Houhanshu* 35: 1207.

[11] Zheng Xuan was born in 127 CE and died at the age of 73 in 200. Lu Zhi had died four years prior in 196. If he reached a similar life expectancy, we may assume that he was of similar age to Zheng Xuan, or slightly older, which is suggested by Zheng's appellation as discussed below.

[12] These three scholars lived during the so-called "Old Text/New Text controversy". What editions of the Classics were used, was thus another potential point of contention. Whereas Ma Rong is widely considered an Old Text adherent, Zheng Xuan and Lu Zhi seem to have pursued synoptic interests. For more on this topic, see Connery 1998; Nylan 1994; Ess 1999; Kern 2001: 78–80.

[13] For a general introduction to *chenwei* writings, compare Giacinto 2013. For insights into Zheng's work with *chenwei*, compare Ikeda 2004, Lü Kai 1982.

[14] *Houhanshu* 35: 1207.

[15] Luo Jianwei 2015: 26.

[16] *Liji* 40: 1354a.

[17] *Houhanshu* 64: 2117.

[18] Compare Shi Yingyong 2007, Zhao Houjun 2008.

Lu Zhi.[19] He is, however, said to have redacted them into editions of his own, then authoring a commentary to the resulting, combined version (*yin Lu Ma zhi ben er jia jiaozheng* 因盧馬之本而加校正).[20] This idea was perpetuated early on by Lu Deming 陸德明 (556–ca. 627)[21] and later by Pi Xirui 皮錫瑞 (1850–1908).[22] Edition philology might thus constitute one field where scholarly exchange (including clashes) between Zheng and Lu occurred, though this is now difficult to assess. It is furthermore possible that Zheng and Lu worked in direct cooperation when they wrote their commentaries to the *Notes on Mores*. This may be inferred from a passage in the *Records of Zheng* (*Zhengzhi* 鄭志), which depicts discussions between Zheng Xuan and his disciples in the style of the *Assembled Discussions* (*Lunyu* 論語; commonly known as the *Analects*). This compilation, by Zheng's successor Zheng Xiaotong 鄭小同 (ca. 194–ca. 258), contains an exchange between Zheng Xuan and one of his disciples, Gui Mo 炅模 (?–?), who references a quotation from the *Odes* (*Shi* 詩) in the *Notes on Dykes* (*Fangji* 坊記) chapter of the *Notes on Mores* and enquires about the corresponding commentary by Zheng:

> 【炅模問曰：】「坊記引燕燕，詩註以爲夫人定姜之詩。【何則？】」
>
> 【鄭玄】答炅模云：「為記註時，就盧君先師亦然。後乃得毛公傳記，古書儀又且然。記註已行，不復改之。」[23]
>
> [Gui Mo asked:] "The *Fangji* cites the ode *Yanyan*. The *zhu* commentary considers it an ode by consort Ding Jiang. [Why?]"
>
> [Zheng Xuan] answered Gui Mo as follows: "At the time I noted down the *zhu* commentary to the *Notes*, I approached my former master Lord Lu, who also saw it that way. Afterwards I obtained this [ascription to Zhuang Jiang] from the notes transmitted by Duke Mao, and it was the same as in the ancient *Documents* and *Ceremonies*. Given that [my] *zhu* commentary to the *Notes* was already in circulation, it was not re-edited."

Gui Mo questions Zheng's identification of the person the ode is supposed to be about with Ding Jiang 定姜 (?–?), the consort of Duke Ding 定 of Wei 衛 (?–577 BCE). Meanwhile, in his *jian* 箋 commentary to the *Mao Odes*, he instead follows the commentary ascribed to Mao Heng 毛亨 (?–?) in identifying the ode with Zhuang Jiang 莊姜 (?–690 BCE), the consort of Duke Zhuang 莊 of Wei

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[19] Habberstad and Liu 2014: 296.

[20] Pi Xirui 2021: 345. The different editions are not extant.

[21] In his overview of *Commentators and Transmitters of the Three Mores Classics* (*San Li zhujie chuanshuren* 三禮註解傳述人), Lu Deming states that "Zheng Xuan also relied on editions by Lu and Ma and commented them" (*Zheng Xuan yi yi Lu Ma zhi ben er zhu yan* 鄭玄亦依盧馬之本而註焉). *Wuyingdian Liji* 1: 2b.

[22] Pi Xirui 2021: 345.

[23] *Zhengzhi* 11b. For the passage in the *Notes on Dykes*, see *Liji* 51: 1641b. For the full ode, see *Maoshi* 2: 142b–146a.

(?–735 BCE).[24] Zheng responds by admitting he had been yet to discover the Mao interpretation when he authored the comment in question. Upon arriving at the passage, he had asked Lu Zhi about it, and the pair had agreed on Ding Jiang. Only later did Zheng come across the Mao interpretation and change his mind, but by that point his commentary was already in circulation, and so was not changed retroactively.

Zheng's and Lu's commentarial remarks on the passage in question match verbatim. The *Notes on Dykes* say, "The *Odes* state: 'Thinking of the former lord, should [make one] accommodate his widow'" (*Shi yun: "Xianjun zhi si, yi chu guaren".* 詩云：『先君之思，以畜寡人。』).[25] The two commentators' explanations are identical:

> 此衛夫人定姜之詩也。定姜無子，立庶子衎，是爲獻公。畜，孝也。獻公無禮於頃 [sic] 姜，定姜作詩，言獻公當思先君定公，以孝於寡人。[26]
>
> This ode is about consort Ding Jiang of Wei. Ding Jiang had no son, so the bastard son Kan was established; this was Duke Xian. "To accommodate (*chu*)" is "to treat with filial devotion (*xiao*)". Duke Xian had no mores towards Ding Jiang, so Ding Jiang composed this ode to say that Duke Xian should think of Duke Ding, the former lord, and for this reason be more filially devoted to his widow.

This is not the only passage where the two commentaries overlap in their phrasing or are even worded identically. Duplications like these may also stem from misattributions by later scholars. But on the informational level, the question of whether the ode is to be attributed to Ding Jiang or Zhuang Jiang is one of relatively few where it is evident that there was in fact an intellectual exchange between the two commentators going on. Furthermore, there is only one time Zheng Xuan explicitly quotes Lu Zhi in his commentary to the *Notes on Mores*. In the *Tan Gong II* (*Tan Gong xia* 檀弓下) chapter, referring to the sentence "Zixian reported [the execution of] his assignment to Duke Mu" (*Zixian yi zhiming yu Mu gong* 子顯以致命於穆公), Zheng says:

> 使者，公子縶也。盧氏云 ：「古者名字相配，顯當作韅。」[27]
>
> As for the envoy, that is prince Zhi. Mister Lu states: "The ancients' names and styles corresponded to one another. The character *xian* 顯 should be written as *xian* 韅".

Zheng thus invokes Lu Zhi to explain why the envoy is referred to as Zixian 子顯 [韅] (by his style name) and not as prince Zhi 縶 (by his personal name). The sentence has been incorporated into the collection of fragments of Lu's commentary in *Compilation of Lost Writings from the Jade Envelope*

[24] *Maoshi* 2: 142b.

[25] *Liji* 51: 1641b.

[26] For Zheng Xuan, see *Liji* 51: 1641b. I have adjusted the punctuation here. For Lu Zhi, see *Yuhan shanfang* 911b. In quotations from *Compilation of Lost Writings from the Jade Envelope Mountain Studio*, the punctuation is mine throughout this study.

[27] *Liji* 9: 307b.

Mountain Studio from Zheng's commentary.[28] Maybe Lu had spoken to this effect in a personal conversation, or perhaps Zheng had seen Lu's commentary or a draft thereof. Why does Zheng Xuan choose to explicitly reference Lu's words in this instance? We may recognise in this explicit reference an appeal to Lu Zhi as an authoritative source, invoked to provide if not evidence, then at least credible additional information on the text. Yet, this is the only instance where this happens throughout the *Notes on Mores* commentary. So why are there only so few traces of scholarly cooperation to be found?

The timeline when the commentaries were drawn up may be decisive in this case. After parting with Ma Rong towards or after the end of Ma's life in 166,[29] Zheng Xuan completed his education and moved back to his home region of Gaomi 高密 in present-day Shandong province where he himself took to teaching.[30] He is often speculated to have authored the bulk of his commentaries later on, during his prohibition from office (170–184), having "retreated from public life to dedicate himself to the task of the classics" (*yin xiu jingye* 隱修經業).[31] As the passage from the *Records of Zheng* above reveals, the *Notes on Mores* seems to have been one of the earlier commentaries written by Zheng, potentially during this time.

Lu Zhi, according to the *Book of Latter Han*, had finished a first, no longer extant, commentary, the *Word Explanations to the 'Notes on Mores'* (*Liji jiegu* 禮記解詁), around 175.[32] He is then described as having worked as governor of Lujiang 廬江 in modern-day Anhui province for roughly a year. Thereafter, he was appointed to the Eastern Pavilion to "check the notes and transmissions of the *Five Classics* by the palace writers,[33] as well as emend and continue the *Notes on the Han*" (*jiao zhongshu Wujing jizhuan, buxu Hanji* 校中書五經記傳，補續漢記).[34] This could have been when he set to work on his *zhu* commentary to the *Notes on Mores*, but he was removed from this office before long due to the emperor's dissatisfaction with the team's slow progress.[35] Seeing as the next part of Lu's biography in the *Book of Latter Han* sets in at around 178, we may assume that the removal took place before that date. For the rest of the account, Lu is portrayed as being deeply involved with politics, rather than working on texts.[36] We may thus speculatively infer that at least a part of his commentarial work on the *Notes on Mores* occurred between 176 and 177/178, but the *Book of Latter Han* does not tell us if or when it was finished.[37]

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[28] See the annotation in *Yuhan shanfang* 904b.

[29] According to *Houhanshu*, Ma was still alive when Zheng left, *Houhanshu* 35: 1207. Wang Chenglüe 2004: 51 claims that Ma died that same year.

[30] *Houhanshu* 35: 1207.

[31] *Houhanshu* 35: 1207.

[32] *Houhanshu* 64: 2117. For a study on this commentary, see Ikeda 1990.

[33] Translation according to Bielenstein 2008: 49.

[34] *Houhanshu* 64: 2117.

[35] *Houhanshu* 64: 2117.

[36] *Houhanshu* 64: 2117–2120.

[37] The *Suishu jingjizhi* 隋書經籍志 (*Treatise on Classical Materials in the Book of Sui*) lists an edition of the *Liji* by Lu Zhi in ten fascicles

It could hence be possible that Zheng Xuan and Lu Zhi worked on their commentaries concurrently or that Zheng's was finished some time before that of Lu. It is thus conceivable that they did not have access to each other's complete writings yet each were acquainted with the other's ideas about the *Notes on Mores*.

The "Conspicuous Disconnect" between Commentaries

Scrutiny of the timeline sketched out above may help explain why a phenomenon which might be called a "conspicuous disconnect" occurs between the two commentaries. In such cases, the commentaries by Zheng and Lu do not even engage with each other through agreement or disagreement, let alone explicitly reference one another. There is either no multilateral discourse going on, or the interplay between different commentarial writings is so implicit as to render it mute, at least on the surface level. Given the vigour of debate surrounding the classics at the time, this counterintuitive phenomenon warrants interrogation.

A particularly striking example may be found in the discrepancy between Zheng's and Lu's remarks on the authorship of the *Royal Regulations* (*Wangzhi* 王制) chapter. In his *Refutations of the 'Divergent Meanings of the Five Classics'* (*Bo 'Wujing yiyi'* 駁五經異義), Zheng Xuan explains that "The *Rites of Zhou* are an arrangement by the Duke of Zhou, the *Royal Regulations* are what has been noted down by great worthies, successors of Confucius" (*Zhouli shi Zhougong zhi zhi, Wangzhi shi Kongzi zhihou daxian suo ji* 周禮是周公之製，王製[38]是孔子之後大賢所記).[39] Zheng Xuan thus ascribes the authorship role of the chapter to one or several successors in the line of Confucius (Kongzi 孔子, 551–479 BCE). This is ostensibly an attempt to explain why it depicts regulations different from the *Rites of Zhou*, which he ascribes to the Duke of Zhou (Zhou gong 周公, ?–? BCE). But Zheng remains silent on who the "great worthies" were and when the *Royal Regulations* were committed to writing. Lu Zhi's ascription, meanwhile, is much more precise. As he describes it, "the Filial Wen Emperor ordered all the erudites among the court academicians to compose these writings, the *Royal Regulations*" (*Han Xiao Wen Huangdi ling boshi zhusheng zuo ci Wangzhi zhi shu* 漢孝文皇帝令博士諸生作此王制之書).[40] *The Notes of the Scribes* (*Shiji* 史記, commonly known as the *Records of the Grand Historian*) likewise date the compilation of the *Royal Regulations* to the fourth month of the fourteenth year of the reign of Emperor Wen 文 of Han (r. 180–157 BCE), that is, the year

(*juan* 卷), which would be only half of the edition commented by Zheng Xuan (twenty *juan*). Lu's commentary may thus have been fragmentary at this point or complete but significantly shorter than Zheng Xuan's, but it is equally possible that it was never completed. *Suishu* 32: 922.

[38] Here, the variant of *zhi* 制 is used, apparently with no noteworthy conceptual difference.

[39] *Bo Wujing yiyi* shang 12.

[40] *Yuhan shanfang* 905a.

166 BCE, with Lu seemingly borrowing their phrasing.[41] If Zheng and Lu collaborated and their grounding in the classics was so similar, how could such a discrepancy in exactness be explained?

Perhaps Zheng Xuan was less interested in dwelling on the details here, as the point he is making in this instance serves mainly to establish an unambiguous hierarchy and expound his worldview: the *Rites of Zhou* were to him a direct representation of an enlightened past, and the *Royal Regulations* mere vestiges thereof. Meanwhile, unlike Zheng's remark in the separate text, Lu Zhi's clarification stems from his *zhu* commentary on the chapter itself. Lu was hence focussed on the *Royal Regulations* in and of themselves, and may therefore have seen greater value in adding context to clarify the text's origins. A difference surfaces here between what I might call "opinion texts" such as the *Refutations of the 'Divergent Meanings of the Five Classics'* on the one hand, and commentarial writings which are consciously and conspicuously attached to an important text to support its reading on the other. This difference is telling with regards to the purposes of commentaries as opposed to writings designed as standalone texts: opinion texts did pass comment on other text(s) but were not designed to accompany its reading. Rather, they weighed in on contemporary discourses surrounding the classics.[42]

Zheng Xuan especially made use of opinion texts to engage in debates with his contemporaries more directly. He picks up on the *Divergent Meanings of the Five Classics* (*Wujing yiyi* 五經異義) by Xu Shen 許慎 (58?–147?) in *Refuting the 'Divergent Meanings of the Five Classics'* mentioned above. Another instance of a contemporary opponent is He Xiu 何休 (129–182). Concerning the *Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) traditions, He Xiu wrote texts entitled *Mo's Defensibles of Gongyang* (*Gongyang Mo Shou* 公羊墨守), *The Devastating Diseases of Guliang* (*Guliang feiji* 穀梁廢疾), and *The Vital Points of Mister Zuo* (*Zuoshi gaohuang* 左氏膏肓).[43] Zheng Xuan again set to work on responding texts, the *Dispelling 'Mo's Defensibles'* (*Fa 'Mo Shou'* 發墨守), *Eradicating the 'Devastating Diseases'* (*Qi 'Feiji'* 起廢疾) and *Acupuncturing the 'Vital Points'* (*Zhen 'Gaohuang'* 鍼膏肓), wherein he critically responds to He's readings.[44] This confrontational move is said to have troubled He Xiu, leading him to

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[41] *Shiji* 28: 1382.

[42] What I call "opinion texts" for the purposes of this study, could be considered commentaries by definition, but do not closely adhere to the classics in structure and content, as well as pursuing different purposes from what I term "commentaries" (to simplify, commentaries explain the classics, whereas opinion texts weighed into contemporary debates surrounding the texts, supplying a general outlook on the texts or addressing other readings). Commentaries, then, are appended to the classics, often line by line, and were integrated into the manuscripts of the classics early on: Henderson 1991: 70 points to "the Latter Han at the earliest". Chen Yinke 1992: 110–114 places this arrangement style which he calls "combined edition of commentaries to the *masters*" (*heben zizhu* 合本子註) in the context of Buddhist writings, the influx of which began in the second and third centuries.

[43] *Houhanshu* 35: 1207–1208. Jack Dull translates the three titles as "The Kungyang, as strong as a city defended by Mo-tzu", "The incurable maladies of the Tso commentary", and "The debilities of the Ku-liang commentary", respectively. Dull 1966: 391. Benjamin Elman, discussing the *Guliang feiji* and the *Zuoshi gaohuang*, translates them as "Disabling Diseases of Ku-liang" and "Incurability of Master Tso". Elman 1990: 253.

[44] These writings are gathered in the late imperial collection *Wenjingtang congshu* 問經堂叢書 1, *Baibu congshu jicheng* 百部叢書集成 38.

cry out, "Kangcheng [i.e. Zheng Xuan] has entered my home, taken hold of my own spear, and used it to attack me!" (*Kangcheng ru wu shi, cao wu mao, yi fa wo hu* 康成入吾室，操吾矛，以伐我乎).[45]

As these examples illustrate, there must have been heated debates over the texts and their meanings underway in the Eastern Han era, but commentarial writings from this period were not the main medium wherein such discourses were carried out, at least not explicitly. This is not to say they did not *implicitly* reflect ongoing disputes. However, in his commentaries, Zheng only indirectly responds to scholarly discourses of his own era, apparently to render his writings more timeless and concise, but also to obliterate any influence of others and position himself as the foremost authority on the text by excluding other voices rather than engaging with them. Only in the case of the *Rites of Zhou* does he regularly cite two select commentators from earlier times, namely Zheng Zhong 鄭眾 (?–83 BCE) and Du Zichun 杜子春 (ca. 30 BCE–ca. 58 CE).

Another conspicuous disconnect is found in the absence of traces of Ma Rong's scholarship in the writings of both Zheng Xuan and Lu Zhi. Rather than conforming to the tradition established by their master, Zheng and Lu seem to have striven to assert their own voices within the scholarship of their era. There are even cases when Zheng Xuan explicitly contradicts his former teacher. This may not be surprising: after all, Ma Rong was only one of a number of intellectuals Zheng had sought out for his studies, which also included Diwu Yuanxian 第五元先 (?–?) and Zhang Gongzu 張恭祖 (?–?).[46] When Zheng took up the brush to write his commentaries, Ma was likely already deceased, and Zheng had himself become an esteemed scholar of transregional acclaim. There is thus no strong reason to suggest Zheng should cling to Ma's teachings. Still, the pervasive absence of Ma's name in Zheng Xuan's writings has even given rise to question over the credibility of a narrative found in the *New Discussions of Widespread Tales* (*Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語), according to which Ma was so jealous of Zheng's scholarly prowess he even sought to kill him after Zheng left his school.[47] It is more likely, however, that Ma and Zheng simply had different opinions and worldviews, leaving no reason for Zheng to include Ma in his writings. Alternatively, perhaps their viewpoints did not differ significantly enough to warrant engaging with Ma's readings.

This is exemplified when Ma Rong prefaces the *Monthly Ordinances* (*Yueling* 月令) chapter of the *Notes on Mores* by stating that "the *Monthly Ordinances* were composed by the Duke of Zhou" (*Yueling Zhou gong suo zuo* 月令周公所作).[48] The same remark is later echoed by Cai Yong,[49] as well as Wang Su 王肅 (ca. 195–256).[50] All three agree on the Duke of Zhou's authorship of the chapter, and use identical remarks to highlight this in their writings. Zheng Xuan, meanwhile, does not consider this to be the case. He goes so far as to take a direct jab at his own teacher by criticising that "nowadays,

[45] *Houhanshu* 35: 1208.

[46] *Houhanshu* 35: 1207.

[47] This claim is considered unfounded in Liu Qiuzeng 2003: 44–45.

[48] *Yuhan shanfang* 901a.

[49] *Yuhan shanfang* 914a.

[50] *Yuhan shanfang* 937a.

uncultured people state that the Duke of Zhou composed the *Monthly Ordinances*; but this [idea] was not widely circulating in antiquity" (*Jin suren jie yun Zhou gong zuo Yueling, wei tong yu gu* 今俗人皆云周公作月令，未通於古).[51] Clearly, Zheng's opinion—on a question so fundamental—differed from many of his contemporaries, including Ma Rong.

The issue of the lack of cross-referencing between Zheng and Lu in their commentaries, meanwhile, may reach a straightforward resolution if we assume that the writing process of the two texts overlapped in time. There simply may not yet have existed a finished commentary by the other to which to respond. Still, extant writings by the two scholars reveal some similarities and some differences, which, for purposes of this study, may be read together to gain a sense of how (in)compatible their readings were.

Compatible or Overlapping? Similar Commentaries

Similarities between the two authors can occur with respect to their wording, their ideas and interpretations, or both. In addition, there is significance in which parts of a given line from the *Notes on Mores* a commentator opts to address, and what, by inference, he appears to have found less noteworthy or unproblematic. At these sites, the two commentaries often take different vantage points, allowing us to read them as complementary or contrastive. It is questionable, however, if a reading of the two commentaries side by side was intended by their authors. There is no evidence to suggest that Lu and Zheng aimed to expand upon or implicitly correct one another, or that the readership in this era would consult more than one commentary to accompany the text.[52] Still, the fault lines emerging from a comparative reading allow for important insights into the plurality of opinions on and approaches to the classics in the Eastern Han dynasty.

Pertaining to the sentence "Upon entering through the gate, one inquires about taboos" (*Ru men er wen hui* 入門而問諱) found in the *Mellow Rites I* (*Quli shang* 曲禮上) chapter,[53] Lu Zhi remarks that "the rulers of neighbouring domains are just like our own ruler" (*Linguo zhi jun you wu jun ye* 鄰國之君猶吾君也).[54] In what respect does Lu mean that? Zheng Xuan implicitly replies to this question in his commentary. He summarises the passage by stating that "All these [phrases] are about respecting one's host" (*jie wei jing zhuren ye* [...] 皆為敬主人也 [...]).[55] The two commentaries, read together, thus reveal the passage to be denoting that visitors to another domain should inquire about the tabooed

[51] *Liji* 15: 578.

[52] Neither is there a lot of evidence to suggest the opposite, however. Further research needs to be conducted on the material form of commentaries to gauge their use in late antiquity.

[53] *Liji* 3: 101a.

[54] *Yuhan shanfang* 903a.

[55] *Liji* 3: 101a.

names of deceased rulers in the said domain, thereby paying the same respect to rulers of other domains as they would to those of their own. There is no major conflict between the respective interpretations. A synoptic reading proves constructive here, because the two commentaries go in the same direction. Yet, their wording and vantage points differ slightly: Lu spells out the principle behind the phrase in question, whereas Zheng connects it to the phrase's immediate context in the *Notes on Mores*.

When elsewhere in the same chapter the *Notes on Mores* spell out that "the lord of a domain does not take an unconventional chariot" (*Guojun bu cheng qiche* 國君不乘奇車),[56] Zheng and Lu again generally agree but differ in their approaches. Lu explains that a *qiche* is "a chariot which does not correspond to proper procedure" (*Bu ru fa zhe zhi che ye* 不如法者之車也).[57] Zheng meanwhile points to an overarching principle, saying that "going in and out [of the palace] must be conducted correctly" (*churu bi zheng ye* 出入必正也).[58] He explains *qiche* as "a chariot of the sort equipped for hunting" (*lieyi zhi shu* 獵衣之屬).[59]

To understand the contrasts between different commentarial agendas, it is often instructive to consider which parts of a passage or line in the classic commentators opt to problematise. For instance, the *Monthly Ordinances* chapter of the *Notes on Mores* states:

> 是月也，玄鳥至。至之日，以大牢祠於高禖，天子親往。[60]
>
> In this month, the dark birds arrive. On the day that they arrive, one brings a major animal sacrifice to the Matchmaker of Gao, and the Son of Heaven himself comes to attend.

Lu Zhi remarks that the "dark birds" arrived at the time when the natural forces *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 were in equilibrium, furnishing living beings with fertility. He explains the sacrifices as part of prayers for abundant offspring (more specifically, an heir to the throne) to a divine instantiation of the *mei* 媒 (matchmaker) office of antiquity,[61] thus the term *mei* 禖.[62] Zheng Xuan's elucidation is very similar overall, but he elaborates on certain points in greater detail than Lu: "dark birds" is glossed with "swallows" (*yan* 燕), explicating that they were considered symbols of marriage because of their arrival and nestbuilding at a time of procreation. Arguing that the *mei* office underwent an *apotheosis* due to its

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[56] This may refer to a chariot with unround wheels. Compare the *yinyi* 音義 commentary, which glosses *qiche* as "a chariot which is tilting and not upright" (*qixie buzheng zhi che* 奇邪不正之車). *Liji* 3: 114a. I thank Andrea Bréard (FAU Erlangen) for the discussion of the geometrical terminology used in these conceptions, which align well with the overall *Liji* passage, the prescriptions of which similarly focus on dimensions and the spatial order of a gentleman's comportment.

[57] *Yuhan shanfang* 903b.

[58] *Liji* 3: 114a.

[59] *Liji* 3: 114a.

[60] *Liji* 15: 554a. Gao stands for Gaoxin 高辛, a successor to the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黃帝), who is connected to the inception of this office by Zheng Xuan.

[61] Compare *Zhouli* 9: 271b–272a, 14: 425a–432a.

[62] *Yuhan shanfang* 906a.

association with auspiciousness, he also delves into the details of the matchmaker office more than Lu, who remains focussed on the ritual itself.[63] Whereas their overall readings thus agree, Lu and Zheng focus on different points and comment on them to a different degree of detail.

While the approach taken by Zheng and Lu to a given passage differs in the above examples, laying bare that the two commentators often pursued divergent commentarial strategies, they nonetheless mostly agree on the meaning of the respective content in the *Notes on Mores* in each case: why a certain ritual is important, or what constitutes an "unconventional chariot". What need was there for several, overlapping commentaries, then? It seems that commentators deliberately wrote commentaries to open up discursive spheres of their own to present their personal understanding of specific passages in isolation from other authors. Comparative readings may hence reveal meaningful but indirectly expressed differences.

Disconnects and Incongruencies

Alongside the many commonalities, there exist many instances which suggest Zheng and Lu had a compatible understanding of a line's language yet disagreed on other aspects, including its meaning.

In the *Mellow Rites II*, a discussion is begun with the words "If one is removed from one's domain for three *shi*..." (*Qu guo san shi*... 去國三世...).[64] What is *shi*? Zheng Xuan and Lu Zhi might have had different ideas about this. To Lu, "*Shi* is a 'lifetime'. As for the living beings, their lifetime is regarded as a *shi*" (*Shi, sui ye. Wanwu yi sui wei shi* 世，歲也。萬物以歲為世).[65] Lu Zhi thus reads the *Mellow Rites* to be speaking about three generations, though it is conceivable he is explaining that *shi* consist of *sui* in the sense of "years of one's life", meaning that *shi* (generations) were a time measurement for a certain number of years (*sui*) to him. Zheng Xuan similarly claims that "three *shi* go from the paternal grandfather to the grandson" (*San shi, zi zu zhi sun* 三世，自祖至孫).[66] Thus for Zheng, too, *shi* means "generations", but he foregrounds the cultural meaning of the ancestral cult, going on to suggest that rituals belonging the former home region would have been forgotten about after three generations had elapsed.[67] Lu meanwhile seems more focussed on establishing a general definition of the term *shi*, conceiving of its meaning as cognate with *sui* as more valid to comprehend the conditions of all living beings. Such conceptual differences reflect differing approaches to the same text by the two commentators.

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[63] *Liji* 15: 554a.

[64] *Liji* 4: 128a. For a more detailed discussion of this passage, compare Hua Zhe 2018: 76–86.

[65] *Yuhan shanfang* 903b.

[66] *Liji* 4: 128a.

[67] *Liji* 4: 128a.

As mentioned above, besides differing readings of a passage's language or ideas, another fault line consists in what commentators felt it important to highlight about a given passage. This may have had to do with their expectations of their readership's prior knowledge, but also with their personal priorities. In the *Royal Regulations* chapter of the *Notes on Mores*, pertaining to a passage about the elders above sixty years being nourished in the capital (*liushi yang yu guo* 六十養於國) as part of a ritual,[68] Lu is mainly concerned with the meaning of "to nourish" (*yang* 養). He understands the expression as exempting the elderly from military service (*bu yu fu rong* 不與服戎) and furthermore spells out that "the elderly" specifically refers to elderly commoners (*shuren zhi lao* 庶人之老).[69] Zheng Xuan does not pay attention to these points. Instead, he specifies that the "nourishing" would take place in the minor academy in the capital (*guozhong xiaoxue* 國中小學), adjacent to the palace. He highlights that the "nourishing ritual" was conducted by the Son of Heaven and the marquises (*zhuhou* 諸侯), as well as adding that the description in the *Royal Regulations* depicted the practices of the Yin 殷 administration (ca. 1600–ca. 1045 BCE).[70]

As these examples illustrate, there are discrepancies in the readings of even fundamental terms between Zheng Xuan and Lu Zhi, which highlight that despite the apparent similarities in their personal backgrounds, their worldviews at times may have differed. In the following, the political and personal dimensions which may have brought this to the fore will be sketched out, along with the implications this had for the continued transmission of commentarial writings as well as for their study today.

Between Political Entanglements and Classical Writings for Career Purposes

By the Eastern Han period, the scholarly canon of classical writings[71] had assumed monumental importance among the political and literati elite of early imperial China.[72] These texts, many of which were supposed to stem from a more enlightened past, were exalted as paragons informing statecraft as well as providing guidelines for life and intellectual inquiry.[73] The classics were political in the sense that they were considered to outline ideals of rulership.[74] Understanding them and conveying one's understanding to others hence became a profession to some, the *Ru* 儒, or classical scholars.[75] Writing

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[68] *Liji* 13: 491a. Compare also *Zhouli* 10: 308b.

[69] *Yuhan shanfang* 905b.

[70] *Liji* 13: 491a.

[71] For an overview, see Nylan 2001.

[72] The *Notes on Mores* was by then in the process of becoming part of the classics, and Zheng Xuan may have contributed to this canonisation. Compare Habberstad and Liu 2014.

[73] Compare Zhao Lu 2019: xviii.

[74] Compare Lewis 1999: 351.

[75] Compare Zufferey 1994; Anne Cheng 2001.

commentaries to the classics evolved into a typical way for Eastern Han *Ru* to engage with a text they presumed themselves to be knowledgeable about. Putting forward their own readings and making their voices distinctly heard may have been a motive of commentators like Zheng Xuan and Lu Zhi to write commentaries of their own when others already existed. But to do so, they had to enter a centuries-long scholarly tradition, and strive to assert their own status within it.

The political nature of the texts also positioned them as means for scholars to pursue a career in the state administration. Given that the classics were esteemed as having the potential to shape virtuous statesmen yet did not provide direct blueprints for the organisation of a government and hence required interpretation, experts were needed to extract the wisdom contained within the texts. This presented a job opportunity for classical scholars, as well as an expedient means to make their voices heard and lend them some authority. In Lu Zhi's biography, a memorial he once presented to the throne may serve as a case in point. While also chiding the court, it reads like a thinly veiled self-recommendation letter, demonstrating Lu's expertise in the classics through various quotations and flowery language:[76]

> 夫士立爭友，義貴切磋。書陳『謀及庶人』，詩詠『詢於芻蕘』。植誦先王之書久矣，敢愛其瞽言哉！今足下之於漢朝，猶旦、奭之在周室，建立聖主，四海有繫。[77]
>
> If the officials once established directly criticised their friends, righteousness and nobility would assist one another. The *Documents* expound, "slander reaches the common populace", and the *Odes* sing, "consulting those who mow the grass and cut the firewood". Long have I, Zhi, recited the writings of the former rulers, and presume to cherish their unintelligible words! As for the relationship between the Han dynasty and my humble self at your feet, it is like that of Dan or Shi to the ruling house of Zhou.[78] If one establishes a sage ruler, everything within the four seas will attach to him.

Lu quotes from the *Venerated Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書)[79] and the *Odes*[80] to lend authority to his words and posit himself as a potential adviser to the court. He repeatedly emphasises his longstanding and intensive adeptness with regard to the classics, as well as invoking the wisdom of the former rulers contained in the texts. In this case, the *Book of Latter Han* proceeds to report that "he could not be

[76] *Houhanshu* 64: 2113–2114. Given that the *Book of Latter Han* was written centuries after Lu's lifetime, it is open to speculation if its author really had access to such memorials.

[77] *Houhanshu* 64: 2113.

[78] Dan was the personal name of the aforementioned Duke of Zhou (Zhou gong 周公), who ruled on behalf of the young king Cheng 成 (1055–1021 BCE). Shi (?–?) is said to have supported the Duke of Zhou as a ruler of Shao 召. Lu Zhi thus likens himself to these famous personae who served their ruling house in obedient but influential positions.

[79] Compare *Shangshu* 12: 372a.

[80] Compare *Maoshi* 17: 1347.

employed" (*bu neng yong* 不能用).[81] Nevertheless, prowess in the study of imperially recognised classical texts seems to have generally been a viable path to a political or administrative career.[82] Indeed, Lu went on to be successfully hired, both to work on texts in the Eastern Pavilion, and to serve as governor and general. His tasks, then, deviated from the direct study of classic texts, as he was, for instance, tasked with the pacification of the Yellow Turban rebellions.[83]

The proximity of classical scholarship to the career options of intellectuals meant that commentaries, aside from serving to outline their author's ideas, may have been written with the motive of gaining the necessary prestige to prove one's qualifications for an official post. It also meant that adherents of different textual traditions and readings were often in competition with one another for patronage and recognition. The possibility that commentarial writings served to gain standing in society and ascend to the echelons of state service are especially striking if we contemplate that the late Eastern Han period was in many respects a society in upheaval. Despite (or even because of) the ensuing political crises foreboding the looming fall of the dynasty, many scholars towards the end of the Eastern Han apparently still sought recognition and employment from the central government (or warlords erecting para-statal structures).[84] After all, the texts they studied were considered political and supposed to contribute to aiding the government and informing its actions.

Not all scholars approved of the co-optation of their scholarship for political purposes, however. Zheng Xuan especially seems to have been keen to evade liability on these grounds. As a prominent scholar, at least in his home region,[85] towards the end of the Han dynasty Zheng was repeatedly sought out by warlords for his expertise and offered advisory positions, all of which he rejected or excused himself from.[86] He thus represents a countermovement of intellectuals retreating into private studies, having grown sceptical of engaging with state authority.[87] Zheng's source of income then was teaching at his own private school,[88] probably much like the one he and Lu had themselves studied at under Ma Rong. He hence depended as much on his reputation as a great scholar, perhaps even more so, than did someone pursuing a career in state service.

If commentary-writing was a way to gain recognition by the scholarly community and even a position and an income, this may present one reason why commentators felt prompted to author commentaries of their own while disregarding or at least not explicitly referencing those of others: to foreground their own, individual insights, and to avoid giving unnecessary airtime to their competitors. In addition,

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[81] *Houhanshu* 64: 2114.

[82] This is not to say that this was the only prerequisite: practical knowledge and experience probably also played a similarly significant role.

[83] *Houhanshu* 64: 2118–2119.

[84] For example Dong Zhuo 董卓 (?–192), Yuan Shao 袁紹 (?–202), or Cao Cao 曹操 (ca. 155–220).

[85] *Houhanshu* 35: 1212 states "He was considered an [intellectual] ancestor between Qi and Lu" (*Qi Lu jian zong zhi* 齊魯閒宗之). Qi and Lu were regional states in the area around modern-day Shandong province during the Chunqiu 春秋 period (ca. 770–481 BCE).

[86] *Houhanshu* 35: 1209, 1211.

[87] Compare Zhao Lu 2019: 116.

[88] *Houhanshu* 35: 1207. See also Yoshikawa Tadao 2019.

brevity and reader-friendliness may have been a concern for commentators,[89] consequently opting not to represent broader discourses in their writings. Such information might have been imparted to the target audience orally instead. More explicit opinions and scholarly disputes were moreover voiced via the separate venue of opinion texts instead, such as those mentioned above that referenced Xu Shen and He Xiu.

To summarise, political factors and the social climate of the late Eastern Han leveraged a profound impact on scholars' lives and careers, and this in turn influenced the way they approached their commentarial writings. How a commentary was written depended on who they anticipated would read it, what was considered orthodox, and what standing and/or position a scholar held or hoped to gain. As shown above while commentaries were devoted to the readings of one individual, it is vital to note that their voices chime into a contextual discourse. This is often not sufficiently acknowledged in scholarship.

Reflections: Survival of the Fittest Commentary

The transmission history of the commentaries has tilted the scales in favour of Zheng Xuan. As a result, any analysis of the fragmentary extant materials by Lu Zhi, Ma Rong, Cai Yong, or others must bear the caveat that crucial elements may have been lost. Inferences drawn based on fragments by the likes of Lu Zhi should therefore be treated as approximations. Nevertheless, they still provide a helpful means of comparison. Furthermore, the role afforded to Zheng Xuan on account of the more complete transmission of his writings has led him to dominate other scholars in our perception of his time. Though it is tempting to consider him representative of the scholarship of an entire era, in his day he would merely have been one voice among many.

Zheng's popularity at the time and his supremacy throughout the later transmission process may have indeed become a factor in the loss of writings by other commentators.[90] Once only Zheng's commentary was left in a mostly complete form, this ease of accessibility and broader coverage could only have cemented his prominent position among Han-era commentators, especially regarding the *Mores* canon and the *Odes*, his scholarship on which seems to have enjoyed particular esteem in the eyes of

[89] Given the large number and volumes of commentarial writings in the Han era, they were sometimes decreed to be shortened. Compare Wang Chenglüe 2004: 6.

[90] The *Treatise of Classical Materials in the Book of Sui* already only lists two editions of the *Liji* by Han-period compilers, commented by Lu Zhi and by Zheng Xuan, as well as a *zhangju* 章句 (*section and sentence*) commentary of the *Yueling* 月令 (*Monthly Ordinances*) chapter by Cai Yong. *Suishu* 32: 922. The relative wealth of different commentaries to the *Liji* to be assumed for the Han period must therefore have already shrunk significantly by the Sui 隋 (581–617) and Tang 唐 (618–907) dynasties. The Tang-period editors of the authoritative *zhengyi* 正義 (correct meaning) edition then limited the range even further at imperial behest: "Now, an imperial decree has been presented to delete the old structures, to hold on to and adhere to Huang as the basis. What he has not equipped [the commentary with] is to be supplemented through Xiong" (*Jin fengshe shanli, reng ju Huangshi yiwei ben, qi you bubei, yi Xiongshi bu yan* 今奉勅刪理，仍據皇氏以為本，其有不備，以熊氏補焉). By imperial decree, the *Liji zhengyi* was thus to be based on the previous work by Huang Kan 皇侃 (?–?) and Xiong Ansheng 熊安生 (?–?) from the Northern and Southern Dynasties (Nanbeichao 南北朝, 420–589), both of whom are depicted as having based their own work on Zheng Xuan in the foreword to the *Liji zhengyi*. *Liji zhengyi xu*: 4a.

both his contemporaries and successors. Given the frequent invocation of *Odes* materials in the *Mores* classics, the synergies created by Zheng and the worldview he constructed around the *Rites of Zhou* may have supplied the impetus for readers of his commentary on one classic also to include his other commentaries to texts such as the *Classic of Filial Devotion* (*Xiaojing* 孝經) or the *Assembled Discussions* (*Lunyu*) over comparable writings by others. While some commentaries by Zheng Xuan seem to have been less popular and were themselves supplanted by others,[91] at a certain point his writings could deliver a relatively consistent guide to the reading of at least two entire classical canons and permit readers to draw connections. Meanwhile, other commentarial writings had become too fragmentary, and their lack of coverage meant they could no longer compete in terms of appeal and user-friendliness.

The predominance of certain individual commentators' readings was perpetuated, and today continues to exacerbate the suppression of competing writings. This process is exemplified by a remark in the *Book of Latter Han* with regard to the *Changes* (*Yi* 易) tradition:

> 建武中，范升傳孟氏易，以授楊政，而陳元、鄭眾皆傳費氏易，其後馬融亦為其傳。融授鄭玄，玄作易註，荀爽又作易傳，自是費氏興，而京氏遂衰。[92]
>
> Amidst the Jianwu period [25–56], Fan Sheng transmitted the *Changes* of Meng and taught Yang Zheng with them, whereas Chen Yuan and Zheng Zhong both transmitted the *Changes* of Fei. Thereafter, Ma Rong also made a *zhuan* commentary for it. Rong taught Zheng Xuan, and Xuan wrote a *zhu* commentary to the *Changes*. Moreover, Xun Shuang wrote a *zhuan* commentary to the *Changes*. From then on, [the *Changes* in the tradition of] Fei thrived, whereas [that of] Jing consequently went into decline.

Here the *Book of Latter Han* traces scholarly lineages, with layers of commentaries accruing virtually simultaneously to the text being passed on from master to disciple,[93] the more active reception of the edition by Fei Zhi 費直 (?–?) ultimately spelling a decline of interest in the tradition of Jing Fang 京房 (77–37 BCE).[94] An orthodoxy built around the *Yi* commentary by Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249) emerged later during the Tang period, which had grown out of a stream of the tradition earlier championed by Ma Rong and Zheng Xuan.[95]

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[91] For example, his commentary to the *Changes* (mentioned in the quotation above) is extant only in fragments. While this does not prove his commentary was less popular, this loss (which could tentatively be attributed to fewer manuscripts of it circulating due to less popularity) probably prevented it from gaining wider acclaim.

[92] *Houhanshu* 79 shang: 2554.

[93] The case of Zheng Xuan, who in this passage is said to have commented on and thus contributed to the popularisation of the Fei edition of the *Changes* presents an exception to this pattern, seeing that Zheng had started out his educational journey by being taught the Jing version of the *Changes* by Diwu Yuanxian prior to his time with Ma Rong. *Houhanshu* 35: 1207.

[94] Compare Shaughnessy 1993: 222–223.

[95] Shaughnessy 1993: 223.

The plurality of opinions brought forth in a certain timeframe and geographic sphere formed comprehensive discourses. The different approaches recognisable in the writings of Zheng Xuan and Lu Zhi on essentially the same textual basis were likely intended to highlight the individuality of their perspectives in an effort to stand out from these. But at the same time, a commentator must necessarily assume their own stance in response to what came before. Only with their integration into the intertextual mesh presented by the intellectual discourses of their time were individual readings rendered meaningful.

Commentary-writing was thus conducted in response to the intellectual requirements of the time and the sociohistorical background of commentators. For researchers nowadays, this context is often lacking, making it tempting to either dismiss certain remarks as idiosyncratic or to engage in a personal essentialism, ascribing certain readings to the whims or the genius of an author rather than to the practical purposes they intended to accomplish, to influences from their environment, or to the demands of the discourse at the time. An equilibrium should be maintained between studies on the individual commentarial exegeses of the texts on the one hand, and the fuller mosaic of historical intellectual discourses these commentaries were part of on the other. In this way, a commentary does not exist in a vacuum, and in order to succeed in interpreting its content, it is vital to attempt to reconstruct its context within the discourses to which it was designed to weigh in.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

What is Other than "Us": Non-Buddhist Sources in the Buddhist Commentary *Zhiguan Fuxing Chuanhong Jue*

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This study delves into Zhanran's *Zhiguan fuxing chuanhong jue* (hereafter *ZFCJ*), a commentary on the *Mohe zhiguan*. It focuses on this Buddhist commentary's incorporation of non-Buddhist sources and highlights two primary approaches. First, the commentary employs a strategy of "philological exposition" to blend Zhanran's knowledge with the object of the commentary, Zhiyi's *Mohe zhiguan*. Second, instead of simply contradicting non-Buddhist teachings, it exemplifies an approach of "interpretational integration" to affirm the superiority of Buddhism by juxtaposing non-Buddhist and Buddhist content. This paper argues that non-Buddhist sources significantly enrich the text of the *ZFCJ*, showcasing Zhanran's extensive interdisciplinary knowledge and highlighting the interplay between, and synthesis of, Buddhism and traditional Chinese culture. By providing a comprehensive case study, this research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of literary practices within Chinese Buddhist traditions.

湛然的《止觀輔行傳弘決》是對智顗《摩訶止觀》的註釋。本文探討湛然在註釋中運用非佛教典籍的兩種方式：文本詳釋與整合詮釋。前者指湛然將個人的知識充分融入對《摩訶止觀》的解說；後者則是指湛然通過將非佛教內容與佛教內容進行對比，進而確認佛教的優越性，而非簡單地反駁異說。非佛教典籍豐富了《輔行》的內容，展現湛然的廣博知識，並揭示了佛教與中國傳統文化之間的互動與融合。此研究有助於理解中國佛教典籍在文本外延方面的特徵。

Keywords: commentary, intertextuality, *Zhiguan fuxing chuanhong jue,* Zhanran, Tiantai Buddhism, thought

關鍵詞： 註釋，互文性，止觀輔行傳弘決，湛然，天台佛教，子

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Introduction[1]

This study demonstrates that references to external texts in a commentary not only fulfil an explanatory function but can also be strategically utilised to reinforce the author's own position. For pre-modern Buddhist commentary-writers, this engagement with external sources served as a way to connect with other intellectual traditions and interact with the broader intellectual community.

As illustrated by the use of character *su* 俗 in terms such as *sudian* 俗典 (non-Buddhist classics) and *sushu* 俗書 (non-Buddhist books), Chinese Buddhist writings actively differentiate non-Buddhist sources from Buddhist sources.[2] Yet although they are specified to be something other than Buddhist, that does not mean non-Buddhist sources are excluded from Chinese Buddhist writings. Examples of the various ways in which non-Buddhist texts were used by a Tang Buddhist scholar can be seen in the *Zhiguan fuxing chuanhong jue* 止觀輔行傳弘決 (A Determination on the *Mohe zhiguan* to Support Practice and for Propagation; collected in *Taishō* [hereafter *T*] 46, no. 1912).[3] It was composed by Zhanran 湛然 (711–782),[4] a prominent advocate of the Tiantai tradition 天台宗. In the *Zhiguan fuxing chuanhong jue* (hereafter *ZFCJ*), non-Buddhist sources are not only used as an aid to understanding the *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (The Great Cessation and Contemplation; *T*46, no. 1911),[5] but also to support Zhanran's assertion of the superiority of the Tiantai school. The *Mohe zhiguan* is a

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[2] For the usage and connotations of these terms, see the below section "Demarcation of 'Buddhist' and 'Non-Buddhist' Texts".

[3] The numbering following "*T*" or "*X*" indicates the volume number of the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大蔵経 (Taishō Revised Tripiṭaka; Takakusu 1924–1932) and *Manji shinsan Dainihon zokuzōkyō* 卍新纂大日本續藏經 (Manji Supplementary Buddhist Canon; Kawamura 1975–1989), respectively. Following that is the scripture number, the page number, the column (a, b, or c), and the column number.

[4] We can reconstruct Zhanran's life experiences from the autobiographical details in his own writings and from other people's accounts. These are to be found in: (1) Zhanran's own works, such as the prefaces to his works; (2) Zhanran's words as recorded in others' works, such as his letters recorded in the *Tiantai jiuzu zhuan* 天台九祖傳 (Biographies of the Nine Tiantai Patriarchs); (3) records on his life by others, including Buddhist biographies such as the *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (The Song Dynasty Biographies of Eminent Monks), Buddhist chronicles such as the *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 (Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs), and local gazetteers such as the *Jiading Chicheng zhi* 嘉定赤城志 (The Jiading Gazetteer of Chicheng). For more detailed information, see Chi Limei's monograph (2008, 7–57), which outlines the records of Zhanran's life in detail. Penkower's PhD thesis (1993, 10–112) also examines Zhanran's biography and is furnished with a detailed introduction to the relevant sources.

In terms of Zhanran's works, Hibi (1966, 82–130) and Chi (2008, 85–87) disagree on the total extant number. Here I adopt Chi's view that out of a total of thirty-two works that Zhanran is believed to have written, twenty are extant and twelve of them are based on works by Zhiyi. Chi (2008, 85–94) offers a brief introduction to these works. For a detailed examination of each work, see Hibi (1966).

[5] The *Mohe zhiguan* explores a Buddhist meditative practice combining *zhi* 止 (cessation, Skt. *śamatha*) with *guan* 觀 (contemplation, Skt. *vipaśyanā*). It is a record of Zhiyi's lectures but was compiled by his disciple Guanding 灌頂 (561–632). The extent to which Guanding's record accurately reflects Zhiyi's original ideas is a long-standing topic of scholarly debate. Although Zhanran also distinguishes between Guanding's and Zhiyi's contributions within the text, he generally treats the *Mohe zhiguan* as an authoritative text within the Tiantai tradition.

constituent of the "Three Major Works of Tiantai Buddhism" (*Tiantai san da bu* 天台三大部)[6] that laid the foundations of the Tiantai tradition, all three works being composed by its founder, Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597).[7] The title of the *ZFCJ*, which I render *A Determination on the "Mohe zhiguan" to Support Practice and for Propagation*, clearly articulates the aim of providing the correct interpretation in order to assist readers' understanding and practice of Tiantai Buddhism, thereby preserving and disseminating the Tiantai tradition.

The *ZFCJ* is a text with a strong sectarian orientation which contains extensive discussions of doctrine; non-Buddhist sources could be said to have little to offer in contribution to either of these facets. Indeed, within the tradition itself, there is evidence of concern about Zhanran's use of non-Buddhist sources. For example, in the preface of the *Guketsu geten shō* 弘決外典鈔 (On the Extrinsic Sources in *A Determination on the "Mohe zhiguan" to Support Practice and for Propagation*),[8] a 10th-century Japanese text that catalogues and comments on all the *waidian* 外典 (extrinsic sources) that are mentioned in the *ZFCJ*, records a complaint—attributed to a Tendai monk—that Zhanran quoted extensively from *waidian*, resulting in a commentary that was "crowded with redundancies" 太為繁粹 (Tomohira Shinnō, *Guketsu geten shō*, 1).[9] We do not know the precise grounds for this claim and this article has no intention of evaluating its validity, but it raises the question of whether and how this inclusive approach could be understood to reflect Zhanran's thoughts on how to interpret the *Mohe zhiguan* effectively. It is clear that the non-Buddhist quotations, paraphrased excerpts and other references in the *ZFCJ* are not heaped together aimlessly. To the contrary, this article will argue that they were chosen carefully to serve two purposes of "philological exposition" and "interpretational integration".

"Philological exposition" occurs in instances which do not engage in doctrinal discussion and serves to incorporate Zhanran's knowledge into his commentary on the *Mohe zhiguan*, almost as if showcasing his vast compendium of generalist knowledge. In doctrinal discussions, there are instances of other intellectual traditions being presented as being in direct opposition with Tiantai doctrine.

There are also cases where, instead of outright rejection, non-Buddhist and Buddhist content is juxtaposed to affirm the superiority of Buddhism, a method I refer to as "interpretational integration". Using this method, the *ZFCJ* demonstrates how non-Buddhist texts offer inferior understandings of the same issue compared to Buddhist interpretations. This presents the reader with a more nuanced

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[6] The other two commentaries are the *Fahua xuanyi* 法華玄義 (The Profound Meaning of the *Lotus Sūtra*) and the *Fahua wenju* 法華文句 (Words and Phrases in the *Lotus Sūtra*).

[7] There are several versions of the Tiantai tradition's lineage. It can be regarded as extending as far back as Nagarjuna or even to the Buddha, but Zhiyi is considered the school's founder since its doctrines are based on his teachings. When discussing the Tiantai lineage, we need to be aware that the lineage had not yet formed during Zhiyi's or Zhanran's time; it was established later during the Song dynasty. Zhanran is also recognised as a patriarch within its lineage. Penkower (1993, 360–556) conducts a detailed study of the lineage construction process.

[8] "Guketsu" is a Japanese abbreviation of the title *ZFCJ*.

[9] The Tiantai doctrines were later exported to Japan, where they are known as "Tendai". The school takes its name from Mt. Tiantai 天台山 (in present-day Zhejiang province), where its headquarters were located. Possibly, the mentioned Tendai monk was a fictional character, serving as a narrative device to enable the prince to underscore the importance of compiling the *Guketsu geten shō* while avoiding criticising the *ZFCJ* himself.

relationship that recognises a level of validity in the non-Buddhist content, yet ultimately incorporates it within the Buddhist framework. Compared to "philological exposition", this approach demanded a more careful and deliberate use of the materials at hand on the part of the commentator.

To investigate the differing treatment of Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources in the *ZFCJ*, we will start by exploring how the text employs the terms *sudian* and *sushu*, and then consider what this permits us to infer about Zhanran's understanding of what those terms meant and how they differed from other categories of literature. Next, I will illustrate the two approaches through which such sources are quoted, cited and otherwise paraphrased in the *ZFCJ*: the aforementioned "philological exposition" and "interpretational integration", and explore the complexities involved, which include Zhanran's aims to promote the Tiantai tradition, his concerns about his readership, and the influence of traditional Chinese exegesis practices and pre-existing Tiantai hermeneutics.

Demarcation of "Buddhist" and "Non-Buddhist" Texts

The *ZFCJ* contains a large number of quotations, paraphrased excerpts, and other kinds of reference. The sources are deployed in various forms: they are either quoted almost verbatim,[10] paraphrased, summarised, or referenced indirectly through their titles. Their sources are generally attributed to specific texts or authors, but we occasionally see broader, less precise categories such as *sudian*, *zishu* 字書 (dictionaries), or phrases like *shiren yun* 世人云 ("as said by people in society"), all of which obscure the origin of the source.

The *ZFCJ* contains about 1,800 textual references drawn from a wide range of sources, which I categorise as:

(1) Doctrinal Buddhist literature: Indian Buddhist canons (known as *tripiṭaka*, the "three baskets") and Chinese-language Buddhist exegetical works;[11]

(2) Non-doctrinal Buddhist literature, such as Chinese-language Buddhist biographies and historical records;

(3) Premodern Chinese texts, including dictionaries, historical records, gazetteers, and the representative classics of various indigenous intellectual traditions.

[10] The quotations in the *ZFCJ* often exhibit minor differences from the quoted texts. These differences could be unintentional, or they might be deliberate alterations by Zhanran. Another possibility is that the version of the *ZFCJ* or the referenced texts at the time of writing differed from the transmitted versions available today.

[11] Chinese Buddhist exegesis underwent a complex developmental process that combined Indian Buddhist and indigenous Chinese exegetical traditions, in various stylistic forms; see Li Silong (2021).

The first two, namely Buddhist doctrinal texts and non-doctrinal texts produced by the Buddhist community, can be referred to as "Buddhist sources".[12] The third category corresponds to what Zhanran called *sudian* or *sushu*. The character *su* 俗 is furnished with a range of connotations, but in the Buddhist context, it can be understood as "lay", as opposed to *seng* 僧, a translation of the Sanskrit word *saṅgha* meaning the community of Buddhist monks and nuns in general, or an individual monk or nun. In the *ZFCJ*, *su* is used primarily to denote that something is "non-Buddhist" in nature.[13] The use of these terms to differentiate between "Buddhist" and "non-Buddhist" is also commonly encountered in other Chinese Buddhist texts.[14] Besides *sudian* and *sushu*, the *ZFCJ* uses the character *su* in other combinations, such as *sujiao* 俗教 (non-Buddhist teachings), which is used to indicate indigenous intellectual traditions.

The term *sushu* appears only once in the *ZFCJ*, where Zhanran summarises Zhiyi's approach to integrating non-Buddhist sources (*T*46, no.1912, 302b20–21). This passage comes immediately after Zhanran's interpretation of why the story of the "Fight between a Snipe and a Clam" (*yu bang xiang zheng* 鷸蚌相爭) appears in the *Mohe zhiguan* (*T*46, no. 1912, 302b12–19). Zhanran notes that the source of this story is Kong Yan's 孔衍 (268–320) *Chunqiu houyu* 春秋後語 (Post-Spring and Autumn Discourses), a non-Buddhist Chinese text.[15]

The term *sudian* occurs ten times in the *ZFCJ*,[16] and twice in the *Zhiguan fuxing souyao ji* 止觀輔行搜要記 (Record Collecting the Essentials of *The "Zhiguan" to Support Practice*),which is an abridged version of the *ZFCJ*.[17] In some of these instances the context sheds light on how Zhanran himself understood the term. These include references to:

(1) Single-character dictionaries such as the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explaining Depictions of Reality and Analysing Graphs of Words) and *Erya* 爾雅 (Progress towards Correctness);

[12] While the former category is treated in the *ZFCJ* as proof texts, the credibility of the latter category, containing opinions expressed by other Buddhists, is not always acknowledged and could be subject to criticism. Such criticism is evident in the paradigm of "Mahayana/Hinayana" or "Tiantai/non-Tiantai", a different manifestation of the distinction between "us" and "others".

[13] In this sense, *su* contrasts with *shi* 釋, which signifies "Buddhist" and is adopted as a surname by members of some monastic orders of East Asian Buddhism.

[14] For example, see Daoxuan's 道宣 (596–667) *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (The Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks; *T*50, no. 2060), 636b27.

[15] The story of "The Fight between a Snipe and a Clam" is more commonly associated with the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (Strategies of the Warring States) in contemporary sources, while Zhanran explicitly attributes it to the *Chunqiu houyu*. Although the *Chunqiu houyu* has mostly been lost, with only fragments surviving, we can find the story in the sections that have been preserved in the Wang Mo (recomp.), *Han-Wei yishu chao* 漢魏遺書鈔 (Excerpts from Lost Books of the Han and Wei) (Chongqing: Xi'nan shifan daxue chubanshe, 2011), 6:496–508. The version in the *Chunqiu houyu* is remarkably similar in structure and content to that in the *ZFCJ*, see ibid., 507.

[16] *T*46, no. 1912, 143c12, 153b7, 189c29–190a1, 190c22, 222a5, 238b6, 304a26, 304b29, 325b27, 374c14.

[17] *X*55, no. 919, 743a22, 746c16.

(2) Confucian and Daoist classics such as the *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects), the *Laozi* 老子, and the *Zhouyi zhu* 周易註 (Commentary on the *Book of Changes*) by Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249) and Han Kangbo 韓康伯 (n.d.);

(3) Texts like the *Guanzi* 管子 and *Bowu zhi* 博物誌 (Records of Diverse Matters), which do not fit neatly into a distinct philosophical tradition.

Thus, it can be seen that the terms *sudian* and *sushu* are used in the *ZFCJ* to describe both non-doctrinal and doctrinal non-Buddhist sources. *Sudian* is further categorised as Chinese non-Buddhist sources (*cifang sudian* 此方俗典) (*T*46, no. 1912, 238b6) and Indian non-Buddhist sources (*xifang sudian* 西方俗典) (Ibid, 222a5), although Indian non-Buddhist content is not actually utilised in the *ZFCJ*.[18]

A wide range of Chinese non-Buddhist sources (*sudian* and *sushu*) are used in the *ZFCJ*. They include dictionaries, historical records, gazetteers, compendia, and classics. In total, there are 397 borrowings from eighty non-Buddhist sources. However, the *ZFCJ* is a voluminous work of approximately 500,000 characters in ten fascicles; it invokes Buddhist sources 1391 times, making the non-Buddhist content a relatively small proportion of about 20%. However, its use of non-Buddhist sources was commented on unfavourably within the tradition. In the *Guketsu geten shō*, Prince Tomohira 具平親王 (964–1009) reports a conversation that he claimed was one of his reasons for composing the text.

> Last year, a monk said to me, "The Dharma literature of our [Tendai] school cites extensively from extrinsic sources. Among them, the commentary *Hongjue fuxing* [i.e., *ZFCJ*] is crowded with redundancies. Learners of latter generations need not include [this material] in their studies."
>
> 去年有一僧相語曰："我宗法文多引外典，就中弘決輔行記太為繁粹。後來末學不必兼習。"
>
> (Tomohira Shinnō, *Guketsu geten shō*, 1)

As the passage shows, the commentary is perceived by this Japanese Tendai monk as an example of excessive use of *waidian*.[19] How should we interpret this claim? As non-Buddhist content only constitutes a relatively small proportion of the *ZFCJ*, the claim that the *ZFCJ*'s use of non-Buddhist material

[18] It is also noteworthy that the term *waidian* is used in the *ZFCJ* to differentiate the "Buddhist" from the others. Although the term appears only once in the *ZFCJ* (*T*46, no. 1912, 339b12), without a clear connotation, its usage in Zhanran's other writings suggests that it refers to Indian non-Buddhist sources. The term *waidian* (Jpn. *geten*) has a different connotation in the *Guketsu geten shō*. The *Guketsu geten shō* refers to Chinese non-Buddhist sources, as well as non-canonical Chinese Buddhist sources, as *geten*. A catalogue of these texts is provided at the beginning of the *Guketsu geten shō*. Feng (2022, 137–142) summaries the texts quoted or otherwise borrowed from and their frequency of use. The diverse interpretations of the term *waidian* highlight its ambiguous nature and calls for further research into its implications in different textual contexts.

[19] As mentioned above, the term *waidian* only refers to Indian non-Buddhist sources in Zhanran's writings, but in the *Guketsu geten shō* the term refers to Chinese non-Buddhist classics as well as non-canonical Chinese Buddhist classics. It therefore seems reasonable to assume

is "crowded with redundancies" seems to be more a matter of quality than of quantity. Readers across different regional contexts and time periods would have had various needs and reading habits, making whether the information provided was strictly "necessary" a subjective matter. However, the monk's claim naturally raises the question of the manners in which Zhanran integrates non-Buddhist sources, which will be discussed in the following sections.

Philological Exposition: Quoting for General Explanation

Zhanran summarises the principle of how non-Buddhist sources are used in the *Mohe zhiguan*.

> Whenever [the *Mohe zhiguan*] uses non-Buddhist books, their meaning is always taken partially, rather than in their entirety.
>
> 凡用俗書皆取少分，非全其意。
>
> (*T*46, no.1912, 302b20–21).

This indicates that the *Mohe zhiguan* uses content from *sushu* with reservations, adopting their ideas in small measures rather than in their entirety, with this partialness conceptual, not physical. Thus, a complex methodology underlies the selection of concepts, and the distinction made between Buddhist and non-Buddhist materials.

Unlike Buddhist doctrinal texts, non-Buddhist sources are seldom employed as "proof texts", that is, scriptural excerpts utilised to substantiate doctrinal arguments. As we shall see in the next section, when it comes to doctrinal discussions, Zhanran takes a cautious and critical view of the use of non-Buddhist sources. Nevertheless, far from being excluded wholesale, non-Buddhist sources are sometimes used in a neutral way or accepted with conditions. In certain cases, they are even used uncritically and without reservation, that is, taken "in their entirety" rather than just "partially".

The *ZFCJ* often cites non-Buddhist sources as a means to provide general explanations of non-doctrinal points, for example to elucidate non-Buddhist elements, or supplement information on terminology, historical figures and events, or classical allusions. When engaged in this "philological exposition" of non-doctrinal points, Zhanran exhibits a tendency to provide summaries of his knowledge on the subject at hand, invoking all kinds of sources. This makes the *ZFCJ* a varied compendium of knowledge, reflecting Zhanran's extensive scholarly interests.

Several factors may have contributed to this tendency towards "philological exposition". Given that the *Mohe zhiguan* is embedded in its author Zhiyi's cultural context, and thus infused with indigenous cultural elements, the *ZFCJ* employs Chinese non-Buddhist sources for required explanations and

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that the Japanese monk was referring to the non-Buddhist sources used in the *ZFCJ*.

contextual clarifications. The non-Buddhist sources employed for general explanations come from various genres. Traditional Chinese dictionaries, for example, offer explanations for glosses in the *Mohe zhiguan*, following an approach of traditional Chinese exegesis, known as *xungu* 訓詁.[20] Li Si-long (2013, 155–159) suggests that traditional Chinese exegetical methods might have been an important influence on Zhiyi's hermeneutical approach to Buddhist scriptures. However, it is unlikely that Zhanran's abundant use of character dictionaries for literal explanations was inherited from Zhiyi, as the *Mohe zhiguan* does not use dictionaries to define terms in as much detail or as frequently as the *ZFCJ*. This tendency seems more attributable to Zhanran's previous training as a Confucian scholar, which would have familiarised him with such methods as standard exegetical approaches.[21]

The *Mohe zhiguan* incorporates many allusions and terms without the elucidation needed by those less well versed in the subject. It quotes or paraphrases some non-Buddhist as well as Buddhist sources "silently" without explicit identification or attribution. As Swanson (1997, 7) points out in his study of Zhiyi's use of quotations, the result of this is that the *Mohe zhiguan* is "often abbreviated and cryptic", giving rise to the need for a commentary like the *ZFCJ* to provide explanations for non-Buddhist Chinese terms and allusions in the text. For example, when Zhiyi was discussing Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures, Zhanran's use of Chinese non-Buddhist sources often served as a way to resolve issues of untranslatability in cases where Chinese lacked an equivalent for a term in the source language. In his gloss on *gui* 鬼 (ghost) and its equivalent *preta* in Sanskrit (hungry ghost), Zhanran adds the explanation from *Erya* for clarification (*T*46, no.1912, 195c13–14). Similarly, the *ZFCJ* cites many Chinese historical or geographical records and compendia when it delves into the cultural-historical context of words and passages. For instance, it quotes the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Records of the Three Kingdoms) to illustrate the life of Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) (*T*46, no. 1912, 294b2). It cites the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas) to shed light on the question of the timing of the invention of the plough (172c1), and it cites the *Picang* 埤蒼 (Increased Cangjie), a traditional Chinese dictionary, to introduce the idea that the pincers of a crab could be described as "holding fire", which, though intriguing, is a deviation from the sense as used by the *Mohe zhiguan* (389c1). It even includes dietary advice from the *Bowu zhi* (274c2).

While non-Buddhist sources in the *ZFCJ* provide information necessary for supporting readers' understanding of the *Mohe zhiguan*, the above examples also tend to include any pertinent knowledge Zhanran happened to possess, making the commentary in certain respects a compendium of his personal knowledge. His rich employment of literature demonstrates great attention to textual sources. While Zhanran's manifold quotes and citations reflect the importance of books within Chinese Buddhism, the *ZFCJ* is not the exclusive product of textual scholarship. Traces of "oral instruction" are discernible in the process by which the *Mohe zhiguan* and the *ZFCJ* were formalised in writing. The *Mohe zhiguan* originated from lectures given by Zhiyi, which were compiled and edited into their

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[20] As pointed out by Matsumori (2006, 179), a traditional style of exegesis is also found in Zhanran's other commentary, the *Fahua xuanyi shiqian* 法華玄義釋籤 (Explanation of the 'Profound Meaning of the *Lotus Sūtra*'; *T*33, no. 1717).

[21] The *Song gaoseng zhuan* (T50, no. 2061) records that he was born into a Confucian family (T50, no. 2061, 739b17) and maintained the identity of a Confucian scholar until he was formally ordained in his thirties (739b25–26).

current form by Guanding. The influence of orality on the *ZFCJ* can be gleaned from Zhanran's own accounts and biographies. Creating the *ZFCJ* was a lengthy process; Zhanran mentions in the *Zhiguan fuxing souyao ji* that the *ZFCJ* was based on the lecture notes he had been taking since he began studying Buddhism at an early age (*X*55, no. 919, 742a7–11). His experiences of giving lectures may also have affected his commentarial style. According to the *Song gaoseng zhuan* Zhanran used to lecture on the *Mohe zhiguan* at the Kaiyuan Monastery 開元寺 in today's Suzhou 蘇州 (*T*50, no. 2061, 739b27). In comparison to texts to be read, oral lectures may require more techniques in order to engage listeners. It is not inconceivable that while giving his lectures, Zhanran found it useful to hook his audience's attention by adding certain indigenous cultural references that would resonate with them. His intention to meet the needs of different readers is suggested by his creation of multiple commentaries on *Mohe zhiguan*, including the *Souyao ji,* an abridged version of the *ZFCJ*, the *Zhiguan dayi* 止觀大意 (General Meanings of the *Zhiguan*) which was written for the official Li Hua 李華, and the *Zhiguan yili* 止觀義例 (Interpretations and Precedents of the *Zhiguan*) which systematises Zhiyi's ideas in the *Mohe zhiguan*.

Who were the target audiences for the *ZFCJ*? Zhanran lists ten reasons for its composition. Of these, the third, fourth, and fifth are suggestive of its intended readership.

> ...... Third, this is written for transmission to future generations to prevent the rise of misinterpretations and the loss of the original teachings. Fourth, this is written for those who believe in this lineage and are eager to learn it but cannot find a teacher elsewhere, so they have a reference to rely on. Fifth, this is written for those who cultivate both doctrines and meditative practice and wish to rely on the Tiantai teachings, so they have an apparatus for their practice and comprehension.
>
> 三為後代展轉隨生異解失本依故。四為信宗好習餘方無師可承稟故。五為義觀俱習好憑教者行解備故。
>
> (*T*46, no. 1912, 141b22–24)

The third reason reflects concern that the Tiantai doctrine might be lost and stresses the importance of preserving and transmitting it to future generations. The fourth and fifth reasons indicate that the commentary is for those who aspire to study the Tiantai teachings. The "doctrine and meditative practice" mentioned here reflect the mutual importance of teachings and meditation, a fundamental concept in the Tiantai tradition. Zhanran's intended readers and listeners here are students of Tiantai and belong not only to the present generation but also to future generations. One of the reasons he strove to incorporate various sources was likely in order to preserve as much detail as possible, ensuring these elements would support and enhance learners' understanding.

However, whether the information he chose to provide was strictly "necessary" remained a subjective matter, so it is understandable that Zhanran's "philological exposition" elicited diverse feedback. For readers seeking to absorb a wide array of knowledge from the *ZFCJ*, the detailed inclusion of various non-Buddhist elements is likely to have been appealing. On the other hand, readers already equipped

with a fundamental understanding of traditional Chinese philology and culture who hoped the *ZFCJ* would grant them deeper insights into the Buddhist concepts discussed in the *Mohe zhiguan* might well have found such detail superfluous, as illustrated above by the *Guketsu geten shō*.

The relationship between orality and text creation may be relevant to the debate surrounding the "Dark Age" of the Tiantai tradition. This term, coined by Shimaji Daito, is based on Liang Su's 梁肅 (ca. 751–793) claim that Zhanran's great contribution was to revitalise Tiantai following Zhiyi's death. Shimaji's (1929, 270) view was that whereas other Buddhist traditions like Huayan 華嚴 and Chan 禪 flourished, Tiantai languished until it was rejuvenated by Zhanran's rigorous treatment of Zhiyi's doctrines and critique of other schools. This view has been challenged by Yu (2006) and Chi (2008). Yu suggests that this argument exaggerates Zhanran's role in elevating Tiantai by overlooking the contributions of other Tiantai scholars. For example, Xuanlang, Zhanran's teacher, compiled and commented on Tiantai doctrine. Most of his works were either never completed or have not survived, but his ideas and writings may have been subsumed into Zhanran's writings (Yu 2006, 36–38). Yu's study (2006, 30–46) suggests that the potential contributions of the Tiantai scholars active in between the lifetimes of Zhiyi and Zhanran have been overlooked because their teachings were transmitted orally and hence did not leave textual records. However, this is not to say that their oral teaching left no traces whatsoever; these may in fact be preserved within the *ZFCJ*. The *ZFCJ*'s possible nature as a product of both oral and textual transmission should be reconsidered and may indeed offer further clues on Zhanran's extensive use of references.

Quoting to Compare, or to Adopt?

Besides being used to explain non-doctrinal points, in the *ZFCJ* non-Buddhist sources are also invoked in order to draw comparisons with Buddhist thought on doctrinal issues. These comparisons reflect the tension between Buddhism, an imported intellectual tradition, and indigenous traditions, especially Daoism and Confucianism.

Buddhism took a long time to establish itself in China. That process involved competing with, and negotiating with, these pre-existing traditions. The conflict played out physically, such as in the debate over whether monks should kneel before figures of political authority, and is also reflected in texts such as the *Laozi huahu jing* 老子化胡經 (Sutra on Laozi's Conversion of the Barbarians; *T*54, no. 2139),[22] which claims that Laozi had been the Buddha's teacher, thus asserting the superiority of Daoism over Buddhism. Given the conflict between Buddhism and indigenous traditions, the extent to which non-Buddhist texts are utilised in the *ZFCJ* could be cause for surprise. Moreover, since the

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[22] The term *hu* was used in premodern China to collectively refer to foreigners but has also acted as a reference to various specific groups throughout history. Sometimes derogatory in connotation, it is often translated as "barbarians".

eponymous aim of the *ZFCJ* is to preserve and disseminate the Tiantai teachings, its integration of external sources is even more noteworthy.

The *ZFCJ* generally takes a critical perspective when using non-Buddhist sources in doctrinal discussions. At certain points the *ZFCJ* is openly critical of non-Buddhist traditions. One comment, for instance, says that reading the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals), one of the "Five Classics" (*wujing* 五經) of Confucianism, and its commentary, the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (The Commentary of Zuo) could only result in "a heart wandering through the battle array and lips enacting deceitful stratagems" 心遊戰陣、口演詐謀 (*T*46, no. 1912, 341b7–8).

More in-depth criticism can be found in the theoretical discussions. For example, the *ZFCJ* refers to the idea of the *wufu* 五福 (five blessings)[23] as a "mundane Confucian" 俗儒 perspective that recognises the different types of blessing yet does not identify their origins, or suggest the need for restrictions or discipline (as Buddhism does with its idea of *vinaya*) for those who enjoy these blessings and will otherwise accumulate bad karma as a result. "For the reason that their felicities are numerous, the sins they beckon are also numerous" 以福多故，招罪亦多 (*T*46, no.1912, 300a26–30). Here it is Zhanran who introduces the reference to Confucianism. The part of the *Mohe zhiguan* upon which he comments does not refer to Confucianism specifically, nor does it imply that the kind of person who is inclined towards goodness but ends up sinful is an adherent of Confucianist ideas. Instead, the *Mohe zhiguan* merely stresses the need to become *wulou* 無漏 (uncontaminated, Skt. *anāsrava*), because those who adhere to the *wujie* 五戒 (five moral precepts) and practise the *shishan* 十善 (ten good deeds) due to an intention to evade misfortunes in their next life are cultivating the blessings with a superficial heart and will consequently incur bad karma (*T*46, no. 1911, 56a1–3). It was Zhanran who chooses to deploy non-Buddhist content in such a detailed way to elaborate on the idea of the blessings.

Although the examples above demonstrate that Zhanran could be critical of Confucianism, overall, his critiques of Confucianist ideas are relatively infrequent, and most of these references actually serve to explain the anecdotes used by Zhiyi. Much like Zhiyi, on the other hand, Zhanran is more openly critical of Daoism. According to Ikeda's (1990) summary, Zhiyi finds fault with three aspects of Laozi's and Zhuangzi's thought. First, Laozi and Zhuangzi fail to grasp the truth of *yinguo* 因果 (cause and effect). Zhiyi criticises Zhuangzi's concept of *ziran* 自然 (spontaneity), which he regards as failing to effectively explain the cause and effect of things, unlike the Buddhist idea of dependent arising. Second, he notes that Laozi and Zhuangzi blindly venerate the concept of *jueyan* 絕言 (the ineffable), unlike Buddhism, which seeks to ground its ethics in rationality.[24] Third, whereas Buddhism seeks to benefit others, Laozi and Zhuangzi lack such wholesome aspirations (Ikeda 1990, 73).

Similarly, Zhanran criticises these three aspects of Laozi's and Zhuangzi's thought. He belittles Zhuangzi's understanding of *ziran* for the same reason that it "does not comprehend the Dharma of

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[23] Namely, the five blessings are longevity, prosperity, health and tranquillity, the practice of virtuous deeds, and a peaceful death at a venerable age. The *ZFCJ* attributes the idea to Du Yanye, and the *Guketsu geten shō* elaborates that it is from Du's *Jin chunqiu* 晉春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals of the Jin Dynasty). Lost during the Song dynasty, the relevant content is absent from surviving fragments.

[24] For a detailed discussion on Tiantai's criticism on the Daoist interpretation of the ineffable, see Kantor (2024).

dependent arising" 不達緣起之法 (*T*46, no. 1912, 238b9–15). He criticises Zhuangzi and Laozi for recognising that the five sensory organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body) cause harm, yet failing to grasp the root of their emergence (270c8–13). He also criticises Laozi for enticing his disciple Yin Xi 尹喜 (n.d.) to harm his parents,[25] which, as he points out, is behaviour that would even be unacceptable to Confucians, who advocate filial piety (325b24–28). In contrast, Zhanran writes, Buddhism takes great compassion as the principle, and thus "it is impossible that Buddhism originated from Daoism" (325b28–29). Thus, Zhanran not only aligns himself with Zhiyi's perspective but also criticises Daoist views in a similar manner from the three perspectives of the conceptual, polemical, and ethical.

These examples show how Zhanran uses various approaches to criticise Confucianism and Daoism. While there are clearly marks of the influence of Zhiyi's criticism, not all the content that is criticised in the *ZFCJ* is mentioned by the original *Mohe zhiguan*; these are sometimes additions made by Zhanran. In this way, the commentary broadens the discussion in the *Mohe zhiguan*, while remaining tethered to it.

However, while the above examples show instances of criticism being levelled at non-Buddhist sources in the *ZFCJ*, that is not the only kind of treatment they receive. Non-Buddhist ideas are sometimes accepted, even without criticism, but given lower status in a hierarchy. By demonstrating that non-Buddhist texts' understanding of the same issue is inferior to Buddhist interpretations, the *ZFCJ* constructs a complex relationship that acknowledges the validity of the opposing viewpoint, but ultimately incorporates it within a Buddhist framework. Non-Buddhist ideas are partially included on the Buddhist side to show the comprehensiveness of its wisdom. This approach of juxtaposition is illustrated in the following two examples:

> As for [passages] such as "[One] should not cheat the Buddha", deceiving someone means to insult them. If the *Lunyu* states, "A man of noble character should not be hoodwinked", then what more so for the Buddha?
>
> "不欺佛" 等者，欺物曰陵。論語曰: "君子不可罔也。" 況復佛耶？
>
> (*T*46, no. 1912, 182c10–11).

> The *Li* states, "Alcohol is used for offering sacrifices". It does not call it a regular drink. If drinking when one is not offering sacrifices even violates mundane propriety, then what more so for the Buddhist regulations?
>
> 禮云："酒者，因祭祀而用之。" 非謂常飲。非祭而飲，尚違世禮。況佛制耶？
>
> (*T*46, no. 1912, 342a17–19).

[25] The source of this record is said to be the *Laozi huahu jing* but the content mentioned is not present in the extant text. Rather, it can be found in Zhen Luan's 甄鸞 (535–566?) *Xiaodao lun* 笑道論 (Laughing at the Dao), which is now included in Daoxuan's *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (Further Collection for Propagation and Clarification; *T*52, no. 2103, 149c27–150a13).

The first example cites the *Analects* to show that deceit is not proper Confucianist behaviour, while the second example compares the restrictions of alcohol in Buddhism to those in the *Book of Rites*. The two examples end with similar rhetorical remarks, "then what more so for the Buddha/Buddhist regulations?" That these remarks can be made without any further elucidation reflects that the good sense of these Buddhist ideas is self-evident, implying by extension that the teachings of Buddhism are always comprehensive and universal. Hence, when other intellectual traditions happen to have understand something correctly, that understanding is already naturally subsumed within Buddhism.

Occasionally, non-Buddhist content is even almost granted equal treatment to Buddhist content. For example, the *Mohe zhiguan* likens the practice of *lishi guan* 歷事觀 (phenomenal contemplation) [26] to the six tusks of the white elephant symbolising the "Bodhisattva's undefiled six supranormal powers" (trans. Swanson 2018, 315–316). When explaining this, the *ZFCJ* indicates that a similar approach of seeing the truth through analogies with physical processes can be found in non-Buddhist works, such as the statement by Zihua 子華 (n.d.) that just as farmers cultivate their crops, a nobleman cultivates himself by maintaining a righteous character and righting wrongs (*T*46, no. 1912, 190c22–25).[27] Citing this example, Zhanran comments on this common approach:

> How could this be the preserve of Buddhism; the non-Buddhist classics also regard it to be so... This just means that the great teachers inwardly concur, and that's all.
>
> 何但釋教，俗典亦然......但謂大師內合而已。
>
> (*T*46, no. 1912, 190c22; 26–27).

However, we would be naïve to understand this as a promotion of non-Buddhist sources. Rather, Zhanran's point is that even non-Buddhists can comprehend such rudimentary principles. Therefore, although it is possible to draw parallels with Buddhist teachings, non-Buddhist teachings barely make the grade to be admitted to the hierarchy. For example:

> Even the non-Buddhist teachings say that "Loftiness takes lowliness as the foundation; nobility takes humility as the base".
>
> 俗教尚云: "高以下為基，貴以賤為本。"
>
> (*T*46, no. 1912, 162a17).[28]

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[26] *Lishi guan* (also *tuoshi guan* 托事觀) is one of the *sanzhong guanfa* 三種觀法 (three kinds of contemplation). The three kinds of contemplation, although they appear in the *Mohe zhiguan*, were classified and formalised by Zhanran, particularly in the *Zhiguan yili* (*T*46, no. 1913, 458a10–15). Tam translates *Lishi guan* as "phenomenal contemplation", meaning "contemplation of mind that resorts to phenomenal (ritual and cultic) distinctions" (1996, 74). In the example we cite here, *lishi guan* means "contemplation of bringing oneself into the verses of Buddhist scriptures" (Sakamoto 1984, 953).

[27] This content seems to have a close connection the *Li zhongjie chao* 勵忠節鈔 (Excerpts Encouraging Loyalty and Integrity, *Pelliot chinois* 2711, col. 16–17).

[28] This passage is found in the *Laozi* (*Laozi daode jing zhu* 老子道德經註 [Commentary on Laozi's *Daode jing*], 39.109).

In this example, there is an acknowledgment of the viewpoints of non-Buddhist teachings. However, the concessive expression "even" (*shang* 尚) reflects a subtle reconciliation of Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachings: the correct viewpoint that even non-Buddhist teachings were able to notice is naturally included in Buddhist teachings. This implicitly affirms Buddhist superiority: Buddhism not only encompasses but also transcends other intellectual traditions, rendering the Buddhist perspective not only correct but also the more profound and comprehensive.

Both this intrinsic alignment and the hierarchy allow us to observe the influence of *panjiao* 判教 (doctrinal classification) in Chinese Buddhist hermeneutics. Rhodes (2016, 140) indicates that the Chinese Buddhist hermeneutics developed in response to the ongoing importation of the numerous and frequently conflicting sutras from India, each asserting their authenticity as records of the Buddha's teachings, and that this stimulated Zhiyi's aspiration to formulate his comprehensive guidelines for organising the Buddha's words. The doctrinal classification scheme in Tiantai is known as the *wushi bajiao* 五時八教 (Five Periods and Eight Teachings). It classifies the sutras by the time periods in which the Buddha preached them, as well as by their content and the approach used to expound them. Rhodes (2016, 140) comments on the motivation behind Chinese Buddhist hermeneutics appears also to be applicable in both Zhiyi's and Zhanran's case:

> Buddhists were not motivated to develop hermeneutic strategies solely to assert the dominance of their own vision of Buddhism over that of others. Their overriding concern was to discover the contents of the Buddha's enlightenment by discerning the true meaning of the Buddha's words.

In other words, the approach taken by Buddhist scholars, including Zhiyi and Zhanran, to resolve contradictions was not to eliminate opponents or to ignore them, but to manage to uncover an overarching "truth" within them that was equally shared by "us" and "them", thereby harmonising these contradictions within a cohesive framework.

In the context of this paper, "we" stands for the Buddhist tradition, while "they" refers to "non-Buddhists". When the Tiantai were trying to resolve contradictions within the Buddhist community, an internal distinction is further drawn between "Tiantai" and "other Buddhist schools". Although quotations, paraphrased excerpts and other uses of Buddhist and non-Buddhist material differed in nature, with one set of sources being intrinsic and the other extrinsic, it is apparent that a similar logic underlies the Tiantai tradition's approaches to both kinds of source. The distinction lies in the fact that while we do see Buddhist doctrines being arranged into hierarchies, they are not criticised outright, whereas Confucianist and Daoist doctrines are not only relegated the lowest tier of the doctrinal hierarchy but must also face direct criticism.

Conclusion

Focusing on Zhanran's commentary and its nuanced engagement with non-Buddhist texts, this study has revealed his sophisticated commentarial approaches of philological exposition and interpretational integration. Zhanran's use of non-Buddhist texts serves as a strategic tool not only for elucidating the obscure or undeveloped aspects of the *Mohe zhiguan* but also for addressing contradictions between Buddhist and non-Buddhist theory. This underscores the role of commentaries not just as interpretive guides but also as platforms for broader intellectual discourse.

Furthermore, Zhanran's support for Buddhism is not solely executed by opposing non-Buddhist theories but also by assimilating them through skilful exegesis. By incorporating non-Buddhist texts, Zhanran not only broadens the scope of his commentary but also demonstrates the potential of intellectual inclusivity and adaptability of Tiantai hermeneutics. His methodology of interpretation, which partly arises out of incongruity between the Buddhist tradition and the non-Buddhist traditions, in turn, reinforces the superiority of Buddhism, which further solidifies the opposition or distinction between Buddhism and other indigenous traditions.

Non-Buddhist quotations, paraphrased excerpts, and other references are a significant component of the *ZFCJ*. They enrich the text and demonstrate Zhanran's extensive and broad-ranging knowledge. His use of non-Buddhist texts also demonstrates the interaction and synthesis between Buddhism and premodern Chinese culture. There are many possibilities for further exploration into Zhanran's use of sources. Future research could delve deeper into Buddhist references in the *ZFCJ*, compare the *ZFCJ* with Zhanran's other commentaries on the *Mohe zhiguan* to identify similarities and differences in how they approach sources, or secure insight into Zhanran's intended audience by investigating the Buddhist pedagogical practices of his time.

Abbreviations

ZFCJ: Zhiguan fuxing chuanhong jue 止觀輔行傳弘決.

T: Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭, eds., 1924–1932. Taishō shinshū daizōkyō 大正新脩大蔵経 (Taishō Revised Tripiṭaka). Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai 大正一切経刊行會.

X: Kawamura Kōshō 河村孝照, ed., 1975–1989. Manji shinsan Dainihon zokuzōkyō 卍新纂大日本続蔵経 (Manji Supplementary Buddhist Canon), Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai 國書刊行會.

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Zhiguan fuxing souyao ji 止觀輔行搜要記 (Record Collecting the Essentials of *The "Zhiguan" to Support Practice*). ca. 765–770. Zhanran 湛然. *X*55, no. 919.

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SPOTLIGHT

Issues at Stake in Poetic Commentary in Medieval Japan: Fujiwara no Teika's *Secret Investigations of Kenshō's Commentary [on Kokin waka shū], Kenchū mikkan* (1221)

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In order to understand the issues at stake in poetic commentary in medieval Japan, this article examines one of the oldest commentaries in the Japanese tradition, the *Kenchū mikkan* or "Secret investigations of Kenshō's commentary [on *Kokin waka shū*]", a commentary on the first anthology of Japanese poetry compiled by imperial order, around 905. The *Kenchū mikkan* dates from 1221. It is a double commentary by two poets, among the most important in the Japanese tradition, who belonged to two rival poetic schools. The first, Kenshō (1130?–1209), belonged to the Rokujō school, while the second, Fujiwara no Teika (1162–1241), was head of the Mikohidari school. Around 1183, Kenshō wrote a commentary entitled *Kokin hichū shō* "Notes on the secret commentaries of the *Kokin [waka shū]*", in which he comments on 410 of the 1111 poems of the imperial anthology. In 1221, Teika added his own commentaries to Kenshō's text: *Kenchū mikkan* is the title given to this double commentary. In the article we examine the entire section dedicated to the Laments, that is to say, 12 poems and their commentaries. Reading this section will enable us to understand the specific points of the two poets' commentaries, and therefore what they considered to be the essential information to be conveyed.

本文通過分析日本傳統中最古老的評論之一《顕注密勘》，旨在探討中世紀日本詩歌評論的重要性。《古今和歌集》是日本第一部由天皇下令編纂的和歌集，成書於 905 年左右。《顕注密勘》是由日本最重要的兩位詩人為《古今和歌集》撰寫的雙重評注，他們分別來自兩個激烈競爭的詩派。六條派的顯昭在 1183 年成書的《古今秘注抄》中對《古今和歌集》的 1111 首詩中的 410 首進行了評注。禦子左學派的藤原定家在顯昭的文本基礎上增補了自己的注疏，形成了《顕注密勘》。通過研讀《顯注密勘》中哀歌部分的 12 首詩及其評注，可以深入瞭解這兩位詩人評論的重點，從而把握他們認為需要傳達的關鍵信息。

Keywords: *Kokin waka shū*, *Kenchū mikkan*, Fujiwara no Teika, Kenshō, Japan, poetry

關鍵詞： 古今和歌集，顯注密勘，藤原定家，顯昭，日本，詩歌

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Introduction[1]

Heir to the Chinese exegetical tradition, the practice of commentary dates back in Japan to the beginning of the 7th century (603 to be precise) when Prince Shōtoku 聖徳太子 (574–622), a fervent defender of Buddhism, wrote his *Sangyō gishō* 三経義疏 (*Commentaries on the Three Sutras*).

In the poetic field, the oldest commentaries date from the end of the 11th and beginning of the 12th century. The work that has been the subject of the greatest number of commentaries is the *Kokin waka shū* 古今和歌集 (*A Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern*), the first imperial anthology of Japanese poetry, compiled around 905. In order to understand what was at stake in poetic commentary in classical Japan, I would like here to read a double commentary on the first imperial anthology, completed at the beginning of the 13th century and the work of two major poets.

The first of the two commentaries is the work of the poet Kenshō 顕昭 (1130?–1209), famous for his erudition. He wrote, around 1183, a work entitled *Kokin hichū-shō* 古今秘注抄 (*Notes on the secret commentaries of Kokin [waka shū]*). This text owed its success to the commentaries added by the poet Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家 (1162–1241). The latter, compiler of the eighth and ninth imperial anthologies of Japanese poetry, was considered the greatest poet of his time.[2] This double commentary is entitled *Kenchū mikkan* 顕注密勘 (*Secret investigations of Kenshō's commentary [on the Kokin waka shū]*). In this work, Kenshō and Teika comment on 410 of the 1111 poems in the imperial anthology, the poems that according to Kenshō needed a commentary to be properly understood. Teika finished writing his commentaries in 1221; he was then 59 years old and Kenshō had been dead for more than ten years. In addition to being one of the earliest commentaries on the *Kokin waka shū*, the *Kenchū mikkan* is the only double commentary on the imperial anthology. It therefore enables us to appreciate the dialogic nature of poetic criticism at the time and to learn about the points of view of two major poets of the period. In this respect, the *Kenchū mikkan* is of exceptional interest.

No autograph manuscript of the *Kenchū mikkan* in Teika's hand has been preserved.[3] We therefore read this text based on copies. For this article, I have used the printed version contained in volume 5 of the supplementary series of the *Nihon kagaku taikei* 日本歌學大系 collection, a text established by Kyūsojin Hitaku 久曽神昇 from a manuscript preserved in the collection of the Imperial Palace Library (*Kunaichō shoryōbu* 宮内庁書陵部)[4] as well as the facsimile of the manuscript preserved in

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[1] I would like to thank my colleagues Sumie Terada who kindly checked my translations of the commentaries and Joshua S. Mostow who read my article before its submission.

[2] On Fujiwara no Teika see Atkins 2017 and Vieillard-Baron 2001. More broadly, on the actors and activities connected to medieval poetic commentary, see Huey 2002.

[3] A manuscript of the *Kenchū mikkan* in Teika's hand has been discovered recently (in 2024) in the Reizei familly library. But it was after this article was written.

[4] *Kenchū mikkan*, 1981.

the collection of the Chūō University 中央大學 Library (Tokyo), published by Kubota Jun 久保田淳.[5] The latter is a manuscript which probably dates from the 16th century.

Before starting to read the commentaries, we must read the afterword that Teika wrote for his work, which will allow us to understand the stakes of this double commentary. In the original version, the afterword is presented as a continuous text in a single block. As this text is very dense and requires explanations to be fully understood, I felt it would be more appropriate to split it into three paragraphs, A, B, and C, after which I will insert the necessary explanations.The division was made according to the meaning of the text. Each paragraph deals with a different point.

A.

> "I came across the three volumes of commentaries [by Kenshō] quite unexpectedly. Being by nature ignorant, and on top of that, having no taste for study, I did not even think of writing down the few things that I have heard in the past or that I think today. While my writings would not exceed a single sheet of paper, the areas that Kenshō examined and reflected on in his commentary are really very wide, and the skill with which he arranges his considerations is readily apparent. Now, then, I have the highest regard for this exceptional man. During his life, when he was discussing the value of a poem (*waka* 和歌),[6] in what he said, for example, in his judgments on poetry matches, he was unbendingly stubborn about what he liked, and I saw him as someone who insisted on his opinion. However, I realised that although he quoted the *Ōgishō* 奥義抄 (*Notes on Ultimate Secrets*), in terms of his in-depth opinions, he does not follow this treatise, and I find overall [in his comments] just what I heard and learned in the past. The writing is of high quality."[7]

In this part of his afterword, Teika describes his great admiration for the richness of Kenshō's commentaries. In order to understand these words, we must keep in mind that Kenshō and Teika belonged to two rival poetic schools. Kenshō belonged to the Rokujō 六條 school founded by Fujiwara no Akisue 藤原顕季 (1055–1123), whereas Teika belonged to the Mikohidari 禦子左 school which became the most powerful thanks to Teika and his father Fujiwara no Shunzei 藤原御成 (1114–1204), who were at its head. While one would expect Teika to take advantage of his position to criticise Kenshō's comments, it is quite the opposite that we find. Teika alludes in this text to Kenshō's famous temper tantrums and his stubbornness during poetry matches (*uta awase* 歌合) when one of his poems

[5] *Kenchū mikkan*, 1987.

[6] The term *waka* "Japanese poem" here refers to a poetic form of 31 syllabes in 5 lines: 5,7,5,7,7 written in Japanese (some Japanese poets – mainly men – also wrote poetry in Chinese). *Waka* is the most important form of Japanese court poetry.

[7] Except where otherwise mentioned, translations are the author's.

was disqualified or considered inferior for reasons he did not accept.[8] The main aesthetic difference between Kenshō's school and Teika's is that for Kenshō, it is the *Man.yōshū* 萬葉集, the anthology of ancient poetry compiled in the eighth century which represented the canon, the poetic work of reference, whereas for Teika and his school, it was the first imperial anthology of poetry *Kokin waka shū*, and more widely, the first three imperial anthologies — *Kokin waka shū* (around 905), *Gosen waka shū* 後撰和歌集 (*Latter Collection*, compiled around 951) and *Shūi waka shū* 拾遺和歌集 (*Collection of Gleanings*, compiled around 1005) — which constituted the canon of poetry. Teika and his father (and the poets of their school) banished from their poetry the expressions judged too archaic, or alarming, even if they had been used in poems of the *Man.yōshū*, because they judged them incompatible with the first function of *waka*, which was to move people's hearts.

Teika also recognises the originality of Kenshō, who, although he occasionally quotes the *Ōgishō* — an important treatise written between 1135 and 1144 by Fujiwara no Kiyosuke 藤原清輔 (1104–1177), Kensho's elder brother — does not content himself with slavishly repeating it, but produces his own "in-depth" comments. Teika also recognises the quality of Kenshō's writing.

B.

> "Following his explanations, I added briefly the few things that were taught to me and my slightly different points of view. As far as family traditions are concerned, they are not limited to these two [i.e. Kenshō's and mine], there are probably many others, but it is not possible to know them without being taught, so I think it is more interesting to let people think about the various handed-down traditions they come to know than to let things go without writing them down. That being said, it would be inappropriate to bring this text to the attention of those who do not seek to reflect on their own family tradition as well as those of others. Therefore, under no circumstances should this text be distributed outside our familly. The thoughts that follow one another in our minds will disappear if they are not connected to other thoughts. I am well aware that the opportunity given to me to add my comments [to those of Kenshō] is not insignificant. [Since Kenshō,] what scholar has appeared in this Way of Poetry? He was truly an exceptional man. And even though I must admit that [my son Tameie] does not study enough and still lacks discernment, when he receives the three generations of commentaries recorded in this text, he will be very grateful. At no cost should this text leave the family."

In this part B of his afterword Teika indicates that he has recorded, following Kenshō's comments, the information passed down in his own family tradition as well as his (rare) differences in interpretation. Teika emphasises here that family traditions, which were generally transmitted orally from master to disciple, can only be perpetuated if they are taught, and thus passed down. It is therefore in order to

[8] On this point, see for instance Vieillard-Baron 2007.

preserve his own family tradition — and his own point of view — in writing and to transmit them to his son Fujiwara no Tameie 藤原為家 (1198–1275), who was destined to become the head of the poetic school, that he decided to add his commentaries to those of Kenshō. In accordance with the Japanese tradition that knowledge should be transmitted secretly from master to pupil, so that it would retain its prestige and value, Teika insisted on the necessity to keep the work within the family and not to spread it outside.

C.

> "Apart from this book [of commentaries], no one has written about the [*Kokin waka shū*]. Originally, the retired emperor Sutoku 崇徳天皇 had a copy of the *Kokin waka shū* copied by Ki no Tsurayuki 紀貫之 himself. Lord [Fujiwara no] Norinaga 藤原教長, my late father [Fujiwara no Shunzei, also called], the cleric of the third court rank of Gojō 五條三品禪門, and [Fujiwara no] Kiyosuke had each asked for permission and copied this manuscript. The consultant [Fujiwara no Norinaga] reproduced every sign of writing without modifying anything, whether it was a Chinese character or a *kana* 仮名. However, it seemed at the time [to my father Shunzei] that there were many doubtful points, and that the text could hardly be considered reliable. Some years ago he [i.e Shunzei] received the explanations of the Former Gate Watch 前金吾[Fujiwara no Mototoshi 藤原基俊] and wrote them down. Without rejecting the original writings, he had established, he told me, the family tradition, gathering information gleaned from all sides. Now, recently, someone [showed me the work] called *Chū Kokin* 注古今 (*Notes on Kokin[waka]shū*) by [Fujiwara no] Kiyosuke. Other than the comments, there wasn't much difference. Someone else showed me what is called the *Hihon* 秘本 (Secret Manuscript). How many differences there are! Are they copying errors? — it is not clear."

The first sentence of this part C is ambiguous. Teika writes: "Apart from this book [of commentaries], no one has written about the [*Kokin waka shū*]." Does this mean that Teika was unaware of the existence of the *Kokin waka shū Norinaga chū* 古今和歌集教長注 (*Norinaga Commentaries on the Kokin waka shū*), a book that Fujiwara no Norinaga presented in 1177 to the prince-monk Shukaku 守覚法親王 (1150–1202) and that Kenshō quotes in his commentaries? Or should we rather understand that no-one has written such detailed commentaries as Kenshō's? This last interpretation seems to me the most probable.

Fujiwara no Norinaga (1109–ca. 1180) was Emperor Sutoku's (1119–1164) private secretary. Emperor Sutoku owned a copy of the *Kokin waka shū* (now lost) which was copied by Ki no Tsurayuki (ca. 871–946), the chief compiler of the anthology. Norinaga, Fujiwara no Kiyosuke (1104–1177) — head of the Rokujō poetic school and brother of Kenshō — and Fujiwara no Shunzei — head of the Mikohidari school and Teika's father, each requested and obtained from the sovereign the right to copy this manuscript. It seems from Teika's words that Shunzei actually reproduced Norinaga's scrupulous copy (and not the original manuscript). Shunzei noticed that there were many doubtful points

in this manuscript version, so he asked his instructor in poetry Fujiwara no Mototoshi (1056–1142) for clarifications which he recorded. The version established by Shunzei is thus the result of the copy of the manuscript of the emperor Sutoku, corrected (or completed) according to Mototoshi's explanations, and other explanations gleaned from here and there. This is the tradition of the Mikohidari school which Teika inherited and which he is preparing to bequeath to his son Tameie. Teika concludes his remarks by indicating that he was shown the work entitled *Chū Kokin* by [Fujiwara no] Kiyosuke (now lost) and that he did not find many differences between the text of the *Kokin waka shū* as reproduced by Kiyosuke and the version kept in his family, whereas there are countless differences between the latter and the version entitled *Hihon*/Secret Manuscript (unidentified).

All twenty books of the *Kokin waka shū* have been commented on. The book with most commentaries is Book 1, Spring (1), with 34 poems commented on out of 68 poems. The book with the fewest commentaries is Book 10, Names of things, with 4 poems commented on out of 47.[9] We will now read the section of the *Kenchū mikkan* dedicated to Laments (*aishō* 哀傷). This section has been chosen since, being relatively short, we will be able to read it in its entirety in this article. Then, I will try to draw my main conclusions.

Let us begin by saying a word about the language and the layout of the commentary. The poems are in Japanese, the commentary is written in Japanese, with, sometimes, passages in Chinese (in particular, quotations from Chinese texts). The commented poems, selected by Kenshō, are quoted without the headnote (*kotobagaki* 詞書) which precedes them in the imperial anthology. These notes are often necessary to the understanding of the poem, so I have added them in square brackets. After the poem, Kenshō places his commentary. After Kenshō's commentary, Teika adds his own commentary, or does not. When Teika does not add any commentary, it means that he agrees with Kenshō's words and that his overall commentary will appear later. In the print edition, Teika's comments are indicated by a indentation equivalent to one character; in the manuscript, a slash indicates where Teika's comment starts. In this article, I have indicated Teika's name in square brackets before his commentaries.

The commentaries:

Kenchū mikkan

Kokin waka shū, Book 16, Laments (*aishō no uta* 哀傷歌)[10]

- [Poem no. 829]

[9] The breakdown of commented poems by book is as follows: Book 1, Spring (1): 34 poems; Book 2, Spring (2): 18 poems; Book 3, Summer: 13 poems; Book 4, Autumn (1): 27 poems; Book 5, Autumn (2): 18 poems; Book 6, Winter: 8 poems; Book 7, Felicitations: 8 poems; Book 8, Parting: 10 poems; Book 9, Travel: 6 poems; Book 10, Names of things: 4 poems; Book 11, Love (1): 39 poems; Book 12, Love (2): 13 poems; Book 13, Love (3): 24 poems; Book 14, Love (4): 28 poems; Book 15, Love (5): 28 poems; Book 16, Laments: 12 poems; Book 17, Miscellaneous (1): 33 poems; Book 18, Miscellaneous (2): 28 poems; Book 19, Miscellaneous forms: 31 poems; Book 20, Folk music office songs: 28 poems.

[10] Original text in Japanese in *Kenchū mikkan*, 1981, 249-254.

[Composed upon the death of the poet's sister.]

naku namida	I wish my teardrops
ame to furanamu	might descend like driving rain,
watarigaha	for she would come home
midzu masarinaba	if flood waters were to rise
kaheri kuru gani[11]	in the River of Crossings.[12]

[Ono no Takamura 小野篁]

The River of Crossings, *Watarigawa* わたり川 (渡川) is also called *Sanzu no kawa* 三途河 or River with Three Ways.[13] It is also called *Mitsusegawa* みつせ 河 (三瀬河) or River with Three Fords.

Composed while looking at a painting of hell:

mitsusegaha	[The boat] has no oar
wataru misawo mo	in order to cross
nakarikeri	the River with Three Fords
nani ni koromo wo	to what then shall we hang
nugite kakuran	the clothes that we take off ?

[Poem by Sugawara no Michimasa's daughter 菅原道雅女, *Shûi waka shū*, Book 9, no. 543, Miscellaneous II.]

In the *Shiwang jing*, JPN *Jūō kyō* 十王経 (*The Scripture on the Ten Kings*)[14] this river is called Naihe, JPN Naga 奈河.[15] During the second seven (i.e. the fourteenth day), dead people cross the River Naihe; in hordes of a thousand and groups of ten thousand they step through the river's waves. The ox-head [demons] who guide the way clasp cudgels on their shoulders; the ghost soldiers who press people

[11] When quoting classical Japanese, I provide a transliteration of the original orthography (the so-called *kyūkanazukai*), rather than a transcription of the pronunciation in modern Japanese, in order to allow readers to look up words in a classical Japanese dictionary. Historical spelling also tends to make both pivot words (words with two different meanings) and line counts more apparent.

[12] All translations of *Kokin waka shū* poems (some times adapted) are taken from Helen Craig McCullough, 1985. This translation was chosen because it is the most faithful to the Japanese original. I have adapted the translations where the point discussed in the commentary did not appear clearly.

[13] This river is said to have Three Ways, or three undesirable destinies, "because it proves to be more or less difficult to cross according to the nature of the *karman* of those who pass it, light, mixed or heavy," Frank, 2017, 283.

[14] Apocryphon thought to have been composed around the end of the Tang dynasty in the 10th century. It describes the ten courts of law, each ruled by a magistrate or king, where the deceased must successfully negotiate passage in order to be reborn.

[15] Naga is the inevitable river in purgatory to be crossed by those suffering the three undesirable destinies.

ahead raise pitchforks in their hands.[16] This is the text [describing when] after the second seven days they (i.e. dead people) pass before Chujiang Wang 初江王, the King of the First River.[17]

・[Poem no. 830]

[Composed on the night when the remains of the Former Chancellor [Fujiwara no Yoshifusa 藤原良房] were taken to the vicinity of Shirakawa 白川, White River.]

chi no namida	Anguished tears of blood
ochite zo tagitsu	descend in seething torrents:
shirakaha ha	White River, it seems,
kimi ga yo made no	was a name doomed to vanish
na ni koso arikere	with the passing of our lord.

"Tears of blood" is an expression taken from the classics. It means that, [the pain] being excessive, one has exhausted one's tears and weeps blood. The *Han Feizi* says: Once a man of Chu, named Mister Ho, came by an uncut jade in the Chu Hills. He submitted it as a present to King Wu [King Li according to the *Han Feizi*]. Thereupon King Wu [Li] had a jeweller give an opinion of it. "It is an ordinary stone," he said. [The King, regarding Ho as a liar, had his rigth foot cut off [left foot according to the *Han Feizi*]. [Upon King Wu [Li]'s death], King Cheng [Wu] ascended the throne. [Ho again submitted it as a present to King Cheng [Wu]. King Cheng [Wu] also had a jeweller give an opinion of it. Again he said, "It is an ordinary stone." The King also regarding Ho as a liar,] had his right foot cut off. [King Cheng [Wu] died and King Wen ascended the throne.] Ho, carrying the uncut jade in his arms, cried at the foot of the Chu Hills. After three days and three nights his tears were all exhausted and blood flowed out. [At this news the King sent men out to ask him the reason, saying, "Throughout All-under-Heaven men whose feet were cut off are many. Why should you be crying so bitterly ?" "I am lamenting not the loss of my feet," said Ho in reply, "but for the calling a precious gem an ordinary stone and for their dubbing an honest man a liar. This is the reason why I am lamenting." Meanwhile, the King had a jeweller polish up the jade and got the treasure out at last. So it was designated "The jade of Mister Ho".[18]

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[16] In the *Kenchūmikkan* (1981, 294) the quotation from *Shiwang jing* is: 二七日亡人渡奈河。千群萬像墮涉江渡，引路牛頭肩挟棒，催行鬼卒手擎刄， 第二七日遇初江王文也。 Translation by Teiser, 1995, 212.

[17] Chujiang Wang resides in the Second Court of Di Yu Hell (地獄), where he passes judgement on the souls that are brought to his domain.

[18] The quotation from *Han Feizi* in *Kenchū mikkan* (1981, 249) is: 韓子 (*sic*) 曰，楚人卞和得玉璞於楚山中，獻之武王。王使玉人事相之，曰石也。刖其右足。後成王郎位，和抱其璞哭楚山下。三日三夜泣涙盡，繼之以血。使玉人治之。乃得寶焉。名曰和氏璧也。 Parts underlined in the translation are not in the quotation but are necessary to understand the whole passage. This point will be discussed in the Conclusion. Translation adapted from Liao, 1939, 113.

We can probably also find “tears of blood” in [other] texts.

・[Poem no. 833]

[Sent to his house when Fujiwara no Toshiyuki 藤原敏行 died.]

nete mo miyu	He appears to me
nede mo mitekeri	when I wake and when I sleep.
ohokata ha	Ah, but after all
utsusemi no yo zo	this transient world itself
yume ni ha arikeru	is only an empty dream.

[Ki no Tomonori 紀友則]

A dream that we have when we are sleeping is a regular/correct (*uruhashiki* うるはしき) dream. It is a dream that we have once we are asleep. What we see when we are not sleeping is reality. Since birth and death are a dream, we see them even when we are not sleeping. The expression *utsusemi no yo* うつせみの世, which means “world [as fragile as a] cicada shell /ephemeral world”, illustrates the ephemerality of the world. Using the useless cicada shell as an example, [the poet says] that whether asleep or awake, the world is a dream. The *Weishilun*, JPN *Yuishikiron* 唯識論 (*Treatise on Consciousness Only*) says: As long as one has not attained true awareness, one lives in a dream, which is why the Buddhist teaching[19] calls [this state] the “long night of birth and death”.[20]

・[Poem no. 841]

[Written while in mourning for his father.]

fudjigoromo	This unravelled thread
hatsururu ito ha	from a wisteria robe
wabihito no	now becomes a cord
namida no tama no	on which to string the jewels
wo to zo narikeru	of a mourner’s bitter tears ！

The “wisteria robe” is a [mourning] garment. [It is made of] a beautifully woven cloth made of wisteria fibre. The soldiers of the bodyguard call it *sofuku* 素服 or “simple mourning garment”. When the

[19] I.e. the *Cheng weishi lun*, JPN *Jō yuishiki ron* 成唯識論 (*Discourse on the Theory of Consciousness-only*).

[20] The suffering through birth and death is compared to the experience of a long dreaming night. The quotation from the *Weishi lun* in the Kenchū mikkan (1981, 250) is: 唯識論文云，未得眞覺常處夢中，故佛説爲生死長夜云々。

emperor wears it as a mourning garment, [it has the shape] of the great court robe. According to the principle of "Taking days and changing them into months" (*Hi wo motte tsuki ni kaeru*, 日以易月),[21] the emperor wears this robe for thirteen days and then takes it off. The meaning [of the poem] is that a thread probably detached [from the garment] becomes the string on which to thread the beads of fallen tears. On the other hand, hemp cloth called *tachi asa* 裁麻 or "hemp that is cut [to make a garment]" is also used for mourning clothes. A piece of clothing dyed with black ink is also called a mourning garment. In poetry the expression, "Will you not just this one year / put forth ink-coloured blooms?"[22] has been used. Similarly, in the *Shūi* [*waka shū*] one reads, for example:

[*hito nashishi*	Wear this garment
mune no chibusa wo	dyed black with the ashes
homura nite]	[produced by the flames
yaku sumizome no	from the breasts of this woman
koromo kiyo kimi	who made you a man!][23]

In the same way, people dye black with *kanefushi* かねふし, a [dye] made from [powdered] walnut and iron filings. A dye called *shiinibi* 椎にび [made from oak bark] is also used for mourning clothes. In *Goshūi* [*waka shū*] one reads:

[*kore wo dani*	[Here, our mourning dress
katami to omohu wo	we consider as a souvenir of the deceased emperor
miyako ni ha]	but in the capital]
hagahe ya shitsuru	have the ordinary robes / have the oaks made
shiwishiba no sode	replaced the oak-coloured robes? / their new leaves?[24]

The person who, still alive, mourns [the one who is no longer] is called *wabibito* わび人. It can also be the person who, having lost his support who died before him, grieves and regrets.

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[21] Principle imitated from China which allowed a reduction of the period of mourning by considering that each day is equivalent to a month.

[22] From *Kokin waka shū*, Laments, no. 832:

fukakusa no	If you have feelings
nobe no sakura shi	flowering cherries in the fields
kokoro araba	at Fukakusa
kotoshi bakari ha	will you not just this one year
sumizome ni sake	put forth ink-coloured blooms?

[23] This poem is a Lament (no. 1294). It implies that the mother's love is so ardent that it produces flames. In the imperial collection, it is preceded by the note: "At the time when [her son] Toshinobu was exiled, she learned that the exiles had to leave the capital wearing the garment of great mourning, so she sent him such a garment with this poem tied on." Toshinobu and his mother are not clearly identified.

[24] Lament (no. 583), composed by retired emperor Ichijō 一条院.

Generally speaking, the clothes worn by monks, dyed with black ink or oak bark, are called "Buddha's clothes" (*Hotoke no gofuku* 佛の御服).

sumizome no	That your tears should fall
kimi ga tamoto ha	thus ceaselessly as raindrops –
kumo nare ya	might it be because
taezu namida no	your sleeves, dyed in black ink hues,
ame to nomi furu	somehow share the stuff of clouds?

[*Kokin waka shū* no. 843, Mibu no Tadamine 壬生忠岑]

ashihiki no	I dwell nowadays
yamabe ni ima ha	among foot-wearying hills,
sumizome no	and there is no time
koromo no sode no	when the sleeves of my garment,
hiru toki mo nashi	black-dyed, are not wet with tears.

[*Kokin waka shū*, no. 844, Anonymous]

・[Poem no. 837]

[When an old love of Fujiwara no Tadafusa 藤原忠房 died, Kan'in 閑院 wrote this poem to go with the messenger who expressed her condolences.]

sakidatanu	Though we entertain
kui no yachi tabi	eight thousand tardy regrets,
kanashiki ha	it is all too true
nagaruru midzu no	that once a stream flows away
kaheri konu nari	it never comes back again.

[Kan'in]

The expression *sakidatanu kui* さきだゝぬ悔 "tardy regrets" means that one regrets not having died before [the deceased]. Even if we regret afterwards that we did not die before the person who disappeared, it is not up to us. To say that flowing water does not come back is to take the example of

flowing water to mean a long separation. For, like flowing water, the dead do not return. The expression *yachitabi* 八千度 "Eight thousand times" means that no matter how many times one regrets, it is in vain.

[Teika:]

Concerning the five poems above [829, 830, 833, 837, 841], our interpretation is identical.

・[Poem no. 845]

[Composed while viewing blossoms near a pond during a year of national mourning]

midzu no omo ni	Unbid, his image
shidzuku hana no iro	rises clear in memory's eye
sayaka ni mo	when I see the flowers'
kimi ga mikage no	bright reflection at the bottom
omohoyuru kana	of the pond's surface.

[Ono no Takamura 小野篁]

The expression *Midzu no omo ni / shidzuku hana no iro* 水のおもにしづく花の色 "The flowers' bright reflection at the bottom of the pond's surface" means [that the flowers' reflection] sinks [to the bottom of the pond's surface]. That is the reason why in some common manuscripts [of the anthology] it is written *shidzumu* "sinks".[25] "To sink" means [in this case] that [the flowers] are reflected on the water. The poem says that, like the flowers that are reflected on the surface of the pond, the august face of the [sovereign] who died is remembered clearly. In the *Man.yōshū* a poem [no. 4199] says:

fudjinami no	So clear is the bottom
kage naru umi no	of the lake that reflects the image
soko kiyomi	of the wisteria waves
shidzuku ishi wo mo	that the sunken stones seem to me
tama to zo aga miru	as many pearls.

A horse-readying song (*saibara* 催馬楽) says:

kadzuraki no	In Kazuraki

[25] While the verb *shizuku* 沈く is static (to be at the bottom of the pond), the verb *shizumu* 沈む indicates a movement (to sink).

tera no mahe naru ya	in front of the monastery
toyora no tera no	the monastery of Toyora
nishi naru ya	on the west side
enoha wi ni	in the spring of Enoha
shiratama shidzuku ya	white pearls are at the bottom
mashitatama shidzuku ya	white pearls at the bottom.

[Teika:]

The expression *shidzuku* “at the bottom [of the pond’s surface]” is not so different [from *shidzumu*] “sink [in the water]”. *Osahete shidzumu* おさへて沈 “to force something down [into the water]” is probably difficult to use [in poetry]. *Shidzumu* means to sink to the bottom [of the pond], *hitaru* ひたる means to be partially immersed in water. For example, when something seems to be partially immersed [in water], it is visible among the waves, and it seems to be tossed by them. It is said that one must have the impression that it is sometimes hidden, sometimes visible. On the other hand, concerning the stones that emerge, I was taught that one should say that one sees them apart, as if they appear among the waves that seem to be tossing them about. The proof-poems *shōka* 證歌[26] quoted here are, it seems to me, consistent with this.

・[Poem no. 846]

[Composed on the death anniversary of the Fukakusa Emperor, Nimmyō]

kusa fukaki	Is it not a year today
kasumi no tani ni	since the shining sun darkened
kage kakushi	hiding its radiance
teru hi no kureshi	in a haze-shrouded valley
kefu ni ya ha aranu	overgrown with tall grasses?

[Fun.ya no Yasuhide 文屋康秀]

[Emperor Ninmyo 仁明天皇] is called the emperor of Fukakusa *fukakusa no mikado* 深草の御門 because he was buried in a tomb in Fukakusa 深草.[27] The deep grass and the valley of mist refer to

[26] *Shōka*, more often written 証歌, are poems quoted in order to prove that certain expressions, certain images, have already been used in previous poems.

[27] Fukakusa is in the southern portion of present day Kyōto. It was a separate village in premodern times.

the imperial tomb in Fukakusa. To say that an emperor is dead one [uses the Chinese expression] *shengxia* / JPN *shōka* 昇霞 which means that "[his] haze rises", so the expression "he hid its radiance in a haze-shrouded valley" is used here. As the emperor died on the 21st of the third month, it is very appropriate that the poem sings that banks of haze float in the valley. Everything is in accordance here! In the poem it is said that "today is the day when the shining sun darkened, hiding its radiance" because it is the anniversary of the death of the emperor. The expression "shining sun" refers to the emperor.

[Teika:]

The meaning [of this poem] is clear.

・[Poem no. 851]

[On seeing plum blossoms at a house where the owner had died.]

[Version in Kenshō's text:]

iro mo ka mo	The hue is no richer
mukashi ni kosazu	and the perfume no more fragrant
nihohedomo	than in days gone by
uhekemu hito no	but how I long for a glimpse
kage zo kohishiki	of the one who planted the tree.

[Common version:]

[*iro mo ka mo*	[The hue is as rich
mukashi no kosa ni	and the perfume as fragrant
nihohedomo	as in days gone by
uhekemu hito no	but how I long for a glimpse
kage zo kohishiki]	of the one who planted the tree.]

[Ki no Tsurayuki 紀貫之]

When we praise something, we [usually] say that it exceeds that of the past. [The poem says that] although the intensity of the past is the same as that of the present, we miss the person who planted the tree. In the common versions [of the Collection] we read *mukashi no kosa ni nihodomo* 昔のこさにゝほへども "[The hue is] as rich and [the perfume] as fragrant as in days gone by". This means that the deep hue they once had [remains today with] the same intensity, which comes to the same

thing [as in this version of the poem]. In the *Tsurayuki shū* 貫之集 (*Tsurayuki Collection*), we find the variant *mukashi nokosazu nihodomo* 昔のこさずにほへども, which means "with their former qualities, without neglecting any, they are [today] absolutely as beautiful". Among the three versions, *mukashi nokosazu* "With their old qualities, without neglecting any, [or as in the past]" seems to me the best. If we say *mukashi ni kosazu* 昔にこさず "without surpassing that of the past", how could anything absolutely surpass what existed in the past? This seems excessive to me. To say *mukashi no kosa ni nihohedomo*"[The hue is] as rich and [the perfume] as fragrant as in days gone by, but", focuses on intensity, which is vulgar. When we talk about hue and fragrance, [saying] *mukashi nokosazu* "with their former qualities, without neglecting any" seems to me ample and good.

[Teika:]

In this poem is used the expression *mukashi no kosa* 昔のこさ "the intensity they once had / [The hue is] as rich and [the perfume] as fragrant as in days gone by". It is consistent to speak of intensity in relation to hue or fragrance. In the manuscripts I consulted and in the *Tsurayuki Collection* it is written *mukashi no kosa* "the intensity they once had / as rich and fragrant as in days gone by". These are versions left by persons from the past. So there is no need to argue.

・[Poem no. 852]

[Composed on seeing the re-creation of Shiogama when he went to the mansion of the Kawara Minister of the Left [Minamoto no Tōru 源融] after the Minister's death.]

kimi masade	How lonely it looks –
keburi taenishi	the vast expanse of garden
shihogama no	with no smoke rising
urasabishiku mo	above Shiogama shore
miewataru kana	now that the master is gone.
[Ki no Tsurayuki]	

This poem refers to the splendid mansion that the Kawara Minister of the Left [Minanoto no Tōru] built at Rokujō-Kawara [Kyōto].[28] A pond had been dug there and filled with water. Every month, thirty *koku* 石 of sea water were brought and poured in, making fish and shellfish from the bottom of the sea live there. The Shiogama Bay しほがま（塩釜）の浦 in Michinoku 陸奥 province had been reproduced and [the Minister] enjoyed the work of the salt workers who made smoke rise by burning

[28] On this mansion and its importance in poetic commentary, see Smits, 2022. For a detailed description of its famous garden, see Frank, 2011.

salt, but after his death, Tsurayuki, seeing that the smoke of Shiogama Bay had stopped, celebrated the master of the place with this poem. The prefix *ura* 浦/うら "bay/heart" is commonly used in various expressions such as *urasabishi* 浦さびし "a sad [heart]", *uramezurashi* うらめづらし "[a heart] full of wonder", *urakanashi* うらかなし "a sorrowful [heart]",[29] but the reference here is to Shiogama Bay. It is a poignant poem. This is the residence [also] called Higashi-Rokujō 東六條 or the residence located east of Sixth Avenue.

[Teika:]

[In this explanation] nothing needs to be clarified.

・[Poem no. 855]

naki hito no	If indeed, cuckoo,
yado ni kayohaba	you are a bird who journeys
hototogisu	to haunts of the dead,
kakete ne ni nomi	let him know my days are spent
naku to tsugenamu	thinking of him and weeping.

[Anonymous]

The expression *naki hito no yado* なき人のやど, "haunts of the dead", is based on the fact that the cuckoo is considered to be a bird from the Land of the Dead (*Yomi no kuni* よみの國), and it is said in poetry that it comes from the Mountain of Death (*Shide no yama* しでの山). That is why the cuckoo is said to call the chief steward of its fields in the Land of the Dead and order him to cultivate its rice fields. In this same *Collection* we read:

ikubaku no	What is the number
ta wo tsukureba ka	of the fields he cultivates
hototogisu	the cuckoo who cries
shide no tawosa wo	every morning and calls
asa na asa na yobu	his field overseer in the Land of the Dead?

[no. 1013, Fujiwara no Toshiyuki 藤原敏行]

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[29] The three expressions with *ura*, absent in the printed version of the *Kenchū mikkan*, have been added according to the manuscript version of the text.

How should we understand the above poem? Among Ise's poems [we read]:

shide no yama	He probably came
koete kitsuran	crossing the Mountain of Death
hototogisu	this cuckoo:
kohishiki hito no	I would like him to tell me
uhe kataranamu	about the one I miss so much.

[*Shūi waka shū*, Laments, no. 1307, Composed on hearing a cuckoo one year after the death of the prince, her son.]

In this composition, it is said [that the cuckoo] comes from the Mountain of Death, *Shide no yama*. To say that the cuckoo comes from the Mountain of Death is, as we know, something that was already written in the past. On the other hand, to say "the haunts of the dead"/*naki hito no yado*, when thinking of the land of the dead, is not illogical.

[Teika:]

The meaning [of the poem] is the same [in our tradition]. In this poem "the haunts of the dead"/*naki hito no yado* means the house where a person resided, but since this person is [now] dead, [the poet] says "if you go to the haunt of the dead". Since [this place] is in the vicinity of the Mountain of Death, [the poet orders the cuckoo] to go to this mountain and to let the dead know "that the days [of the poet] are spent thinking of him and weeping." This is what the poem says, I learned. [Kenshō's interpretation and ours] are probably not different.

・[Poem no. 858]

[A man's wife suddenly fell ill while he was away in the provinces. When she had grown fatally weak, she composed this poem and died.]

kowe wo dani	It grieves my spirit
kikade wakaruru	to take leave without hearing
tama yori mo	the sound of your voice,
naki toko ni nemu	yet what will it be for you
kimi zo kanashiki	to sleep in an empty bed?

[Anonymous]

Tama たま means "spirit". [In poetry,] a human's spirit is called *tama*.

・[Poem no. 862:]

[The author suddenly fell ill while on his way to visit a friend in Kai Province 甲斐國. Realising that he was dying, he gave someone this poem to take to his mother in the capital.]

karisome no	"Only a short trip
yukikahidji to zo	to Kai Province and back,"
omohikoshi	so I thought as I left –
ima ha kagiri no	yet it was the departure
kadode narikeri	from which there is no return.

Ariwara no Shigeharu 在原滋春, the son [in fact, the younger brother] of the Middle Captain Ari[wara no Narihira 在原業平], while on his way to Kai province, suddenly fell ill. As he felt his death was imminent, he had this poem brought to the capital to show to his mother. The expression *yukikahidji* ゆきかひぢ means "[a trip] to [somewhere] and back". This expression is used here in reference to the province of Kahi [since it contains its name].

[Teika:]

There is, concerning these two poems [nos. 858 and 862], no point to clarify.

Conclusion

Reading these commentaries, we understand that Kenshō's main objective was to provide the necessary explanations for a correct understanding of the poems. As underlined by Kyūsojin Hitaku,[30] Kenshō seems to have given a particular importance to checking and explaining the following points:

1. The difficult terms. By using different ancient Japanese sources (poetic collections, poetry treatises, stories, novels) but also Chinese sources (canonical works, Buddhist sutras, etc.) Kenshō explains the origin and the meaning of some terms used in poetry. This can be seen in the commentaries on poems 829, 837, and 858.

[30] Kyūsojin 1981, 27–30.

2. The facts. Kenshō explains certain facts by using Chinese sources (canonical works, Buddhist sutras, etc). It is interesting to note that the quotations are sometimes truncated (as we have seen in the case of poem 830) which suggests that, for Kenshō, his readership (by definition very limited) had the necessary knowledge to reconstruct from memory the missing parts of the quoted texts. See the comments on poems 829, 830, and 846.
3. The circumstances. Kenshō explains in which particular circumstances certain poems were composed. See, for example, the comments above on poems 852 and 862.
4. The traditions. Kenshō explains certain traditions, or certain customs of ancient Japanese society. See, for example, in his commentary on poem 841 the explanations concerning mourning clothes.
5. Textual variants. Kenshō in his commentary seizes on the variants that can be found between different manuscripts of *Kokin waka shū*. See his comments to poems 845 and 851.

Although absent from the commentaries we have just read, Kenshō also set out to explain the use of certain *makura kotoba* 枕詞 "pillow words" or "guide phrases" preparatory to specific words. As Sumie Terada explains, "'guide phrases' are fixed poetic expressions, some of which were already perceived as archaic in the 8th century. Because of their remote origin, the meaning of some of them became enigmatic very early on" and thus required explanations.[31]

Finally, Kenshō also provides in some of his commentaries explanations concerning "famous sites used in poetry" (*meisho* 名所 or *utamakura* 歌枕).[32] More than a thousand "famous sites used in poetry" have been listed within the tradition, and the use of famous sites is very frequent in *waka* poetry.

Teika's commentaries are usually much shorter. As Teika writes in his afterword, his commentaries aim above all at transmitting the family tradition constituted by his father Fujiwara no Shunzei and the latter's master in poetry, Fujiwara no Mototoshi, completed on occasion by some original explanations coming from Teika's personal experience. What is striking when reading Teika's comments — the examples we have read are quite representative of this — is that Teika generally approves of the explanations given by Kenshō. This double commentary proves that in spite of the rivalry between their schools, their interpretations of *Kokin waka shū* poems were mostly identical. Although we have only read a tiny part of the *Kenchū mikkan* — 12 poems and their commentaries out of 410 —, we are struck by the extent of Kenshō's erudition: Japanese sources, Chinese sources, nothing seems to have escaped the vigilance of this erudite poet. As a contemporary reader of this double commentary from the 13th century, I am aware of our debt to Kenshō and Teika. Besides the fact that all modern editions of *Kokin waka shū* are based on one of Teika's manuscripts (two of his autograph manuscripts are preserved), we are aware of how much our contemporary interpretation of the poems of the imperial anthology is indebted to the commentary work of these two major poets and scholars.

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[31] Terada 2004, 66. See, for example, the commentary on poem 84 absent from our corpus.

[32] See, for example, the commentary on poem 473 absent from our corpus.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Epistolary Activities in the Early Southern Ming Period (1644–1652)

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This study examines the communicative function, political value, and epistolary stages of letters during the war-filled early Southern Ming period. The term "Southern Ming" was proposed by modern historians to refer to the Ming regimes established in the south after the collapse of the Beijing Ming government in 1644. On the basis of this social context, this study focuses on letters written by Southern Ming supporters between 1644 and 1652, avoiding simply categorising them as Ming or Qing letters. I argue that because of the paralysed Ming postal system, these private letters became an alternative method for the dissemination of Ming or Qing military and political news, effectively liaising with Southern Ming supporters in different territories or regions. Furthermore, the epistolary stages of writing, transmission, reception, preservation, circulation, and dissemination demonstrated dynamic interactions. The understanding of the social situation in the war period and the anticipation of possible variables at different stages of letter exchange prompted Southern Ming correspondents to try to avoid factors that might disrupt their correspondence, even before they began to write. The turbulent social situation caused early Southern Ming letters not only to contain their correspondents' self-representation but also to be involved in the political and military fields in the special era of the Ming-Qing transition.

"南明"一詞特指 1644 年明北京政府覆滅後在南方建立的明朝政權。本文基於這一社會背景，探討南明初年書信的交流功能和政治價值。1644 至 1652 年間南明支持者的書信通常被籠統地歸類為明代或清代書信。在明朝郵驛系統因戰亂癱瘓的情況下，這些私人書信承擔了傳遞明清軍政消息的關鍵角色，有效聯絡了活躍於不同地區的南明支持者。書信的撰寫、傳遞、接收、保存、流通和傳播過程呈現出動態的互動。基於對當時局勢的判斷及對通信過程中可能遇到變數的預測，南明支持者在撰寫書信時試圖規避可能幹擾正常通信的因素。在南明初年動盪的社會環境中，私人書信不僅是通信者的自我呈現，還展現出其在明清易代之際深度介入政治和軍事領域的獨特性。

Keywords: Letters, epistolary activities, the Southern Ming period, the Ming-Qing transition, Ming loyalists

關鍵詞： 書信，書信活動，南明，明清易代，明遺民

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This study investigates the epistolary stages of writing, transmission, reception, preservation, circulation, and dissemination of letters during the war-filled early Southern Ming period (1644–1652). It shows how private letters written by Southern Ming supporters became an alternative to the Ming official postal system for exchanging military and political messages and how the different stages of the epistolary process interacted dynamically. Although the Beijing Ming government collapsed in 1644, Emperors Hongguang 弘光, Longwu 隆武, and Yongli 永曆 established Ming courts in southern China in 1644, 1645, and 1646. In both the Ming and Qing territories, many people still conducted political, military, cultural, and social activities as Ming subjects, which became a strong impediment to the Qing regime's occupation of the Ming territory and subjugation of Ming subjects.[1] Their self-identification with the Ming identity made it difficult to categorise their letters as Ming or Qing. This is partly because, according to official historiography, the Ming dynasty collapsed in 1644,[2] but also because their correspondence was deeply associated with anti-Qing actions, and they never considered themselves to be Qing subjects, even though from 1645 onwards, most of them were technically subject to the Qing. Thus, I examine their epistolary activities in the social context of the Southern Ming period, to distinguish their letters from those of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

The "Southern Ming" is a term proposed by modern scholars to distinguish several Ming courts established in the south after 1644.[3] The Beijing Ming government was first broken by the Shun army on April 25, 1644 (Struve, 1984, 15–16). However, after less than two months, on June 6, the Qing army defeated the Shun government, which had ruled China for only one-and-a-half months, and gradually took control of northern China (Gu, 2011, 19, 22, 55–63). This gave the Ming forces, who had fled to the south, the opportunity to maintain Ming rule. On June 19, 1644, Ming officials endorsed the Ming prince, Zhu Yousong 朱由崧 (1607–1646), and established the Hongguang court in Nanjing 南京. However, this court lasted only one year before the Qing army defeated it. Nevertheless, other officials soon supported the accession of another Ming prince, Zhu Yujian 朱聿鍵 (1602–1646), to the throne in Fuzhou 福州 on August 18, 1645. The newly established Longwu court, like its predecessor, lasted for only one year and collapsed on October 6, 1646, after the Qing army killed its emperor (Gu, 2011, 39, 137–143, 183–186, 222–225). However, the Qing army was stuck fighting the Ming army in Jiangxi for the next few years and could not immediately attack the Yongli court established in Zhaoqing 肇慶 on December 24, 1646. This court, led by Zhu Youlang 朱由榔 (1623–1662), a timid and untalented Ming prince, miraculously held out in the southwest for sixteen years (Gu, 2011, 288–291, 342–357). According to historian Qian Haiyue, the Southern Ming period did not end until the Qing regime recovered Taiwan in 1683, because from that year onwards, Yongli, the last Ming reign title, was no longer used publicly (Qian, 2016, 1).

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[1] Although it was the Shun army that directly contributed to the fall of the Beijing Ming government, this regime lasted only a year, and its remnants defected to the Ming army in the summer of 1645. Therefore, the main rival forces in the early Southern Ming period were the Ming and the Qing. See *Dashun shigao*, pp. 120 to 174.

[2] See *Zhuanglie di zhuan er* 莊烈帝傳二 (Biography of Zhu Youjian Ⅱ) and *Zhu Yousong zhuan* 朱由崧傳 (Biography of Zhu Yousong) in *Mingshi* 明史 (History of the Ming) (*Mingshi*, 2000, 224, 2417).

[3] See historians Lynn A. Struve's *The Southern Ming 1644-1662*, Qian Haiyue's *Nanming shi*, and Gu Cheng's *Nanming shi*.

During this period, two other Ming princes also tried to act as southern Ming emperors. On September 7, 1645, Zhu Yihai 朱以海 (1618–1662), the Prince of Lu 魯王, was endorsed by some Southern Ming supporters as Regent Lu 魯監國 in Shaoxing 紹興, Zhejiang. They gathered military forces to fight against the Qing army while struggling for power with Emperor Longwu. However, a year later, with the Qing army's occupation of eastern Zhejiang, Zhu Yihai had to flee the mainland and continue his anti-Qing action along the southeast coast of Zhejiang and Fujian (Gu, 2011, 189–197, 214, 275–281). Another Ming prince, Zhu Yuyu 朱聿鐭 (1605–1647), with the support of the Southern Ming official Su Guansheng 蘇觀生 (?–1647), hastily proclaimed himself emperor in Guangzhou on December 11, 1646. Unlike Regent Lu, Zhu Yuyu did not fully participate in the conflict with the Qing army but was busy fighting with Emperor Yongli, who established a new Ming court in the same month, for control of the Ming forces in the south. However, a month later (January 1647), Guangzhou was occupied by the Qing army, prompting Zhu Yuyu and some of his supporters to choose martyrdom, and his reign title of "Shaowu 紹武" was never used (Gu, 2011, 286–290).

This study focuses on the early Southern Ming period from 1644 to 1652. I assume the end of the early period was 1652 because the Yongli regime was the key node of the Ming forces from its establishment and operation to its decline: the actual controller of the Yongli court changed. In 1652, Emperor Yongli was welcomed by Sun Kewang 孫可望, former general of the Daxi army 大西軍[4], to Anlong 安隆 in Guizhou. Thereafter, Sun controlled the Yongli court, turning Emperor Yongli into his puppet (Gu, 2011, 479–483). The impact of this time point on the activities of the Southern Ming letter-writers was enormous. Letter exchanges between correspondents were closely related to the stability of the societies in which they lived. During the early Southern Ming period, when society was in turmoil, questions that deserve further exploration include whether the topics discussed in letters were different from those during peacetime, how private letters were transmitted and received, whether they could be preserved, or whether they could to a certain extent be circulated and disseminated, how the different stages of the epistolary process interacted with the complex political situation, and whether such interactions, in turn, affected the epistolary process.

Although epistolary activities in the Southern Ming period have not yet been examined, studies on the epistolary process have focused on specific periods and correspondents, contributing to illuminating discussions on changes in epistolary processes and the function of private letters. Letter writing is a mechanism of self-representation. As Matthew Wells argues, in early China (the Han and early medieval periods), the elaborate images presented in autobiographical letters were rhetorical strategies used by writers to shape the self at critical moments in their lives (Wells, 2015, 621–642). Similarly, Zhao Shugong believes that, in the Tang dynasty (618–701), letters written requesting a meeting with people in authority (*ganyeshu* 干謁書) were a manifestation of the writers' desire for a political career (Zhao, 1999, 197). Nonetheless, letter writers are not always free to choose their topics. In her exploration of women's letters in the late Ming and early Qing period, Ellen Widmer suggests that some of the taboos imposed on female correspondents probably limited the topics of their letters (Widmer, 2015, 744).

[4] This military force was originally established in the southwest by Zhang Xianzhong 張獻忠 (1606-1647) to overthrow the Ming regime.

In contrast, the transmission, reception, and preservation of letters were flexible and varied. Scholars have found that official and private correspondence did not travel through the same postal system. As Antje Richter points out, in early medieval China, most private letters were delivered by private messengers. She argues that although the official postal system was prohibited from transmitting private letters, the illegal use of this network may have been common (Richter, 2013, 30–32). Timothy Brook believes that this phenomenon was equally prevalent during the Ming dynasty (Brook, 1998, 640). In most cases, the received letters would be preserved by the recipients because of their value in demonstrating the nature of the relationship and in order to appreciate the calligraphy. However, in the late Northern Song to early Southern Song periods, as well as in the late Ming and early Qing periods, received letters were often compiled in letter collections, preserving them in the form of commercial publications (Widmer, 1989, 1–43; Widmer, 1996, 77–122; Zhao, 1999, 73; Pattinson, 2006, 125–157). This resulted in a letter originally addressed to a single recipient reaching a broader readership. Both Wells and Suyoung Son have argued that the readership of private letters was not always private. They were not only read by contemporaries but also made available for circulation among the public or future readers (Wells, 2015, 621–622; Son, 2015, 879–899).[5]

Most of the above epistolary studies are focused on stable social environments. In the early Southern Ming period, however, the wars and territorial divisions brought about by the Ming-Qing transition seriously disrupted official and private epistolary processes. I argue that although the exchange of private Southern Ming letters was not always successful, they became an alternative to the paralysed Ming official postal system because of their more flexible and secretive delivery methods. Private letters played an important role in transmitting governmental information and liaising with scattered Southern Ming supporters in different regions and territories. These letters were no longer merely aimed at exchanging personal messages but were endowed with political value through their deep involvement with the changeable social situation between 1644 and 1652. Furthermore, during this period, the different stages of the epistolary process showed dynamic interactions. Familiarity with the social turmoil and the difficulty of message exchanges, as well as forecasting of the possible circumstances that might arise throughout the epistolary process, would motivate correspondents to attempt, even before their letters were written, to solve the internal and external factors occurring in the stages of transmission, reception, preservation, circulation, and dissemination that could disrupt their epistolary activities. The anticipation of difficulties in letter transmission led correspondents to choose, as far as possible, bearers who would be able to deliver their letters successfully and to use special material methods to compose their letters. A foreknowledge that their letters might be circulated among Southern Ming supporters who wanted to understand the relevant news would, in turn, motivate senders to consider writing on more than one topic in a single letter. Southern Ming correspondents also used their letters

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[5] By examining the letters written by the publisher Zhang Chao 張潮 (ca. 1650-1707), Son suggests that letters are sometimes not only written to specific recipients but also to draw the attention of the public so that writers can defend their rights.

to reshape or reinforce a particular image—as loyalists of the Ming dynasty—among a broader readership, thereby defending their reputation, which might have suffered from the transmission of inaccurate information.

The letters examined in this study were written by Huang Daozhou 黃道周 (1585–1646), Qu Shisi 瞿式耜 (1590–1650), Fang Yizhi 方以智 (1611–1671), Hou Tongzeng 侯峒曾 (1591–1645), and Hou Qizeng 侯岐曾 (1595–1647) between 1644 and 1652. Most of these letters were sent to relatives and friends and survive as printed versions preserved in their collected works, diaries, and calligraphy collections.[6]

Huang Daozhou was from Zhangzhou 漳州 in Fujian. After the establishment of the Longwu court, he was appointed Grand Secretary 大學士 and Minister of Personnel 吏部尚書. However, in 1646, he was captured by the Qing army and executed on April 20 of the same year because he failed in an anti-Qing action (Hong, 1999, 29–37). Both Qu Shisi and Fang Yizhi travelled from the southeast to the southwest to support the Ming forces. Qu was a Southern Ming official appointed by Emperor Hongguang and had been stationed in Guilin 桂林 since the summer of 1645 (Qu, 1987, 55–58). In contrast, after arriving in the southwest, Fang became an official of the Yongli court for only a short period and returned to the southeast as a monk after Qu's death in 1650 (Fang, 2018, 102–168). Hou Tongzeng and Hou Qizeng were brothers who both supported the Ming forces in the southeast. In 1645, their hometown, Jiading 嘉定 in Songjiang 松江, fell under Qing control (Dennerline, 1981, 297–298).[7]

Between 1644 and 1652, these correspondents lived in different territories and regions, had different identities, and had different purposes in carrying out letter exchanges; thus their letters illuminate the epistolary activities of this period from various angles, including, but not limited to, geography, identity, materiality, and writing skills. It should be noted that because of the frequent wars during this period, the transmission and preservation of letters were extremely difficult. The correspondents discussed in this study must have written more letters than those we can currently read. Nonetheless, their preserved letters still provide us with a window into how the different stages of the epistolary process were maintained and interacted during the tumultuous war period of the early Southern Ming.

[6] It should be noted that these printed letters were edited, but changes to the texts caused by the editing process have a minimal impact on the findings of this study. This is because a letter is chosen for publication as the compilers, editors, or other people who are involved in the publishing process believe that its content is inherently of some value. In this case, they are bound to retain most of the text or what they consider to be significant, editing only minor details—correcting orthographical errors or deleting a few lengthy and meaningless expressions—to present the content more accurately and clearly.

[7] Hou Tongzeng committed suicide after his anti-Qing action in Jiading failed, and Hou Qizeng was executed by the Qing army a year later for harbouring Chen Zilong 陳子龍 (1608-1647), a Southern Ming supporter. ("Hou qizeng riji" 侯岐曾日記, 482).

The Transmission of Private Letters: An Alternative to the Official Postal System

The information conveyed in private letters is usually centred on the daily lives of the senders and recipients. Although the spectrum of topics can be broader, from greetings and health to governmental decrees and literary discussions, the content generally revolves around personal life experiences and social activities, and the communicative function of the letters is largely confined to conveying the latest news on behalf of individuals. However, in contrast to peacetime, because of the turbulence between 1644 and 1652, private letters were no longer limited to sharing personal information. While the wars disrupted the Ming postal system, the flexibility and secrecy of delivering private letters made it possible to exchange military and political news across territories and regions and to bring Southern Ming supporters into contact.

The Ming postal system had already started to break down well before the Ming actually collapsed. Many postmen who were made redundant joined the rebels. After the fall of the Ming dynasty, competition between different regimes over the Ming territory seriously hampered the operation of this official postal system. According to the diary of the Ming official Qi Biaojia 祁彪佳 (1603–1645) for June 1, 1644, the news of Emperor Chongzhen's 崇禎 suicide and the collapse of the Beijing government on April 25 did not reach the southeastern area until late May, more than a month later ("Jiashen rili" 甲申日曆, 740).[8] Even after the Hongguang court had been established, the blocked or delayed transmission of official news remained unresolved. Li Qing 李清 (1602–1683), a Southern Ming official, recorded the situation after the Qing army had captured Yangzhou in 1645:

> There were no boats crossing the [Yangtze] river, and the news between the north and the south was cut off. It was not until the twenty-ninth day that the Ministry of War received the news [of the Yangzhou massacre], but the ordinary people still knew nothing about it.
>
> 大江中無一舟渡，南北聲絕，遲至二十九日，兵部始得報，民間猶未知也。
>
> (*Nandu lu* 南渡錄, 274)

Similarly, in a letter to his family members written on October 28, 1646, Qu Shisi, as a Southern Ming official stationed in the southwest, complained about the slow delivery of notifications of government appointments during the winter of 1645.[9] Between 1644 and 1652, when confrontation between regimes was fierce, cutting off normal official post routes was a common approach to preventing the

[8] See Kishimoto Mio's study for more details on the transmission of information about Beijing from Beijing to the Jiangnan area (Kishimoto, 1999, 25-32).

[9] It took two and a half months for Qu to receive from the southeast orders for the appointment of officials. According to his records in the same letter, on April 26, 1645, he set off from his hometown Changshu 常熟 in Nanzhili 南直隸 (the area of modern Jiangsu, Anhui, and Shanghai), and on June 26 of the same year, he took office in Wuzhou 梧州 in Guangxi. In other words, his entire trip took less than two months. Qu's wife and mother went to Guangxi with him, and they stayed in Hangzhou 杭州 for seven days in May, which may have contributed to slowing down his journey. However, the government appointment delivered through the official postal system took longer

exchange of information among hostile regimes. The Ming and Qing armies set up garrison troops and checkpoints on their territories, which cut off transmission, and one would hardly expect the Qing to allow the Ming postal system to operate in its territory. As Southern Ming official Peng Qisheng 彭期生 (1614–1646), who was stationed in Ganzhou 贛州 in Jiangxi, mentioned in a letter written on May 22, 1646:

> When the messenger [who delivered the report to Emperor Longwu] was leaving [to return to Wulin], I asked him to take a letter to my family, ... Unexpectedly, when he arrived in Wulin, my hometown had been occupied by the Qing army, [so] this letter was not delivered.
>
> 奏事人去。曾附以家書。……不謂信使赴武林而吾鄉已陷(逆虜)矣。此信亦遂不得達。
>
> ("Peng Qisheng" 彭期生, 201 – 202)

On May 5, 1649, Qu Shisi, who wanted to send a letter from Ming territory to his hometown, which had become Qing territory, was also worried that:

> Since Jiangxi reverted to [Ming] allegiance in the first month of 1648, the route [to my hometown] has become even difficult and [Qing] interrogation is more strict.
>
> 況自戊子正月。西江反正之後。途路益難。盤詰益緊。
>
> ("Qu Shisi" 瞿式耜, 148)

Such circumstances made it impossible for military and political news to be successfully delivered to different territories or regions through the official postal system. Poor official delivery prompted Southern Ming correspondents to rely more on private letter exchanges for information transmission.

Compared with official postal methods, the way in which private letters were materially constituted and delivered had a higher likelihood of success. The use of the official postal system was governed by specific regulations regarding the selection of personnel, use of transport, verification of the courier's identity, and authenticity of the information. Couriers of the Ming postal system used horses or boats of various sizes (depending on the route) to transmit governmental documents, messages, or items. When delivering urgent messages, horses were required to be harnessed with bronze bells, so that the horsemen at the next post station would have a replacement horse ready as soon as they heard the bell ring. In addition, couriers were required to carry an officially issued "*fuyan* 符驗": a certificate verifying the identity of the courier and the authenticity of the documents (*Daming huidian* 大明會典, 145.1a, 5a – 6a). These regulations made it easier for official couriers who were performing delivery tasks to be recognised and distinguished from ordinary travellers. Perhaps couriers in the Southern Ming period did not always strictly follow the regulations to avoid the danger of interception, but the

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than his trip from the southeast to the southwest ("Bingxu jiuyue er'shi ri shuji" 丙戌九月二十日書寄, 251-252; Qu, 1987, 58).

inability to avoid delivery restrictions and the difficulty of concealing official status would inevitably make their efforts useless. In contrast, the transmission of private letters could be more secretive and flexible, in both material composition and delivery methods. To transmit letters between Ming and Qing territories, Southern Ming correspondents focused on methods of hiding letters, looking for reliable delivery routes, and selecting bearers who could deliver letters successfully.[10] The checks on those who would travel from one territory to another might be extremely strict, driving private letters that originally would have only needed to be sealed in paper envelopes to be hidden in unpredictable ways. In 1647, a letter sent by Qu Shisi's family was tucked into an umbrella handle by the bearer ("Qu Shisi", 149). Similarly, one of Qu's family letters, written between October and November 1648, was sealed in a ball of wax ("Wuzi jiuyue shuji" 戊子九月書寄, 263 – 265).[11] The purpose for which the letter was concealed was not merely to avoid loss but, more importantly, to avoid its being discovered or destroyed during delivery. A wax ball sealed the stationery on all sides, and wax provided surer protection than a paper envelope from water or fire. In addition, using hot wax to crush the stationery into a ball might make letters easier to carry because of their small size. The umbrella handle was even more useful for evading searches, as it would be unlikely for the searcher to expect a letter to be hidden that way. According to Qu Shisi, his letter to his family, hidden in the handle of the bearer's umbrella, was not found by the person who intercepted it but was removed by the bearer himself when his life was threatened ("Qu Shisi", 149).

It was relatively difficult to intercept letters being delivered privately. According to the Ming regulations, whether for officials or ordinary people, private letters should be delivered by unofficial bearers such as relatives, friends, travellers, or monks.[12] These people, having different identities, did not always choose the same routes when travelling between Ming and Qing territories. On November 27, 1648, Qu Shisi wrote a letter to his friend Gu Yushu 顧玉書, mentioning that his bearer planned a delivery route that might allow him to travel smoothly from Guangdong to his hometown Changshu:

> Because of two actions of Jin Shenghuan and Wang Deren, [the Yongli court] has regained control of Jiangxi. A Jiangxi man [has found] a by-way to Guangdong, so [I will] give him this

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[10] Richter suggests that, from early medieval China, the trustworthiness of bearers became extremely important. By comparison, the requirements for bearers in the early Southern Ming period were not only a matter of trust, but more importantly, of whether they could pass the Ming or Qing checkpoints (Richter, 2013, 41).

[11] Using wax balls to seal letters was not Qu Shisi's invention; the material composition of such letters was an important method in the wartime. As early as the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, a period of war and turmoil, there was a precedent of using wax ball letters to exchange secrets between generals. See *Sun Sheng zhuan* 孫晟傳 (Biography of Sun Sheng) in *Xin wudai shi* 新五代史 (A Newly Written History of the Five Dynasties) ("Sun Sheng zhuan", 241).

[12] See the stipulations in *Daming huidian* 大明會典 (Code of the Ming): "Regulations in the twenty-sixth year of the Hongwu reign period stipulate that all official horse watering stations and delivery offices are only for transferring official travellers, rapid reporting on military information, and transporting military supplies. 洪武二十六年定，凡天下水馬驛、遞運所，專一遞送使客、飛報軍情、轉運軍需等項。" However, Peng Qisheng, mentioned earlier, was someone who unsuccessfully asked an official courier to deliver a letter to his family. Nonetheless, among the ways of letter transmission during the early Southern Ming period, transmission by official courier was rare, because it was difficult to carry out this delivery method, and most private letters were delivered through unofficial means (*Daming huidian*, 145.1a).

letter and [ask him] to have a go at delivering it to you. If [this post method succeeds and] we can frequently exchange letters, we can continue to send letters in this way.

茲因金、王兩動，西江反正，江人以間道入粵，遂附之同行，姑且試之。此後若可頻通往來，當續寄也。

("Yu Gu Yushu shouzha sifeng (si)" 與顧玉書手劄四封(四), 277)

Although several similar attempts by Qu had failed, we can still observe his efforts in selecting routes and bearers. He dispatched servants (or subordinates) Zhang Ying 張英 and Zhou Yi 周誼, monks, and travellers such as Luo Zhiyu 羅之煜 to carry letters ("Qu Shisi", 148–150). All of these people were carefully selected by Qu because bearers with diverse identities could provide different degrees of possibility for the successful delivery of letters. Servants or subordinates were loyal to him and would try their best to deliver letters, as we can see by the fact that Qu's servant, Zhou Yi, stayed where the route was blocked, waiting for the least opportunity to travel into Qing territory ("Qu Shisi", 148). As a group detached from political restraints, monks had a special status that would gain respect from people in all positions, allowing them to be checked less frequently when travelling from one territory to another. Luo Zhiyu's hometown was in Jiangxi; therefore, he may have been able to pass the checkpoints more successfully by saying he was returning home.

This variety of methods made it comparatively difficult for the Qing government to block the transmission of all private letters, while, for the Southern Ming correspondents, their letters became a mechanism to achieve the cross-territory or cross-regional delivery of Ming military and political information. Since Southern Ming supporters did not always live in Ming territory, they relied heavily on private letter exchanges to deliver Ming news and contact other supporters in different places. In the summer of 1645, as the Qing army occupied the southeastern region, it was dangerous to take action against the Qing regime. As Ming loyalist Hou Qizeng wrote in his diary on February 28, 1646:

Now [people who secretly supported the Ming force] were worried that their whereabouts would be exposed, [so they] only wrote letters on a small piece of bamboo paper to exchange information secretly at any time.

時惟恐聲跡少露，朝夕密通往來，止裁竹紙一小幅。

("Hou Qizeng riji", 486)

From 1645 onwards, with the occupation of the Ming territory from the southeast to the southwest, the Qing court regarded the southern Ming courts as "*weichao* 偽朝 (illegitimate courts)" (Yin, 2016, 319). To avoid possible political persecution from the Qing regime, people no longer publicly supported the Ming forces. The channels through which they could obtain Ming news were extremely limited, prompting private letters conveying Ming affairs to become irreplaceable communication tools. Between 1644 and 1652 in particular, many Southern Ming supporters were scattered throughout

China, and their letters carried significant information on whether the courts established in the south could continue the Ming rule. In 1647, Xia Wanchun 夏完淳 (1631–1647), Hou Xuanjing 侯玄瀞, and Gu Xianzheng 顧鹹正 handed over letters to Xie Yaowen 謝堯文 and Sun Long 孫龍, who specialised in secret contact with other Southern Ming supporters in the eastern sea area of Zhejiang (Gu, 2011, 332). Their collective action had a high probability of being completed under the combined effects of their letters. A letter that conveyed information about contacting the Ming forces could help to gather anti-Qing fighters and update Ming news in a timely manner, because it functioned as a crucial medium for political communication among Southern Ming supporters who lived in Qing territory.

Paralysis of the Ming postal system and the Qing's occupation of the former Ming territory were undoubtedly key motivations whereby the use of private letters assumed an important role in transmitting military and political news at the time. Surprisingly, however, before 1646, when the Ming forces were in control of much of the south, Southern Ming correspondents still used private letters as the main means of delivering news and contacting Southern Ming supporters. From 1645 to 1646, Southern Ming official Huang Daozhou sent at least twelve letters to Ni Yuanzan 倪元瓚, Huang Chunyao 黃淳耀 (1605–1645), Zhongqiu 仲球, Shushi 叔實, Zu Tai 祖臺, Cao Yuansi 曹遠思, Meng Changmin 孟長民, Du Muyou 堵牧游, and Yin Minxing 尹民興.[13] With Huang's letters at the centre, these correspondents, sharing the ambition of reviving Ming rule, were connected. They shared mutual political demands and goals and exchanged messages about in-fighting within the Longwu court and the problem of military expenses. They discussed and formulated counter-measures according to the political situation, thus making an effort to support the Ming forces. Huang Daozhou is only one example in the southeastern region. Other correspondents, such as Xia Yunyi 夏允彝 (1696–1645), also wrote letters to their friends, relatives, and colleagues—for example, Hou Tongzeng and Chen Zilong—to convey Ming or Qing military and political news (Qian, 2016, 1638). However, because of the frequent wars in this area between 1644 and 1652, not all of their letters were preserved.

Huang Daozhou's example implies more than just a deep interaction between private letters and Ming news. Although some letters were addressed to a wider audience, it cannot be ignored that in the early Southern Ming period, there was still a portion of correspondence that needed to be exchanged in secret because it contained confidential government information. The private nature of epistolary writing undoubtedly became the best choice for correspondents to pass on essential news and to communicate with specific readers. In composing such letters, the writers not only aimed to convey certain military or political events that had taken place but also the results of these events and the likely adjustments in strategic planning that would follow. Between the autumn and winter of 1645, Huang Daozhou wrote a letter to friends whom we know only by their courtesy names, Zhongqiu and Shushi, focusing on an analysis of the current war situation, the preparation of military expenses, and the

[13] The writing dates of the letters to Zhongqiu, Shushi, Meng Changmin, Du Muyou, and Yin Minxing, as well as one letter to Ni Yuanzan, cannot be accurately verified ("Zhi Yunsheng shouzha" 致蘊生手札, 106; "Yu Xianru shu" 與獻汝書, 957-960; "Zhi Zhongqiu Shushi zha" 致仲球叔實札 and "Zhi Zu Tai zha" 致祖臺札, 239-245; "Da Cao Yuansi shu" 答曹遠思書, "Da Meng Changmin shu" 答孟長民書, "Da Du Muyou shu" 答堵牧遊書, and "Da Yin Minxing shu" 答尹民興書, 5.13a-16b).

strategic deployment of the Ming army ("Zhi Zhongqiu Shushi zha", 239–242). On December 14, 1645, he sent another letter to his friend Ni Yuanzan mentioning the forces of the Prince of Lu, Zhu Yihai, whose activities worried Emperor Longwu ("Yu Xianru shu", 960). On January 12, 1646, the Jiangxi official Zu Tai (mentioned above as a correspondent of Huang Daozhou) received a letter from Huang. In this letter, Huang proposed a military deployment method ("Zhi Zu Tai zha", 244–245). Similarly, in the southwestern region, Qu Shisi used letters to deliver news from the Yongli court, linking local Southern Ming officials and supporters. In 1646, Emperor Yongli dispatched Peng Yao 彭耀, an official of the Ministry of War, to Guangzhou to promulgate an imperial edict, but he was killed by the official Su Guansheng. Su sent troops to Zhaoqing to attack Emperor Yongli. To solve this political crisis, Chen Zizhuang 陳子壯, the Grand Secretary and concurrently Minister of War, wrote a letter to Qu Shisi requesting that Su be killed ("Yongli jinian shang" 永曆紀年上, 61). Personal letters provided Huang Daozhou and Qu Shisi, who served as significant ministers in the Longwu and Yongli courts, with the possibility of passing on government secrets and decrees. When the social situation was rapidly changing, official decrees, messages, and news, which required many rounds of scrutiny before they could be issued or disclosed through the official postal system, were probably far less rapid than those transmitted through private letters.

The official status of Huang Daozhou and Qu Shisi, as well as their choices of writing letters to convey Ming news, made the transmission of private letters crucial in periods of frequent war. Nonetheless, private letters were chosen for more Southern Ming supporters because they were ordinary people with no official positions at the time of the Ming collapse. As Huang Daozhou said in a letter written to Huang Chunyao in 1644, when he had not yet entered the Longwu court: "I am a person of low status and do not know any news of the court. 僕身處於五未。無緣知中朝動靜。" ("Zhi Yunsheng shouzha", 106) Despite the fact that these people even gave their lives in support of the restoration of Ming rule, it was essentially difficult for them to see official documents. Most of the anti-Qing actions they undertook were organised voluntarily (Su and Xu, 2018, 141–150).[14] At the end of July 1645, for example, Hou Tongzeng spent all his money recruiting thousands of people to fight against the Qing army in his hometown, Jiading ("Hou zhongjie gong quanji-nianpu xia" 侯忠節公全集-年譜下, 3.5b – 15b). Therefore, even if the Ming postal system continued to operate, they could not use official channels to contact other supporters or be informed accurately of anti-Qing actions. Instead, private letters helped them avoid the many limitations of official deliveries. In particular, when the successive failures of the Hongguang and Longwu courts left supporters of the Ming forces without a reliably strong government, the information provided to them by private letters may not have come entirely from within the imperial court but effectively supported their desire to resist the Qing army and enabled them to engage in attempting the restoration of Ming rule as loyal and righteous men.

[14] See the present author's and Xu Dajun's work on Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646). From 1634 to 1638, Feng was a Ming county magistrate of Shouning 壽寧 in Fujian but then retired. In 1644, when he was seventy years old, he left his hometown and travelled around Zhejiang and Fujian, following the Ming forces. However, despite the fact that he wrote several proposals dedicated to helping to restore Ming rule, they were never adopted, and it is doubtful whether they were even read by the Southern Ming monarchs, because he was never an important official of any Ming court established in the south.

Political Value of Private Letters

Although the transmission of private letters showed a higher possibility of success than the paralysed Ming postal system, the difficulty of passing the Ming or Qing checkpoints, as Qu Shisi complained in the fourteen letters written to his family between 1645 and 1650, still caused serious disruptions to delivery. However, the division of territory was only one symptom of the difficulties that led to this. The internal cause lies in the contents of these letters, because the information they contained was not as simple as greetings, health, or daily life. Like Qu, many Southern Ming correspondents chose to write about military or political news, which made their letters crucial at the political level, but also created trouble for their epistolary communication.

Although sending a letter from Ming territory to Qing territory only constituted a normal stage of delivery, the motivation to exchange Ming news would put this letter at risk of being confiscated after entering Qing territory. A case in point was that of Qu Shisi. His letters to his family were probably intercepted by the Qing government. Between 1644 and 1650, he lost at least three family letters in Qing territory. In one of his letters, Qu expressed his doubts on the subject:

> On April 3 this year, there was a person called Pan Zhong from Wugang who arrived from Changshu. According to what he said, you told him that a monk carried my letter, but this letter was taken away. I do not believe it! How could anything go wrong [in the short distance] between Nanjing and my hometown when this letter had been handed over to Xing Kun?
>
> 乃今年二月廿二日。有武岡人潘忠者。自常熟來。據雲。汝曾語彼。僧人寄書被人搶去。吾不信也。豈有書既交邢坤之手。只南京到家。反有差池之理乎。
>
> ("Qu Shisi", 149)

Qu was a key figure in the Yongli court who had led the army to defeat the Qing's offensive three times in 1647 (Qu, 1987, 79, 86, 93). Nanjing and Qu's hometown, Changshu, were in the same province and had become Qing territories in the summer of 1645 (Struve, 1984, 19). The Qing government could not capture Qu immediately but could monitor or even threaten his family members living in its territory. In September 1648, Qu's house in Changshu was searched by Qing soldiers, and his family members were intimidated (Qu, 1987, 109–110).[15] It is reasonable to speculate that the Qing government secretly monitored the delivery of his family letters. Once his letters, which might record the military and political secrets of the Yongli court, entered Qing territory, they would probably be intercepted. This speculation can be confirmed in a letter sent on April 7, 1646, from Hou Qizeng to his friend Yang Tingshu 楊廷樞 (1595–1647). Hou told Yang about the living conditions and literary works of some of the Southern Ming supporters. Before finishing this letter, he specifically added: "These words must not be circulated in writing, and you must immediately destroy this letter as soon

[15] Qu Shisi's family members were eventually secretly protected by the Qing official Hong Chengchou 洪承疇 (1593-1665), who passed the imperial examination in the same year as Qu in the late Ming period.

as you have read it. 此等語不敢浪傳筆墨，一見即毀之。” (“Hou Qizeng riji”, 498) After the Qing regime took control of Hou’s hometown of Songjiang in 1645, Hou secretly supported the Longwu court and opposed the Qing regime. He asked Yang, who was also involved in actions against the Qing, to burn the letter because he knew that their letters might be intercepted by the Qing government.

Letters written by Southern Ming supporters living in Qing territory would likewise encounter some censorship after entering Ming territory. For the Ming forces, letters from areas ruled by the Qing regime were likely to contain the latest or secret Qing military and political news. Intercepting them yielded valuable information that those who did so could not obtain by reading publicly promulgated Qing decrees. In a letter written on May 5, 1649, Qu Shisi mentioned that one of his family letters had been intercepted by a former Shun general.

> [Pan Zhong] came from my hometown on September 26 and arrived at Baoqing in the eleventh month [of this year]. Then he was captured by Hanyang Marquis Wang Jincai. Wang was going to kill Pan on the grounds that Pan did not have an officially approved travel certificate. Pan had no choice but to take out my family letter from the handle of his umbrella. However, even though Wang had my family letter, Pan Zhong was still kept in custody for three months. It happened that the Military officer Wu Qilei sent a letter to the governor and clearly explained everything, then they reluctantly allowed Pan to return, but Wang still refused to release my family letter. Pan Zhong is from the Chu area. Although he lived in my house for several months, how could he know everything about my family and relatives?
>
> [潘忠]八月二十日自家中來。十一月到寶慶。爲漢陽侯[16]王進才獲住。以身無炤票。[17]幾欲殺之。不得已。乃從傘柄中取出家書示之。而彼既留家書。並羈管潘忠不放。凡三個月。而適有兵科吳其雷遣人送書堵制臺。認識明白。乃勉強放歸。究竟家書仍不肯發。潘忠。楚人也。雖住吾家幾月。而家中一切大小事情。並眷屬人口。彼烏知之。
>
> (“Qu Shisi”, 149)

Wang Jincai withheld this letter and the bearer Pan Zhong in order to find out who Qu’s relatives were, because they were technically Qing subjects, and what had happened in Qu’s hometown when the Qing army occupied it. Because of the strong interaction with the political field, private letters displayed political value, but simultaneously, political value brought different degrees of trouble and danger to these letters, their writers, and their bearers. Letters originally written to transmit personal

[16] Wang Jincai had already cooperated with the Southern Ming regime in 1649, and he was granted the title of Xiangyang Marquis 襄陽侯 by Emperor Yongli. The “Hanyang Marquis” written in this letter must be a clerical error. Baoqing was a prefecture in Huguang, where Wang was stationed (Huang Weiping, 2010, 331-332).

[17] I did not find any historical record of “*zhaopiao* 炤票”. Based on the contents of this letter, it might be a form of official approval for travel. In the Ming dynasty, anyone who went further than a hundred *li* (50 kilometers) from his or her hometown was required to obtain a government route certificate. “*Zhaopiao*” was probably one of such certificates (*Daming huidian*, 167.2a; Brook, 1998, 619).

information were exchanged not only for private communication. Their roles went far beyond the activities of daily life, showing close involvement in the in-fighting and transfers of power of the early Southern Ming period. This also proves that in such an era of war, the value of private letters, because of the governmental information they conveyed, took on an importance similar to that of official documents or decrees, and was even more valued by both the correspondents and hostile regimes.

Dynamic Interaction at Epistolary Stages

Chen Pingyuan, Wells, and Son all point out that, in special cases, private letters are not written to a single recipient but to a wider audience: more contemporary and future readers (Chen, 1998, 210; Wells, 2015, 621–622; Son, 2015, 896–897). However, as I will demonstrate in this section, while early Southern Ming correspondents also showed a wish to disseminate their letters to a broader readership, the interactions that took place in their epistolary processes were not simply present between the stages of writing and dissemination. Rather than losing interest and confidence in maintaining their epistolary activities, the turbulence in society and the closure of official information made correspondents even more eager to carry out the exchange of letters, even if they suffered some disruption. At the writing stage, correspondents demonstrated an anticipation of the internal and external factors that might hinder their epistolary activities in the subsequent stages. As in the case of Qu Shisi discussed earlier, his choice of using wax to wrap letters to his family which contained information from the Yongli court, as well as his thoughtful selection of bearers and delivery routes, suggests his foreknowledge of the difficulty of getting his letters successfully delivered, because the Qing government would probably intercept his letters. This contributes to the fact that in the early Southern Ming period, the epistolary stages of writing, delivery, reception, preservation, circulation, and dissemination exhibited a dynamic interaction. Although writing serves as the first step in this process, writers' choices of topics and writing techniques are closely related to subsequent stages and change according to different social situations.

Diffusion Information: Interactions between Writing, Transmission, and Circulation

The idea of circulating letters emerged in early China. However, Wells argues that early Chinese letter writers might not have been able to control the range within which their letters were communicated (Wells, 2015, 629). In contrast, Southern Ming correspondents attempted to control to whom, how, and to what extent their letters were disseminated, even if such attempts probably did not always follow the correspondents' intentions in practice. Although most of the awareness of circulation from early China was generated by writers, a nuance showed in the early Southern Ming period: the circulation of their letters was specifically requested by the senders, and simultaneously, some recipients also made it clear that they wanted to circulate the letters they received.

The blocked routes and checkpoints caused difficulties in the letter transmission from one territory to another, which drove Southern Ming correspondents to send fewer letters but to request their recipients to circulate those letters which were delivered to a wider readership. As Qu Shisi said in his letter to his family written in February 1647:

> I should send letters to my relatives and friends, but it is difficult to have them delivered. You can tell them all the matters I have written about in this letter.
>
> 吾于至親至友，理應各寄數行，而爲途中難以攜帶。汝只得將我書中顛委，具以告之。
>
> ("Ji Zhang Er'gong shu" 寄張爾公書, 266 – 268)

In another letter written on November 27, 1648, Qu asked his friend Gu Linsheng 顧麟生 to share this letter with Xiaotong 小童, Jianwu 肩吾, and Junhong 君鴻, who may have been their common friends; he also told Gu to read the letter he sent to his eldest son ("Yu Gu Yushu shouzha sifeng (si)", 277). This wish prompted Qu Shisi to choose a method of writing in which various topics needed to be considered when writing a letter. He wrote extensively on the military deployments and political strategies of the Yongli court, analysing the various situations the court would face. The letter to Gu Linsheng mentioned above contained seven topics:

> (1) Ming military and political affairs after Qu left his hometown and served in the Yongli court;
>
> (2) Qu explained why he thought Guilin was a better place to stay and complained that some officials around Emperor Yongli insisted that Guilin was not good enough, which made the emperor flee to Quanzhou 全州 and then Wugang 武岡;
>
> (3) Qu expressed that he often encountered disasters in Guilin;
>
> (4) Qu complained that he had to fight more bandits and rebels than the Qing army had in the past two years;
>
> (5) The travels of Emperor Yongli;
>
> (6) Qu lamented his hardships after 1644 and believed that these experiences improved his knowledge; and
>
> (7) Qu mentioned correspondence with family and friends and asked his recipients to show them this letter.

All of Qu Shisi's fourteen letters to his family written between 1644 and 1650 include various topics. From military operations to his attitude toward Emperor Yongli, he recorded almost everything he saw, heard, and felt while serving in the Yongli court. Before writing his letters, Qu must have predicted that his family and relatives wanted to be informed of what was happening in the Ming territory. Although his family lived in the Qing territory, most of them were Ming loyalists. Whether they were

people who secretly supported the Ming forces or were worried about Qu, who was their family member and was confronting the Qing army, such situations made them concerned about Ming affairs in the southwest. However, the only way they could obtain relevant news was through family letters. Although Qu only told his recipients to show the content to others in two of his letters, his wish might have prompted the circulation of his other letters among friends, relatives, and even more Ming loyalists in the southeast.

The motivation to expand the readership also led to some Southern Ming letters containing important military and political news being circulated after they had been written, delivered, and received. It should be noted that this circulation was conducted by re-delivering the received letters as enclosures with newly written letters. In the summer of 1645, when the Qing army was about to break into Songjiang, Hou Tongzeng wrote to his friend Huang Chunyao, who was participating in anti-Qing actions:

> I send you a letter from Yang Wencong that I just received. The important things are the same as what you said, but I never heard [such things could happen in reality]. ... Please return Wencong's letter to me immediately after you read it, as I want to send it to Xia Yunyi.
>
> 適接楊龍友一緘呈覽，要皆彼法中語，然可謂聞所未聞也。......龍友劄覽畢即見還，欲寄與瑗公耳。
>
> ("Yu Huang Taoan jinshi shu" 與黃陶庵進士書, 9.5b)

Yang Wencong 楊文驄 (formal name 龍友, 1596–1646) was a Southern Ming official. Although Hou did not specify exactly what information Yang's letter conveyed, judging from his actions in sending this letter to Huang Chunyao and Xia Yunyi, who were carrying out anti-Qing actions in Suzhou and Songjiang (Qian, 2016, 1628), we can speculate that the topic of this letter was related to the Ming or Qing military affairs at the time. The original recipient of this letter was Hou Tongzeng. However, it was also delivered to two additional recipients. It is worth noting Richter's discovery that, in early medieval China, some correspondents wrote new texts on the stationery of the letters they received and returned them to their senders (Richter, 2013, 33). Although it is difficult to assert that this phenomenon did not exist during the early Southern Ming period, because, as in the case of this letter from Hou Tongzeng, few letters survive in manuscript, according to Hou's description, Yang Wencong's letter might be sent as an enclosure. Hou specifically mentioned sending Yang's letter back, suggesting that it was probably written on another sheet of stationery. Sending this letter as an enclosure instead of making a new copy, was most likely to shorten the time for spreading the news as well and simultaneously to show the authenticity of the letter to a greater extent, as Yang Wencong's friends Huang Chunyao and Xia Yunyi would recognise his handwriting. The peculiar social conditions of the war prompted correspondents to actively circulate the letters they received, which often contained information on secret military operations of the Ming courts. Unlike the case of Qu Shisi, who took the initiative to request that his letters to his family be shown to his friends and more distant relatives, Hou Tongzeng may not have sought Yang's consent when he sent this letter to Huang Chunyao and

Xia Yunyi.[18] Nonetheless, it can be surmised that even if Yang did not have the idea of suggesting about the circulation of this letter as Qu Shisi did, Yang would have been willing to allow his letter to be read by more people who supported the Ming forces, as it would allow the latest military news to be disseminated quickly.

Reader Presupposition: Interactions between Writing, Reception, Preservation, and Dissemination

Owing to the hampered delivery of news and information, it was difficult to distinguish authentic from fake news. In 1644, when the Beijing Ming government was overrun by the Shun army, many Ming subjects who lived there were accused of defecting to the Shun forces. After escaping Beijing, they either heard such rumours about themselves or suffered slander and imprisonment. Motivated by the purpose of justifying themselves, they clarified the truth through letter exchanges. In order to restore their images in situations of reputational damage, correspondents developed expectations about the possible readership and reading experience before and during their writing. They identified specific recipients and readers of their letters, as well as ways of preservation and dissemination. Rather than writing to share personal information, they intended to ensure that the topics contained in their letters and the writing techniques they used would immediately change the attitudes of readers who had perhaps already believed the rumours. These were the strategies that they relied on to help reestablish the recognition among their readers that they had never betrayed the Ming dynasty. This section focuses on letters written by Ming loyalist Fang Yizhi. Fang was captured by the Shun army in 1644 when it invaded Beijing. He soon fled to Nanjing but was reprimanded by Ruan Dacheng 阮大鋮 (1587–1646) for not having chosen martyrdom, and Ruan intended to list him as a rebel (Fang, 2018, 103, 104–107).[19] Subsequently, Fang fled to the southwest and supported the Yongli court, but he never gave up defending himself (Peterson, 1979, 12–13). The rumours and persecution he suffered, and his attempts to use letter-writing skills to justify himself to readers of different identities and periods, make his letters a typical example of the early Southern Ming period.

Between 1645 and 1649, Fang Yizhi sent letters to both Qing officials and Southern Ming supporters, telling them what he suffered during his time in Beijing and how he was framed and excluded by Ruan Dacheng. He did not choose his recipients randomly, but rather he chose them carefully and meticulously. His motivation for sending letters to Qing subjects, most of whom were his friends, such as Li Wen 李雯 (1609 – 1647), was to prove his Ming loyalism. These Qing recipients were originally Ming subjects but served the Qing court after 1644. Fang, being politically hostile toward the Qing regime, had no wish to be seen by this regime as someone who had betrayed the Ming dynasty. The purpose of choosing to express grievances to Southern Ming supporters was to demonstrate himself to be a

[18] This is only possible speculation as we do not have the original copy of this letter from Yang.

[19] Ruan's decision contained a strong partisan motivation. He wanted revenge on men in Fushe 復社 (Restoration Society) or Donglin Party 東林黨 like Fang Yizhi because he was dismissed in the late Ming period for his defeat in the in-fighting against the Donglin Party (Fang Shuwen, 2018, 106).

one of the Ming loyalists. If everyone in this group believed that he had served the Shun government, he would never have been accepted. This also explains why he wrote more letters to Southern Ming supporters than to Qing subjects.[20]

As Richter argues, the dialogicity of letters can help readers enter into an intimate personal relationship so that they are more easily persuaded (Richter, 2019, 32). The same is true of Fang Yizhi's strategy. To justify his reputation, Fang meticulously chose and designed topics, characters, phrases, and metaphors that maximised the recipients' sympathy and understanding.[21] In a letter sent to Zhang Zilie, we can see Fang's strategy of using dialogic writing techniques to defend himself by expressing in detail the hardships he experienced after 1644:

> I would rather have died ten thousand deaths than submit in Beijing, as everyone who has come down from the north knows. At that time, Mi Shoudu, Han Lin, and Wang Zibai were all witnesses that I abandoned my wife and children in order to flee to the south to tell the generals about the conditions of the [Shun] rebels. I reached Nanjing in the fifth month. In the ninth month, Ruan Dacheng took control of the Hongguang court and slandered me, calling a chaste woman a prostitute.[22] What calumny! What calumny! ... Although people were afraid of his arrogance when I was treated unjustly, all of them sighed secretly, thinking this an extraordinary injustice. ... When Wu Bangce was arrested and imprisoned in [Nanjing's] northern prison [by Ruan], [Ruan] tried to force him to perjure himself so as to have me killed. However, Wu still did not stop telling the truth even though both his ankles were broken. ... This is an anomaly for the ages, so I am suffering an anomalous injustice for the ages.
>
> 智萬死不屈於北都，北來之人無不人人知者。當時米吉土、韓雨公、汪子白諸人所親見，決我棄妻子南奔，告諸督鎮以賊狀。五月至南都，九月阮大鋮用事，而節婦詈爲淫婦矣，冤哉冤哉！……然弟被無妄時，人雖畏懾虐焰，然無不暗中太息，以爲奇冤也。……吳邦策逮下北獄，必欲左證殺智，然至兩踝斷，而正論不撓。……此真千古一奇事，故智受千古一奇冤耳。
>
> ("Ji Zhang Er'gong shu" 寄張爾公書, 266–268)

Fang wrote this letter to arouse his readers' sympathy and to shape, through the textualised self, the image of a loyalist who never betrayed the Ming dynasty. He adopted emotional expressions and writing techniques to engage in dialogue with his readers and sought to share his inner feelings with them. The characters and phrases that he chose were full of grief and anger. He wrote the characters "*yuan* 冤 (injustice)" four times and "*ku* 苦 (suffering)" seven times to show the magnitude of his misfortunes,

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[20] Fang's Southern Ming recipients include Jin Bao 金堡 (1614-1680), Cheng Yuan 程源, Zhu Tianlin 朱天麟, and Zhang Zilie 張自烈 (1597-1673).

[21] In his study of autobiographical letters in early China, Wells argues that letter writers would use rhetorical strategies to craft self-images at crucial moments in life (Wells, 2015, 622-642).

[22] Fang Yizhi used a metaphor here, which is explained in detail below.

both physical and mental, because of the injustice he had received and the destruction of family and dynasty that he had suffered. He specifically selected phrases that could gain sympathy and resonance from the recipients, such as "*qixue* 泣血 (weeping blood)", "*wansi* 萬死 (ten thousand deaths)", "*tongxin* 痛心 (grief)", "*hen* 恨 (hate)", "*buxing* 不幸 (unfortunate)", "*fubing* 扶病 (enduring sickness)", and "*gushen* 孤身 (alone)". He compared himself to a "*jiefu* 節婦 (chaste woman)", and Ruan Dacheng's false accusation against him was like a "chaste woman" being regarded as a "prostitute". He even compared his grievances to that of Bigan 比干, who was suspected by the monarch of the Yin dynasty 殷朝 (about 1300 B.C.– about 1046 B.C.) and cut open his chest to show his heart and prove his innocence. In this way, Fang indicated that what he encountered was "an anomalous injustice for the ages". All these approaches can show Fang's hardships in such a way as to obtain what he expected from his readers, the recasting of his image as a Ming loyalist. As the recipient of this letter was Zhang Zilie, a Ming loyalist who may also have suffered from slander after 1644, such descriptions and metaphors would resonate with him especially strongly.

Fang Yizhi's efforts to justify himself were not limited to these approaches. He selected his letters for publication, seeking to rehabilitate his reputation among a future readership. Fang's collected works *Lingwai gao* 嶺外稿 (Drafts from Beyond the Mountain Range), compiled by his three sons and published shortly after his death, includes a total of seventeen letters. Seven of these letters were written to express grievances to different recipients. Judging by his descendants' speed in sorting and publishing these letters, Fang had intentionally copied and preserved them before sending them, and it is possible that he selected these letters and asked his sons to compile them into his collected works. The expectation of publishing letters to obtain the approval of a broader readership undoubtedly influenced Fang's letter writing. This is because, under such circumstances, writers' choice of topics and writing techniques was not merely directed at resonating with a single reader, although the reading experience of contemporary recipients was crucial in the early Southern Ming period; more importantly, they needed to consider stirring emotions among a wider range of readers at different intellectual and emotional levels. The passage quoted above is also included in Fang's collected works. It can be seen that the words and phrases were not obscure, but accessible. The metaphors he chose—chaste woman, prostitute, and Bigan—were straightforward and vernacular enough to be understood, even by those who were illiterate.[23] This increased the readability of his letters among readers of different knowledge backgrounds, eliciting the sympathy and recognition he sought to achieve the goal of justifying his reputation.

The unique manifestations of epistolary activities between 1644 and 1652 project more than just the evolution of Chinese epistolary culture during the late Ming and early Qing period. Epistolary activities suffered the same turbulence and disruption as the wartime in which they occurred. Private letters,

[23] The story of Bigan originated from the *Shiji* 史記 (The Scribe's Records) written by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145-87 B.C.). During the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties, it was written as a mythological story by the literati and spread among ordinary people by storytellers. In the late Ming period, this story was written into the mythological novel *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義 (Creation of the Gods). These facts demonstrate that Bigan's story was popular among both literate and illiterate ("Song Weizi shijia" 宋微子世家, 1465; *Fengshen yanyi*, 170-177).

which had originally been more concerned with individual life, were deeply involved in the political and military fields and played an even more crucial role in information exchange than the official postal system. Even after these letters had been successfully delivered and read, their political value might prompt another process of epistolary exchange. To a certain extent, this restored and maintained news updates and contacts between Southern Ming supporters in different territories and regions, but simultaneously it brought varying degrees of political trouble to them, as well as to their writers and bearers. Thus, we conclude that the writing, delivery, reception, preservation, circulation, and dissemination of early Southern Ming letters interacted dynamically. Although the epistolary process began with relatively independent and private letter writing, it was never a simple act, and there were many complexities integrated into the purpose of writing a letter. Correspondents had to consider the possible situations in terms of delivery, reception, preservation, circulation, and dissemination. Their predictions of the difficulties that their letters would experience in wartime delivery and the aim of writing for a wider audience greatly influenced their writing, prompting them to focus on self-representation, select readers with different identities, and even show an expectation of disseminating their letters among specific readers.

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BOOK REVIEW

台灣文學的世界之路

[The Global Path of Taiwanese Literature]

By 邱貴芬 Chiu Kuei-fen

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Keywords: Taiwan literature, world literature, small literature, millennial writers, Wu Ming-Yi, Le Moulin, book review

關鍵詞：台灣文學，世界文學，小文學，千禧世代作家，吳明益，日曜日式散步者，書評

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When Swedish indigenous writer Fredrik Prost was nominated for the Nordic Council Literature Prize 2024, he refused to have his book, written in Sámi, translated into any major language. He argued that he wanted to preserve its cultural integrity for the Sámi people and prevent its commercialisation and misappropriation by the metropolitan centre. Although Prost agreed to translate the book solely for the prize jury, he plans to burn these numbered copies after the jury's assessment to ensure it remains inaccessible to non-Sámi speakers. He hopes that winning the prize would demonstrate that minority literature can stand on an equal footing with the major literatures (Samer.se, 2024).

In her recent book, The Global Path of Taiwanese Literature (2023), Taiwanese scholar Chiu Kuei-fen addresses the urgency of framing and exploring Taiwanese literature in the world literary space. The book aims to identify conditions that obstruct and mechanisms and strategies that enhance the circulation and reception of Taiwanese literature within the world literary system, as well as to foster its wider appeal and boost its worlding in today's globalised world. The central question of her endeavour is how to overcome the obstacles faced by a "small literature" and amplify recognition for peripheral Taiwanese writers on the world stage.

It is not an exaggeration to claim that without this literary scholar's thirty-plus years of academic commitment and intellectual dedication, Taiwanese literature would hardly be a firmly established field in the national and international academic community. Before her recent retirement Chiu was a Chair Professor of Taiwan Literature and Transnational Cultural Studies at National Chung Hsing University, currently hosting the digital Taiwan Literature Archive. In The Global Path of Taiwan Literature Chiu treats us to the gist of her research and exploration of Taiwan literature, its development over time, its current state and its future aspirations. The overall framework is shaped by the impossible situation of Taiwan as a nation on the world stage in general, and of the island's literary production in particular. As such the book's driving force is to showcase the country's local uniqueness and cultural achievements, along with its international adaptability and democratic alignment both at home and in the world. Given this inevitable complicity, her research is anchored in the concerns and achievements of the domestic community while continuously engaging in diaologue with the international counterpart. Employing the globalised theory toolbox of world literature in conceptualising and exploring Taiwanese literature and its "journey to the world", Chiu opts for dialogic negotiation over confrontational resistance in her reasoning about a world of asymmetric power relations.

Comprising six chapters, the book first establishes the disadvantaged position of Taiwanese writers in the world literary space by aligning with Pascale Casanova's world literature system and its notion of "small literature". Given the "poverty", "smallness", "backwardness", and "remoteness" of the literary world they inhabit, Taiwanese authors have only restricted possibilities of gravitating towards the centre. As indicators of their invisibility and lack of recognition, Chiu accurately measures their under-representation in various forms of cultural and symbolic capital such as literary prizes, translations, academic attention, readership, writer-in-residencies, adaptions. Concluding that Taiwan literature still has a long way to go, she points to translation as key, referring to Johan Heilbron, who has shown how the success of Dutch writers, despite occupying a peripheral position, follows a pattern structured by three succes-

sive circuits: selection, diffusion, valorisation and recognition. First, supported by Dutch cultural diplomacy, Dutch literature travels among Dutch-speaking groups abroad. Second, it expands towards the respective national literary field of the receiving country. Third, it occupies a visible space in the transnational universe tied to international fairs, publishing houses, and prizes, ultimately gaining international fame.

The second chapter engages with the research paradigms of Taiwanese Literature, such as "World Chinese Literature" (世界華文文學), "Sinophone Literature" (華語語系文學), and "World Literature" (世界文學), examining their development and transformation over time and their roles within various national academic cultures. This chapter maps out a differentiated and critical review of a field marked by globalisation and transnationalism, assessing the pros and cons of these paradigms for exploring and positioning Taiwanese literature. Instead of pitting these approaches against each other, Chiu deliberately evaluates their respective usefulness.

While the paradigm of World Chinese Literature, a concept developed in the 1980s by mainland literary scholars, might be considered outdated by some, Chiu argues for its continuous relevance. She insists that, despite its arguable narrowness, this paradigm notwithstanding challenges the traditional concept of "Chinese literature" as it includes literature written in Chinese produced outside China, and it also fosters a transcultural perspective. Since it acknowledges the locality of literature and demands a nuanced historical exploration, it naturally moves beyond merely recognising commonalities among transnational literatures. Also, as a methodological approach it requires looking beyond aesthetic discussions to examine the complex power dynamics within the literary field (p. 67–68).

Both the Sinophone and the world literature approaches serve different purposes when applied to Taiwanese literature. Chiu positions the Sinophone approach as an epistemological concept and research method that challenges sinocentrism and Chineseness within the hierarchy of Chinese literary studies. However, her approach prefers a definition of literature written in the Sinitic script that is independent of the writer's identity and ideological position. Sinophone Taiwanese literature thus implies two major paradigms: a transnational one regarding Taiwan's Mahua literature (馬華文學, Literature written by Malaysian Chinese) and an indigenous one concerning indigenous literature. At the same, time, this term has been instrumental in pushing forward "de-Sinicisation" in Western academia and questioning its tendency to consider Taiwan literature as a sub-category of Chinese literature (p. 72).

Chiu concludes this chapter by applying all three different approaches to the work of Taiwanese poet Yang Mu, demonstrating how each approach highlights different aspects of his work. She emphasises that the appropriate framework and research method depend on the specific study to be conducted, while all of them are useful in exploring Taiwan's literature and connecting with different scholarly communities. The crucial goal is to "put Taiwan back on the world map" (把台灣放回世界) (p. 85).

The third chapter delves into the cosmopolitanism (世界感) inherent in Taiwanese literature, focusing largely on two groups: millennial writers and indigenous writers. Chiu examines three key collections by writers born in the 1980s, demonstrating how in a joint effort they consciously build literary capital

by acknowledging the Taiwanese literary tradition beyond the continuous appropriation of Chinese, Japanese, and Western literature practised by their predecessors.

Using three works as reference points — Yang Shuangzi's novel Seasons of Bloom (花開時節), which blends time travel with historical fiction; the joint publication Anecdotes of a Magnificent Island: the Key (華麗島軼文: 鍵), which recreates well-known Taiwanese authors as fictional characters; and the collection 100 Years of Taiwan Literature: 1900–2000 (百年降生: 台灣文學故事 1900–2000), which maps the development of Taiwanese literature in the 20th century by arranging 101 stories chronologically, each devoted to a lesser-known but significant writer, literary work, genre, or literary community — Chiu shows that intergenerational intertextuality, largely absent in the writings of previous generations, is central to millennial writing. A dialogue with the "legacy of Taiwanese literature" (傳承台灣文學) is apparently at the core of millennial writing (p. 107). These writers employ localisation and Taiwan subjectivity while effortlessly drawing from world literary resources, making cosmopolitanism a main feature of their writing. Their self-conscious memoralising creation of afterlives for Taiwanese writers and their works grants Taiwan literature the authority needed to consecrate its writers.

Indigenous writing at first gained prominence in Taiwan's literary scene as an expansion of the Indigenous movement in the early 1980s. Initially it focused on themes such as the search for roots, the revival of repressed and forgotten cultural practices, the reclamation of cultural heritage, and criticism of the dominant culture. In a world literary context, as Chiu points out, their writing was less concerned with de-Sinicisation but more with the reinvention of indigenous cultural tradition. From the 2000s onwards, however, their work increasingly started to go beyond the paradigm of indigenism, gradually extending to topics such as modernity, planetary awareness, ecocriticism on the one hand and experimenting with literary forms and borrowing from Western textual and visual art on the other.

Thus, what both groups share in common is the cosmopolitan disposition of their writing, which is deeply anchored in localised culture. Consequently, both need to be analysed in relation to the complexity of cosmopolitanism and with regard to their position in the local literary system. In a literary landscape so multilayered and steeped in serial colonialism, the question of dominant cultures becomes a question of positionality, depending on whom and when you ask, as well as who is asking. In conclusion, Chiu rhetorically asks whether choosing compromise over confrontation does signify cooptation or rather broadening the space for Taiwanese literature (p. 117).

Chapter Four showcases nature writer Wu Ming-Yi, as a successful example of "small literature" gaining international recognition beyond its place of production. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, Chiu demonstrates how Wu's literature overcame what Casanova defines as the four obstacles of small literature: "poverty" (文學資本匱乏), "backwardness" (落後), "remoteness" (遙遠), and "invisibility" (能見度低). Chiu illustrates how Wu successfully navigated the three circuits as defined by Heilbron: first, his journey into the literary centre was supported by a government-backed "publishing Taiwan" strategy and cultural diplomacy that promoted him as a representative of Taiwanese literature (p. 129); second, translation rights for his novel The Man with the Compound Eyes (複眼人) were purchased by a British publishing house, leading to a tour across the US that

bolstered Wu's reputation as a promising writer; third, his next novel, The Stolen Bicycle (單車失竊記), was consequently long-listed for the Man Booker International Prize, thus gravitating towards world literature.

Chiu argues that Wu's works were not simply translated for transnational literary traffic but were re-composed for the target literary context in order to be regarded as possessing literary merit, a transformative process Casanova calls "littérisation" (文學化). Besides, Wu's work holds profound potential by addressing not only local environmental issues but also global concerns, by aligning with the "cult of nature".

His integration of local history and environmental issues with cosmopolitan memory and global eco-cosmopolitanism, together with his employment of modern scientific knowledge to dispel the impression of backwardness and his use of magical realism techniques and familiar environmental themes, makes his literature accessible to an international audience.

At the same time, he benefited from academics, translators, and distributors joining forces with promotion efforts by the Taiwanese government for an efficient marketing strategy, making his works fit for transnational literary traffic and increasing its visibility.

Chiu reminds us that despite Wu's success, the sustainability of his recognition in world literature remains uncertain. Unsuccessful attempts at "worlding", such as the case of Zhang Ailing, represent the existing divergences of Chinese language literature in the world literary system that make transnational travel a difficult endeavour (p. 143–144). And, one might add, cases of successful worlding hardly affect or sustainably change the asymmetrical world literary system.

The final two chapters extend their inquiry beyond conventional print literature, examining the feasibility and limitations of transmedial artefacts such as the documentary Le Moulin (日曜日式散步者) by Ya-li Huang (2016). Revisiting world literature as a mode of reading and circulation, Chapter Five offers an instructive analysis of the filmic reconstruction of the Taiwanese modernist Le Moulin Poetry Society (風車詩社), a group of experimental poets in 1930s colonial Taiwan.

Chiu critically engages with transmedia concepts and the significant role of new media in fostering circulation within a world literary system. The core issue, however, lies in the apparent paradox this documentary creates for post-colonial and world literature approaches: set in the colonial era, it seemingly portrays these poets as lacking a critical engagement with their subjugated position, while highlighting their keen interest in and longing for world literature from the West, mainly by forging connections with French symbolism and modernism translated through the colonial metropolis (p. 164). Their positive search for inspiration from world literature and art through Japanese and Western modernism, in other words their lack of any critical awareness of their colonised mentality, disqualifies post-colonial and world literary approaches.

Predictably, the film received much criticism for harbouring an uncritical romantic nostalgia for the colonial period and fostering "Japanophilia" in line with other films and art products. Chiu however, argues that reducing the world literary space to a world political space misses the point. These poets

strongly believed in literature as a world-opening force, and their alignment with world literary trends was a form of connecting with the world. Thus, the documentary recreates these poets' fascination with the world-making power of literature and art, resisting the conflation of the literary with the political space.

Overall this chapter highlights the importance of non-print media in transforming and sustaining old literary texts as a form of rejuvenation and dissemination of cultural heritage. Le Moulin serves as case study on how the visualising of these influential but relatively unknown poets not only boosted a public interest but also allowed for a more efficient mode of circulation, relying not purely on linguistic but enjoying cross-medial translation.

The final chapter investigates new agents and the role of digital platforms in shaping international recognition of writers from "the republic of small literature" (小文學共和國). Using Taiwanese writer Li Ang as an example, Chiu evaluates different digital platforms as new agents of literary consecration. Most relevant is the Li Ang Archive (李昂數位主題館), created by her own academic institution to build a social memory and literary afterlife of this author and her work. Similar to traditional museums or archives, it showcases the writer's achievements and documents historical material as a kind of technical media record (科技媒介紀錄) (p. 185). As a digital platform, the archive forms a dynamic space that integrates digitised documents with digital recreations, applying tools such as TimeMapper and Timeline JS to create various perceptions of space and time (p. 186). Chiu presents statistical figures and charts generated by algorithms based on e-footprints that open up new directions in reception research.

As a non-profit and crowdsourced platform, Wikipedia emerges as the most prominent global platform for producing, disseminating, and sharing knowledge. Focusing on the changing public image of Li Ang, Chiu resorts to the archiving mechanism of Wikipedia that keeps track of the editing and revising process, revealing how entries have been written and rewritten over time.

She also consults the highly commercialised database Goodreads.com that implements machine learning to provide reader comments, ratings, and categorisations as well as personalised recommendations and book-sharing services. Chiu utilises sales figures and reader responses from this platform to measure international literary recognition. Through tagging, commenting, and search protocols, these readers play a crucial role in shaping the literary reputations of writers and their texts.

The Global Path of Taiwanese Literature rigorously surveys the rich multicultural and multilingual landscape of Taiwanese literature as a "small literature", examining how it has adapted to and aligned with changing global literary trends and academic paradigms. Chiu approaches this with a playful yet inclusive methodology, uncovering the various roles and positions Taiwanese literature occupies in the world literary system. Utilising Casanova's framework as a theoretical foundation, she identifies the challenges faced by Taiwanese authors and the key success factors for accumulating literary capital, gaining international recognition, and moving from the literary periphery to the centre.

However, reading Taiwanese literature through the lens of a geocultural framework may have complicated the neat periphery versus centre, small literature versus world literature binary system; it approaches understanding literary practices as ways of claiming space that constantly shift, expand, and contract the "world" undergirding world literature. Through the lens of cosmopolitan-vernacular dynamics these geocultural practices affect the construction of spaces in multifarious ways, making world literature emerge not as a static entity or "small literature's" Other but as a shifting stage for symbolic claims on space (Bo Ekelund, 2021).

While Chiu maintains an admirably critical stance toward the colonising effects of theoretical frameworks imposed on Taiwanese literature but originating elsewhere, she is less critical of government-sponsored promotion of translation, research, and the institutionalisation of Taiwanese literature through education, museums, festivals, and prizes. What happens when Taiwanese authors respond by producing texts that cater to international tastes? When AI-generated texts start to dominate commercialised, algorithm-based platforms? World literature is a double-edged sword; like soft power, it comes with a price. Thus worlding "small literature" is one way of relating to the world, while its provincialisation signifies either a pendulum swing back or simply another mode of engaging in the world literary system.

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BOOK REVIEW

Anxiety Aesthetics. Maoist Legacies in China. 1978–1985

By Jennifer Dorothy Lee

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Keywords: Beijing Spring, avant-garde art, intellectuals, culture debate, Mao era, book review

關鍵詞：北京之春，先鋒藝術， 知識份子， 文藝評論，毛澤東時代，書評

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Quite a few articles and books have been written on the Chinese avant-garde art groups of the 1970s and 1980s, mostly from the perspective of art history, but telling us also about the surrounding political atmosphere, describing the struggles for political freedoms that the movement was connected to, such as the Democracy Wall, the independent journals, and the new spirit of enlightenment that had come over China's intellectuals.

What Jennifer Dorothy Lee is trying to give us is a much wider context, a theory describing the years of transition between Mao's China and the one known as the era of reform and opening associated with Deng Xiaoping. What happened in the early 1980s, writes Lee, was (not only in the field of arts), something in between the Mao era and what at one point she calls "the marketizing present" (p. 5). Lee does not agree with the assumption that post-Mao collective actions were "the signal of a nation's sudden release from radical political leftism and a repudiation of Maoist socialism" (p. 3). Even further, she says, "socialism is still with us in the present" (p. 5). In the light of such observations, Lee suggests a new periodisation: in the field of arts she sees the turning point only with the emergence of the "85 New Wave" ('85 新潮).

Lee is Associate Professor of East Asian Art in the Department of Art History, Theory, and Criticism at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Born in 1978, just around the time when most of the events she describes were taking place, she apparently grew up in the US, although she never reveals much detail about her background. For example, one doesn't find a CV in this book, and hardly any biographical details anywhere else.

So we do not know too much about what drove her to find interest in this early post-Mao rebellion, the "Beijing Spring" (*Beijing zhi chun* 北京之春) of 1978–1981, a period that has become a bit lost and forgotten in the realm of Chinese studies, superseded by the much bigger topics of the Tian'anmen revolt of 1989, the economic advances of China, and her rise to become a global power. Bringing these earlier developments back to our attention, and doing that in a rather new way, is certainly one of the achievements of this book.

The author develops most of her basic theories in the nineteen pages of the "Introduction" chapter (subtitled "Endings or Beginnings" accordingly). A short "Conclusion" of five pages at the end mainly refers to some follow-ups on what has happened in Chinese society more recently: the Covid experience, the dramatic events in Hong Kong, or – relating more directly to the early avant-garde art – a surprising commemorative exhibition on the Stars art group at the OCAT Institute in Beijing in 2019 (but unfortunately without going into details).

In the five chapters between the Introduction and the Conclusion, Jennifer Dorothy Lee conveys to us an enormous amount of details, anecdotes, remarks, and quotations (27 pages of bibliographical notes!) on the Beijing Spring and the avant-garde arts movement and its aftermaths. The chapters may have been chosen a bit arbitrarily (personalities that Lee has met and interviewed, or that have otherwise impressed her?), but they provide a wealth of evaluations and elements of the internal Chinese debates during that period.

They take us from "Democracy Walls" to "Memorializing Huang Rui's Beijing" (Lee calls this portrait of the co-founder of the "Stars Art Group" 星星畫會 "a case study" [p. 17]), then to the artist and art theoretician Wu Guanzhong 吳冠中 (1919–2010) who published essays on "abstract beauty" during 1979 and 1980. In chapter four, Lee takes up the "visual diary" (a series of small texts accompanied by drawings) of Qu Leilei 曲磊磊 (born 1951), another key artist and eyewitness of the "Stars" and the Beijing Spring. And the last chapter discusses the well-known artist and literary critic Liu Zaifu 劉再複 (born 1941) who wrote a famous essay "On Literary Subjectivity" in 1985 (*Lun wenxue de zhutixing* 論文學的主體性).

But what is it after all that Lee calls "Anxiety Aesthetics" as in the title of her book? Her main thesis is that the political activists of the Beijing Spring as well as the "Stars" artists never succeeded in breaking with the Maoist or socialist past, but represented in some ways a continuation of the ideas and forms of this revolutionary period, even when they attempted to emancipate themselves from it. Also, by trying to negate Mao and socialism, they still remained tied to this past, to its theories and some of its practices.

The notion of "anxiety" seems more difficult to define and to understand than "aesthetics". When we ask Google for synonyms for "anxiety", we obtain quite a number of expressions that correspond to this key word of Lee's text, such as "nervousness", "worry", "concern", "unease", "apprehension", "disquiet", "fretfulness", "angst", and "fear", or as Lee puts it, "(a)nxiety in this book ...codifies the worries and troubles, the doubts and vacillations, the bitter disquiet of a collective crisis consciousness shaped over generations of twentieth-century Chinese modernity constituted, in large part, by serial revolution" (p. 13).

When Lee uses "aesthetics", she also wants to apply this notion in a much broader sense, not restricted to the arts, but also as a "strategy of radical leftism and a repudiation of Maoist socialism" in general, as an "ideological transformation among the masses, among intellectuals and everyday folks alike" (p. 11). "Anxiety Aesthetics" is thus defined by Lee as "a structure of consciousness" in the post-Mao years at the end of the 1970s "fuelling generative social movements in creative practice, while endlessly self-deferring" (p. 10).

The author draws a direct line from "strategies of collective action and grassroots organization established during Mao-era campaigns" (p. 17), such as *dazibao* 大字報 ("big character posters"), *xiaozibao* 小字報 ("small character posters", like dazibao, but on much smaller sheets of paper) and *minkan* 民刊 ("citizens' publications" – independent, usually mimeographed journals), to those employed by the Beijing Spring activists and artists without their being really conscious of such a link.

As for the arts, Lee sees "spaces of expression that remain conditioned ... by earlier socialist and Maoist projects" and that even "contradict the intentions of the artists and thinkers" (p. 5). The Stars artists, Lee remarks, were still discussing Marx and socialist aesthetics at that time (p. 9), and like the political activists they often "treat[ed] socialism ... as a prospect still unrealized" (p. 10).

Here we come to the essence of Lee's arguments, at what she calls the "anxiety aesthetics", art (and literature) that is exploring something new, sometimes taking up ideas from the past or from other

cultures, but remaining deeply rooted in the Maoist era, either by continuing to be influenced by some of its ideas, or by an explicit and elaborate negation of the principles of that era. Often, says Lee, there is "no clear-cut rejection of the Mao era in the works and writings of transitional artist and intellectuals" (p. 6), "to the contrary," she says, it is "an ending without closure, a rupture shorn of heroic new beginnings" (p. 6).

During the five succeeding chapters, Jennifer Dorothy Lee mainly refers to examples that seem to underline this theoretical frame, and to the rich debates among Chinese intellectuals and art critics up to the appearance of new generations of modern artists.

Lee first tells us about the Xidan Democracy Wall (*Xidan minzhuqiang* 西單民主牆) in Beijing that has received wide international attention. Foreign journalists, she says, created an impression that the Beijing Spring was a complete turnaround in Chinese politics and society, a break with the Maoist past, and she explains again why she will not accept this assumption.

In chapter two, which analyses how the leading "Stars" artist Huang Rui 黃銳 portrays the Xidan Wall in some of his sketches and oil paintings, Lee reminds us of a remarkable item among the Beijing Spring publications, a fictitious futuristic story by someone (still unknown hitherto!) who uses the pseudonym Su Ming 蘇明: "A tragedy that could happen in the year 2000" (*Keneng fasheng zai 2000 nian de beiju* 可能發生在 2000 年的悲劇). It was first published as a dazibao and then in the journal "Spring of Peking" 北京之春, somewhat reminding one (intentionally?) of George Orwell's *1984* (although Lee does not draw such a comparison in her text). After thirty years of reform and prosperity, so it goes, the heirs of the radical Maoist "Gang of Four" 四人幫 return to power after the death of a beloved "certain comrade", re-establishing a kind of Cultural Revolution regime, doing away with free speech at the Democracy Wall, and re-inventing the "old days". China's endless political cycle of opening up and tightening the strings thus begins anew (pp. 47–50). Many thanks to the author for recalling this fantastic piece of political fiction!

In chapter three, Jennifer Dorothy Lee focuses on intellectual debates on art and literature during that time, notably on Wu Guanzhong's broad reflections on beauty and abstraction, "abstraction" perceived as a mental process, "a mode of thought" (p. 75), and not just a concept of art history.

Chapter four analyses "The Serial Images of Qu Leilei", artistic combinations of texts and drawn images dating from 1983, from the time of the Anti-Spiritual Pollution campaigns after the Beijing Spring, with sarcastic allusions to the "sun" (a metaphor for Mao), especially in a sequence called "The Sun of My Dreams" (*Mengzhong de Taiyang* 夢中的太陽), originally not intended for exhibition or publication. Again Lee remarks that post-Mao transitions "more often than not, remained shackled to the past" (p. 100).

The last chapter dives deeply into the philosophical debates of the 1950s and 60s, arriving at Liu Zaifu's essay on literary subjectivity written during the early years of the reform era. Liu, defined as a "state intellectual" by Lee, "remained dedicated to issues of the socialist and Marxian aesthetic of the time", but somehow tried to adapt to the reform era (p. 131).

So what can we eventually take home from reading Lee's text? "I focus less on object-orientated approaches to works of art", but more "on a holistic portrait" (p. 5), taking up the discourse and "intellectual history" around the artistic and political developments during this era, writes Jennifer Dorothy Lee in her introduction. "I aim to provoke fresh thought on a singular historical moment that has been less examined in the years bridging the Mao era with Dengist reforms." This is a promise she has certainly kept with her book, although it is not always easy to follow the highly branched structure of her arguments and the many detours to other interesting topics.

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TRANSLATION REVIEW

The Misadventures of Master Mugwort: A Joke Book Trilogy from Imperial China

By Su Shi, Lu Cai and Tu Benjun

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關鍵詞：幽默，蘇軾，宋朝，明朝，書評

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Master Mugwort is an imaginary Warring-States-era philosopher, apparently the brainchild of the eminent Song-dynasty literatus Su Shi 蘇軾. 'Master Mugwort' is the translator Elizabeth Smithrosser's rendering of his Chinese name Aizi 艾子; her other suggestions are Aicius and Mugwortius. Perhaps, as artemisia is the genus to which the plant *ai* belongs, one could also consider Artemisius. She points out too that the name may be a pun on 'Master Fool' 騃子, making him a jester who speaks truth to power; the author of the final book in the trilogy specifically places Master Mugwort in the lineage of Sima Qian's 司馬遷 biographies of jesters or humourists.

The first book in the trilogy (all are quite short), *Miscellaneous Stories of Master Mugwort* (*Aizi zashuo* 艾子雜說), is traditionally attributed to Su Shi, and it is clear that this attribution was accepted by the later (Ming-dynasty) writers of its sequels, the *Further Sayings* and *Outer Sayings of Master Mugwort* 艾子後語、艾子外語, respectively Lu Cai 陸采 and Tu Benjun 屠本畯. Humorous writing in premodern China has received less attention than it perhaps deserves, and Smithrosser, a young scholar formerly at Leiden and now at Oxford University, argues in a short but knowledgeable and comprehensive introduction to this volume that the humour in these three works of 'masters' literature' is mainly directed at satirising the foibles of the societies in which their authors lived, rather than having anything much to do with the Warring States era in which Master Mugwort and his more historical colleagues existed. Thus, many of the *Miscellaneous Stories* may be intended to poke fun at or criticise the reforms of Wang Anshi in the Song (as the author of the *Further Sayings* suggests), while the *Further* and *Outer Sayings* are more broadly directed at bureaucracy and corruption in Ming society. For example, a short passage in the *Further Sayings* (no. 13) satirises the power of eunuchs, those bugbears of the scholar-official class:

> Master Mugwort kept two goats in a pen. The billy goat was fond of tussling, and every time he encountered a stranger he would chase and butt him, much to the dismay of Master Mugwort's disciples whenever they paid a visit. They petitioned Master Mugwort, saying "Dear master, that billy goat of yours is so violent! We implore you to get him fixed. That'll settle him down."
>
> Master Mugwort laughed and said, "Haven't you heard? These days once the balls come off they get a lot more violent!"
>
> 艾子畜羊兩頭於囿。羊牡者好鬬，每遇生人則逐而觸之。門人輩往來，甚以爲患。請於艾子曰：「夫子之羊牡而猛，請得閹之，則降其性而馴矣。」艾子笑曰：「爾不知今日無陽道的更猛裏。」

As can be seen from this example, the language of these anecdotes is a lapidary classical Chinese, with occasional diversions into colloquialism.

But this is a translation review, not a review of scholarship on Chinese humorous literature (which I would in any case be unqualified to write). The translation is excellent: accurate, fluent, and – most important! – often very amusing. Sometimes I think Smithrosser actually improves on the humour of the original: when (in *Miscellaneous Stories* no. 23) the Dragon King issues an edict that all water

creatures with a tail are to be beheaded, an alligator wonders why a frog is so upset, to which the frog replies (in Smithrosser's version), 'I'm terrified my past will come back to haunt me!' This seems to me to be a distinct improvement on (pseudo-)Su Shi's rather plodding 'I'm afraid that they'll pay too much attention to my time as a tadpole 但恐更理會科鬥時事.'

The translation of humour across languages and cultures is notoriously difficult, particularly in the case of puns and other plays on words. Smithrosser provides brief notes before or after some of the passages to explain the cultural or social background, and sometimes to bring out the point of the joke where it might be missed by the modern, especially non-Chinese, reader, as well as occasional footnotes (and sometimes endnotes also, which does get a bit confusing) to provide additional, though non-essential, information. Sometimes, as a result, one can get the joke or the point and see its historical interest without being much amused by it, but on the other hand, some of the jokes did make me laugh out loud, the ultimate accolade for such a translation.

Smithrosser shows a particular talent for humorous verse, which she uses to render rhythmic or actually 'poetic' diction in the anecdotes. Near the end of a rather long anecdote (*Miscellaneous Stories* no. 33) about a malefactor bargaining with an Oxhead demon to be let off the tortures of hell in exchange for some leopardskins, the malefactor tries to shrug off his obligations with the following doggerel quatrain (Smithrosser's literal translation, from the endnotes, in brackets; my asterisked note):

牛頭獄主要知聞，(Newsflash, Bullhead Section Head:

權在閻王不在君；The authority lies with King Yama, and not with you!

減刻官柴猶自可，By all means to reduce the amount of official firewood*

更求枉法豹皮裩。But you went too far by perverting the law for some leopard-skin loincloths.)

*For the cauldron in which the malefactor is to be boiled.

This is inventively rendered as a limerick:

The Netherworld's home to an Ox

Who's mistaken himself for the boss!

He's expunged my fate

For a wardrobe update,

But the king round here's Yama. His loss!

It's always possible, albeit seldom helpful, to nitpick translations, and personally I wouldn't translate 媼 or 嫗 in the vocative (which occur a few times) as 'old dear', but rather 'mistress' or 'goodwife', which maintain the archaistic tone. However, this is the sort of very minor point which is all that one can complain about in this fluent, skilful, and entertaining translation.

The Hsu-Tang Library of Classical Chinese Literature was launched by Oxford University Press in late 2023; so far five volumes, including this one, have appeared. The volumes consist of parallel texts, with the original Chinese on one side and the English translation on the other, like the long-established Loeb Library of Greek and Latin classical texts. As the collection expands, it should perform a very useful function in bringing a wider range of pre-modern Chinese literature within the reach of students or even of that chimerical being, the intelligent general reader.

Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies

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BOOK REVIEW

The King's Road. Diplomacy and the Remaking of the Silk Road

By Xin Wen

Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2023. xii + 389 pp. ISBN: 9780691237831

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Keywords: silk road, central Asia, diplomacy, China, medieval China, history, book review

關鍵詞：絲綢之路，中亞，外交，中國，唐宋時期，歷史，書評

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Using civil documents that Wang Yuanlu (1851–1931) discovered in one of the Dunhuang Mogao caves in 1900, *The King's Road. Diplomacy and the Remaking of the Silk Road* presents the fascinating story of diplomatic envoys who travelled over the network of 'silk roads' that connected the different polities of Central Eurasia and China in the period from 850 to 1000. To draw this picture, Xin Wen has divided this book—that can be categorised in the broader field of 'Dunhuang studies'—into three main parts. The first part is devoted to the travellers themselves. The civil documents subject to research portray people of different ethnic backgrounds (Han Chinese, Tibetans, Uyghur, Sogdians, Khotanese, Indian, and ethnically mixed persons), speaking and writing different languages, belonging to different social positions, Buddhist monastic figures and secular householders, wealthy and powerful people, destitute and desperate people, men and women, governmental officials and commoners. Not only were these diplomatic missions not ethnically, socially, or linguistically monolithic—the latter being an important asset for the diplomatic missions to "successfully navigate the dazzlingly complex linguistic landscape of medieval Eastern Eurasia" (p. 171), but missions from different states appear to have often voyaged together (p. 49), adding to the 'international' character of Central Eurasia in the relevant era. The second part of this book deals with how these people travelled—their knowledge of the 'silk road' network, their ways of transporting goods, the exchange of gifts with the heads of state where they were travelling to, their actual use of language when encountering commoners on the road and engaging with heads of state. The third part of the work brings all these practical considerations into the larger framework of the economic, political, and social impacts of the 'silk road' network.

This broad picture of the activities on and the importance of the 'silk road' network between 850 and 1000 which *The King's Road. Diplomacy and the Remaking of the Silk Road* provides is based on the wide variety of civil documents (setting aside documents related to the Buddhist faith, about 5 per cent of the total number of documents found in this particular Mogao cave are of a secular nature) that were found in what once served as a mortuary chamber for a renowned local Buddhist monk (p. 19) and that, later on, also served as library cave for Buddhist texts and a storage room for the library of the Dunhuang Sanjie Monastery: the collection contains contracts that show how travellers financed their journeys, royal edicts that include the information that was communicated, maps and road guides that reveal how the difficult terrain of Central Eurasia was navigated, personal correspondence and notebooks that offer a window into the minds and sentiments of the travellers while on the road, petitions that demonstrate the travellers' need for assistance in times of distress, and messages of greeting and gratitude that bear witness to the relationships the travellers enjoyed with their hosts (p. 7). The knowledge that these secular documents are present in this overall Buddhist setting because these documents, having fulfilled their social roles, were actually recycled as used 'paper' to restore damaged parts of Buddhist texts (pp.21–22) makes the value of this find even more extraordinary. The multifariousness of the documents that, given the geographic setting in Dunhuang, basically depict 'diplomatic life' in Dunhuang, is further enriched by the many languages in which the discovered documents were written: "Sources in Chinese, Khotanese, Tibetan, Uyghur and Sogdian reveal the interaction between a North China-dominated tributary system and an equally well-established, though much less well-known, Inner Asian tradition of diplomacy" (p. 9). In the research that is at the basis of this work,

these written sources are complemented with information that can be deduced from the mural paintings and their colophons found in the Mogao cave complex, and with similar documents found in areas further West in Central Asia, such as Turfan and Khotan. The latter type of documents, mostly produced from the 6th to the 8th centuries, serve as a comparative lens (p. 24). Xin Wen also brings these non-Chinese sources into comparison with documents from the Tang and Northern Song courts.

One important scientific outcome of the use of this variety of sources is that "the world of diplomacy viewed from this peripheral, envoy-centered, and multilingual perspective" appears to differ drastically "from the tributary system that appears throughout sources from the Chinese court" (p. 9). That is to say that, contrary to the commonly accepted knowledge that the decline of the Tang brought about centuries of reduced trans-Eurasian connections, the emergence of a large number of independent entities, many of which claimed to be descendants of the old Chinese, Tibetan, and Uyghur empires, made the 'silk road' network of vital importance for the material wealth of these different polities, and therefore also enhanced the importance of 'diplomacy' to maintain the peace of the Central Eurasian area, which, in its turn, secured the continuation of diplomatic activity. This situation lasted until 1004, when the Chinese Song and the Liao signed the Chanyuan Covenant after the Song had gradually reconsolidated its power alongside the Xia (p. 36).

The real number of transregional journeys over the 'silk road' network is impossible to know, but many of the Dunhuang documents hint at an impressive frequency of such diplomatic travel (p. 57). A few factors explain this high frequency. For the heads of states who decreed such missions, they were a means to gain prestige and keep informed (through diplomatic letters) about the political developments in other polities. For the individual envoy, albeit risky, participating in a diplomatic mission—with numbers of participants ranging from as few as half a dozen to as many as over one hundred (p. 48)—was a major means for upward social mobility and gaining considerable wealth (p. 44, p. 203). Monks, too, frequently travelled over the 'silk roads'. For them, it was not diplomatic purposes or material wealth that incited them to join a diplomatic mission, but the acquisition and dissemination of religious knowledge (p. 73).

As Xin Wen outlines (p. 138), the general 'program' of these diplomatic missions had five stages. The first stage was the one of 'reconnaissance'. Through stories, travelogues compiled by previous travellers (p. 76), geographical treatises, lists of place names (pp.98–99), phrasebooks (p. 193), etc., the travellers had a rough idea of the road ahead. Each successful journey thereby generated knowledge that could inform a future journey (p. 124).

This stage was followed by the 'road protection' stage of the diplomatic mission leaving its own state. Because the diplomatic envoys had to travel over a collection of regional routes of varying degrees of traversibility conditioned by topographical features and the availability of water (these 'geopolitical' conditions translated into four types of stops on the road: postal stations, military establishments, natural stops near water, and stops in deserts), and because of the danger the diplomatic mission might encounter from malevolent gangs, it was the sending state's task to guarantee safe travel and guidance of the mission until it entered the jurisdiction of another state. Because, at that moment, the mission

needed the escort and protection of that other state (p. 112), a previous returning mission had to inform the head of state whether a new mission would be accepted by the head of state from which they had just returned. The importance of all this is confirmed in the Dunhuang documents: it is rarely deserts, mountains, or rivers that appear as the main culprits for the failure of a mission, but the hosts, either because of the dereliction of protective duties or through active hostility (p. 143).

Having arrived at the destination state, the mission's activities focused on the 'audience' with the head of state—the third stage of a diplomatic mission. In this stage, diplomatic and other gifts were exchanged. Practical concerns and cost-efficiency determined the nature of the gifts. More precisely, "the limits of carrying power meant that envoys had to make choices as to what to take to maximize the political, cultural, and material gains of the trip" (p. 90). This explains why light and costly products—such as silk—were preferable. For the heads of state, gifts had three social functions: an economic function of redistribution, a political function of maintaining peace, and a social function of enhancing or confirming status (p. 150). These gifts were most often accompanied by diplomatic letters that included a section describing the content and quantity of the gifts attached, as well as the purpose of these gifts. Without these letters (both official and private), the social significance of the gifts could not be properly understood (p. 155). While in many cases the delivery and acquisition of gifts were themselves the primary goals of diplomacy, the donation of gifts likely also facilitated the transmission of diplomatic information and the formation of interstate relations (p. 159). Written information was thus complemented with verbal messages that were a vital part of the communication. For this, the missions could depend on their multilingual composition (p. 191). The members of the diplomatic missions themselves were treated as guests, and also received gifts. "Unlike the gifts exchanged between sovereigns, which tended to be high-value, luxury items, the gifts given to envoys were more diverse. There were high-value items such as silk, but more often, the gifts for envoys, both at departure and on arrival, comprised practical items such as horses, food, wine, paper, and clothes" (p. 163). These gifts accounted for a significant portion of the 'income' of envoys on a diplomatic mission.

Very often, the envoys stayed in the destination city for a period of time. One could in this sense claim that these multimonth, sometimes even multiyear, residences—the fourth stage of the diplomatic missions—constituted "a semipermanent diplomatic presence in the host state" (p. 136). During this residence, the envoys continued to produce documents and convey messages to both the sovereign of their own state and their host (p. 187). As a general rule, so it appears, longer edicts were composed in the administrative language of the sender; shorter notes were composed in the administrative language of the receiver (p. 188).

Thereafter, the diplomatic missions, loaded with presents and diplomatic letters, had to head back to their own state. This was the fifth and final stage of the program. The knowledge gained on such a mission was, in its turn, the basis on which a new mission could be organised.

It is precisely because, in the period between 850 and 1000, this network of roads within Central Eurasia and between Central Eurasia and China was not maintained by any one government that "the fall of a state or the shift of a governmental policy could not fundamentally change the shape of the

Silk Road, much less cut it off entirely, [but was] created accumulatively by a mutually generative process of travel and knowledge construction and consumption" (pp.124–125). The culturally, ethnically, and socially heterogenous composition of the diplomatic missions further added to the implications these missions had on the cultural, economic, and political awareness of the people involved.

Interpreted within the larger framework of the economic, political, and social impacts of the 'silk road' network from 850 to 1000, Xin Wen has magnificently crafted a portrayal of kings who may have donated a part of the gifts they received through these diplomatic missions to Buddhist institutions for the accumulation of merit (p. 231), but who also depended on diplomatic missions to acquire the necessary foreign goods that enabled them to sustain their representation of kingship (p. 228) — even to the extent that "a shared culture of kingly dress" was created (p. 235). Economically speaking, a picture of a Dunhuang that is to a significant extent defined by the activities of diplomatic travellers emerges. Overall, this work shows how this diplomatic activity "was not the prerogative of a small, tight-knit group of highly trained bureaucrats," but was "a way of life open to a wide spectrum of people in society" (p. 288); "to many residents of medieval Dunhuang it was a way of life, and a means of livelihood" (p. 224).

In short, Xin Wen has shown that, collectively, the Dunhuang documents offer a multiperspective view of the political culture of Dunhuang and, to some extent, the region around it. Economic, political, and cultural reasons explain why the primary concern of the participants in the 'silk road' activities between 850 and 1000 was the maintenance of peace. As a result, an open road was achieved through diplomatic means in most cases, and military actions were the exceptions (p. 268). A second important outcome of this work is therefore that a non-Sinocentric story of Eastern Eurasia is given, a story that contradicts the general view based on Chinese documents that the Five Dynasties and the Song are often the sole protagonists of Chinese history in this period of history. On the contrary, the Five Dynasties and the Song are shown to be only parts of a broader world that responded to the decline and fall of the Tang, the Tibetan, and the Uyghur empires, and to one another (p. 302). The value given to peace—and, by extension, the value of profound historical knowledge of which this book is an excellent example—is succinctly expressed in one of the letters Cao Yuande, lord of Dunhuang, wrote to the Uyghur ministers of Ganzhou (Pelliot 2992v–1): "By the road we become one family".

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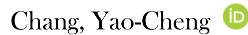
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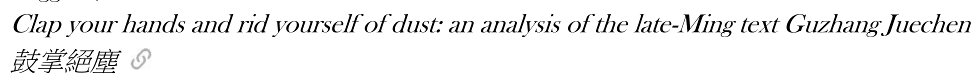
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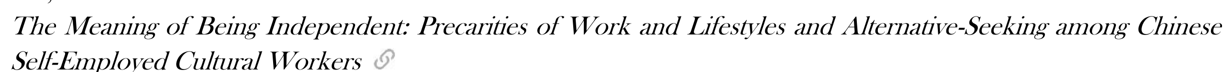
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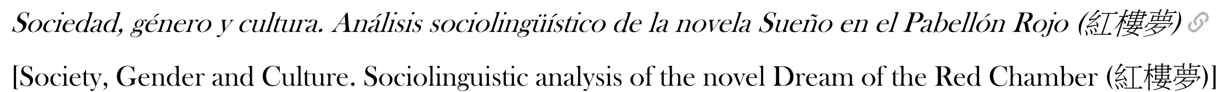

Sociedad, género y cultura. Análisis sociolingüístico de la novela Sueño en el Pabellón Rojo (紅樓夢)
[Society, Gender and Culture. Sociolinguistic analysis of the novel Dream of the Red Chamber (紅樓夢)]

Universidad de Almeria, Spain, September 2024
Supervisors: Francisco Joaquin Garcia Marcos (Universidad de Almeria), Pedro San Gines Aguilar (Universidad de Granada) and Wei Zhao (北京师范大学)

Keywords: Dream of the Red Chamber, ethnography of communication, sociolinguistics, Confucianism, gender, female characters

Abstract:
This thesis deals with the sociolinguistic analysis from a gender perspective of women's language within the Confucian universe in the novel Dream of the Red Chamber.
Dream of the Red Chamber is regarded as one of the four classics of Chinese literature. It is a complex work that has given rise to the creation of the field of study known as Redology, 紅學 Hong Xue. The novel has been compared by translators and sinologists to Western literary canons: Dante's The Divine Comedy, Shakespeare's theatre or Cervantes' The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha.
The conceptual axes on which the interpretative reading of the corpus of study of this thesis is based are: Halliday (1978) Language as social semiotic. The social Interpretation of language and meaning, Van Dijk (1977) Text and context. Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse, Dell Hymes (1974) Foundations in sociolingüístic: an ethnographic approach, and Scott (1986) Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis.
The main objectives proposed for this thesis are:

1. To analyze the novel Dream of the Red Chamber from a sociolinguistic and gender perspective.
2. To include literature as a sociolinguistic variety of a speech community.

In order to achieve these general objectives, the following specific objectives have been defined:

1. To assess the viability of employing ethnography of communication to analyze the novel Dream of the Red Chamber.
2. To identify the Confucian norms' influence on the ends pursued by the characters.

In order to achieve these goals, 982 dialogues from the novel have been analyzed using the SPEAKING model proposed by Hymes (1974).
A sociolinguistic analysis of the interactions between characters has yielded the following results:

1. The same communicative end can be pursued in different ways by each character,
2. The manner in which a character employs each SPEAKING parameter determines whether or not they successfully achieve their communicative ends,
3. Some characters present a similar communicative pattern among themselves.

The aforementioned results have led to the following conclusions:

1. Sociolinguistics is a valid scientific discipline for analyzing Dream of the Red Chamber.
2. The application of the SPEAKING model has enabled us to ascertain information regarding the sociolinguistic behavior of the characters under analysis.

3. The explicit presence of the norm parameter in communicative events has turned out to be insufficient in number to show a direct influence on the ends pursued by the characters.

The qualitative analysis of all parameters collectively provides the necessary information to establish the influence that the Confucian norm has on the communicative events of the characters. This conclusion is at odds with the first initial research hypothesis, “the fact that the norm parameter is present in every communicative event demonstrates the influence of Confucian ethics on the ends pursued by the characters”.

The conclusions drawn about gender relations in the novel have demonstrated that:

1. Male and female spaces are not always respected and the status of women within the family is not fixed,
2. The question of women’s subordination is determined by the family role and the social class they hold.

Bennett, Hannah

Gender, Class, and Migration at Play: Training Affect in China's Golf Courses

SOAS, University of London, UK, November 2023
Supervisor: Jakob Klein

Keywords: Gender, Class, Work, Professionalism, Affective Labour, Vocational Education, Migration

Abstract:
By framing golf as a socially constituted leisure activity rather than focusing on the technicalities of the sport, this project acts as a lens through which to view a number of complex issues located at the forefront of the anthropology of China: issues such as gender, class, and labour. This thesis takes the example of caddies as a micro-exploration to enable macro-analysis. Though often seen as on the fringes of society, the golf industry has seen growth despite governmental moratoriums. This has caused golf in China to be in a period of 'spring': of growth, transformation, and adaptation. Indeed, as the golf industry has adapted, so too have caddie employment practices reacted to the unsteady position of golf in China and responded to recruitment issues caused by the one child policy and vocational education. The result has been a reluctant shift from an industry which only employs young women, to one which predominantly employs interns, and thus has been forced to employ an increasing number of men. Despite this, affective labour remains central to the role. This thesis argues that by expanding definitions of what it means to be a professional, affective labour emerges as a type of professionalism. It is something which is actively trained and is regulated in accordance with the company's specifications. This thesis is based on a year of fieldwork, predominantly training to work as a caddie at Golden Valley, and two years of pre-field interviews, and time spent at multiple driving ranges.

Berdajs, Tina

Issues of Dating and Provenance of the East Asian Ceramic Vessels in Slovene Museum Collections

Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, September 2023
Supervisor: Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik
Co-advisors: Mateja Kos Zabel and Sabrina Ra

Keywords: East Asian Ceramics, Porcelain, Provenance, Slovene Museum Collections

Abstract:
The doctoral dissertation focuses on the culture of collecting, heritage studies, and material culture in both art history and sinology. The author analyses East Asian ceramics from selected collections kept in Slovene museums. This research sheds light on objects, previously rather neglected and sometimes forgotten, mostly due to lack of specialized knowledge about East Asian ceramics. Until today, over 21 different collections and objects were identified. Ceramic objects are present in at least eleven of these collections and have been analysed for this doctoral thesis. Four collections from Slovene museums have been chosen as the main part of this study: the Ceramics Collection at the National Museum of Slovenia, the Skušek Collection at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, the East Asian ceramics in the collection of Regional Museum Ptuj-Ormož, and the East Asian ceramics in the Cultural History Collection of Celje Regional Museum.
The main research question of this doctoral dissertation is thus: what kind of methodological issues are we facing when researching East Asian ceramics in Slovenia and how do we establish appropriate criteria and methods on the basis of which we can more precisely date and determine the provenance of individual pieces of ceramic vessels of East Asian origin in the collections of Slovenian museums and other public institutions in the broader time frame from the 17th to the early 20th centuries?
The main research question is accompanied and supplemented by the following sub-questions: a) how individual pieces of ceramics and porcelain of East Asian origin reached the Slovenian territory, and what parallels can we draw within the context of collecting such objects over certain periods of time in the wider European area; b) who were the individuals who collected East Asian ceramics and what was their status; c) what do the objects in question reveal about the collecting approaches or collecting practices of their original owners; d) how such items ended up in museums and gained the status of museum items; e) how is the lack of specific knowledge and basic information in identification and treatment of East Asian objects related to the issues of dating and determining provenance we face when researching; f) what causes problems of dating and determining provenance and how can we establish a suitable methodological framework for correct dating and determination of provenance; g) how did the context of the objects (and the collections in which they are kept) change from their initial production, through the intercultural transfers, all the way to the final acquisition of museum item status?
This dissertation thus proposes a framework to accurately date and determine the provenance of East Asian ceramics in Slovene museum collections. It addresses challenges faced by researchers studying these objects, providing reliable research approaches for proper documentation and provenance research of the objects. The primary research is largely based on the practical exploration of East Asian collections as well as individual ceramic objects held in them and largely incorporates new data and findings from my own empirical research (inventory, identification, and categorization of individual objects and collections). This

research takes into account the physical characteristics of objects (material, shape, motifs, stylization of paintings and patterns), their production, and use in the primary context. To transfer and understand the cultural environment in the context of the museum, older museum documents, old issues of newspapers, old and new museum inventory books, and a wider selection of relevant secondary literary sources in various fields has been studied and examined.

Bernardi Junqueira, Luis Fernando

The Science of the Spirit: Psychical Research, Healthcare and the Revival of the Occult in a Modernising China, 1900–1949

University College London, United Kingdom, October 2023
Supervisors: Vivienne Lo and Sonu Shamdasani

Keywords: psychical research; hypnotism; spiritualism; medicine; science; esotericism; Republican China; modern China; global history

Abstract:
How did a new science initially promoted by only a few individuals eventually become a widespread cultural phenomenon practised by thousands of people? My thesis examines the transnational history of psychical research in Republican China (1912-1949), a field dedicated to the scientific investigation of paranormal phenomena like hypnotism and mediumship. Originating in late 19th-century Britain, psychical research captivated the imagination of scientists and intellectuals worldwide, who saw in it the potential to expand the boundaries of science beyond the material world. The field promised to showcase the supremacy of mind over matter, revealing exceptional human abilities such as self-healing and mind-reading. As China was being ravaged by imperialism and civil wars, Republican reformers lauded psychical research as a scientific means to enhance the Chinese mind by unlocking hidden psychic powers. This, it was believed, would save China from the grip of Western materialism, paving the way for a superior form of 'spiritual modernity' rooted in science, tradition and mental reality.
Through the perspectives of transnational history and boundary-work, my thesis examines how Republican reformers appropriated psychical research in their modernisation efforts – and more specifically, how it impacted 20th-century Chinese notions of health and religious experience. I argue that the Chinese engagement with the field must be seen as the interplay between local interests and global movements which denounced Western modernity as materialistic and dehumanising. Challenging old-fashioned narratives that science inevitably leads to secularisation, I demonstrate how psychical research reignited the interest of highly-educated Chinese reformers in spiritual matters and phenomena previously deemed 'superstitious'. My thesis is based on a hitherto unexplored collection of sources combined with a close engagement with scholarship in eight languages. It is concerned with the interplay between local and global dynamics, lay and expert knowledge, and the boundaries between what was perceived as 'scientific' and 'non-scientific' in early 20th-century China. My research upsets prevailing narratives that construe China's modernity as a derivative of Western standards. It makes critical contributions to the historiography of medicine, showcasing the pluralistic healing landscape of the Republican era and the creative ways the Chinese appropriated psychological knowledge. It also fills vital gaps in religious and intellectual history, uncovering vast networks of social movements previously unknown in Chinese academic literature. In short, my thesis opens new research fronts, revolutionising our understanding of how tradition, the psychological disciplines and global forces shaped China's construction of its own modernity.
Chapter 1 examines the introduction of psychical research in China through newspapers, manuals and stage performances. Chapter 2 analyses the rise of associations for xinling kexue 心靈科學 (Spiritual Science) – the Sino-Japanese expression of psychical research – in Republican Shanghai. Chapter 3 delves into hypnotism, a method hailed by Chinese reformers as a powerful means to craft the 'ideal' Chinese

citizen and, thereby, accomplish the Republican revolution. Chapter 4 investigates how Chinese spiritual scientists adopted psychical research to reassess the causes of traditional occult practices like ritual healing and mediumship. Chapter 5 explores how Chinese occultists invoked Spiritual Science to legitimise their activities in a modernising world.

This PhD thesis won the '2024 British Association for Chinese Studies Best Doctoral Thesis Award' for the best PhD thesis completed at a British university in 2023.

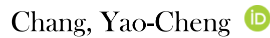
Bryant, Kristy

China's Gaze Towards the West: Anti-Baizuo Discourse and Digital Nationalism During the COVID-19 Pandemic

University of Oxford, United Kingdom, December 2024
Supervisor: Anna Lora-Wainwright

Keywords: baizuo, Western liberalism, COVID-19, pandemic, Chinese nationalism, digital nationalism, discourse, netizen, Self-Other

Abstract:
With the rise in cross-border news consumption on social media in China, internet users have become increasingly exposed to current affairs in the West. With this exposure, Chinese netizens are increasingly engaged with, and able to construct their own opinions about, current affairs. Amid the ongoing tensions between China and the United States in particular, social media research provides a unique insight into grassroots perspectives and popular sentiments that differ from the more widely studied top-down discourses. In light of such advances, this thesis develops an understanding of how Chinese netizens utilise, engage with, and perceive the liberal West vis-à-vis the popular neologism, "baizuo" (白左). The term, meaning "white left", serves as a derogatory neologism that encapsulates both racial and political dimensions and is used to criticise Western liberals or "lefties" who align with left-leaning, politically correct, or "woke" perspectives. Through conducting discourse analysis of over 330 Weibo posts containing the term, this study delves into the intricacies of anti-baizuo discourse by tracing the term's development during the COVID-19 pandemic, exploring its racial and cultural connotations, and uncovering its connection to broader Chinese nationalist ideologies. The findings reveal the fluid and context-specific nature of the term and how it serves as a tool for Chinese netizens to express nationalist and anti-Western sentiments, particularly in response to global geopolitical tensions and the pandemic. The study uncovers how "baizuo" is used not only to highlight and critique Western liberalism – underscoring perceived shortcomings in Western responses to global challenges – but also to express deeper frustrations with Western values and to bolster Chinese national pride and unity. By examining how such sentiments are constructed at the grassroots level by netizens, this research aims to further understandings of contemporary Chinese nationalism beyond the assumptions that it is solely state-driven.


Chang, Yao-Cheng

From Observation to Tradition: The Multidimensional Roles of Sight and Hearing in Ancient Chinese Argumentation

KU Leuven, Belgium, September 2024
Supervisor: Carine Defoort

Keywords: Early Chinese Argumentation, Sight and Hearing, Ghosts and Spirits, Immortals, Cultural Interpretation of Sensory Terms

Abstract:
This PhD thesis investigates ancient Chinese texts to understand their views on sight and hearing. While modern interpretations often use the lens of empiricism, focusing on knowledge gained through sensory experience, these ancient texts offer a more complex perspective. This thesis revisits ancient Chinese texts beyond modern empirical readings from two major perspectives. First, it focuses on the intricate multiple meanings of sensory terms and the distinctions made with these terms, which serve as a source of inspiration for ancient Chinese arguments. For instance, 'jian' (見, seeing) and 'wen' (聞, hearing) in texts like the Mozi carry multiple meanings, with 'wen' signifying both firsthand and secondhand knowledge. This multifunctional nature of sensory terms highlights the interplay between personal observation and knowledge passed down through generations, demonstrating the complex ways ancient Chinese texts used sensory experiences to convey various forms of knowledge. Second, the thesis examines the theme of 'gui' (鬼 ghosts), 'shen' (神 spirits), and 'xian' (仙 immortals), which modern readings typically consider superstition. It explores how these texts discuss sight and hearing in relation to these spiritual beings, revealing a rich debate that blends philosophy, religion, and rhetoric. The research spans different historical periods, from early ghost-spirit culture to the imperial era's focus on immortality. The study identifies three key themes: (1) ancient Chinese texts use what people see and hear to argue for the existence of spiritual beings. This evidence is used to convince audiences of the reality of ghosts, spirits, and immortals; (2) in several texts, knowledge is formed and classified through a three-stage process: observation ('seeing'), oral accounts ('hearing'), and documentation ('hearing through transmission'). This process starts with direct observation, followed by spreading knowledge through oral traditions, and finally preserving it in written records; (3) rulers utilized the collective sensory experiences of their subjects to make informed decisions. Ordinary people's observations and reports were seen as extensions of the ruler's own senses, helping to ensure just governance and moral leadership. This thesis reveals that ancient Chinese texts offer a complex view of sensory perception, distinct from modern empirical interpretations. Instead of focusing on universal knowledge, these texts use 'seeing' and 'hearing' to develop arguments on specific topics, such as the existence of ghosts, spirits, and immortals, establishing effective governance, and evaluating historical events. Many ancient texts trust secondhand "heard" knowledge more than firsthand "seen" knowledge, while still valuing direct experiences.

Chen, Lu

Environmental and Climate Engagement and Disengagement in China: Case studies of State-led Governance and Local Responses

Universitetet i Oslo, Norway, June 2024
Supervisor: Mette Halskov Hansen
Co-supervisor: Zhaohui Liu

Keywords: environmental anthropology, gender, ecological civilization, disaster, citizenship, water governance, rural China

Abstract:
This article-based dissertation explores how people in China respond to environmental and climate challenges, specifically how state-led environmental and disaster governance affects their responses. It is based on seven months of ethnographic fieldwork and follow-up interviews in four villages and one faith-based organisation in East China. It contributes to environmental anthropology and China studies, considering both the prevalent presence of the state in local China and the increasing challenges that people are facing. I develop an analytical framework of engagement in, and disengagement from, state-led environmental and disaster governance to analyse citizens' responses. I introduce 'engagement' and 'disengagement' to examine when, why, and how they participate and not participate in state-led governance, as well as their practices accompanying non-participation. I use the notion of 'state-led environmental and disaster governance' to focus on its direct and indirect impact on people's lives as seen from local actors' experiences. Multiple factors influence the impact of state-led governance, and local responses are shaped in continuous interactions between local practices and the governance.
In four articles, I examine local actors' diverse responses towards and their lived experiences of environmental and climate challenges, ranging from domestic waste, extreme weather and landslide-induced floods to tap-water-related risks. This dissertation concludes that state-led environmental and disaster governance facilitated some actors' engagement, but also led to disengagement responses. In conjunction with disengagement, some actors built solidarity of informal groups and took alternative practices. This research shows how people respond to increasingly pressing environment- and climate-related challenges by engaging in the government's political processes when possible, and retracting to taking actions by themselves when such engagement is not possible.

Chhiv, Laetitia

La légende comme instrument d'édification : le personnage de Yi Yin 伊尹 dans les manuscrits chinois du IVe siècle av. n. è.

[Legend as an Instrument of Edification: The Figure of Yi Yin 伊尹 in the Chinese Manuscripts from the 4th Century BC]

École Pratique des Hautes Études (Université Paris Sciences et Lettres), France, November 2023
Supervisors: Marianne Bujard and Olivier Venture

Keywords: China, Warring States, Chu kingdom, Manuscripts, Philosophy, Yi Yin, Sovereign and minister

Abstract:
This thesis traces the legend that formed around Yi Yin 伊尹, which served as a minister to the first king of the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600-1046 BC). Apart from Shang rulers, he is the only figure to be plainly identified in both oracle bone inscriptions and transmitted texts. Ancient sources related to Yi Yin thus span a period of over a millennium. They also include several Warring States manuscripts (481-221 BC) that were copied in the old Chu state. In the light of these new sources, this study proposes an overall analysis of the legend of Yi Yin. What do the Chu manuscripts reveal about this narrative? How was it used for edification purposes? How can we interpret the contrasts between all the different written accounts? This study is divided into three parts, moving from the general to the specific.
The first part comprises two chapters which constitute a prelude to the rest of the study. It focuses on three topics: the historical and archaeological context surrounding the discovery of Warring States manuscripts, the methodology used to reconstruct these texts written on bamboo slips, and the deciphering of Chu script. I aim to explain the material and technical backgrounds specific to these documents, as well as the issues involved in reading Chu graphs. Drawing on case studies and concrete examples, this synthesis shows that Chinese paleography is a continually evolving discipline. That is why, in the field of Chu manuscripts, several hypotheses regarding text reconstitutions or graph interpretations are likely to coexist.
The two chapters of the second part survey all the sources linked to Yi Yin throughout Chinese antiquity, from the 13th century BC to the 1st century AD. First, an analysis of oracle bone inscriptions unveils that Yi Yin was the recipient of lavish sacrifices. In the Shang pantheon, he occupied a position equivalent to that of the most prominent ancestral spirits and the most powerful nature deities. Next, I explore the transmitted literature, which reflects the development of the legend in four stages, the succession of which coincides with the social and political changes characteristic of each era. Lastly, I present, transcribe, and translate the five Warring States manuscripts that feature Yi Yin as a protagonist, along with two others that mention him.
The third part examines the triple representation of Yi Yin in the manuscripts: as a catalyst of dynastic change, as an expert in the culinary arts, and as an adept of self-cultivation. The excavated texts reveal different roles of Yi Yin, which appear little or not at all in received texts, and which may even seem contradictory. Yi Yin sometimes appears as the teacher of the ruler, sometimes as the hero of a fable, which may belong to an alternative legendary cycle. Therefore, even if the manuscripts do not totally contradict the legend as drawn from transmitted sources, they do enrich it significantly. We can now clearly distinguish, on the one hand, the historical figure of Yi Yin, about whom we know just a few, and on the

other hand, the multifaceted legendary figure, whose portrayal was adapted in many ways in order to convey various political and philosophical ideas.
The conclusion emphasizes that the main contribution of Chu manuscripts lies in their antiquity and in the raw, unaltered form they have come down to us, largely escaping the stylistic and content categories to which we are accustomed through transmitted literature. Such contrasts, some of them quite striking, open new avenues for research off the beaten track of tradition.
This thesis will be published n the "Civilisations d'Asie orientale" series by the "Institut des Civilizations" (Collège de France). Two monographs are under way *Prolégomènes à la lecture des manuscrits de Chu des Royaumes combattants* (Prolegomena to the reading of Chu Warring States Manuscripts) and *La geste de Yi Yin: histoire singulière d'une figure légendaire de la Chine ancienne* (The Saga of Yi Yin: The Unique History of a Legendary Figure of Ancient China).

Cicci, Federica

Caring Women: Transnational Activism and Humanitarian Relief Efforts during Wartime China (1937–1945)

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia (Italy) and the Chinese Institute at Universität Heidelberg (Germany), March 2024
Supervisors: Laura De Giorgi and Joachim Kurtz

Keywords: Humanitarianism; Women; War; China; Catholicism

Abstract:
How did relief work in a transnational context offer an agency space for Chinese and foreign women during wartime China? This dissertation focuses on the role of women in relief activities during the War of Resistance against Japan and the Second World War in China (1937-1945) from transnational and transcultural perspectives. It investigates the complex ways in which Western and Chinese women together repositioned themselves in the public sphere through charitable, humanitarian, and religious activities in a crucial historical period that witnessed major global and international transformations. Through some significant case studies that involve the Red Cross and the Catholic missionary female orders of the Ingenbohl Sisters from Switzerland and the Italian Canossian Sisters, the research increases the field of foreign and Chinese women's history, enabling a deeper comprehension of the contributions they made in relief work. I examine what global connections provided opportunities for women working in relief activities, and how these efforts tapped into the so-called feminine virtue and merged the virtuous women—self-sacrificing, frugal, generous, caring and helpful—with that of a nurse and a nun.

Ge, Liang

In, With, and Through Ambivalence: Subjectivities, Desires and Affects of Chinese 'Danmei' Participants in Producing and Consuming Male-male Romances

King's College London, United Kingdom, July 2024
Supervisors: Fran Martin and Heather Inwood

Keywords: boys' love, danmei, affect, desire, body, Chinese women, queer, subjectivity, digital media, affective economy

Abstract:
This thesis employs questionnaires and in-depth interviews with Chinese danmei writers and readers to delve into their embodied lived experiences in the dynamic yet ambivalent danmei cultural ecology. Danmei fiction, featuring male-male romantic and/or erotic relationships, emerged in mainland China in the late 1990s. In its early years, danmei culture was heavily influenced by Japanese boys' love (BL) comics, with pirated copies making their way into mainland China through Taiwan and Hong Kong. Since the 2010s, however, Chinese danmei culture has developed its own ecology and evolved into an ever-expanding transmedia cultural landscape, including fiction, animations, comics, audio dramas, web series, films, games, and music. Danmei has also become the preferred term among its participants. However, because of danmei's explicit association with male homoeroticism and women and queer participants' transgressive desires, danmei has always been an easy target for Chinese party-state censorship, entrenched in the heteropatriarchal socio-familial system.

The emergent field of danmei studies predominantly grounds its research in media and textual analysis, with an increasing interest in danmei-adapted web series, while limited attention has been directed towards producers and consumers of danmei fiction. Therefore, through adopting an anti-essentialist perspective and approaching the informants' life-story narratives in an open manner, this research pays close attention to the ambivalences embodied in danmei participants' lived experiences. The project thus offers a unique analytical approach, grounded in the grammar of ambivalences. This approach centres on psychic and material lived realities that have been infiltrated by heteronormative governance and reads out the complexity of danmei participants' affective experiences. This research suggests that the grammar of ambivalences offers us the opportunity to engage with these embodied everyday struggles, in the context of a multitude of normativities, and to explore how best to propel and intervene with a queer/feminist transformative momentum.

I begin the thesis by unveiling the diversity and heterogeneity among danmei participants in terms of age, gender and sexuality, despite the fact that the majority of them are from urban, middle-income and one-child families. It is the accommodation of diverse subject positions that shapes the dynamic of the Chinese danmei cultural ecology, which affords ambivalent subjectivities and desires. Through a careful examination of danmei participants as ambivalent desiring subjects and their varied paradigms of ambivalent affective experiences, this research then maps the manifold ambivalences in the Chinese danmei cultural ecology, embedded and embodied in their subjective experience of reading and writing male homoerotic texts. Throughout this research, I neither dodge the multiple (backward-looking) normativities infused within danmei culture, nor do I foreclose the (forward-facing) transformative potential embodied among danmei participants and the dynamic, fluid cultural ecology. By moving beyond a reductionist binary

framework, i.e., resistance versus escapism, of danmei culture, I suggest that ambivalence operates as the core organising principle of its participants as well as its cultural ecology. Furthermore, it is the reflexivity and self-problematising nature of this cultural community that constantly drive danmei's self-renewal and dynamics, enabling this cultural form to gain its queer feminist momentum.
The monograph adapted from this doctoral thesis has now been under contract with University of Michigan Press.

Georges-Picot, Jean-Baptiste

Places Made of Images: The Domestic Shrines of Minyak

Ecole Pratiques des Hautes Etudes (EPHE) / Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), France, September 2024
Supervisors: Charles Ramble and Pierre-Olivier Dittmar

Keywords: Tibet, Art History, Buddhism

Abstract:
Focusing on six painted shrines from Minyak – a region in the easternmost fringes of Tibet – this dissertation follows two directions. First, it introduces, contextualises and describes a unique corpus, the study of which is of primary importance due to its state of disrepair. This discussion serves as the base material to tackle the visual environment of Tibetan houses. Second, it attempts to interpret these shrines' overwhelming décor. This investigation scrutinises the content of paintings, together with their formal characteristics and the way both are entangled into a constellation of images, acts, places and objects. Based on this specific case, this inquiry moves on to address the way art history usually engages with Tibetan images. In particular, it focuses on the questions of legibility and "iconographic mistakes", the relation between places and images, and the design of painted ensembles.

Han, Dong

Picturing the New Knowledge of Heaven and Earth: World Maps, Cosmologies and Visual Culture in Matteo Ricci's China Mission

University of Warwick, UK, May 2024
Supervisors: Louise Bourdua and Lorenzo Pericolo

Keywords: Jesuits, Cartography, World Map, Visual Culture, Global Early Modernity

Abstract:
This thesis examines the Chinese world maps produced by Matteo Ricci (1552 – 1610) during his mission to Ming China from 1583 to 1608. Previous scholars have made significant contributions to this field. However, the particular role of Ricci's maps as a visual device in the conversation of two worldview systems between China and Europe still requires further examination. This thesis will probe into this issue in five chapters.
Chapter 1 discusses Ricci's life and self-fashioning during his China mission. I demonstrate his culturally hybrid status as an 'outsider' and an 'insider' in the Ming Empire and his dual identity as a missionary and a scholar. Chapter 2 is a comprehensive survey of Ricci mapmaking from Zhaoqing 肇慶 to Beijing 北京, in which I pay particular attention to the world map Kunyu wanguo quantu 坤輿萬國全圖 made in Beijing in 1602. Chapter 3 takes the 1602 map as an example to analyse the European and Chinese sources of Ricci's mapmaking, in order to probe how Ricci constructed the culturally hybrid knowledge of heaven and earth in his world maps. Chapter 4 is a case study of the 1602 map from the perspective of spectatorship, exploring the cultural significance and religious meaning of this cartographic masterpiece as a printed geographical treatise and a pingfeng (folding screen) in the study of Ming literati. Chapter 5 investigates Ricci's mapmaking after 1602, where I examine the religious symbolism of the 1603 map and the decorative illustrations on the 1608 map.
Overall, this thesis reveals how Ricci's self-fashioning and mapmaking interacted with Chinese literati's understanding of the world within the sociocultural context of late-Ming China from the interdisciplinary perspective of histories of art, science and ideas.

Huang, Ke

Sociologie de la plateforme de livraison Meituan et de ses livreurs. Redéploiement du capitalisme chinois, acteurs et régulation

Sociology of Meituan Platform and Its Delivery Workers. Redeployment of Chinese Capitalism, Actors and Regulation

Université Paris Cité/Inalco, France, July 2024
Supervisors: Patrick Cingolani and Chloé Froissart

Keywords: Work platform, Capitalism, Delivery workers, Meituan, Control, Collective action, Regulation, Trade union

Abstract:
This dissertation stems from the observation that since the 2010s, the platform economy has been developing in China, emerging as one of the key economic drivers in the era of slowing economic growth known as the “New Normal” (xin changtai). How does the platform economy, as a new form of capitalism, operate within the Chinese regime known as the “socialist market economy” (shehui zhuyi shichang jingji)? Sitting at the intersection of perspectives from sociology of work and political sociology, alongside an economic approach rooted in regulation theory, this dissertation focuses on delivery platforms to examine the deployment of Chinese platform capitalism and the practices of regulation actors.
In addition to the rich literature of platform studies, this dissertation mobilises numerous policy documents and reports related to the platform economy. Ethnographic data for this study come from participant observations and interviews conducted through fieldwork in three Chinese cities (Xiamen, Shenzhen, Guangzhou) and textual and audio-visual materials collected via online ethnography.
Based on the case study of the Meituan platform, this dissertation first reveals that the platform constructs a multiple outsourcing system that gives rise to a specific “grey zone” of employment. Through their own strategies for controlling delivery workers, Chinese food delivery platforms are developing a form of platform capitalism that differs from that inspired by the North American model. Firstly, algorithmic control constructs a digital Panopticon by combining it with a punishment system designed to instil fear into delivery workers in the work process. Secondly, for organisational control, Chinese platforms cooperate with third-party companies to create the “station” (zhandian) model, providing paternalistic protection through human intermediaries. The platforms then integrate the delivery workers recruited and managed by the third-party company (zhuansong) into the power relations and form a de facto subordination relationship between themselves and the zhuansong workers. For the freer delivery workers (zhongbao) who register via the App on their smartphones, platforms gamify their work by creating different modes of work, where the zhongbao workers’ freedom is transformed into a choice between a limited number of options.
Faced with the exploitation of workers by platforms and the disruptive effects on Chinese society as this economy expands, various actors are reacting against Chinese-style platform capitalism. On the one hand, Chinese delivery workers are demonstrating their agency by expressing their dissatisfaction. Their collective actions in the internet space indicate the possibility of using new technologies to build a new form of solidarity beyond the community of workers in China, where the space for resistance is shrinking. On the other hand, the Chinese authorities (central and local governments, as well as trade unions) tend to regulate

platforms to eliminate their negative effects and protect the interests of delivery workers without changing the country's existing institutional systems.

Launay, Elise

“Xianzheng”, un constitutionalisme à la chinoise?

[Xianzheng: Chinese-style Constitutionalism?]

Institut national des langues et civilisations étrangères (Inalco), France, December 2023
Supervisors: Frédéric Wang and Sébastien Billioud

Keywords: Constitutionalism, belief system, yifa zhiguo, rule of law, Chinese theory

Abstract:
Viewed through a liberal lens, the Western concept of constitutionalism does not fit well in an authoritarian one-Party regime such as China, since its core philosophy lies in the prevention from excessive concentration of power and is often associated with certain democratic norms: not only separation of powers but civil society, free elections, and rule of law, amount to the criteria of a genuine constitutionalist state. We argue that despite much reluctance to use the term “xianzheng” on the part of the CCP leaders (as a politically-loaded term inseparable from the connotation of the liberal democratic systems of government), its ideologists actually display a constitutionalist theory, in the narrow sense. There is not much of a paradox if one analyzes the Chinese Party-State’s ideology as a specific belief system making sense within its own set of principles, codes and values. Under the name “fazhi guojia”, the official discourse promotes a triptych, articulating the claim of the CCP leadership necessity to the national sovereignty premise (people as masters of the country) and to the “yifa zhiguo” assertion, whereby those in power and all citizens alike obey law for the purpose of the “Chinese dream”.

Leggieri, Antonio

Clap your hands and rid yourself of dust: an analysis of the late-Ming text Guzhang Juechen 鼓掌絕塵

Universität Wien, Università del Salento, Austria, Italy, October 2024
Supervisors: Maurizio Paolillo and Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik

Keywords: Guzhang Juechen, Late-Ming, Huaben

Abstract:
Guzhang juechen 鼓掌絕塵 (Clap your hands and rid yourself of dust, hereafter GZJC) is a collection of four medium-length stories, first published during the Ming 明 dynasty (1368–1644). Each story unfolds over 10 hui 回 (chapters), giving the text a total length of 40 chapters. Its foreword pins down rather precisely the era in which it was finished (and probably started circulating): it bears the date Chongzhen Xinweisui zhi Yuandan 崇禎辛未歲之元旦 (First Day of the Xinwei Year of the Chongzhen Era, therefore 1631). Respecting the praxis of writers of that time, its author and compiler conceal their identities behind artsy, bombastic pseudonyms. The text is signed by one Gu Wu Jinmu Sanren 古吳金木散人 (Idle man of metal and wood from Old Wu), and, apart from him, more people seem to have collaborated in the book. The names of Bihu Xiansheng 閉戶先生 (Master of the closed house) and Chicheng Linhai Yisou 赤城臨海逸叟 (Old Man at leisure close to the sea from Chicheng) appear in the introductions.
The four ten-chapter stories or sections are named respectively, Feng 風 (Wind), Hua 花 (Flowers), Xue 雪 (Snow) and Yue 月 (Moon), and each tells a different story, although some recurring macro-themes can be traced throughout the work. This study tackles GZJC in four different macro-aspects: the first chapter is an analysis and an introduction of the text and of its elements. The most evident aspects are the presence of diluted plots and the appearance of lists.
The second chapter deals with paratextual features and then it attempts a narratological analysis which is meant to establish the figure of the narrator as doer of things.
The third chapter is a study of intertextual references, mostly from three points of view: poems, references to famous literary characters, and themes. It also includes an analysis of the Chinese way to intertextuality.
The fourth chapter deals with humour. It starts from an analysis of a satirical episode, and then proceeds to tackle humour on a micro-level and on a macro-level. This chapter highlights also the constant dialogue that the text has with the past.

Leonard, Gordon

Chinese born-global firms in a megacity: a social capital perspective

Nottingham Trent University, UK, May 2023
Supervisor: Amon Simba

Keywords: International Entrepreneurship, Born-global Firms, Social Capital, Legitimacy

Abstract:
This research responds to the recent call in the entrepreneurship literature to address the shortcomings arising from the application of management theories developed in the "West" to "non-Western" contexts. The International Entrepreneurship (IE) literature itself strongly suggests social capital generation is important for born global firms' survival and growth, though understanding of how this is conducted in non-Western contexts is weak. Drawing upon and extending the social capital and legitimacy literature, this study utilises survey and in-depth interview data to further contextual knowledge about how born global firms go about generating their social capital in a booming city in south-west China, Chengdu. Born global firms have not been widely studied beyond the more developed coastal areas of PR China and with economic growth shifting towards rapidly growing interior cities such as Chengdu, this research provides new avenues to understand how born global firms can establish themselves in such different environments.
This study specifically seeks to understand how do Chengdu based born global firms earn and maintain legitimacy to establish contact with high-prestige networked individuals under different socio-cultural conditions. In doing so, this research furthers the understanding of born global firms' social capital generating behaviour outside of the more studied developed regions of China or the West. These studies have not focussed on the role of legitimacy in social capital building, which is suggested to be more relevant in regions or cities which are experiencing very rapid periods of change and economic disruption. These changes require born global firms to regularly renew their legitimacy due to the rapid disruptive pace of change.
Using a sequential explanatory design, this research collected fifty-two valid responses from owner-managers of Chengdu based born global firms. To follow up on emergent findings, eight in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide rich data on the linkages between the two most relevant dimensions of social capital (relational and cognitive) and legitimacy (cognitive and socio-political).
The findings of this research revealed that not only were strong ties vital during born global firms' early efforts at social capital building, but an interesting finding also revealed from the qualitative rich data was the subsequent role officials and high prestige occupation holders played as these firms sought to expand their networks. Officials often served as key sponsors who facilitated access to high-prestige individuals and additional scarce resources, which would hitherto remain hidden.
A conceptual typology of four firm types has been proposed based on cross-case analysis of findings to demonstrate the dynamic linkages between the levels of socio-political legitimacy achieved and connections to prestigious occupation holders. This typology can be used by practitioner or academic audiences to strategically plan or understand and develop purposive social capital building strategies for born global firms. Details of an illegitimate type are also provided, illustrating where born global firms survivability could be imperilled if such strategies are ignored or neglected. This research may also be of interest to

policy makers or organisations tasked with supporting born global firms such as chambers of commerce, and innovation/enterprise zones.

Lepri, Chiara

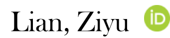
Il cinema cinese della "melodia principale". Storia, istituti, linguaggi e narrazioni

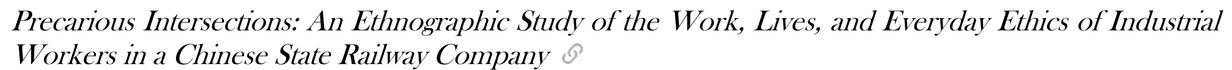
[Chinese main-melody cinema. History, institutions, languages and narrations]

Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, September 2024
Supervisor: Federico Masini

Keywords: Chinese cinema, media, propaganda, main melody, storytelling

Abstract:
This thesis is dedicated to the study of Chinese propaganda cinema, with particular reference to the so-called "main-melody cinema" (zhuxuanlü dianying 主旋律电影), a category established in 1987 to maintain the propagandistic tradition of cinema in the People's Republic of China. Since the 2000s, main-melody cinema has become one of the most commercially successful genres in the Chinese film industry. The "main melody" is analysed here in two sections, both of which draw upon Chinese Media Studies and Chinese Film Studies.
The first section adopts a historical approach and presents a diachronic account of the institutions that have controlled, regulated, and supported propaganda film production from the late 19th century to 2022. The second section focuses on the narratological and linguistic analysis of "main-melody cinema" (1987-2022). To this end, a periodisation of the transformations in main-melody cinema is proposed, combined with a series of case studies. The four time periods and the selected films highlight the linear transformation of the main-melody genre, thus identifying changes in the narrative elements of contemporary Chinese propaganda storytelling.


Lian, Ziyu



Precarious Intersections: An Ethnographic Study of the Work, Lives, and Everyday Ethics of Industrial Workers in a Chinese State Railway Company

Durham University, United Kingdom, April 2024
Supervisors: Catherine Alexander and Thomas Yarrow

Keywords: Precarity, Ethics, Labour

Abstract:
This dissertation explores Chinese industrial workers' labour, lives, and everyday ethics in the context of growing labour precarity. My ethnography, based on a year's fieldwork at a Chinese state railway company's construction site and its headquarters, demonstrates how new forms of precarity profoundly affect all aspects of workers' lives, including romantic relationships, marriage, social relationships with co-workers, plus a sense of security, and changing ideas of achievement.
I propose a fourfold model in which labour precarity intensifies social, affective, and structural precarity. Thus, since the reform of state-owned enterprises in the 1990s, temporary employment has largely replaced socialist, lifelong employment. Structural precarity refers to precarity resulting from particular economic and political configurations. Social precarity is characterised by vulnerable social relationships. Affective precarity indicates subjective experiences of precarity, such as the emotions that emerge in the context of labour, structural, and social precarity. The extent to which workers are affected by these different forms of precarity, or able to mitigate them, largely depends on their positions in a complex, gendered labour hierarchy of permanent state employees, temporary agency workers, workers with oral agreements with the company, interns, apprentices, and migrant workers. Exegeses and experiences of these kinds of precarity are shaped by distinct moral frameworks: Confucian philosophy emphasising filial obligation, socialist ideas of collective worth, and recent ideas of self-improvement and individual advancement. Drawing on all these three frameworks, workers piece together solutions to moral dilemmas, building a patchwork of everyday ethics, which I term the ethics of precarity.
My contributions are threefold. First, I offer new insights to scholarship on precarity by exploring how different forms of precarity intersect and are experienced. Second, I provide a novel analysis of how everyday ethics and precarity are intertwined. Finally, I provide an original ethnography of Chinese railway workers' labour and lives.

Liu, Jialong

The Tones of Stones: Public Inscriptions and the Rise of Regional Powers in Tang China (755-907)

KU Leuven, Belgium, May 2024
Supervisor: Hilde De Weerdt

Keywords: Tang China, Inscriptions, Provinces, Court, Legitimacy

Abstract:
This dissertation studies the role of public inscriptions in the mid-late Tang (755-907) political context. The Chinese Tang Empire suffered a continuing crisis after the An Lushan Rebellion (755-763). On the one hand, control from the central government based in the capitals over the whole empire weakened. On the other hand, the powers of provincial governors increased in reaction. The tension between the central and local governments was one of the most significant problems that beset the empire throughout the latter half of the dynasty. Under this background, public inscriptions as remarkable landmarks in local areas were used by the court, local governments, and literati involved to fulfill propaganda purposes. The first two chapters focus on a specific genre of public inscriptions: steles of virtuous governance. One chapter studies the steles of virtuous governance in a semi-autonomous province, demonstrating that the provincial governors used the steles to gain legitimacy in ruling the province and maintain their rulership during crises. The other chapter studies the steles in a province whose governors were appointed by the court and loyal to the emperor. This chapter shows that the inscriptions were structured based on the dynamic political situation to achieve good propaganda results. The following two chapters focus on another genre of public inscriptions: records on walls of office halls. I argue that the authors of the records on the walls of local government offices attempted to emphasize the authority of the central court and neglect provincial governors' rising powers in their texts. In this way, the literati were trying to define the relationship between the central court and provincial governments. In the last chapter, I analyze the spatiotemporal distribution of the public inscriptions throughout the Tang Dynasty (618-907). I conclude that the Tang capitals gradually lost their dominant position in the cultural field and the cultural importance of Southern China increased.

Liu, Ruoxi

The Meaning of Being Independent: Precarities of Work and Lifestyles and Alternative-Seeking among Chinese Self-Employed Cultural Workers

Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, November 2023
Supervisor: Christel Lane

Keywords: Alternative-seeking, China, Communities, Cultural Workers, Independent Work, Precarity, Self-Employment

Abstract:
Notwithstanding the many emerging terms relevant to self-employed/independent workers, such as freelancers and flexible workers, and the growing discussion regarding new types of work and entrepreneurship, self-employed workers are still a minority in the Chinese labour market. Without an official definition and uniform categorisation, self-employed workers in Chinese society face an ambivalent situation in economic, social, and cultural terms. This thesis investigates the independent cultural workers, who constitute a significant population to study among the self-employed workers. They represent an important niche social group whose work ideally requires a high level of autonomy and creativity but who constantly face constraints from content regulation and censorship. Compared to other self-employed workers (such as gig workers and non-cultural digital workers) or those in other social contexts, independent cultural workers in China face challenges connected with being 'independent' in various aspects of sociality, culture, and gender.
Contextualised in contemporary mainland China, a post-socialist society characterised by its own features of collectivism, individualisation, and neoliberal tendencies, this thesis studies the 'independents' who do cultural work to understand three sets of research themes from a sociological perspective: first, precarity and hope in independent cultural workers' work and lifestyles; second, the politics of cultural production; and third, the individual-society-state relationship. The thesis adopts a mixture of qualitative methodologies (participant observation, in-depth interview, and solicited diary-keeping) throughout an 11-month period (from May 2020 to April 2021) of ethnographic fieldwork across a number of Chinese cities.
Drawing on the testimonies of 111 interviewees, 16 diaries, and my own fieldnotes as a participant observer and engaging with the literature on precarity and hope in creative labour studies, the politics of cultural production, and individualism and individualisation, I first summarise their work and lifestyle practices, characterised by various precarities, not only in the normal sense as an aspect of work, but also from social, cultural, and gendered standpoints. I then investigate how they strive for self-realisation in part via negotiation at both individual and community levels, in response to the growing interest from the market and the state in self-employment. Last, I highlight their search for alternatives to various kinds of precarity and the increasing uncertainties created by the multiple players within China's cultural politics. In particular, I identify their alternative practices in developing new modes of doing cultural work via self-organisation, cultivating alternative spaces, communities, and cultures, and pursuing a new, often non-confrontational cultural politics through everydayness and mobility-seeking.
By pursuing three lines of enquiry, this research contributes to an understanding of the meaning of 'being independent' in an authoritarian society with residual collectivist, as well as neoliberal, tendencies. I argue that 'being independent' in China starts with aspects of work but goes beyond it to also encompass cultural,

social, and political aspects of life. I conclude by establishing workers' reasons for being independent, which lie in achieving self-realisation, social withdrawal, and individualism, and the approaches to being independent, including disengagement from society and alternative-seeking. I finally position independent cultural workers as a drifting social group and reflect on the features of heterogeneity, in-betweenness, and temporality, shown in their work and lifestyle practices and status of being independent.

Overall, this thesis furthers a more nuanced understanding of cultural/creative work, cultural/creative workers, and their communities; develops new insights into the individual-society-state relationship and contest individual agency at the grassroots levels in China; and provides a 'cultural independents'-focused version of China's individualisation process.

Liu, Shuang

Vulnerable Yet Resilient: Representations of Migrant Workers in Contemporary Chinese Prose

Leiden University Institute for Area Studies, Netherlands, December 2024
Supervisors: Maghiel van Crevel and Svetlana Kharchenkova.

Keywords: Chinese literature, migrant workers, vulnerable, resilient

Abstract:
China has been known as the "workshop of the world" since the late 20th century, and countless consumers all over the world have been purchasing and using products "made in China" for decades. But what do they know about the people who made these products? Along with construction workers, the makers of goods made in China constitute a core group within the nearly 300 million internal rural-to-urban labor migrants whose cheap labor has enabled China's economic rise amid a globalized ecology of consumption. Even as their labor enters the lives of others worldwide, they essentially remain strangers to the average store customer. Who are these people?
This study asks how China's migrant workers are represented in literature, as distinct from various other discourses. Addressing this question will give us a better understanding of China's internal migrant workers, Chinese society, global capitalism – and last but not least, of Chinese literature.

Luo, Yuxue

Contextualising Foreign Subsidiary Governance of EMNEs: Antecedents and Consequences

University of Nottingham Ningbo China, China, November 2024
Supervisors: Lei Li and Youngun Kim

Keywords: foreign subsidiary governance, board of directors, CEO, antecedents, consequences

Abstract:
The institutional environments for international business have become increasingly complex and uncertain, which presents disproportionate challenges to emerging-market multinational enterprises (EMNEs). Foreign subsidiaries of EMNEs are expected to establish well-functioning governance structures and play crucial roles in managing the global strategy journey of parent companies. However, the literature reveals a gap in systematic research on foreign subsidiary governance. To address the research gap, I develop a comprehensive framework to explore (1) the understudied internal drivers of foreign subsidiary governance structure such as the FDI motives, business relatedness, and the parent firm's ownership; (2) the lack of understanding of the impact of foreign subsidiary governance structure on local legitimacy of EMNEs. To empirically test the hypotheses, I utilise data from 116 listed foreign subsidiaries of Chinese MNEs, collected from CSMAR, ORBIS, BoardEx, and ProQuest, spanning from 2005 to 2021.
Subsidiary governance mainly serves an internal role in managing relationships with headquarters and an external role in managing relationships with host countries. Conflicts may arise due to this dual role, leading to a trade-off or varying emphasis between headquarters control/standardisation and subsidiary autonomy/adaptation (Kostova & Roth, 2002).
The first empirical study examines the impact of antecedents. The findings indicate that the strategic asset-seeking motive positively influences the external role of the subsidiary board while negatively affecting its internal role. This impact is demonstrated by a greater emphasis on engaging with the host country environment, evidenced by a higher proportion of independent directors and a preference for non-expatriate CEOs. Conversely, the internal role receives less emphasis, as reflected in a lower ratio of expatriate directors. In comparison, institutional escape, business relatedness, and headquarters ownership of subsidiaries correlate more strongly with the subsidiary board's internal role and less with its external role. The hypotheses regarding institutional escape—that it correlates with a higher expatriate director ratio, lower independent director ratio, and a higher likelihood of hiring a non-expatriate CEO—are supported. However, hypotheses concerning business relatedness and headquarters ownership receive only partial support.
The second empirical study investigates the influence of subsidiary governance on legitimacy. Utilising sentiment analysis of news titles and two-stage least squares regressions (2SLS), the study reveals that a greater external role and lesser internal role positively correlate with subsidiary legitimacy. Specifically, a higher ratio of independent directors, the appointment of non-expatriate CEOs, and a lower ratio of expatriate directors facilitate legitimacy attainment.
Additionally, the moderating effect of cultural distance is discussed across both empirical studies. Generally, increasing cultural distance strengthens the internal role while weakening the external role. Both empirical chapters employ regression analyses, followed by a series of robustness tests, which generally confirm the robustness of the results.

I contribute significantly to international corporate governance and the study of EMNEs. It addresses gaps highlighted by Puck & Filatotchev (2020) by integrating multi-disciplinary approaches in corporate governance and strategic management in the process of firm internationalisation. Moreover, the thesis integrates and extends management theories within the context of foreign subsidiaries, which are essential elements of MNEs navigating dual pressures from both home and host environments. Moreover, it shifts the focus from previous research on DMNEs to include EMNEs, which uniquely impact subsidiary board composition and CEO recruitment and are supplementary to existing literature. Additionally, I empirically examine the impact of board composition on legitimacy, a novel contribution not previously directly tested in the literature. Finally, it provides implications for both practitioners and researchers, highlighting the importance of strategically selecting board members and CEOs for subsidiaries to align their expertise and strategic vision with local contextual dynamics and subsidiary-specific objectives.

Ma, Yinting

Le développement de la France libre en Chine: les relations sino-françaises pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1940-1946)

[The development of the Free France in China: Sino-French relations during the Second World War (1940-1946)]

Université Paris-Saclay, ENS Paris-Saclay, France, September 2024
Supervisor: Olivier Wieviorka

Keywords: Free France, General de Gaulle, Tchang Kaï-chek, Sino-French relations, Second World War

Abstract:
By tracing the history of diplomatic relations between Free France and Tchang Kaï-chek's government during the Second World War, this thesis endeavors to integrate the development of Free France in the Far East into the study of Sino- French relations. After the collapse of France in the summer of 1940, the Gaullist movement in China underwent a gradual transformation. The movement evolved from the spontaneous organization of French expatriates in China to the appointment of an official delegate by General de Gaulle to establish relations with Tchang Kaï-chek's government. Between 1941 and 1945, General de Gaulle's diplomatic efforts towards China reflected his political vision and concern for French interests in China and Indochina. However, the difficulties encountered by the Gaullists in China revealed the intrinsic fragility of Free France, notably its lack of resources and internal contradictions (between Gaullists and Giraudists). As members of the Allied coalition, Tchang Kaï-chek and de Gaulle shared both contradictions and common interests regarding Indochina. Moreover, the ambition of the Free French to restore French influence in China after the war, as well as Tchang Kaï-chek's desire to strengthen his friendly relations with France in order to create a favorable international environment for his government, were decisive factors in the evolution of their relationship during the dark years.

Morbiato, Anna

Word order and sentence structure in Mandarin Chinese: new perspectives

Ca'Foscari University (co-supervised by the University of Sydney, Dept. of Linguistics, Australia), Italy, March 2018
Supervisors: Magda Abbiati (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) and William A. Foley (The University of Sydney)

Keywords: Word order, subjecthood, constituenthood, argument structure, event structure, information structure

Abstract:
Word order (WO) is one of the most fascinating and investigated topics in Mandarin Chinese (MC) linguistics, and many accounts have been proposed on different WO patterns and constructions. However, despite the large amount of research, a number of WO related issues remain rather controversial. Crucially, no unified consensus exists on the relationship between WO and the different dimensions of the language (i.e. semantics, syntax and pragmatics), and on how these levels interact with each other. The present thesis's aim is twofold: (1) identify the categories that are useful to account for WO patterns and variations in MC; (2) examine in greater depth the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors that influence word order in MC, as well as how they interact and impose constraints on possible WO variations. The novelty of the approach lies on three aspects: (i) a typological, comparative perspective that benefits from cross-linguistic investigation of WO phenomena in other languages; (ii) a bottom up approach that avails itself of cross-linguistically validated typological tools (e.g., GR tests, or constituenthood tests) aimed at conducting the analysis on a language-internal basis, and (iii) an empirical approach: the analysis avails itself of natural linguistic data, mainly drawn from corpora, and relies on acceptability checks with native speakers. Overall, the thesis highlights that WO patterns and constructions are determined by the interplay of different factors and constraints. It also highlights that, for the sake of clarity and ambiguity avoidance, WO constraints are hierarchically organized, and WO freezing phenomena occur to allow disambiguation of participants in the described event.

Nagy, Mercédesz

Az Új Kína kulturális percepciója Magyarországon

[The cultural perception of “New China” in Hungary]

DOI:10.15476/ELTE.2023.322

Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences, Hungary, April 2024
Supervisors: Akos Bertalan Apatoczky and Ferenc Hammer

Keywords: Chinese-Hungarian cultural relations; perception of China in Hungary; Rákosi regime; visual propaganda

Abstract:
This dissertation aims to contribute to the research and understanding of the cultural relationship between China and Hungary. Its focus is on the short period after 1949, the proclamation of the People's Republic of China, when Hungary's thinking about China changed along the lines of the transition between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War. What used to be an ‘exotic far-off world’ suddenly and dramatically became a direct political ally: ‘People's China’ became a ‘friendly country’. This fact did not mean, of course, that the Hungarian public could have had a more credible picture of this country (and geopolitical factor) with a radically different cultural, religious and social tradition, which still calls itself the Middle Kingdom, than the one that had been formed in the Horthy regime's perception of the East, mixed with the Turanism and disappointed yearning after Trianon. The perception of China in Hungary that unfolded under the dictatorship of the Rákosi regime was shaped by the historical and geopolitical dramaturgy of the period, in accordance with the narrative defined in the Soviet Union - which was fed by the spirit of internationalism that was taking on an imperialist tone over time - and was adapted to the Soviet-Chinese relationship. The Sino-Soviet struggle for dominance that began after Stalin's death was reflected in the Hungarian image of China, always with a slight phase lag; as a result of the deteriorating relations between the great powers, the Kádár regime's later forced and unquestioning stance in favour of the Soviet Union was also felt in Chinese cultural relations and in the cultural perception of China. In this respect, the dissertation examines the cultural documentation of the period's perception of China. For this purpose, it mainly focuses on the phenomena created by visual propaganda - with a focus on the slide films of the 1950s and the 1951 exhibition New China at the Museum of Fine Arts - and their press.

Ng, Chloe Cheug-Wing

War and the Representations of Women in the Twelfth-Century China

University of Oxford, UK, July 2024
Supervisor: Tian Yuan Tan

Keywords: Chinese literature, Chinese history, gender history, women's literature, war studies, Song dynasty, Middle-Period China

Abstract:
The dissertation focuses on examining female images of the period 1100–1200, analysing how they were produced and used in the context of national instability and investigating how the interpretation and production of such images were affected and/or shaped by war directly and indirectly.
A significant volume of previous scholarship has discussed different aspects of women's roles and rights that might have an impact on, or even started, many of the gender-related cultural phenomena in late imperial China. However, discussions on the impact of wars on women's lives in the Song dynasty have only started in the last two decades. The Northern Song dynasty was bitterly defeated by the Jin army in an unexpectedly swift manner in 1127. Losing half of its lands to the Jin army triggered a major population shift; having almost the entire imperial family, including the two emperors, Huizong and Qinzong, captured by the north, the Song court somehow managed to survive and ruled for another a 150-odd years. As a result of the war, China saw huge social and political changes at the time. For this reason, the dissertation focuses on this period, 1100–1200.
By studying the female images under the context of national insecurities and rediscovering the hidden images of women in the war narratives, I hope to see how women at the time were impacted by national instability, fill the gaps of related studies and discussions, and offer a perspective that could lead to a further understanding of the lives of women at the time.

Ooi, Yen

Sino Science Fiction and Zoefuturism

Royal Holloway, University of London, United Kingdom, July 2024
Supervisor: Adam Roberts

Keywords: Sino science fiction, zoefuturism, techno-Orientalism, decolonialism, colonialism, postcolonialism, zoetology

Abstract:
The aim of this thesis is to define the characteristics of Sino science fiction through understanding its grounding in ancient East Asian knowledge systems and philosophy, and its emergence through modern cultural and socio-political developments. This will facilitate locating my novel Rimba within the genre, to critically contextualise its themes and concerns contemporarily. Often, Sino and Sinophone studies are synonymous with Chinese studies, which is problematic in the oversimplification of the community, where the pressure to focus only on mainland Chinese trends and their consequences have distracted researchers from the wider global Sino community. Using just texts that are available in English, either translated from Chinese or written in English by Chinese-speaking writers or writers with Chinese heritage, this research aims to keep its focus on literature that has been accepted into the pool of mainstream science fiction by the general readership, while presenting additional values to the global Sino readership. Beginning with situating Chinese science fiction and Chinese diaspora science fiction within the wider genre, I will show that science fiction is a congruence site for writers from China and the wider diaspora, and how a duality of science fictional and cultural traits can be expected from their works. Then, I will define the characteristics of the Sino community to reveal how a Sino rationality is required to unlock a Sino reading of the science fiction, and verifying Sino science fiction as diaspora literature. While this isn't essential for the general understanding or enjoyment of the literature, this is still significant because it provides a new critical examination of Sino science fiction that does not rely on foundational theory that clashes with its fundamentality; instead, it informs a new way of approaching Sino science fiction that better caters to embracing all the meanings that it can proffer. Finally, I will introduce zoefuturism as a broader genre within which Sino science fiction is a part, outlining its general concept and how it will form the next phase of my personal research and writing, post-PhD.

Ornaghi, Valentina

La mediazione linguistico-culturale nella didattica del cinese: modelli teorici e applicazioni pedagogiche

[Linguistic and cultural mediation in Chinese language teaching: theoretical models and pedagogical applications]

Sapienza Università di Roma, Italia, July 2023
Supervisor: Chiara Romagnoli

Keywords: Chinese language teaching, Domain-specific Chinese, Linguistic and Cultural Mediation, Mediators' training

Abstract:
This dissertation aims at exploring a topic which has gained growing popularity as far as European languages are concerned, but which is still rarely analyzed when it comes to Chinese language, that is, the teaching of mediation skills. Due to the ever increasing migration trends and globalization, linguistic and cultural mediation is playing a crucial role in the functioning of modern societies. Mediators are playing an increasingly important role in Italy, and Bachelor and Master's degree programs in Linguistic and Cultural Mediation are flourishing. As far as Europe is concerned, in 2018 the Companion Volume of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has introduced important guidelines for teaching and evaluating mediation skills and strategies. However, in Italy, in spite of the increasing importance of linguistic and cultural mediation, there is not a univocal definition of the identity and roles of mediators and there are no definite guidelines as far as training is concerned. For these reasons, this dissertation proposes some teaching materials and activities aimed at university students attending Chinese language courses within the Faculties of Linguistic and Cultural Mediation in Italy, with the purpose of training students' mediation skills.
The first two chapters are aimed at giving a theoretical framework: the first chapter gives a definition of the term mediation and defines the profile and role of linguistic and cultural mediators, while the second chapter illustrates the different types of training proposals emerged from the literature review. The third chapter puts forth a proposal of teaching materials aimed at training students' mediation skills as well as developing their knowledge of the specific terminology, with a focus on legal Chinese. The chapter also includes some suggestions on how to use online and multimedia tools. As final, the fourth chapter presents the results of a laboratory, which was carried out with the aim of testing the teaching materials proposed.

Pan, Fuqin

Learning to Read in Suzhou: Libraries, Cultural Capital, and Inequalities in Suzhou's Preschool Children's Emergent Reading

University of Liverpool, United Kingdom, May 2024
Supervisors: David Goodman, Nicole Talmacs and Josie Billington

Keywords: children's libraries, home reading environment, cultural capital, educational inequality

Abstract:
Since the launch of the national reading campaign in 2006, children's reading in China has been increasingly promoted by national policy. However, the existing literature on this topic mainly centres on the correlation between school-aged children's reading test performances and their families' socioeconomic status or the impact of educational disadvantages on rural children's literacy development. Little discussed is the uneven start of preschool children's emergent reading in Chinese metropolises mixed with a large influx of rural-to-urban immigrants and non-immigrants. Social inequality arising from the complex demographic composition is partially reflected in children's differences in accessing library resources and home reading experiences. While public libraries claim to embrace all children with free reading services and average urban families declare no significant economic challenges in book purchases, some children still have no access to quality reading resources and foster no regular reading habits. In contrast, private children's libraries have gained impetus from market demand and provide customised reading services to families with 'advantageous' financial and cultural capital, which benefits privileged children with reading-focused support. Even less attention has been given to how families without the means to access library resources perceive and practise their children's emergent reading. Suzhou's disparate possession of cultural capital contributes to preschool children's emergent reading inequalities across the city.
This thesis aims to fill this gap in scholarship by exploring three aspects of how preschool children in Suzhou learn to read: firstly, public libraries; secondly, private libraries that operate through paid membership schemes and guided reading classes; and thirdly, through the study of children from rural-to urban migrant workers' families. Drawing on French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's framework of cultural capital, the study tackles these questions by participant observation in public and private children's libraries as well as children's story times organised by them; analysis of reading environments, business infrastructure and programs offered; and through interview of parents and library staff, for a holistic picture of preschool children's emergent reading life in Suzhou.
For observers of China, this thesis provides considerations for educational inequality in China from the perspective of emergent literacy acquisition. For educational and cultural policymakers in China, it provides insight into the gaps between urban children's reading needs and the current performances of public libraries. Some trends observed, such as the cooperation between public and private libraries to provide reading services to children, may shed light on the improvement of children's reading socialisation towards a more inclusive and productive future.

Pavone, Marta

Quête de chance pour une vie prospère: Ethnologie de l'économie de la chance dans le temple de Tudi Gong du Hongludi Nanshan Fude (Hang-lôo-tē) à Taïwan

[In search of Luck for a Prosperous Life: Ethnology of Economy of Luck in the Tudi Gong Temple of Hongludi]

Inalco, France, December 2024
Supervisor: Catherine Capdeville-Zeng

Keywords: Anthropology, Tudi Gong, Luck, Gift economy, Taiwan

Abstract:
This dissertation is based on an ethnological survey of Hongludi Nanshan Fude Temple (referred to in this dissertation by his Hokkien name, Hang-lôo-tē), located on Nanshijiao Hill in Zhonghe District, New Taipei, and dedicated to the worship of Tudi Gong, the "God of Earth". The aim of this dissertation is to analyse the temple's economy, identified here as the "economy of luck". By this term, we refer to the ways in which luck, believed to circulate within the temple area, is managed and distributed to people. The economy of luck in Hang-lôo-tē is characterized by exchanges between humans and spirits for the request of caiyun 財運, or "the luck for becoming rich". This dissertation builds on the work of Roberte Hamayon on randomness in Siberia and, in the sino-taiwanese context, on the research of Stéphanie Homola and Fiorella Allio. We will identify two circuits of luck: the first is based on a redistribution centralized by a selected group (the Temple Committee), while the second involves personal interactions between the worshipper, deities and "predestined affinity" (yuanfen 緣分). In the end, this dissertation aims to observe how humans and spirits participate in the circulation of luck, and how deities are perceived not as abstract and elusive entities, but as real, invisible social actors who operate in the visible world.

Perinçek Karavit, Kiraz

Mobile art along the Silk Roads: Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings

Bogaziçi University, History Department, Türkiye, September 2023
Supervisor: Selçuk Esenbel

Keywords: global history, Silk Road studies, mobility studies, narrative painting

Abstract:
This dissertation aims to put a group of paintings back in their historical contexts, among which they had been mobile along the ancient Silk Roads. Known as Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, these unique works of art are found cut and pasted on various folios of two albums in Topkapi Palace Museum Library.
The artistic style with Chinese impact, materials, and themes of nomadic life implicate a production environment at the intersection of Chinese and Central Asian Turkic realms in the fourteenth century. Although scholars assume their purpose is to illustrate recitations, they are deprived of their original format. Other works of art in the albums support their compilation in the Akkoyunlu court in Tabriz during the fifteenth century. Shreds of evidence strengthen their entry into the Ottoman court as spoils in Selim I's reign (1512-1520). Subject to photography projects stolen from the Ottoman Palace Library, some of them were smuggled to urban sites of Orientalism at the turn of the twentieth century.
This dissertation contributes to the literature in solving the enigma of these paintings in three aspects: first is the abundant groundbreaking sources to enlighten various dark moments of the paintings' mobility. Second is the analysis to reveal the links with Chinese artistic traditions and to substantiate the storytelling function in daily practices. The last and fundamental contribution of this study is the theoretical framework that presents these paintings as mobility elements with shifting local meanings and global implications, where through these perception changes, we can trace historical transformations.

Puglia, Francesca

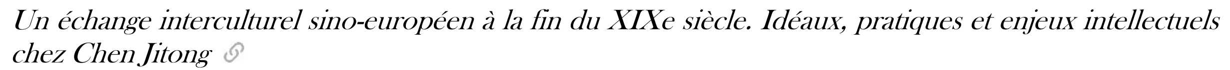
Taiyi sheng shui 太一生水: a new cosmological reading of the Guodian 郭店 manuscript

Bern University, Insitute of Philosophy, Switzerland, September 2023
Supervisors: Richard King and Constance A. Cook

Keywords: Taiyi 太一, excavated manuscripts, astronomy in early China, Taiyi sheng shui 太一生水, Chu 楚

Abstract:
After thirty years from the discovery in 1993 of the Guodian 郭店 Chu slips in the Guodian tombs in Jingmen 荊門, the significance of the fourteen bamboo slips collected by the editors of the Guodian Chu mu zhujian 郭店楚墓竹簡 under the title Taiyi sheng shui 太一生水 (TYSS) remains mysterious. Traditionally, Taiyi 太一 is understood as a concept close to the dao 道 of the Daodejing 道德經 and corresponding to the pole star, and, consequently, the first half of the text as a cosmogony. Because of inconsistencies in these readings of the text, scholarship is still divided in its interpretation.
The aim of this thesis is to offer a new reading of the manuscript, according to which Taiyi is an alternative name for the sun and the first half of the text actually represents a cosmological cycle, the understanding of which is an object of fundamental knowledge by the shengren 聖人 (wise noble) for state administration. The arguments supporting this reading lie first of all in the concrete vocabulary employed in the text, which finds striking parallels in several other ancient Chinese texts. These sources describe the sun both as a celestial body that runs its path through the sky and as a god, and point out its role in granting the existence of the "ten thousand things," providing images similar to those which imbue the TYSS. Taiyi in the TYSS is in fact depicted as moving with the seasons, completing a cycle and beginning anew, and hiding in water, and is defined as the mother and the warp of the ten thousand things—all descriptions that may support the claim that Taiyi refers to the sun: the first chapter of this thesis is entirely devoted to demonstrating this correspondence.
The second chapter is dedicated to clarifying the role of shui 水 (the second agent brought up already in the first sentence of the TYSS) in the cosmology as the water, mostly rivers, involved in the hydrological cycle activated by the sun, and fundamental for the irrigation of the agricultural fields.
The third and the fourth chapters provide a contextualization of the TYSS against the background of the excavated manuscripts from the Chu area and transmitted Chu textual sources. Particular attention is devoted to a confrontation with the Guodian Laozi 郭店老子 and the broader Daodejing-related textual tradition and with the Chu bo shu 楚帛書 excavated from Changsha 長沙.
The fifth and last chapter closes the circle of questions left open in the previous chapters: if the wise noble has services to look after in the state, distancing himself from the Laozian shengren who, conversely, does not act, what is the domain of these services? How are they connected to the relevance given to the knowledge of the sun's patterns and of the hydrological cycle? These questions are answered by reading the text against the background of a fundamentally hydraulic society, in which crops represented both sustenance of the people, taxes, and ritual offerings.

Qi, Yue



Un échange interculturel sino-européen à la fin du XIXe siècle. Idéaux, pratiques et enjeux intellectuels chez Chen Jitong

[A Sino-European cultural exchange at the end of the 19th century. Ideals, practices and intellectual issues in Chen Jitong's work"]

ENS-PSL, France, 2023 (November)
Supervisor: Michel Espagne

Keywords: Francophone literature, Diplomat-writer, Chen Jitong, Intercultural mediator, Cultural transfers, Sino-European exchanges

Abstract:
In Sino-European relations after the Opium Wars, the Self-Strengthening Movement (1861-1895) was defined not only by pragmatic economic reforms. It saw the creation of new international institutions, including the first Chinese embassies, as well as Western-style arsenals and schools that trained a new generation of intellectuals whose influence continued into the early 20th century, fostering cross-cultural exchanges between Europe and China. This thesis examines Sino-European exchanges at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries by studying the political and cultural activities of Chen Jitong, a French-trained diplomat-writer who stayed in Europe between 1875 and 1891 as part of the Movement. In the first part of this thesis, we examine the possibility of spontaneous modernity in China in the context of colonialism, questioning the interactions with Europe in the new diplomatic relations, especially the reciprocal cultural impacts made by Chen Jitong and other reformist intellectuals. In the second part, we propose that in the 1880s, Chen's activities as a figure of "Tout-Paris" were integrated into the political landscape of the early Third Republic and the fin-de-siècle literary milieu. We then examine the underlying tensions in diplomatic and artistic circles and the enrichment of European literature. Finally, in the third section, we define the parallel socio-cultural transformations in Europe and China around 1900 by investigating Chen's late activities after his return. Working as an engineer, translator, and publisher, he promoted Western civilization in China at a time of developing European imperialism and the end of the Chinese empire, despite the reforms. Our study of this emblematic figure between two civilizations and two eras proves invaluable for the historiography of Sino-European relations, Francophone literature, European sinology, and Chinese modernization.

Ren, Sijie

Science and Politics in Maoist China: The Synthetic Insulin Project and its Legacy

University of Bristol, United Kingdom, November 2024
Supervisors: Robert Bickers and Adrian Howkins

Keywords: Mao-era, Basic Science, Politics

Abstract:
Science and politics were deeply interwoven during the Mao era. This thesis examines the synthetic insulin project, widely recognised among Mao-era China's most significant scientific achievements, to explore the complex interplay between political imperatives and scientific progress. This study seeks to understand how and why the synthetic insulin project was initiated, how it succeeded, and the broader implications of its success. Drawing on various kinds of materials, this thesis provides a nuanced analysis of the motivations behind the synthetic insulin project. It argues that the project was driven by Maoist political movements and communist ideology, in conjunction with the influence of Western scientific developments in biochemistry, especially the discovery of the sequence and composition of insulin. The successful collaboration between well-trained scientists and moderate cadres within the Chinese Communist Party, coupled with a period of relative political stability, created a crucial window for scientific advancement. The synthesis of insulin, the world's first synthetic crystalline protein, became a significant scientific milestone and a potent political symbol, offering valuable resources and narratives for the Chinese government. Through its exploration of this project, the thesis not only sheds light on the dynamics of Maoist China but also invites a rethinking of how scientific research can be deeply embedded within the political frameworks of their time. The study reveals the broader implications of the relationship between science and political forces in shaping national narratives and memories.

Sio, Ka I

Representing Hong Kong Identity in Newspapers: A Corpus-based Study of 'Hongkonger', 2001-2020

Durham University, United Kingdom, September 2023
Supervisor: Qing CAO

Keywords: China, Hong Kong, Hongkonger, identity, media, postcolonialism

Abstract:
In the twenty-two years from the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China in 1997 to the months-long political protests sparked by the controversial plan to allow extraditions to mainland China in 2019, Hong Kong's political changes reached a tipping point and led to an identity crisis for its people. Using Homi Bhabha's 'hybridity' idea as theoretical framework, this study investigates Hong Kong people's postcoloniality and unveils the complex relationship between Hong Kong's political movements and Hongkongers' postcolonial political mind-set.
Due to newspapers' close connection with local people and politics, articles from five Hong Kong newspapers, namely, Apple Daily (蘋果日報), Hong Kong Economic Journal (信報), Ming Pao (明報), Oriental Daily (東方日報), and Wen Wei Po (文匯報), are examined to focus on changes in the Hongkonger identity between 2001 and 2020, a period covering several iconic post-handover political incidents. A methodology consisting of corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and in-depth interviews is adopted to analyse the material in both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and helps to answer the following three questions: (1) How has the Hongkonger identity been represented by the five case study newspapers in the sample period? (2) Why was this identity represented in these ways? What are motivating factors that led to such representations? (3) What journalistic strategies have the newspapers adopted to mobilise people, and why?
By examining the three most conflict-laden political movements in post-handover Hong Kong—the Moral and National Education controversy in 2012, the Umbrella Movement in 2014, and the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill protests in 2019— this study argues that Hongkongers' political postcoloniality intensified the conflicts hidden in the 'in-between' Hongkonger identity, thereby aggravating mainland China–Hong Kong tensions and eventually bringing the city to a point of 'no turning back'.

Sun, Chang

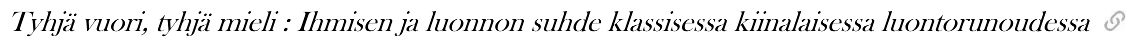
Blurred Boundaries and Eroded Independence: An Alternative History Written by Chinese Independent Documentary

The University of Manchester, United Kingdom, July 2024
Supervisors: Anastasia Valassopoulos ans Felicia Chan

Keywords: Chinese independent documentary, Chinese cinema

Abstract:
The production and circulation of Chinese independent documentaries in China has increasingly become a grey zone in recent years. In order to investigate the reason behind this, the thesis explores the answers to three research questions. First, what the independent spirit is supposed to be in the Chinese context. Second, how have the boundaries of independence been blurred under the influence of the domestic and international film market. And third, what might be the result of this eroded independence. Since its emergence, there have been many literatures on Chinese independent documentary and its interaction with the government and the film festival circuit, with researchers focusing more on Chinese documentarians, especially their confrontations against the authorities and the cultural capital they gained overseas. This thesis further examines the intermediary role the NGOs played in this dynamic structural play, discussing how their intervention shaped the style and content of Chinese independent documentaries, and more importantly, how the medial information accumulated in this process constructed an alternative history of contemporary China. This thesis reviews the development of Chinese documentaries since 1949. Using an integrated framework based on theory of cultural capital by Bourdieu, each chapter provides a thorough analysis on Chinese independent documentarians and their interaction with different actors, respectively the government, international film festivals and the NGOs. These analyses shed light on how the boundaries of independent filmmaking have been eroded on the practical level as a result of the interplay of different forms of capital. This thesis considers the ambiguous attitude of the government towards independent documentaries not as an obstacle, but an opportunity for the NGOs to negotiate with it, to find space for the development of a China-centred independent film network, where certain historical events could be interpreted and represented from a rather personal perspective. History writing eventually became the site where independent documentaries and the Chinese government struggled for authority.

Tähtinen, Tero


Tyhjä vuori, tyhjä mieli : Ihmisen ja luonnon suhde klassisessa kiinalaisessa luontorunoudessa

[Empty Mountain, Empty Mind. The Relationship between Human and Nature in Classical Chinese Poetry]

Tampere University, Finland, October 2024
Supervisor: Sari Kivistö

Keywords: Chinese poetry, landscape poetry, Chinese Buddhism, Wang Wei, Tao Qian

Abstract:
My article-based dissertation discusses the relationship between human and nature in classical Chinese poetry. It focuses especially on the so-called Six dynasties period (220–589 CE) and the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE). Chinese landscape poetry in its present-day sense came into being during the fourth and the fifth centuries. Metrical shi poetry reached its maturity during the Tang which is widely known as the golden era of Chinese poetry.
The object of my study is a group of classical Chinese poems which illustrate the basic principles of Chinese nature philosophy and simultaneously demonstrate the variety and richness of the Chinese poetic tradition. I pay special attention to the poetry of Wang Wei, Wei Yingwu and Tao Qian through which different conceptual dimensions of the Chinese landscape become apparent. Wang is known particularly for his quatrains depicting the realm of wild nature. Wei wrote poems in which the landscape emerges out of the imagination while, in his verses, Tao described the Chinese agrarian milieu and the way of life associated with it.
The theoretical framework of my study is based on several interlocking disciplines contributing to discussions of Chinese studies and literary scholarship on several different fronts, utilizing the tradition of classical sinology but juxtaposing it with modern Western ecocriticism and human geography. One purpose of this research is to approach familiar and previously analyzed poems from new angles which are also linked to current humanistic debates.
The dissertation consists of four peer-reviewed articles which set out to shed light on the relationship between human and nature from different points of view. The main questions that run through all of them are: 1. How does the Chinese tradition understand the concept of "landscape" and in what ways does it differ from Western understanding? 2. How is the Chinese conception of landscape thematized in classical Chinese poetry and by what poetic means is the relationship between human and nature depicted and produced in it?
The first of the four articles functions as an introduction to the theme and presents the basic philosophical principles and worldview of the Chinese landscape tradition. This is in contrast to the Western idea, where landscape exists primarily as an object of visual perception, describing instead an all-encompassing natural cosmology of which the human being is an inseparable part. The second article discusses Wei Yingwu's and Wang Wei's poems in which nature appears not as a physical object but as a volatile imaginative experience. The objective of this article is to question and examine the traditional idea that Chinese poetry treats physical reality as one-dimensional. The third article presents a reading of Wang Wei's 'Wang Stream Collection' which is based on the Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine of 'no-self.' My main claim is that Wang's terse yet suggestive landscape poems do not, after all, depict external natural objects but have to

do with the deep meditative experience of selflessness in which perceiver and perception can no longer be separated. In the fourth article I address the dimensions of 'space' and 'place' in Tao Qian's poetry which centers on a farmstead and its way of life. Through my analyses I seek to demonstrate that for Tao a farmstead is not just a concrete locus but a place that becomes 'lived' in various senses and also has a spiritual and ethical significance.

My study highlights themes and conceptions related to the interface between human and nature that differs markedly from the Western tradition. For instance, classical Chinese poetry, together with the classical Chinese language, enables depictions of the dissolution of the self which in Western poetry has remained marginal. This type of experience has received practically no attention whatever within the context of ecocriticism.

The main thesis of my dissertation is that the classical Chinese worldview and the landscape poetry stemming from it present a much more profound and complex relationship between human and nature than obtains within the Western, subject-oriented tradition. Taking this into account would serve to inform and enrich comparative humanistic nature studies.

Tong, Hanbing

Rewriting Cultural Hybridity: Postcolonial Mirror Images in Somerset Maugham and Eileen Chang

University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom, June 2024
Supervisors: Christopher Rosenmeier and Michelle Keown

Keywords: Eileen Chang, W. Somerset Maugham, Orientalism, postcolonial, cultural hybridity

Abstract:
Eileen Chang (1920-1995) is one of the most read authors in the history of Chinese literature. There is a fair amount of scholarship on her work, and a few scholars have started exploring the representation of colonial matters in her Shanghai and Hong Kong short stories from the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). However, in English academia, there are no longer studies looking specifically at Chang's representation of wartime cultural tensions in comparison to the colonial writings of the popular British writer W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965). Considering the postcolonial and transnational contexts of both Chang's and Maugham's educational and personal backgrounds, Chang's preference for Maugham's Far East tales, as well as the lack of interest in Maugham's colonial narratives in both Chinese and English scholarship, this research will question the notion that to write authentically or sincerely about postcolonial issues of a certain country, one has to be a native of that country. It will also explore that, if bearing the early awareness of Orientalism, to what extent Maugham was deliberately being ironic in writing about the cultural parody by juxtaposing with Chang's colonial narratives set in the (semi-)colonial Shanghai and Hong Kong.

Tucci, Tommaso
L'Iconicità dell'ordine delle parole del cinese mandarino standard
[Iconicity in Standard Mandarin Chinese Word Order]

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano, Italia, April 2024
Supervisor: Chiara Piccinini

Keywords: syntactic iconicity, L2 Chinese acquisition, applied cognitive linguistics, L2 Chinese teaching

Abstract:
The dissertation aims to demonstrate the extensive descriptive and motivational power of syntactic iconicity in illustrating the word order of Standard Mandarin Chinese (MC). It examines the most discussed iconic principles in the literature related to the cognitive-functional framework, based on studies by James H.-Y. Tai (1985, 1989, among others). On the applied level, the study's objective is pursued through the analysis of an error corpus extracted from written compositions of Italian-speaking learners of MC as a second language, encompassing different levels of linguistic proficiency. The analysis of errors in the corpus has led to the development of a taxonomy of principles intended to assist MC instructors and researchers in creating innovative teaching materials and fostering a motivated instructional approach. These pedagogical insights aim to present syntax as motivated through illustrations directly linked to learners' perceptual and conceptual experiences. Ultimately, this pedagogical strategy enhances their grammatical accuracy and metalinguistic knowledge.

Wai, Cheuk Yee

Sisters in Crime: Women and illicit sexual affairs in late imperial Chinese erotic fiction

University of Oxford, United Kingdom, December 2022
Supervisor: Tian Yuan Tan

Keywords: Chinese novels, erotic literature, women in literature, late imperial China, Ming fiction, Qing fiction

Abstract:
This research aims to investigate the literary representation of the female relationships and illicit sexual affairs in late imperial China erotic fiction. Focusing on the plots of touqing 偷情 (having secret sexual affairs), this research utilises five selected examples of vernacular erotic fiction composed around 1572-1730 as the main source to investigate women's lives and social activities in illegal circumstances: Langshi 浪史 (Chronicles of the Libertine), Xiuta yeshi 繡榻野史 (Unofficial History of the Embroidered Couch), Rou putuan 肉蒲團 (The Carnal Prayer Mat), Taohua ying 桃花影 (Shadow of Peach Blossoms), and Dengcao heshang zhuan 燈草和尚傳 (Legend of the Candlewick Monk).
Bonded with their own desire to be fulfilled, female participants of illicit affairs each have a specific role, function, and things to offer, forming a network comprised of these unlikely sisters in crime. To understand how such a network functions and sustains, female characters of the texts will first be grouped and analysed based on their image and common traits respective to their chief identity in the text. The discussion will then lead to an investigation of the interactions portrayed to reveal the respective role of each female type and their implications for the perceived female relationship under the exceptional circumstances of collaboration on sex crimes. The research will also compare the relationships portrayed in erotic fiction and other literature of the era, including Honglou meng and Jin Ping Mei, to illustrate the unique behaviour and network derived from the collective participation in illicit sexual affairs.

Wang, Jingyi Veronica

Queering Chinese Youth Cultures: Biopolitical Negotiations in Post-Xi China

University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, June 2024
Supervisor: Heather Inwood

Keywords: Queer theory, Chinese Studies, Queer Studies, Cultural Studies, Subcultural Studies, Chinese Youth

Abstract:
Post-Xi Chinese society stands at the confluence of shifting norms, with the administration transitioning from neoliberal developmentalism to a more biopolitical mode of social governance. Amidst these changes, Chinese youths are particularly susceptible to the state's stringent control over the production of 'docile bodies' through the power of normalisation. Utilising multidisciplinary methods, this study juxtaposes a diverse sampling of youth cultures to reveal how Chinese youth are actively crafting 'queer' subjectivities, transforming subordination into agency, in order to navigate their non-normative 'selves' within Chinese society's disciplinary regimes. It comparatively explores the intersections and divergences of two sets of contemporary Chinese youth cultures that have emerged from the margins of the normative mainstream: the respective sexual minority cultures of the sexuality-based 'LGBT' self-identified community and the more fluid and cosmopolitan 'queer/ku'er' culture; the shamate culture of young migrant workers that first arose in 2008, and the 'sub-youth' trend amongst urban young people in the 2020s, along with the polarised cultural interactions between the two peer cohorts over the period of a decade. Drawing from queer theory's ontological interrogation of 'normativity' and its associated power relations, this thesis delves into the nuanced remoulding of subjectivities and state-society relations facilitated by various cultural practices in Xi-era China. These case studies serve as a microcosm of the broader dynamics of young individuals' negotiation with the heightened normalising pressure on their desires, aspirations, and self-perceptions. Ultimately, this thesis aims to contribute a new understanding of Chinese state-individual negotiations embedded in their cultural interplay from a 'queer perspective', and of the transformative potential of a 'queer' standpoint in studying contemporary cultures.

Wnuk, Zuzanna

Rozwój metajęzykowej świadomości ortograficznej w kontekście nauczania i uczenia się języka chińskiego jako języka obcego

[Development of Metalinguistic Orthographic Awareness in the Context of Teaching and Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language]

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland, May 2024
Supervisors: Halina Wasilewska and Kamil Burkiewicz

Keywords: Chinese writing system, Chinese as a foreign language, metalinguistic orthographic awareness, Chinese character, sinogram

Abstract:
The primary aim of this dissertation was to investigate the development of metalinguistic orthographic awareness in learners of Chinese as a foreign language, particularly those from outside of the Sinographosphere. Three critical aspects of metalinguistic orthographic awareness of the Chinese writing system were identified: graphemic awareness (concerning structural relationships between strokes, components, and elements), grapho-morphemic awareness (how a Chinese character and its parts connect with meaning), and grapho-phonetic awareness (how a Chinese character and its parts connect with pronunciation).
Qualitative research methods, in particular phenomenographic methods and prepared research tools (i.e. semi-structured interview and metalinguistic orthographic awareness test), led to a better understanding of how learners perceive Chinese characters, how their perception changes with increasing language proficiency, and how metalinguistic orthographic awareness develops over time. The study revealed a discrepancy between declarative and procedural knowledge, which gradually diminished with rising language proficiency. The following qualitative shifts in the perception of Chinese characters were identified: a change in the perception of character structure, a decrease in the perception of characters as pictographic, and an increase in integrated perception of various aspects of Chinese characters. Furthermore, the study confirmed that different aspects of orthographic awareness develop at different rates.
To conclude the study, an original model for processing Chinese characters was proposed. The aim of this model is to accommodate the needs of Chinese language teaching and learning in institutional environments. The proposed model is also adaptable to different stages of metalinguistic orthographic awareness development. Implications of the findings for teaching practice were also discussed, including suggested teaching content at various learning stages and types of tasks supporting the development of metalinguistic orthographic awareness. The necessity of supporting the development of orthographic awareness in students was also emphasized, given its crucial role in facilitating the learning process of the Chinese writing system and the further development of language proficiency.

Xia, Yuhua

Traduire dans la Chine moderne et contemporaine: Oulipo et littérature à contraintes
[Translating in Modern and Contemporary China: Oulipo and Constrained Literature]

INALCO, France, December 2024
Supervisor: Isabelle Rabut

Keywords: Translation, Modern and Contemporary China, Oulipo, Constrained literature

Abstract:
China's modern and contemporary period is marked by unprecedented exchanges with the West, with translation playing a crucial role. Oulipo's constrained literature, born from questioning European logocentrism, occupies a unique position both external to China and marginal in Western culture. This position makes it an effective tool for deconstructing China's reflection on the West and studying the country's cultural and intellectual transformations. The reception of Oulipo in China, mainly through translation, illuminates literature, culture, thought, and translation itself in this context. The paradox of Oulipo in China – being translated without appreciation and exploited without understanding – reflects the complexity of issues related to translation and the source culture. Studying the history of translation in China since modern times and analyzing translations of constrained works highlight tensions between imported cultural models, represented by European logocentrism, and the persistence of Chinese traditions. They also reveal translation's ambivalent role in these confrontations, oscillating between importing new paradigms and reaffirming local traditions. These observations show how China and its intellectuals negotiate their cultural identity facing foreign influences, particularly Western ones, while seeking to preserve and reinterpret their traditions. Translation thus emerges as an essential vector of this complex dynamic, reflecting the challenges and opportunities of Chinese modernization.

Xin, Shengxi

Neo-exogenous Development: Conceptualising Rural Revitalisation in China. A Study on Modern Agricultural Zones

University College London, United Kingdom, March 2024
Supervisors: Nick Gallent and Iqbal Hamiduddin

Keywords: rural development, China, rural revitalization, social innovation, neo-endogenous development, state entrepreneurism, CPC

Abstract:
Since the launch of its "New Socialist Countryside Construction" (NSCC) programme in 2005, China has experienced significant rural restructuring, marked by both new urban-rural connectivity and a diversification of rural socio-economic and spatial structures. Thereafter, and under the Xi administration, the "National Rural Revitalisation Strategy" was launched. It can be considered to be both a successor to the NSCC and to represent renewed effort to integrate pluralising rural society into the party-state apparatus through state programmes that increasingly involve local and external social stakeholders in the implementation stage. This national integration process of rural society, also known as rural integration, is in line with China's rural governance and development tradition which both date back to Imperial China. Viewed in this manner, the NRRS can be seen as part of a broader state-building objective.
This recent governance transition has led to the emergence of a hybrid rural development approach which is referred to, in this thesis, as "neo-exogenous development" (NED). Unlike community-oriented (neo-)endogenous development approaches, NED is characterised by a party-state-led collaborative innovation process in which the 'active party-state' — comprised of both central- and local- state bureaucrats and semi-formal rural party agents — act as the primary development actors rather than civil society groups. In addition to physical improvement, the NED aims to guide rural communities towards becoming "activated communities" that understand how to communicate and cooperate with the "active party-state", as a result of rural integration.
This thesis has two main goals: first, it provides deeper understanding of rural development theory and practice in China, by shifting to a conception of rural development that is rooted in the longer Chinese experience of state-building and unique party-state regime rather than in Western (and mainly European) analyses. Secondly, it unpacks the operational mechanisms and policy effectiveness of NED, which are represented in the thesis by the Modern Agricultural Zone (MAZ). For the purpose of evaluation, effectiveness centres on the propensity of a development model to generate and retain local value, a major challenge for global rural development practice.

Xing, Longfei

Western Students in Mao's China: Policies and Education

University of Cologne, Germany, May 2024
Supervisor: Felix Wemheuer

Keywords: Cold War diplomacy, educational exchange, Maoist China, United Front strategy, Sino-Western relations

Abstract:
This dissertation provides a comprehensive exploration of the history of Western students in the People's Republic of China during the Mao era, aiming to elucidate the socio-political and diplomatic dynamics of Maoist China through the unique perspective of Western students. The admission of foreign students was pivotal in the government's diplomatic strategies and the Communist Party's maneuvers during this era. Against the backdrop of the Cold War, 516 Western students entered Mao's China, where they were treated as foreign guests and received a Maoist education that served proletarian politics and combined with productive labor.
The research addresses several key questions: Firstly, it investigates the policies governing Western students and seeks to uncover the underlying intentions behind these policies. Secondly, it examines the distinctive features of the education imparted to Western students and evaluates the impact of this education on their perception and understanding of China. Lastly, it explores the role of Western student education in China's foreign strategies throughout the Mao era.
By adopting a multidisciplinary approach that combines historical and sociological research methodologies, this study's findings reveal that Western students' education during the Mao era was a class-orientated initiative meticulously overseen by the Chinese Communist Party and government institutions. Undertaken through colleges and universities, it predominantly targeted Western youths with leftist political views or harboring a favorable disposition towards Mao's China. The ultimate objective was to cultivate a proper understanding of the nation among the students, fostering favorable views and nurturing positive sentiments of socialist China.
The education and management of Western students in Mao's China served as a potent instrument of people's diplomacy, aligned with the country's diplomatic objectives. This approach to the Chinese-style people's diplomacy, which interweaved elements of both state and people, formed an integral component of Mao's foreign policy towards the West, strategically intending to project China's influence globally by enlisting Western supporters of socialist China. This study contributes to our understanding of Western student education as a component of people's diplomacy during the Mao era and its significance in the context of the bipolarity of the Cold War.

Xu, Tianhua

Currently associate professor in the School of Foreign Languages of Guangzhou College of Commerce.

Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis of Women's Representation in Shen Bao (1872-1949) and People's Daily (1950-2012)

Durham University, United Kingdom, August 2022
Supervisor: Qing Cao

Keywords: Chinese Women, rejection of roles, Corpus Analysis, CDA

Abstract:
This thesis aims to explore and analyse women's representations in Shen Bao (1872-1949) and People's Daily (1950-2012) in China over a period of 140 years (1872-2012). Combining the quantitative corpus analysis of 1.9 million words of data with qualitative analyses using critical discourse analysis (CDA), it examines four distinctive historical eras in the press portrayal of women: late imperial Qing (1872–1911), Republican (1912–1949), socialist (1950-1978) and post-socialist (1979-2012). During these 140 years, China experienced dramatic sociocultural shifts and political transformations under the guidance of different ideologies over this crucial historical time. Women were placed right in the centre of this turmoil, and women's roles have continuously been renewed, recreated, defended and modified (Williams, 1977). Women were deemed inferior to men were nothing more than the result of social constructions. Women's representations are embedded in ideological frameworks supported by existing power relations in the patriarchal society. They operated in the symbolic world through discursive construction that defines women in ways that shape the social understanding of their role, status and identities. This construction of women by the dominant forces in society serves to sustain the existing patriarchal power relations. The thesis focuses on newspapers because of its central role in shaping public opinions, setting agendas, and maintaining power structure.

Broadsheet newspapers have the power to define key issues, topics, and situations which gives them ideological power. CDA pays attention to both the macro-level of context through a top-down approach, and the micro-level by analysing how ideologies, dominance and power relations are expressed in language. In contrast, Corpus Linguistics (CL) deals with large amounts of text by providing detailed information of the micro-level. CL is basically a bottom-up approach, allowing the data generated in a corpus to take the lead, and thereby limits bias. The data generated by corpus analytical tools in CL is not handpicked data selected by the analyst, it is typical and representative linguistic patterns that have been extracted from a large amount of data.

Women's representations have undergone significant transformations across the four historical eras in China as some women gain more economic independence and could challenge the power hierarchies. In the late Qing era, women were not described as the opposite gender of men, but are represented as the weak, incompetent, decadent, and pathological symbol of premodernity in Shen Bao. Articles in Shen Bao promoted representations of women as "Mothers of the Nation" and "Heroines", which are variations of traditional "good wife and mother" and "devoted to husband and son" sugar-coated with modern nationalism. In the socialist era, women were mostly represented as strong, masculine, selfless, and ideologically correct workers in the labour force, and as emotionally and physically the same as men. Women lived and breathed for the state, and were willing to devote their lives, youth and efforts to communism

and socialism. In the post-socialist era, women's representations in the People's Daily are more diverse. Discourses on women throughout the 140 years acted as a tool to legitimize various national agendas.
This study offers empirical evidence and provides a macro level picture of the transformation of women's representations in the 140 years of history, underpinning the drive behind; also a micro level analysis of detailed discussion on the confliction and consistencies of women discourse over the four historical eras. Women's studies have their origin outside of China, in the west. I hope this study will shed some light onto the many components of the scarcely researched localization of west women theories into Chinese terms, which I believe is the next important issue and the next biggest challenge in women's studies in China.

Xu, Weijun

Nationalism or Cost-Benefit Analysis in Perception: The Logic of China's Foreign Policy Choices in Bilateral Disputes in Post-Cold War Period

University of Cambridge, UK, June 2024
Supervisor: John Nilsson-Wright

Keywords: China, foreign policy, nationalism, perception, Sino-Japanese relations, Sino-South Korean relations, Sino-U.S. relations

Abstract:
This research discusses the changes in the degree of toughness of China's foreign policy choices in bilateral international disputes over the period from 1992 to 2022. This research first reviews previous explanations of why the Chinese government adopts tough foreign policies in international disputes in academia. In response to the popular view that underline the influence of nationalism, this research analyses contemporary Chinese nationalism and its impact on the Chinese government's foreign policy choices. Contemporary Chinese nationalism can be divided into two types: official nationalism and popular nationalism. Official nationalism demands unconditional loyalty of its adherents to the Chinese government and does not exert pressure on the Chinese government's foreign policy choices. Popular nationalism, due to its considerable social mobilization capacity, may have the potential to influence the Chinese government's foreign policy choices through a bottom-up approach, especially in the context of the Chinese government's increasing reliance on nationalism for its regime legitimacy.
By examining the changes in the Chinese government's economic performance and the social mobilization capacity of popular nationalism, this research finds that the Chinese government faced two primary scenarios between 1992 and 2022. In the first scenario, roughly between 1992 and 2012, the Chinese government was able to maintain good economic performance while popular nationalism had a strong capacity for social mobilization. In this scenario, the Chinese government did not need to resort to nationalism as an important source of regime legitimacy, and the pressure exerted by popular nationalists was not sufficient to undermine the legitimacy base of the Chinese government. In the second scenario, roughly between 2013 and 2022, the Chinese government was only able to maintain limited economic performance while the social mobilization capacity of popular nationalism was significantly reduced. In this scenario, the Chinese government strengthened its control over popular nationalism, rendering it no longer able to pressure the Chinese government's decision-making through social movements. Moreover, the regime legitimacy of the Chinese government was not overly dependent on nationalism, and the Chinese government was still able to afford the policy costs of adopting a foreign policy that does not meet the demands of popular nationalism. Therefore, within the timeframe covered by this research, the influence of nationalism is not sufficient to explain the toughness of the foreign policies adopted by the Chinese government in bilateral international disputes.
This research assumes that the Chinese government is a rational actor during the timeframe covered by this research, and its foreign policy decisions in disputes are rational and consistent. This assumption is valid in all cases examined in this research, as China's top leaders were structurally constrained by the collective leadership system and there had been no instances in which the majority of China's political

elites identified with irrational and antagonistic nationalist sentiments. This research establishes an analytical framework for China's foreign policy choices in bilateral disputes based on this assumption. This analytical framework includes three independent variables and one dependent variable. The dependent variable is the degree of toughness of the foreign policies adopted by the Chinese government in bilateral international disputes. And the independent variables include the Chinese government's perception of the importance of the particular bilateral relations, its perception of the priority of the various interests involved in the dispute, and its perception of the severity of the dispute.

This research applies this analytical framework to the analysis of eight disputes between China and Japan over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands issues and historical issues, fourteen disputes between China and the United States over the Taiwan issue, economic and trade issues, and the issues of United States Armed Forces infringing China's sovereignty, and six disputes between China and South Korea over the security issue, the fishing issue, and the historical issues. Through the analysis of these 28 bilateral international disputes, this research finds that, holding other variables constant, the Chinese government's perception of the importance of a given set of bilateral relations is negatively correlated with the degree of toughness of the foreign policies adopted by the Chinese government in bilateral international disputes, while the Chinese government's perception of the priority of the interests involved in the dispute and its perception of the severity of the dispute are positively correlated with the degree of toughness of the foreign policies adopted by the Chinese government in bilateral international disputes.

Xu, Yingying

La Ricezione e la diffusione della figura di Marco Polo in Cina
[The Reception and Dissemination of Marco Polo's Image in China]

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italy, June 2024
Supervisor: Tiziana Lippiello

Keywords: Marco Polo, The Travels of Marco Polo, China

Abstract:
Marco Polo (1254-1324), an Italian merchant and one of the world's most renowned explorers, set out for China in 1271 with his father Niccolò and uncle Matteo. Traveling from Venice along the Silk Road, they reached China, where they were warmly received by the court of the Yuan dynasty. Upon arriving in Beijing, the capital of the Yuan dynasty, Marco Polo gained the appreciation and trust of the Great Khan Kublai. This enabled him to live in and explore China for 17 years, returning to Venice only in 1291. His journey fostered intense cultural exchanges between the East and the West, enhancing mutual understanding and positively influencing both civilizations. The account of his travels, entitled "Le Devisement du Monde", stands as a historical testament to early cultural exchanges between these two ancient civilizations, laying a solid foundation for Sino-Italian friendship.
Through his travel notes, Marco Polo provided his Western contemporaries with a detailed account of Eastern civilization, both in its material and spiritual aspects. He particularly highlighted the social features, historical events, products, and customs of China at the dawn of the Yuan dynasty, under Mongol rule. The value of his narrative lies in the objectivity with which he documented his observations, free from prejudice, relying on documented evidence, and faithfully recording what he saw and heard across various parts of China. He precisely described the prosperity of major cities and trading ports, such as Yuan Dadu (Beijing) 元大都(北京), Xi'an 西安, Nanjing 南京, Zhenjiang 镇江, Yangzhou 扬州, Suzhou 苏州, Hangzhou 杭州, Fuzhou 福州, and Quanzhou 泉州. His literary work opened the doors of the mysterious Eastern world to Westerners, significantly expanding their knowledge of the Far East and enriching European geographical understanding. This stimulated exploration of new maritime routes and accelerated the arrival of the Age of Discovery. It can be said that Marco Polo's account of his great journey inaugurated a new era of exchanges between the West and the East, exerting a monumental influence on the development of Europe and the world at large, with undeniably positive effects. His remarkable achievements have rendered him immortal in China, elevating him to an emblematic figure in human history.
Although Marco Polo's figure became known in China only from the 1830s onwards, within less than two centuries, he has become one of the most famous foreigners in the country through various communication channels and methods. Regarded as a pioneer of cultural exchange between China and the West and a "good friend" of the Chinese people, Marco Polo frequently appears in textbooks, historical books, popular science writings, literary works, and art pieces. Statues, museums, and memorials dedicated to him can be found in several cities mentioned in his travel notes, such as the Marco Polo Memorial Hall in Yangzhou and the statue of Marco Polo near West Lake in Hangzhou. However, perceptions of Marco Polo in China are not uniform: some exaggerated or fictionalized accounts in his travel notes and the lack of concrete evidence for his journey have led to doubts about the authenticity of his visit and the belief that his influence and contributions to China may have been overstated. Some even argue that Marco

Polo's representation of China indirectly encouraged Western powers to invade the country. These differing perspectives highlight the complexity of Marco Polo's legacy, demonstrating how his figure is subject to diverse and sometimes controversial interpretations.

Chinese academic research on Marco Polo began in the early 20th century, significantly later than in Italy and other European countries. Over the past century, Chinese scholars specializing in Marco Polo have made substantial contributions to the field, enriching it with numerous high-quality academic publications. Despite these advances, Chinese studies on Marco Polo display a certain lack of systematicity and comprehensiveness. Research has predominantly focused on bibliographic and textual analysis of his travel notes, often neglecting comparisons with contemporary international research. To date, no exhaustive analysis has been conducted on the evolution of Marco Polo's reception and dissemination in China, despite his significant cultural impact. As a widely recognized figure among the Chinese people, Marco Polo's image has evolved and expanded through different historical periods. However, this topic, which holds great interest and relevance, has not yet received sufficient attention from the academic community. This study aims to explore and address this gap, contributing to a more comprehensive and detailed understanding of the impact of Marco Polo's figure and works on Chinese culture.

This dissertation employs Lasswell's 5W Model of Communication to examine the five fundamental elements of communication—Sender, Message, Medium, Receiver, and Effect—and applies this framework to the historical analysis of Marco Polo's reception and dissemination in China. By incorporating Hans Robert Jauss's concept of the Reader's Horizon of Expectations, as presented in his Reception Theory, the study investigates the close relationship between interpretations of Marco Polo in China and the expectations of the Chinese audience in various social, historical, and cultural contexts over different periods. Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, such as surveys and content analysis, the study interprets Marco Polo's role as a cultural symbol in the post-1949 era of the People's Republic of China. This research aspires to provide a systematic and in-depth presentation of the history of Marco Polo's reception and dissemination in China, a subject that has so far been marginally explored both in China and internationally, with limited research results. The primary objective is to analyze, from a historical perspective, the dynamics that have made Marco Polo a prominent figure in the Chinese context and how he has progressively been celebrated as a "good friend of the Chinese people." This research aims to inspire interest and critical evaluation among Marco Polo specialists and communication scholars. Throughout the study, Chinese sources and textual materials have been collected and systematized, including articles on Marco Polo published in major newspapers from the late Qing dynasty to the Republic of China (1911–1949), all mentions of "Marco Polo" in the official publication "People's Daily" ("Renmin Ribao" 人民日报) from 1948 to 2023, and data obtained from over 1,000 survey responses. It is hoped that these materials, once systematically organized and translated, will form a valuable and detailed database for future research and studies on Marco Polo, both in China and in Italy.

Ye, Yitong

Explaining the variation of climate policy ambition across countries

University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK, July 2024
Supervisors: Neil Munro and Bernhard Reinsberg

Keywords: climate policy, climate change, China, United States

Abstract:
Focusing on the differences in climate policy outputs of countries, I seek to develop a measure of climate ambition at the state level, and to understand its drivers. Because of the challenges brought by conceptual divergence, cross-national measurements, and methodological limitations, a comprehensive measure of ambition is still lacking in the field of comparative climate policy studies. The research therefore develops a new measure and validates it by examining the variation in climate policy ambition across countries.
The new index, which I call the Climate Policy Ambition Index (CPAI) measures climate ambition in terms of both depth and breadth of climate policy outputs, which provides a theoretical foundation for operationalising comparisons of ambition. To validate the index, I construct a comparative dataset covering 35 countries from 1990 to 2020. The index summarises complex policy information into a single measure level, which allows us to study relevant determinants and also contributes new data to comparative climate policy studies. Through a newly developed pluralistic method, it demonstrates that use of the measure produces robust findings. Combined with analyses of important outlier cases, the analysis provides a relatively complete picture of what determines climate policy ambition.
I aim to contribute to the comparative climate policy studies in four aspects. First, it provides an output perspective to interpret the multifaced nature of climate ambition, thereby expanding the avenues for comparing levels of ambition across different frameworks. Second, the CPAI provides valuable panel data for future comparative studies. Third, it develops and applies a novel method to evaluate theoretical expectations about determinants of climate ambition, which stands in contrast to solely case-oriented studies, results of which often depend on case selection. Finally, in seeking to explain the cross-national variations of ambition, it delineates potential strategies for enhancing average ambition levels, which could be a useful tool for policymakers.

Yu, Minlin

The male lens on Jane Eyre: Translating/Constructing femininity across a century of Chinese cultural history

University of Glasgow, United Kingdom, July 2024
Supervisors: Penelope Morris, Hongling Liang and Susan Bassnett

Keywords: femininity in translation, gender roles and identities in China, translation as cultural negotiation, translation bias

Abstract:
The early 20th to the early 21st century marked fundamental changes in gender roles and identities as Chinese women journeyed from the rigours of Confucian orthodoxy to personal sovereignty, from the shadows of ignorance towards enlightenment. This transition, far from linear, was defined by ongoing rounds of dialogue and deliberation. Standing at the forefront of these negotiations are Chinese male intellectuals and translators, who, historically positioned as importers and gatekeepers of Western feminist discourses, have participated in shaping gender ideologies in China.
This PhD thesis presents a compelling case into cross-border travels of gender and feminist discourses from the West to the East. It explores how "progressive" male translators adapt women's literature to the specificities of the Chinese cultural context. It focuses on the representation of femininity in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre through the lens of three male translators across a century: Wu Guangjian's early translation (1935), Song Zhaolin's most reprinted version (1996), and the contemporary rendition by controversial translator Li Jihong (2019). The three male translators stand out for their feminist leanings in the prefaces to Jane Eyre. The study quantitively and qualitatively examines cultural terms and expressions with gender implications across five dimensions of women's lives: marriage and marital status, morality and ethical norms, education and societal roles, and beauty aesthetics. These aspects were examined within broader cultural history, an arena of contestation where Confucian traditions, contemporary norms and gender empowerment trends interact in push-and-pull dynamics, all vying for translators' attention.
Anchored in the Cultural Turn in Translation Studies, the research analyses how translators engage with these socio-cultural dynamics, noting their linguistic alignment with specific cultural undercurrents while marginalising others. Consciously or unconsciously, translators act as cultural architects, constructing and consolidating ideals of femininity. Their roles alternate as marriage proponents, moral custodians, education advocates, beauty consumers and body guardians, advancing feminist empowerment in certain respects while upholding patriarchal traditions in others. Translation becomes a site of cultural negotiation, where Western gender discourses are reinterpreted, reshaped, and sometimes diluted to fit or challenge Chinese cultural norms and values. Translators, in their professional capacity, resemble the protective camouflage of a chameleon, adjusting their linguistic colouration in response to the cultural agendas, yet underpinning every interaction with a consistent core of patriarchal biases. This study both acknowledges and problematises the transformative power of translation in constructing gender identities.

Zeng, Yi

Navigating Face in the Digital Age: Power Dynamics and Subjectivity in Chinese Social Media

Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, University of Liverpool, China and UK, March 2024
Supervisors: Pawel Zygadlo, David S. G. Goodman and Angela Becher

Keywords: Face (lian, mianzi), facework, social norms, digital culture, interactional power, subjectivity and resistance, social dynamics

Abstract:
Recent scholarship convincingly demonstrates that the cultural phenomenon of "face" (脸 /面子, lian or mianzi) has played a central role in shaping communication and social interactions in China for centuries. Despite the ongoing modernisation of Chinese society and the rise of social media, face seems not to lose its contemporary significance. The main objective of this thesis is to explore the concept of face and facework from both universal and culturally specific dimensions, analysing its impact on the formation of online identities, social relationships, and the broader power structures in Chinese virtual communities. Through a combination of semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis of social media practices, the thesis reveals the enduring influence of face across various demographic groups online. While social media has introduced superficial changes to the expressions and practical patterns related to face and facework, the core significance of face framework remains deeply connected to offline social experiences. Furthermore, the findings highlight the underlying power dynamics and socio-cultural importance of face, which continue to be closely tied to offline social norms. Adopting a multidisciplinary approach that integrates sociocultural theories, philosophy, and communication studies, this research introduces the "dispositif" framework to further interpret digital face practices and their social function. It emphasises the role of power dynamics, subjectivity, and resistance. The findings show how face adapts to the digital landscape, illustrating its profound interplay with the evolving culture of social media and its continued relevance in shaping social dynamics in contemporary China. Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates that face, along with facework, continues to function as a framework for navigating both social expectations and individual agency in China's rapidly changing digital environment.

Zhang, Jiahua

Time Travel (chuanyue) Romances in Chinese Cyberspace

University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom, May 2024
Supervisors: Xuelei Huang and Christopher Rosenmeier

Keywords: Cultural studies; Chinese studies, Time travel romance, Chinese online novel, the hidden

Abstract:
The recent few decades have witnessed a boom of online literature in mainland China. This thesis explores the subgenre of time travel (chuanyue) romance, a most celebrated category of Chinese online fiction that emerged in the mid-2000s. By analysing a selected corpus of time travel romances and the internet-based fan communities developed around them, this thesis probes how the desires and anxieties of their predominantly female readership find expressions in these works and how a microcosm of contemporary Chinese society unfolds in these worlds of fantasy. While the (female) protagonists may time travel to China's imperial past, to the Sino-Japanese war, to a dystopian future, or to an imaginary Otherland, the stories are deeply anchored in the complex political and social landscapes of contemporary China. Taking the dual role of what Henry Jenkins called "aca-fan" (both an academic and a fan), I inquire into this rich archive of imaginations, uncovering the themes of feminist consciousness, queerness, social mobility, nationalism, developmentalism, and posthumanism. My central argument is that web time travel romances make "hidden" aspects of contemporary Chinese society visible. The "hidden" refers not only to "serious" social issues which are often neglected in presumably "frivolous" romantic tales, but also to realms beyond ordinary perceptions, such as online games and imagined books. The time travel genre permits female netizens to transcend their real-life experiences, posing serious challenges to social norms, discipline, and hegemonic power. By constructing emancipatory female subjects, fans have also created and advanced their desired and idealized selves, traversing heteropatriarchy, the western-centric global order, and the anthropocentric framework.

Zhuang, Jixi

Paradiplomatie et diplomatie partisane franco-chinoise en contexte de Guerre froide (1949-1964): configuration, réalité et limites

[Paradiplomacy and Franco-Chinese partisan diplomacy in the context of the Cold War (1949-1964): configuration, reality and limits]

Université de Strasbourg, France, December 2023
Supervisor: Emmanuel Droit

Keywords: paradiplomacy, friendship diplomacy, Franco-Chinese relations, communist party, Cold War, cultural history

Abstract:
France's diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China in January 1964 is a classic subject in the contemporary history of international relations. Yet in the fifteen years between the founding of New China and the establishment of diplomatic relations with France, the impact of para-diplomatic and partisan exchanges has rarely been addressed.
The aim of this thesis is to examine the configuration and density of these infra-political, unofficial and non-statocentric exchanges, and their impact on Franco-Chinese rapprochement, particularly in the context of the Cold War, when the diplomacy of sovereign states was initially strongly imbricated in campist logics. The interest and originality of this thesis is to trace, from a perspective of "equal parts history", what existed outside or alongside the framework of diplomacy in Franco-Chinese relations, and to reveal the role of the partisan actors involved, as well as their networks. This Franco-Chinese para-diplomacy developed on several levels - partisan diplomacy, cultural diplomacy - intersecting with parallel logics of parliamentary or economic diplomacy. The thesis drew on a rich and varied corpus of French and Chinese archives, ranging from diplomatic and private collections to the archives of the PCF and its mass organizations. In particular, a large number of personal recollections of Chinese para-diplomatic actors were collected to compensate for the impossibility of accessing Chinese archives and to fill in information gaps on middle-ranking personalities in transnational contacts. Ultimately, the thesis offers not only a complementary perspective to Franco-Chinese diplomatic history, from the cross-views that the actors take of each other, but also contributions to several fields of study in France, such as the history of international relations, cultural history and Chinese studies.

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