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EDITOR’S PREFACE

Benjamin Penny

In this issue of *East Asian History*, we continue our project of reprinting works of the late Professor Igor de Rachewiltz, doyen of Mongolian Studies. As I noted in the Preface to issue 40, before his death Igor had worked with us in the Australian Centre on China in the World, where he was based, to collect and make available articles that he considered represented his most important work, and that were unavailable online. The two articles in this issue show Igor’s characteristically extraordinary scholarship and erudition and, we hope, will be appreciated by students of Mongolian history.

The four original articles in this issue, though on very different themes, all open out research in important new directions. Hung-yi Chien explores ground on which many have walked, literally, in her environmental history of that district of Taipei now known as Da’an. Such ‘sedimentary’ historical study uncovers layers of topography, settlement, land use, naming, and meaning in a way that is both revelatory and possibly unsettling. Di Lu’s study of part of a Tang Dunhuang manuscript brings together philology, literary studies, and medical history to reveal — as much as it is possible to do — the intriguing encoding of the names of medicinal drugs in a literary text. As much as the author notes this is a ‘revisitation’ of a known text, his scientific knowledge brings genuinely new insights to the study of Dunhuang manuscripts. Li-kuei Chien’s work on the circulation of ‘pensive’ bodhisattva images — those with one foot resting on the opposite knee — in the sixth century between the Chinese mainland and the Korean peninsula breaks new ground in its detailing of the routes of transmission of Buddhist sculptural motifs. In a period when the textual record relating to these questions is at best patchy, Chien’s research also broadens our view of the communications between states and regions during the medieval period in general. Finally, Hannibal Taubes’s study of murals in village buildings in northern Hebei uncovers a remarkable local rural tradition of
wall painting across the last few centuries that shows both the creeping in of modernity and the persistence of local religious and theatrical traditions. Taubes’s research also performs an act of documentation of this work as, in some cases, it fades and crumbles; memorialising the performing and painting practices that informed it, and the lives of the people who created it, and lived among and around it.
The Transmission of Buddhist Iconography and Artistic Styles
Around the Yellow Sea Circuit in the Sixth Century: Pensive Bodhisattva Images from Hebei, Shandong, and Korea

Li-kuei Chien

When Buddhism reached the Korean peninsula and took root there between the fourth and sixth centuries, both China and the Korean peninsula were in a state of division. Regional powers competed against each other and waged wars for dominance on both sides of the Yellow Sea, making the political and cultural history of this period exceptionally complex. Korean rulers sought alliances with the powerful states to their west, and the transmission of Buddhist culture was accelerated along with these diplomatic exchanges. Despite the rapid development of Buddhism on the Korean peninsula, the history of interaction between Korea and China remains a challenging topic because relevant textual documents from this period are scarce.

Modern archaeological and art history research compensates for the lack of written records in this field. Our understanding of the development of sixth-century Korean Buddhism and Buddhist art and their relationship with the outside world are largely based on material evidence such as stylistic and iconographic analysis of extant Buddhist sculptures, examination of the remains of monastic sites, and scrutiny of Buddhist motifs in tomb murals and objects.

These types of evidence suggest that although Buddhist emissaries reached Koguryo and Paekche in the late fourth century, the scale of Buddhist material culture remained limited for some time afterwards and was mainly associated with the royal courts. Early examples of Buddhist art include a small gilt bronze figure of a seated Buddha dated to the fifth century (found in the territory of Paekche but possibly produced elsewhere) and a painted mural of a seated Buddha in a late-fifth-century Koguryo tomb. Production of Buddhist images increased during the sixth century and expanded to Silla, which developed closer connections to China after its consolidation of territorial conquests on the Yellow Sea coast in 553. Scholars have tentatively proposed specifically northern or southern Chinese origins for certain stylistic features found in Buddhist art.

Acknowledgements
I am grateful to Mr Gong Dejie 宮德杰 and Ms Yi Tongjuan 衣同娟, the former and present Directors of Linqu County Museum, who welcomed research on the museum's collection and granted me permission to study and photograph the sculptures discussed in this paper. I acknowledge Kim Minku 金玟球 for his discussion on secondary scholarship and for informing me of the latest archaeological discoveries in Korea. I thank Lee Yu-min 李玉珉 for her advice on the title of this paper.

The work in this paper was substantially supported by a grant from the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China (Project No. PolyU 559713).


2 For brief discussions of the uses of these texts in the study of early Korean history, see Rhi Juhyung, 'Seeing Maitreya: Aspiration and Vision in an Image from Early Eighth-Century Silla,' in ed. Youn-mi Kim, New Perspectives in the Study of Early Korean Art and Literature (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006).
This article presents an iconographic and stylistic analysis of the pensive bodhisattva images popular in Hebei, Shandong, and the Korean peninsula from the sixth to the early seventh century. The pensive bodhisattva image was widely reproduced in north-east Asia from the sixth to the eighth century, with more than a hundred stone sculptures in the round discovered in Hebei, about fifteen in Shandong, and in Korea and Japan about thirty bronze statues each. Scholars have published extensively on this subject since the beginning of the twentieth century. However, fundamental questions, including the sources of the iconography, the exemplars that provided artistic inspiration, the provenance of the extant works, and the religious meanings they carried remain hotly contested.

Over the past twenty years, a wealth of material has become available that sheds light on the relationship between Chinese and Korean pensive images. Following the rapid economic development of China during the 1990s, discoveries of ancient hoards during urban construction, new cultural policies to encourage the establishment and refurbishment of museums to display materials from old and new excavations, and the publication of existing materials have together enabled scholars to gain wider access to first-hand data for analysis and comparison.

The postures of the pensive images from Hebei and Shandong are similar overall. The bodhisattva is portrayed seated with one leg pendent and the other folded laterally with the ankle resting on the knee of the pendent leg. One of his hands supports his head or has fingers pointing towards his cheek or temple, as if the figure is absorbed in contemplation (Fig. 1a). However, Hebei and Shandong pensive sculptures differ in material, artistic vocabulary, and iconographic arrangement. Hebei sculptures are mainly white marble while Shandong are grey limestone. The residual pigments on the surface of the stones show that both Hebei and Shandong sculptures were originally coloured. More exquisite works had a layer of white plaster applied before the addition of pigments, in order to make the colours more vivid. Nevertheless, the white marble base material of Hebei sculptures would still have made them appear more dazzling than Shandong sculptures to their original viewers in the sixth century.

Most Korean pensive statues are made of bronze, requiring a different set of crafting techniques from the Chinese stone works. Despite this difference, we can still conduct stylistic comparisons to explore which formal features the Korean artisans learned from their Chinese counterparts. Although the pensive images on either side of the Yellow Sea show formal connec-

However, analysis of such stylistic features is made more challenging by uncertainties surrounding the geographical origins of many Korean statues and by the scarcity of surviving Buddhist sculptures from China's southern dynasties.

Many questions about how Buddhist artistic styles were transmitted to the Korean peninsula thus remain unanswered. In particular, it is unclear which of the distinctive regional Chinese traditions provided the most important sources of inspiration for Buddhist artisans working on the peninsula. By identifying the characteristics specific to certain locales, we can see how these places related to each other as a region, transcending geographic and linguistic barriers to share similar Buddhist iconography and art across the Yellow Sea.

This article presents an iconographic and stylistic analysis of the pensive bodhisattva images popular in Hebei, Shandong, and the Korean peninsula from the sixth to the early seventh century. The pensive bodhisattva image was widely reproduced in north-east Asia from the sixth to the eighth century, with more than a hundred stone sculptures in the round discovered in Hebei, about fifteen in Shandong, and in Korea and Japan about thirty bronze statues each. Scholars have published extensively on this subject since the beginning of the twentieth century. However, fundamental questions, including the sources of the iconography, the exemplars that provided artistic inspiration, the provenance of the extant works, and the religious meanings they carried remain hotly contested.

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tions with each other, the thirty extant pensive images from Korea are each unique, without obvious stylistic similarities to one another. Scholars have proposed stylistic analyses to determine the respective provenances of these works and have come to divergent conclusions. Yet despite continuing disputes over details, art historians generally agree that the majority of extant Korean pensive images from the sixth and early seventh centuries came from Paekche and Silla.

After the new archaeological material became available, Ōnishi Shūya was the first scholar to discuss the iconographic connections between Shandong and Korean pensive bodhisattva images. He proposed that one particular pensive statue from the Longxing Temple in Qingzhou (Figs 1a, 1b, 1c), was the prototype for a group of Korean pensive images sharing a distinctive way of arranging the ring and sash ornaments suspended from the bodhisattva’s waist. Ōnishi proposed on the basis of indirect evidence that this group of statues were produced in Silla; however, this argument rests on shaky foundations, since the provenances of the Korean pieces are unknown.

By broadening the scope of investigation through an examination of pensive sculptures from various sites around the Yellow Sea circuit, I argue that Korean pensive bodhisattva images show some iconographic connections with works from Shandong, while their overall style is closer to those from Hebei. Building on Ōnishi’s work, I first show that the ring and sash ornament, common in Shandong but rare in Hebei, was a common ornamental element in Shandong Buddhist art, and I argue that the appearance of this ornament on the Korean peninsula reflects iconographic influences from Shandong. However, I depart from Ōnishi’s conclusion based on the profound stylistic parallels between pensive images from Hebei and Korea. Finally, I argue that although textual records suggest that Silla and Paekche had stronger diplomatic relationships with southern China than northern
statue unearthed with scientific archaeological methods. However, the statue is rather small at 15cm, and thus easily portable. The place of production is therefore uncertain. See ‘Excavated in Korea for the First Time in the Area of Yeongwol,’ Naver, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LS&Domid=sec&oid=016&aid=0001374701&sid1=001>.


China, material evidence suggests that Paekche and Silla had strong ties with northern China as well. This evidence suggests a need to reassess the history of cultural interactions in the Yellow Sea region during the sixth century, giving greater significance to the relationships between the southern Korean peninsula and north-east China.

**Common Iconographic Elements in Shandong and Korea:**

**Ring and Sash**

Pensive bodhisattva statues have been unearthed in many places in Shandong that are located on the coastal areas to the east of Mount Tai 泰山, including Zhucheng 諸城, Linqu 臨朐, Qingzhou 青州, Boxing 博興, Huimin 惠民, and Wudi 無棣 (see Map 1).13 One particular statue excavated from the Longxing Temple in Qingzhou has become extremely well known because of its fine condition, and has appeared in most major exhibitions and catalogues of Qingzhou sculptures around the world (Figs 1a, 1b, 1c).14 This statue shows the bodhisattva sitting on an hourglass-shaped stool (Chin. quanti 箕踞).15 In the lower section of the stool, a carved dragon holds a lotus flower in its mouth, supporting the deity’s foot. The drapery of the bodhisattva’s skirt is depicted closely clinging to his legs, showing their contours and the shape of the stool.

Ōnishi drew attention to a distinctive pair of ornaments worn by the bodhisattva composed of a ring and sash on either side of the bodhisattva’s hips. The rings are shown tied to two separate sashes — one to fix the ring to the waist and the other tucked between the seat and the buttocks of the pensive image before draping down over the side of the stool (Fig. 1c).16 Ōnishi compared the arrangement of the rings and sashes between the Qingzhou example and those images believed to come from each of the three Korean kingdoms, finding that pensive statues believed to come from Silla have similar designs to that of the Qingzhou statue (Fig. 2), whereas pensive statues believed to come from Paekche have the ring tied to only one piece of sash that drapes down directly from the waist (Fig. 3). Based on records in the *Suishu liyizhi 漢書禮儀志*, Ōnishi further proposed that the ring and sash represented *yujuan 玉環* and *shou 資*, elements of the formal ritual attire for
princes in the southern dynasties and the Sui. It was out of admiration for the courtly attire of high-ranking royalty that the creators of the pensive statues in Qingzhou and on the Korean peninsula adopted this particular decorative scheme for their own creations.\(^\text{16}\)

Besides the Qingzhou pensive statue discussed above, two other pensive statues from Linqu show extant traces of the ring and sash ornaments. Both statues have the rings tied to two separate sashes, but they differ in the positioning of the rings and sashes on the body. The statue shown in Figs 4a, 4b, and 4c has the ring carved on the back of the body near the hip. The sashes are carved in elegant flowing contours along the body and the stool, conveying the lightness and softness of the fabric; the lower segments of the sashes are tied into elaborate knots. In the other pensive statue, the rings and sashes are carved on the sides of the body (Figs 5b, 5c), with the lower segments of the sashes stretched to the thighs and placed under the elbows before draping down naturally.

The three pensive statues from Shandong (one from Qingzhou and two from Linqu) have distinct arrangements of the rings and sashes without following any formulaic styles, showing that the Shandong Buddhist artisans were confident in their skill to experiment with various designs.

A survey of other Shandong bodhisattva statues makes it clear that the ring and sash ornament was not exclusive to the pensive statue but, rather, was common in Shandong Buddhist art, depicted in a variety of designs. In most cases in Qingzhou, the ring is tied to two separate sashes — one to the waist and the other draping down from the ring (Fig. 6). These ornaments have sophisticated designs: some rings are adorned with a pearl-roundel pattern and the lower sash is tied in an elegant bow (Fig. 6). Some rings are fixed to the central set of jewels (Fig. 7), some have sashes passing through them (Fig. 8), and some are embellished with one knot above and another knot below. In some cases, the sashes have elaborate carvings in the shape of pearls and are embellished with gold leaf (Fig. 9).


\(^{16}\) Using jade ornaments to mark prestigious political and social status had been developed into a ritual system since the Western Zhou period. See Sun Qingwei 孫慶偉, Zhoudai yongyu zhidu yanjiu 周代用玉制度研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008).
Possibly drawing inspiration from their visual knowledge of aristocratic attire, sixth-century artisans in Zhucheng painstakingly delineated the yingluo zhubao 瓔珞珠寶 described in scriptures, as if their efforts could transform the stone bodhisattvas into efficacious heavenly beings. In Zhucheng, many bodhisattva statues have rings and sashes similar to those found in Qingzhou, but with even greater complexity and variety. The work shown in Fig. 10 has two separate sashes passing through the ring with precious pendants decorating the lower segments of the sash. The ring on the sculpture shown in Fig. 11 has a sophisticated knot in the circle outside of its left leg. Bodhisattva statues from Linqu, just 30km from Qingzhou, are also lavishly embellished; some even have double ring designs (Fig. 12). In Jinan, a sculpture has sashes twisted within the ring to add more detail (Fig. 13). Similar accessories can also be seen on bodhisattva sculptures from Boxing, now in the Boxing Municipal Museum.

The above examples illustrate how sixth-century Buddhist artisans in Shandong emphasised decorative effects. Their success relied largely on the fact that Shandong limestone has suitable hardness for fine carving and a dense texture for surface polishing. These qualities enabled the craftsmen to execute their carving techniques to capture the finest details, creating a sense of depth and producing a visual effect of luxury and extravagance. These qualities also allow us to observe decorative details 1500 years after their creation, even though the original colours have chipped and faded. Although Ōnishi cited textual evidence in support of his hypothesis that the ring and sash were modelled on southern court dress, it is more likely that the visual inspiration for the ring and sash ornament on bodhisattvas in Shandong came directly from Luoyang — the capital of the Northern Wei until 534. In the Binyang Middle Cave 賓陽中洞, an imperial chapel cut in the 510s at the Longmen cave temples near Luoyang, two attendant bodhisattvas have rings and sashes suspended from their waists (Figs 14, 15). Since wearing jades and sashes was a conventional mark of prestigious status, it is natural that the bodhisattva sculptures in the capital city were depicted in a similar way.
The above examples illustrate the decorative characteristics of Shandong Buddhist art, with the ring and sash ornament as a distinctive part of this artistic practice. Korean artisans incorporated this ornamental aesthetic from Shandong in their own creation of pensive statues, such as Korean National Treasure number 83 (hereafter NT83; Figs 16a, 16b, 16c) and NT78 (Figs 17a, 17b). However, although this particular iconographic element suggests strong connections between the Buddhist art of Shandong and the Korean peninsula, the pensive statues from these two areas exhibit rather different overall artistic styles. The Korean statues employ a distinctive artistic vocabulary in the treatment of the volume and the proportion of the body, the form of the stools, and the folds in the drapery. As I argue below, the closest parallels for these stylistic features are to be found not in Shandong, but in Hebei.

Stylistic Connections between Hebei and Korea: Proportion and Volume of the Body, Form of the Stool, and Folds of Drapery

Proportion and volume of the body

The primary difference in the overall visual effects of the Shandong and Korean works is the proportion and volume of the bodhisattva’s body. Although Korean pensive images vary in body volume — some fuller and others more slender — they are in general well-proportioned, approximating more closely to the true proportions of the human body (NT83: Figs 16a, 16b, 16c; NT78: Figs 17a, 17b). The extant works from Shandong, by contrast, show greater stylisation in the relative sizes of the arms, legs, and torso. The Qingzhou statue shown in Figs 1a and 1b, for example, is slender in build, following the Eastern Wei (534–550) style, with a relatively flat upper torso, an oversized head, an elongated right arm, a stiff left arm, and thin legs. Another Qingzhou pensive statue (Fig. 18), shaped with a fuller body in the Northern Qi (550–577) style, has the left armpit awkwardly lower than the right. Both Shandong examples are less elegant and natural in capturing the proportions of the body than the Korean works.

Besides the appropriate proportion and volume of the body, Korean artisans also mastered the skill of expressing the curves of the torso, carefully defining the characteristics of the chest and the abdomen. The profile views of NT83 and NT78 show their well-built chests gently swelling out, clearly distinguishing the chest from the abdomen and the waist. In contrast, all the known Shandong works have a flat and simple curvature for the front of the torso.

The realistically depicted proportions, volume, and curves of the body in Korean pensive statues are closer to those of the Hebei counterparts. One exemplary Hebei statue in the Freer Gallery (Figs 19a, 19b) shows that the body is well-proportioned. Although the head is slightly on the large side, it conveys a sense of childlike innocence. To define the contour of the chest, Hebei craftsmen used lightly incised lines from the armpit to demarcate the chest from the arms and abdomen on the front of the torso. The visual effect of a muscular chest is thereby achieved, despite the lack of prominent swelling when viewed in profile. The techniques by which Hebei and Korean craftsmen manipulated the proportions, volume, and curves of the body to create a realistic body image are not found in extant Shandong pensive images.
Another stylistic similarity between the Korean and Hebei pensive images is the design of the stool. The majority of pensive statues from Korea and Hebei show a bodhisattva sitting on a stool shaped like a bucket. A neck is formed near the top with the upper section much shorter than the lower (Figs 16c, 17b, 20). The stools are carved with flowing incised lines or in low relief to suggest that they are smoothly cloaked in fabric. In NT83, the fabric covering the stool elegantly extends to the floor and the folds on the stool are neat and continuous, creating a sense of grace and serenity. These features are almost identical to those in the fragmentary Hebei pensive image shown in Fig. 20. In another Korean work (Figs 21a, 21b, 21c), not only is the stool rendered in the same manner as those in NT83 and in the Hebei statue in Fig. 20, but a large lotus pedestal is also carved supporting the stool and a small lotus is added supporting the foot, in a manner resembling the Hebei statue.

The shape of the stools in Shandong statues is completely different from that in Hebei and Korean images, though the carvings and traces of the remaining pigments on the surface of the stools in Shandong pensive statues also suggest the craftsmen’s intention to represent a layer of fabric wrapping around the seat. Shandong pensive bodhisattvas usually sit on an hourglass-shaped stool (Figs 1b, 5b, 18) — a form believed to have come to China from Central Asia with the spread of Buddhism.

Drapery

A third stylistic similarity between the Hebei and Korean pensive images can be seen in the folds of the skirt. Korean pensive statues generally have long skirts covering both the legs and the stool at the front. Close examination of the folds of the skirt reveals that the folds tend to concentrate in two areas: under the folded leg (Areas A, B in Figs 22, 23) and around the ankle of the pendant leg (Area C in Figs 22, 23). The set of horizontal curving lines
beneath the folded leg (Area A) is a realistic depiction of the skirt getting bundled up and making the skirt shorter in appearance. Beneath the curving lines, another set of folds represent the hems of the skirt on the front of the body (Area B). The concentration of the skirt folds near the ankle of the pendent leg represents the rear portion of the skirt hanging down from the seat and almost touching the floor (Area C).

The execution of the skirt folds in the Korean pensive images by and large conveys a sense of naturalism, with some folds represented in a flatter ing fashion (NT78) and others in a more three-dimensional manner (NT83).20 The skirt folds in Hebei pensive images exhibit the same tendency (Figs 19a, 20, 24, 25). The folds under the raised leg of Fig. 24 are intricately carved in a complex formulaic pattern, while those in Fig. 25 are more straightforwardly repetitive, but both display an intention to depict realistically the folding of the skirts. Through various concentrations of the folds, the skirts are made to appear shorter in the front and longer in the back, as they would normally be in a seated position.

The skirt folds in the Shandong pensive statues are expressed with a very different artistic vocabulary from the Korean and Hebei statues. The length of the skirt in the Shandong statues is usually shorter, reaching only the upper section of the raised leg (Figs 1a, 5a, 18). The skirt presents an overall flat impression, with simple folds and few layers. Allowing for obvious differences in the craftsmen’s training, techniques, and artistic tendency, the treatment of skirt folds and body volume suggest that Korean and Hebei artisans shared a similar pursuit of realistic expression in the overall style of the pensive image.

Finally, an exceptional pensive bodhisattva statue from the Mingdao Temple in Linqu (Figs 4a, 4b, 4c) reveals that craftsmen and patrons were aware of the existence of distinctive local styles and that they freely and
selectively combined iconographic and stylistic elements. This statue has rings and sashes similar to the other Shandong statues, but the folds of skirt resemble the works from Hebei in style. Since this statue is made of limestone, typical of Shandong statues, it is safe to assume that it was made locally in Shandong. The curious stylistic and iconographic synthesis seen in this piece suggests that it could have been a Shandong attempt at imitating Hebei style, or perhaps a Hebei sojourning artisan’s effort, incorporating local iconography. The artisan’s creativity is further demonstrated by his inclusion of a form of stool rarely seen in either Shandong or Hebei. The stool is neither in the slender hourglass shape common in Shandong nor the bucket shape with short upper section and long lower section popular in Hebei. Rather, it is divided into two equal sections separated by a thick waist — a form possibly adopted from the pensive images in the Weizi Cave and Putai Cave at Longmen, cut in the 520s. This eclectic synthesis of iconographic and stylistic elements from different sources provides the closest parallels to the features of Korean pensive images among all currently known pensive images from China.

**Diplomatic and Buddhist Contacts across the Yellow Sea**

The iconographic and stylistic similarities between Korean, Shandong, and Hebei pensive images can offer us new insights into the history of cultural exchange around the Yellow Sea circuit. The lack of textual records makes it difficult to ascertain the exact paths by which Buddhist visual culture reached the peninsula. However, available information and existing scholarship suggest several possibilities:

1) Shandong and Hebei merchants coming to Korea may have sold Buddhist items as merchandise or brought them as personal icons or amulets, following the historical pattern by which Buddhist visual culture had originally been transmitted to China from the Western Regions.  
2) Chinese monks may have brought Buddhist icons to Korea for evangelical purposes.  
3) General population movements across the Yellow Sea may have allowed Chinese Buddhist artistic styles and iconography to enter Korea and to be synthesised with local indigenous aesthetics and techniques.  
4) Buddhist icons may also have been sent together with Chinese Buddhist artisans and painters as official gifts from Chinese to Korean courts as part of diplomatic exchanges. Events such as these created the environment in which Korean artisans and patrons imitated, reproduced, and reinterpreted Chinese pensive images.  

Understanding which Chinese regions served as sources of inspiration for Buddhist artisans working on the Korean peninsula can provide clues as to which of the above modes of transmission were predominant. The majority of surviving Korean pensive statues are thought to come from Paekche and Silla, which were geographically closest to the Shandong peninsula in the north and to the coastal regions of the southern dynasties. The shortest maritime route between Shandong and Paekche was only 300 kilometres, which could be crossed in a few days of sailing. This geographic proximity was important for determining maritime trade routes, and it may also have enabled monastic and lay Korean travellers to become familiar with
the characteristic features of Shandong Buddhist art. However, the influence of Hebei artistic traditions on Korean pensive bodhisattva statues suggests that mere geographic proximity was not the primary factor influencing the pathways by which Chinese artistic styles were transmitted to the Korean peninsula. After 534, Hebei was the location of the northern dynasties’ capital Ye 邺 (modern-day Linzhang 临漳). The stylistic similarities between Korean pensive bodhisattva statues and those of the region around the northern dynasties’ capital (rather than the geographically closer region of Shandong) suggest that the transmission of Buddhist artistic traditions to Korea was linked to diplomatic contacts between the northern dynasties and the courts of Paekche and Silla.


22 A study on the surnames of the Paekche envoys to China in the fifth and the seventh centuries shows that Chinese immigrants or Chinese descendants very often served as Paekche’s ambassadors to the Chinese court. Best, A History of … Paekche, pp.491–92.

23 The only pensive bodhisattva statue discovered in the territory of Koguryŏ (from modern-day Pyongyang) shows high stylistic similarity to those from Hebei. Korean National Treasure number 118, Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Korea, <http://english.cha.go.kr/chaen/search/selectGeneralSearchDetail.do?sCcebKdcd=11&ccebAsno=01180000&sCcebCtcd=11>. However, this statue is very small (17.5cm high) and easily portable, and therefore its place of production cannot be easily determined. Its stylistic similarity to NT 83 may also suggest a place of origin in the southern part of the peninsula.

Records in Chinese and Korean official histories suggest that during the fifth and early sixth centuries, Paekche and Silla maintained close relationships with the southern Chinese dynasties, while Koguryŏ had more regular contacts with the northern dynasties (Table 1).23 Earlier scholars have pointed out two major reasons that contributed to such alliances. Geographically, Koguryŏ blocked Paekche’s and Silla’s overland paths and interfered with their sea routes to northern China. Therefore, when the two southern states wished to contact China, it was easier for them to reach the southern dynasties.24 Moreover, Koguryŏ had established friendly relationships with China’s northern political powers, and Silla and Paekche therefore formed strategic alliances with China’s southern political entities in order to resist Koguryŏ.25 Amicable political relationships were usually accompanied by fruitful cultural exchanges, and material evidence from Paekche and Silla reflects cultural influences from the southern dynasties.26

Buddhist activities were an important element in Paekche and Silla’s diplomacy with the southern dynasties.27 According to the Samguk sagi 三國史記, compiled in the twelfth century, Paekche’s embassy to the Liang in 541 asked for supplies of Buddhist scriptures and artisans (gongjiang 工匠) and painters (huashi 畫師).28 In 549, the Liang sent diplomats to accompany a Silla monk returning to Silla with Buddhist relics.29 In 565, the Chen court sent a diplomatic mission to Silla with Buddhist monks as members of the official embassy, bringing 1700 fascicles of Buddhist scriptures (jing 録) and treatises (lun 論) as national gifts.30 Silla and Paekche monks usually chose southern China as a destination for studying Buddhism.31 These historical

Table 1: Dates of contact between Chinese and Korean states

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northern China</th>
<th>Southern China</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Koguryŏ</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Paekche</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>472</td>
<td>406, 416, 420, 429, 430, 440, 443, 450, 457, 467, 471, 480, 484, 486, 490</td>
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<tr>
<td>567, 570, 571, 572, 578, 581, 582, 589</td>
<td>502, 512, 521, 524, 534, 541, 549, 562, 567, 577, 584, 586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Silla</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>564, 565, 572</td>
<td>521, 549, 565, 566, 567, 568, 570, 571, 578, 585, 589</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25 For Koguryŏ’s diplomatic contacts with the northern and southern Chinese states and other political entities in the context of overall East Asian international relations in the fifth and sixth centuries, see Taedon Noh (trans. John Huston), Korea’s Ancient Koguryŏ Kingdom: A Socio-Political History (Leiden: Global Oriental, 2014), pp.231–82.


27 In the contact between Paekche and the Northern Wei in 472, the Northern Wei refused Paekche’s request of taking military actions against its dutiful vassal Koguryŏ. See ibid., p.460.

28 For discussions of Paekche’s cultural evolution in the fifth and sixth centuries, see ibid., pp.499–501. For discussions on the influence of Liang art on the decorative designs of the tile ends and the wide circulation of glazed pottery and celadon imported from the Western Jin (265–316), Eastern Jin (317–420), and Liu Song (420–479), see Kwon, ‘Paekche History,’ pp.75, 78.


31 Ibid., p.137.

32 Ibid., p.138.

33 Best, A History of … Paekche, p.468.
records indicate that Silla and Paekche had strong Buddhist ties with southern China and that Buddhist gift-giving was an accepted component of diplomatic exchanges.

Political contacts between Koguryŏ and the northern dynasties also included similar Buddhist activities. The Chinese hagiography Xu gaosen zhuan 續高僧傳, compiled in the seventh century, recounts that in 576, Koguryŏ’s grand councillor-in-chief (da chengxiang 大丞相) sent monks to study Buddhist doctrines and history at the Northern Qi capital Ye. 34 The embassy met with the grand controller-in-chief (da tong 大統) Fashang 法上 — the highest Buddhist official of the Northern Qi — to receive instruction on Buddhism and Buddhist history. 35 This Buddhist engagement at the highest level between the two countries very likely led to national gifts from the Northern Qi court to Koguryŏ such as Buddhist scriptures and icons that may later have come to influence the development of Korean Buddhist art.

The connections between Koguryŏ and Shandong Buddhist art have been discussed extensively by earlier art historians. Dong-seok Kwak has pointed out the similarities in the design of mandorlas in Shandong and a Koguryŏ Buddhist bronze. 36 Soyoung Lee and Denise Patry Leidy have also discussed the likeness in physique and the rendering of the flowing folds of the shawls and garments between the same Shandong and Koguryŏ works. 37 John Jorgensen has raised the possibility that the internal layout of Koguryŏ stupas was based on a model in the Shentong Monastery (Shentongsi 神通寺) in Shandong. 38

Yet although the textual sources and the material evidence discussed above suggest that Koguryŏ interacted primarily with northern China and Paekche and Silla with southern China, recent scholarship has suggested a more complex pattern of relationships, especially during the second half of the sixth century. Jonathan Best has pointed out that although Buddhist decorative patterns with influences from the Liang such as lotus blossoms were popular throughout the sixth century, Buddhist sculptural styles shifted

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35 For a detailed account of Fashang’s teaching, see Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, ed., Taishō shinshū daizōkyō 大正新修大藏經, 100 vols (Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1932), #2065.50.1016b-c.
in accordance with Paekche’s changes in foreign policy, from resembling southern Chinese styles to the northern Chinese styles. Tanabe Saburōsuke has mentioned the resemblance between Paekche and Shandong Buddha sculptures. Songeun Choe has discussed the general similarities between Silla pensive statues and those from northern China, pointing out that they have a bare upper body, wear a thin necklace, and have drapery flowing from their waist. Taken together, these observations imply extensive cultural contacts between China’s northern dynasties and the southern kingdoms on the Korean peninsula. The similarities between Hebei and Korean pensive bodhisattva statues discussed in the previous section not only provide additional evidence for these contacts, but suggest the further conclusion that they were directly linked to diplomatic exchanges between northern dynasties and southern Korean courts. Meanwhile, the iconographic elements of Korean pensive bodhisattva statues adopted from Shandong prototypes demonstrate that although the artisans who produced the Korean pensive statues were working primarily in the tradition of the Hebei style, their sources of inspiration were not restricted to Hebei alone, but also incorporated distinctive features of geographically closer regions of China such as Shandong.

This complex network of connections between Buddhist artistic production in Hebei, Shandong, and the Korean peninsula was not limited to the pensive bodhisattva statues. A similar process of integration of multiple Chinese regional traditions can be seen in the cliff carving in Sōsan 瑞山, in the territory of ancient Paekche, slightly inland from the Tae’an 泰安 peninsula protruding into the Yellow Sea. This carving has a central Buddha figure, probably intended to represent Amitābha, flanked by an Avalokiteśvara on
Figure 18

Figures 17a and 17b
Pensive bodhisattva statue frontal and side views, NT78, Courtesy of the National Museum of Korea.

Figures 19a and 19b
Figure 20

For example, the Avalokiteśvara statue commissioned by Zhang Jingzhang in 544 has a pensive image on the back. For the images, see Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所, Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiusuo 河北省文物研究所, and Yecheng kaogudui 鄱城考古隊, ‘Hebei Yecheng yizhi Zhaopengcheng Beichao fosi yu Beiyuzhuan fojiao xiaoziang maiangkeng’ 河北裕城遺址趙彭城北朝佛寺與北詔莊佛教造像埋藏坑, Kaosu 7 (2013): 56–57. The Zhang Jingzhang statue is currently on display in the Yecheng Museum. Another two examples can be seen in Handanshi wenwu yanjiusuo 邯郸市文物研究所, Handan gudai diaosuo jinghua 邯郸古代雕塑精華 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2007), nos.53, 54.


Conclusion
The geographic distribution, artistic styles, and iconography of extant pensive images around the Yellow Sea circuit are consistent with the increasing tendency towards closer cultural interactions between the southern Korean kingdoms of Silla and Paekche and the northern Chinese dynasties over the course of the sixth century.45 The production of independent pensive bodhisattva images — a Buddhist phenomenon unique to Hebei and Shandong in China that reached its climax in the mid-sixth century — inspired the production of similar images as the most prominent bodhisattva icon in Paekche and Silla just a few decades later. However, because of gaps in the...
Figures 21a, 21b, and 21c
Pensive statue (frontal, rear and side views) believed to be from Chungcheong-namdo in the territory of ancient Paekche. Tokyo National Museum.

Figure 22
Skirt folds of NT83 (Figures 16a, 16b, and 16c).
Adapted from the National Museum of Korea Collection Database.

Figure 23
Skirt folds of NT78 (Figures 17a and 17b).
Adapted from the National Museum of Korea Collection Database.
textual record, we are as yet unable to answer questions such as the route by which the pensive bodhisattva reached the Korean peninsula, the time and context of this transmission, or the social identities of its earliest sponsors. Iconographic and stylistic analyses provide the best form of evidence available for understanding the historical connections of different groups of artisans across time and space.

Nevertheless, the iconographic and stylistic analysis presented here points towards the conclusion that the most iconic image of Silla and Paekche Buddhist art was inspired by contacts with north-east China. Moreover, it shows that the Korean artisans owed their inspiration not to a single source in northern China but to multiple distinctive regional Chinese traditions, integrating the Hebei artistic traditions with iconographic elements from Shandong art to arrive at a unique representational and iconographic style.

In contrast to previous scholarship that presumed a special relationship between the Buddhist art of the Korean peninsula and that of Shandong, I have proposed that the Korean pensive bodhisattva statues bear a more profound relationship to those from Hebei. The refined handling of the stylistic features that Korean pensive statues share with those of Hebei — especially the proportions and volume of the body and the detailed treatment of the drapery — are most likely to have been transmitted through direct personal relationships among artisans, perhaps through the training of Paekche and Silla artisans in Hebei or through the migration of Hebei artisans to Paekche.
and Silla. By contrast, the features shared between pensive statues from Korea and Shandong — the sash and ring — are relatively superficial design elements that could have been incorporated through imitation after a brief visual encounter.

This conclusion suggests that it may be necessary to reconsider the emphasis that recent scholarship has given to the role of Shandong in the transmission of Buddhist artistic styles to the Korean peninsula, and to explore more thoroughly the roles of other local northern Chinese artistic traditions. The details of my argument depend on stylistic features that are unique to the pensive bodhisattva and show clear differences between images produced in Hebei and Shandong. It remains to be seen whether a comparative analysis of other types of Buddhist icon might suggest different geographic patterns of transmission and imitation. Nevertheless, the pensive images themselves stand as a testament both to the complexity of sixth-century artistic exchanges around the Yellow Sea and to the ingenuity of the artisans who drew on multiple regional traditions in order to create them.

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A story of the escape, revenge, and death of Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (?–484 BC) is partially transcribed in the Dunhuang manuscripts Stein nos. 328 and 6331 and Pelliot nos. 2794V and 3213. Arthur Waley (1889–1966) and Victor H. Mair published their English translations of this story in 1960 and 1983 respectively, both under the title of ‘Wu Tzu-hsü’. However, the four Dunhuang fragments of the story all lack original titles. Although there are the characters lie guo zhuan 列國传 (The Tale of Various Countries) written on the back of the manuscript S.328, they were actually added later by Marc Aurel Stein’s (1862–1943) assistant and Chinese teacher Jiang Xiaowan 蒋孝琬. By the mid-twentieth century, these manuscripts had gained at least five different titles. In 1957, a collation of the four manuscripts was published in a collection of Dunhuang bianwen 變文 (transformation texts), under the title of Wu Zixu bianwen 伍子胥變文 (Transformation Text on Wu Zixu, hereafter WZXBW). This title now has been generally adopted by scholars of Dunhuang studies. According to Victor H. Mair, Dunhuang transformation texts are a type of popular text that originated from narratives of Buddhist miraculous transformations illustrated in paintings. He speculates that the Dunhuang story of Wu Zixu was initially composed in south-east China around the end of the first quarter of the eighth century, then gradually spread to other regions of China, and meanwhile was repeatedly transcribed and polished during the second half of the eighth century and the first half of the ninth century. Some scholars seldom differentiate between its composition and transcription dates, but still try to date the composition (more accurately, finalisation) of the Dunhuang story of Wu Zixu to the late Tang period, or, more specifically, the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang (786–848).

One of the most interesting sections in WZXBW is a dialogue between Wu Zixu and his wife, which contains dozens of apparent or hidden drug names. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Rediscovering Medical Antiquity in China conference, University of Chicago, 7–8 June 2018.


5 They are:

(A) Lie guo zhaan 列国传 (title for S.328), see, for example, Luo Fuchang 罗福章, 'Lundun bowuguan Dunhuang shumu' 倫敦博物館敦煌書目, Guiwu Beijing dazuo guowu jikan 國立北京大學學季刊 1 (1923): 165. See also Chen Bingkun 陈붕君, Zaijin sanshi nian Zhongguo wenxue shi 最近三十年中國文學史 (Shanghai: Taipingyang shudian, 1930), p.173. Luo did not give the Stein number for Lie guo zhaan, but indicated that the manuscript on the story of Wu Zixu was incomplete. What he referred to was probably S.328, as the characters lie guo zhaan are clearly written on the back of S.328.

(B) Lie guo zhi can juan 列国志残卷 (title for S.328), see, for example, Zheng Zhenduo 郑振铎, Dunhuang de suwenxue 唐代敦煌的俗文學, Xiaoshao Yuebao 小報月報 3 (1929): 492–94. Zheng Zhenduo probably did not examine the original manuscript, and therefore miswrote the character zhuang (tale) as zhi (record). Nevertheless, he considered that it would be more proper if S.328 was entitled Wu zixu 伍子胥; meanwhile, he also suspected that the characters lie guo zhi [zhuang] 列国志 [残] should be added by a modern editor of Dunhuang manuscripts.

(C) Wu zixu xiao shuo 伍子胥小説 (title for S.328), see, for example, Xiang Da 邢達, 'Lie guo zhuan jingxian nanli' 列國志殘卷影響南麓, Dunhuang bian suocang dunhuang juanzi jingyan mulu' 敦煌的俗文學敦煌掇瑣敦煌卷子經緯錄 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1957), pp.1–31. Li Shiren 李時人 doubts the propriety of defining this text as a transformation text, see Li Shiren 李時人, Lie guo zhuan jingxian nanli 列國志殘卷影響南麓 (trans. Imre Galambos) (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p.489. Nevertheless, there are still publications unaware of 'Lie guo zhaan' as a modern title and treating it the original title

Here, hidden drug names refer to the drug names whose constituent characters are entirely or partly substituted by other characters so as to reduce obstacles to comprehension of the dialogue, and/or to engage the audience in the entertaining unveiling of such names. Among the four fragmentary Dunhuang manuscripts, only S.328 and P.2794V include this dialogue. S.328 looks neater than P.2794V in terms of handwriting (Fig. 1). Though constituting merely a fraction of many extant stories of Wu Zixu, the dialogue infused with drug names does not exist elsewhere in pre-modern Chinese literature on Wu Zixu, and thereby adds to its literary value. Some editions of excavated Chinese medical texts include the dialogue as a special piece of non-medical writing, while some others stress its value to literature rather than medicine, and therefore exclude it. A variety of scholars attracted by the drug names as puns have made admirable efforts to improve our understanding of the dialogue, including its entertaining effect. But there remain unsolved issues. For example, none of the collations of WZXBW, published since the 1950s, note the textual difference between jia 家 (family) in Wu Zixu’s reply to his wife in S.328 and its corresponding character qie 切 (eggplant) in P.2794V. Another example is the character shi 詩 (poem) in the first sentence of the dialogue in P.2794V (absent in S.328). This has caused some scholars to treat the dialogue as a poem, though some others reject such an opinion. This divergence not only concerns the stylistic nature of the dialogue, but also concerns our quest for its historical origins.

This article highlights the value of the dialogue in mediæval Chinese medical culture, popular literature, and forms of transmission of the stories recorded in Dunhuang transformation texts. Central to the dialogue, the drug names bear multiple senses. They at least enable correct interpretation of a recent idea that dates the intensive use of drug names as puns within a limited length of words or a poem in vernacular novels only back to the post-Song (960–1279) period. In this article, I first give a new collation of the dialogue, then re-identify the embedded drug names. On this basis, I revisit the significance of the drug names, and trace the historical-philological backgrounds of such dialogue. The hidden drug names themselves testify to written rather than oral transmission of the story, or at least the dialogue, because the transcribers or storytellers would not have needed to hide some names if the text took an oral form. This thereby adds to our understanding of the composition and circulation of Dunhuang transformation texts. Above all, I argue that the dialogue in the Dunhuang story of Wu Zixu cannot be considered merely wordplay; to further understand the dialogue and related issues, it must be placed within a larger context of drug culture, literary traditions, Buddhist rhetoric and the geographical position of Dunhuang in early and mediæval Chinese society.

**Collation and Translation of the Dialogue Embedded with Drug Names**

The following transcript of the dialogue, based on S.328, and collated with P.2794V (Figures 1a & 1b), provides a basis for further discussion. It consists of 321 characters. Meanwhile, a tentative English translation of the dialogue, which tries to overcome linguistic obstacles caused by the embedded drug names, is also given below.

其妻遂作名詩問曰，妾是妾之婦，細辛早於於苦，石膽未及當歸，使妾聞之顛滅，薔薇薔芝，澤瀉無隣，黃銅犂犂，何時遠志，近聞楚王無道，遂發卒狐之心，詐妾家破芒消，屈身苜蓫，何時遠志，石膽難當，夫怕逃
His wife then composed a poem embedded with drug names, and, through the poem, asked, 'I am a lady married into the Wu family, and my husband began his early career as an official in the state of Liang. Prior to our marriage ceremony, he had to go back, leaving me alone. The fat meat and fine grain at home was about to be exhausted, and the pavilion I chose to live in stood with no neighbours. I raised my head and sighed for my husband as a guest in Liang, and soon discovered a stalactite cave. After spending half the summer there, I encountered jackals and foxes several times. Then I decided to go east, and soon found a演讲地 as a guest in Liang, and thereby kept calm and eliminated my sorrow, and murmuring his name in daytime dried my tongue out stone, and my bitterness shed on to green boxes. Night-time sleep could not be deceitful to me, like spike moss. When I heard your sincere and unpretentious voice begging me straight how you got here to quench my thirst for information about my husband.

Zixu answered, 'I am neither a son of the Wu family nor a refugee from persecution. Please listen to the story of my journey. I was born in Bashu, and grew up with humiliation. I only have 'goat' teeth, which are not like your husband's teeth. I have spoken frankly and hope you can understand.'

The context of this dialogue is Wu Zixu's escape from the state of Liang, where he served as an official. His family was native to the state of Chu. However, the King of Chu slew his father (a minister of Chu) and elder brother (holding an official position in the state of Zheng), as his father unfavourably criticised the King of Chu's marriage with a young lady from the state of Qin, who was betrothed to the Crown Prince — one of the King's children.
Identification of the Drug Names Embedded in the Dialogue

The word *yao ming* 藥名 (drug name) obviously indicates the use of drug names in the dialogue between Wu Zixu and his wife. The symmetry between their words conduces to identification of certain drug names. For example, Wu and his wife both used the word *jie geng* 桔梗, which obviously refers to the medicinal plant *Platycodon grandiflorus* (eleutherococcus nodiflorus). The word *wu jia* 仵家 ([LMC] /wu ʃa/) 仵茄 ([MC] /w qi/) corresponded to the similarly pronounced *wu qie* 仵茄 ([MC] /w qi/) 仵茄 ([LMC] /wu ʃa/) in Wu’s reply, a homonym of the medicinal plant name *wu jia* 仵家. In Wu’s reply, *wu jia* 仵家 ([LMC] /wu ʃa/) also constitutes a key part of *qie* 切, and thereby is indicative of such a link. Moreover, *chui hu* 醋糊 ([LMC] /tʃu ʃu/) in Wu’s reply corresponds to the similarly pronounced *cui hu* 刺糊 ([MC] /tʃu ʃu/) in his wife’s account. The correspondence helps to link *qie* 切 with the plant name; the character *jia* 家 also constitutes a similar situation. In this dialogue, Wu disguised his identity, but still communicated some obscure information about his previous experiences.
The words that in some cases denoted specific plants and such but had no relationship with any drug in ancient Chinese materia medica, for example, xuan chang 懸腸, will not be considered for identification. Given varied histories of drugs and the composition date of the Dunhuang story of Wu Zixu, identification of drugs here will be cautiously based on Tang or pre-Tang medical records rather than late imperial and/or modern medical texts such as the Bencao Gangmu 本草綱目 (Compendium of Materia medica, 1578). This methodology differs from Victor H. Mair’s, which heavily rests on twentieth-century reference books. The identifications given in Table 1 reflect some existing ideas about the hidden or apparent drug names embedded in the dialogue. Here it is noteworthy that the act of hiding drug names did not first occur in this dialogue, but appeared centuries earlier, in, for example, the yao ming shi 藥名詩 (drug name poems) mentioned below. In this sense, the dialogue followed an existing literary tradition.

In Table 1, I have also abandoned some far-fetched or inappropriate ideas. For example, there is an opinion that relates she gan 舌乾 (the tongue becomes dry) to the medicinal plant she [ye] gan 射干 (Belamcanda chinensis (L.) Redouté). But this opinion neglects that the character 射 in the word 射干 is pronounced as ye [MC] / jia [LMC] rather than she [MC] / ʂɦ [LMC]. Another example concerns the word piao yao 飄飄. Zhu and Chu identify it as the plant piao yao cao 飄飄草 (alias ye can dou 野蠶豆), and claim that the latter was a drug. However, piao yao cao 飄飄草 appeared in Chinese literature as late as the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279), with its medicinal properties being recorded no earlier than the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Some contemporary medical publications equate it with piao yao dou 飄飄豆 (Vicia hirsuta (L.) Gray) — a plant first included in the Chinese materia medica

19 For example, see Liu Ruiming, ‘Wu zixu bianwen de yaoming sanwen xinjiaoshi’, p.70; Xiang Chu, Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu (2006 revision), p.45.
21 The character shi (poem) in P.2794V is absent in S.328.
22 The character shi 仕 (to be an official) in S.328 is written as shi 是 (be/correct) in P.2794V. In existing major collated versions of WZXBW it is common to see punctuation between xi xin 焦辛 and zao shi 早仕, see, for example, Wang Chongmin et al., eds Dunhuang bianwen ji, p.10; Pan Chonggui, Dunhuang bianwen ji xin shu, p.840; Huang Zheng
and Zhang Yongquan, eds Dunhuang bianwen jiao zhu, p. 299; Li Shiren, ed. Quantang Wudai xiaoshuo, p. 2461; Xiang Chu, Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu (2006 revision), p. 41. But in this case the following sentence lacks a subject. For this reason there are also some scholars who propose punctuation between zhī fū 之父 and xīn 馨子. See, for example, Zheng Zhenduo, ‘Dunhuang De Suwenxue’, p. 493; Zhu Hongjie and Chu Liangcai, ‘Wu Zixu bianwen yaomingshi yigu’, p. 214; Yin Zhanhua, Tangsong wenye ju wenxian congao, p. 592.

23 The character li 倚 (rite) is written as lǐ 礼 (a variant form of lǐ 礼) in both S.328 and P.2794V.

24 The characters shì 而 (make) and xiàn 閑 (emptily) in S.328 are written as qian 阡 (dis-patch) and xian 隨 (emptily, a variant form of xiàn 閑) in P.2794V.

25 The character lian 然 (pity) in S.328 is written as rùn 鬆 in P.2794V, which seems to be the character lin 令, a variant form of lǐn 邻 (neighbour). I agree with some scholars who consider lǐn 邻 more in line with the context, see Guo Zaiyi et al., ‘Wu Zixu bianwen jiaoabu’, [MC] ju, ye gan 雖 [MC] yin, wushi chang qing 父是長亭 [MC] yin in reverse order. The first group contains 39 names, which can be directly found in Tang and earlier medical texts — except the name dunan 断斷, which is the drug name xu duan 縱斷 in reverse order. The second group contains 14 names, which are interspersed with disguised characters — for example, jue bai 卷百. The third group contains seven names, which entirely consist of disguised characters — for example, cai hu 材狐. The art of disguise in some characters lies in one of three areas: pronunciation (for example, the character ye [MC]/jia [LMC] 野 in ye gan 野干 corresponds to ye [MC]/jia [LMC] 射 in ye gan 射干); character structure (for example, the character xiang 箱 in qing xiang 青箱 and the character xiang 箱 in qing xiang xi 青葙子 both share xiang 橼); or literal meaning (for example, the characters wu/dao 王無道 in wang wu dao 王無道 are literally closely related to the characters bu liu/xing 不留/行 in wang bu liu xing 王不留行).

26 The character yang 仰 (look up) is missing in P.2794V.

27 The character zhi 志 (ambition) in S.328 is written as chu 蠳 (place) in P.2794V.

28 The characters cai hu 材狐 (wood and fox) in S.328 are written as chai gu 射狐 (jackal and solitude) in P.2794V. According to the sense of this sentence, gu 狐 is likely a miswritten character.

29 The character mu 父 (clover) in S.328 is written as qian 獨 (hade) in P.2794V. Some scholars state that the character zhu 趙 is written as zhu 趙 in S.328 and is written as zhu 趙 in P.2794V, see Guo Zaiyi et al., ‘Wu Zixu bianwen jiaoabu’, pp. 232–33. My own examination negates this statement.

30 The character rui 藥 (dropping leaves) is originally written as su 蕪 in S.328. The latter is a vulgar form of the character rui 藥. See Huang Zheng 黃徵, Dunhuang suzi Dian 葛洪俗字典 (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 2005), p. 342. But in P.2794V the characters wei rui 威蔑 (luxuriant) are unrecognisably written as 落, the structures of which obviously do not resemble that of wei rui 威蔑.

31 The character dan 独 (gallbladder) in S.328 is written as the obscure and unidentifiable character rui 威 in P.2794V.

32 The character xing 形 (punishment) in S.328 is written as xing 形 (shape) in P.2794V. Only xing 形 makes sense in this line. It also corresponds to the character ying 影 in the following line. The character wang 業 (a kind of grass growing on farmland) is originally written as 鬼 in S.328 and 鬼 in P.2794V, which are actually variant forms of wang 鬼, see Zhu Hongjie and Chu Liangcai, ‘Wu Zixu bianwen jiaoabu’, ‘Wu Zixu bianwen jiaoabu’, p. 299; Li Shiren, ed. Quantang Wudai xiaoshuo, p. 2461; Xiang Chu, Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu (2006 revision), p. 41. But in this case the following sentence lacks a subject. For this reason there are also some scholars who propose punctuation between zhī fū 之父 and xīn 馨子. See, for example, Zheng Zhenduo, ‘Dunhuang De Suwenxue’, p. 493; Zhu Hongjie and Chu Liangcai, ‘Wu Zixu bianwen yaomingshi yigu’, p. 214; Yin Zhanhua, Tangsong wenye ju wenxian congao, p. 592.
courage); and tao ren (a person who flees). Some other drug names, however, first need to be transformed so we can understand their pronunciation etc. (Table 2)—for example, the literal meaning of xi xin 细辛 (thin and pun- gent) obscures the real meaning. Mair considers it possibly a pun on xi xin 細心 (prudence), the supposed name of Wu Zixu’s wife.85 While a philological opinion interprets xi xin as a pun on xu shen 無身 (a lady’s husband).86 Another example is jiang jie 江杰; its metaphorical term, in my opinion, is jiang jie 將竭 [(fine food) is about to be exhausted).

As the author(s) and transcribers of the dialogue did not leave any annotations to the text, some of the drug puns are difficult to determine. For example, the literal meaning of the drug name hou po 候脯 can be sincere and unpretentious, which matches the sense of qi sheng 乞聲 (begging voices); but it could also be interpreted metaphorically as hou po 噪破 (a hoarse voice) (however, this sense of the term hou po as far as I know, first appeared in the Southern Song dynasty).87 The term xing li 行李, as another example, can be understood as journey,88 which would suit the immediate context. However, it is also possible that the term actually refers to xing li 行歷 (experiences).89 Here it is noteworthy that the dialogue is essentially a piece of literary work, within which some drug names themselves are literally descriptive and need not necessarily be treated from the perspective of puns. Such examples are long chi 龍齒 and yang chi 羊齒. They literally mean dragon teeth and goat teeth, and both describe Wu Zixu’s teeth. The difference between yang chi 羊齒 (pun on yang chi 羊齒) and long chi 龍齒 (a pun on half of the summer); jiang jie 江接 (pun on jiang jie 江接) [almost]; wu tou 武頭 (pun on wu tou 武頭 [one’s head being cut off]); fu zi 父子 [father and son]; and gui xin 桂心 (pun on gui xin 歸心 [longing for home]).90 Although different interpretations of the song exist,91 there is no controversy about some of its events such as wandering away from home, killing, death, and missing somebody. These events can also be found in the dialogue between Wu Zixu and his wife. Generally speaking, the literary work both concerns life and death. However, drug names intertwine the human and natural worlds. Joseph Needham treated the bencao 本草 (materia medica) genre of Chinese medical texts, which cover many medicinal plants, animals and minerals, as pandects of (pharmaceutical)

**Significance of the Drug Names**

Two literary works feature the use of drug names as puns in Dunhuang manuscripts. One is the Dunhuang story of Wu Zixu; the other is an undated short song transcribed in S.4508, which originally lacked a title but is now entitled “Lang dang bu gui xiang qian yao ming qu zi” (The Song Starting with Lang dang Bu gui xiang qian yao ming qu zi) [A Man Wandering away from Home and Hesitating to Return to His Hometown] and Embedded with Drug Names). It contains several embedded drug names such as lang dang 蘖於 (a pun on lang dang 蘖於) [half of the summer]); jiang jie 江接 (pun on jiang jie 江接) [almost]; wu tou 武頭 (pun on wu tou 武頭 [one’s head being cut off]); fu zi 父子 [father and son]; and gui xin 桂心 (pun on gui xin 歸心 [longing for home]). Although different interpretations of the song exist,91 there is no controversy about some of its events such as wandering away from home, killing, death, and missing somebody. These events can also be found in the dialogue between Wu Zixu and his wife. Generally speaking, the literary work both concerns life and death. However, the two subjects are also among the fundamental concerns of materia medica. Given this consideration, the names invented by humans in diverse ways to identify drugs function well within the context of the dialogue between Wu and his wife.

The use of drug names is not intrinsically necessary. Religious terms, for example, can also be employed to embellish the sufferings narrated in the dialogue with implications for life and death. However, drug names intertwine the human and natural worlds. Joseph Needham treated the bencao 本草 (materia medica) genre of Chinese medical texts, which cover many medicinal plants, animals and minerals, as pandects of (pharmaceutical)
difficult to identify as existing characters, generally treated as ke景在 current collated editions of WZNBW without giving reasons.

41 The character xu尋 is originally written as xu同 in both S.328 and P.2794V, which is a variant form of xu尋.

42 The character jia家 (family) in S.328 is written as qie節 (eggplant) in P.2794V.

43 The character yi亦 (also) in S.328 is absent in P.2794V.

44 The character sheng生 (born) in S.328, which is absent in P.2794V, is written between but near the middle of the characters nai乃 (be) and yu於 (in). Clearly it was added later, after transcription.

45 The character hao賀 (Agastache) in S.328 is written as hao賀 (guest) in P.2794V.

46 The characters sheng jia生家 are originally written as jia sheng居生 in S.328, with the mark ‘/’ made besides the character sheng生.

47 The character bao寶 (treasure) in S.328 is written as bao寶 (guest) in P.2794V.

48 The character you友 (friend) is originally written as you友 in S.328 and zhi支 (branch). See, for example, Wang Chongmin et al., eds Dunhuang bianwen ji Dunhuang bianwen ji, p.10; Xiang Chu徐楚, Xiangchu Dunhuang yuanwen wenxue lunji 昌楚敦煌語言文學論集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2011), p.162. Compared with the vulgar forms of zhi支, it is more like a vulgar form of you友, see Huang Zheng, Dunhuang suzi dian, p.511. Cf. Huang Zheng, Dunhuang suzi dian, p.551. As a result, you友 means ‘support [his] son’ (here, you means support or help), or can be understood as a pun on you友 (pomelo), 朋朋.(post/entrust) and yu余 (/) in S.328 are written as yu余 (by means of) and yu余 (surplus) in P.2794V. The character peng鹏 is written as in S.328 and in P.2794V, which are not yong勇 (use) but variant forms of peng鹏.

50 The character zhi支 in S.328 is absent in P.2794V. The character you友 (friend) is originally written as you友 in S.328 and in P.2794V, which resemble the vulgar forms of you友 (see above).

51 The character gong共 (together) in P.2794V is absent in S.328.

52 The character bei被 (by) in S.328 is written as bi被 (there) in P.2794V. The character ni泥 (salt, a variant form of ni泥) in S.328, following bei被 (by) and preceding han寒 (cold), is absent in P.2794V. Some scholars consider ni泥 as a character the transcriber forgot to delete. See Guo Zaiyi et al., ‘Wu Zixu bianwen jiaobu’, p.233.

53 The character er二 (two) in P.2794V is written as san三 (three) in S.328. According to the meaning of the sentence, it should be natural history.28 In this sense, drug names can help contextualise the escape stories of Wu Zixu and his wife (as narrated in the dialogue) in the natural or wild world, though they are also part of human culture. Drug puns are among the different kinds of wordplay in Dunhuang manuscripts.29 They make the dialogue unique in extant stories of Wu Zixu. Yet the puns in the dialogue are more than wordplay, as they can serve the plot in which Wu Zixu’s wife prudently attempted to ascertain Wu’s identity, while Wu intended to hide his identity. Wang Chongmin, for example, held such a view but he considered serving the plot as the direct reason for the use of drug names.30 This is somewhat far-fetched, as many words other than drug names can function as puns as well. And it is even unnecessary to use puns to achieve the effect of hiding identity information.

The dialogue was primarily composed in the context of materia medica and literary traditions. The presence of at least 60 drug names in the dialogue consisting of merely 321 characters indicates the author’s (or authors’) familiarity with the materia medica. In the Tang dynasty, knowledge of drugs had significantly expanded. Even in the early-Tang period, the officially compiled work of the materia medica, namely Xinxiu bencao 新修本草 (Newly Revised Materia Medica, 659), records 850 native and exotic medicinal substances – many more than those recorded in Shenmeng bencuo jing 神農本草経 (The Divine Farmer’s Classic of Materia Medica, c. first century AD).31 And Dunhuang in the late-Tang period served as a prosperous commercial centre on the Silk Roads, where native and exotic medicinal substances were all present.32 Some local people also donated medicinal substances to Buddhist monasteries in Dunhuang.33 Thus, the drug puns could have had an audience in Dunhuang, though the drug names or even the dialogue might have been added to the story of Wu Zixu during its supposed transmission from South-East China to Dunhuang. Although the audience might not have discerned all the puns and their senses, its appetite would be whetted, thereby contributing to the popularity of the story of Wu Zixu in Dunhuang and, perhaps, contributing to the spread of the culture of materia medica.

The dialogue also engages with the tradition of using drug names as puns in Chinese literature, which dates back to the pre-Qin period.34 The chapter xie yin谐音 (humorous and implicit words) of Liu Xie’s Wenxin diaolong 文心雕龍 (Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons, c.501) summarises a category of rhetoric that includes early (drug) puns.35 In light of this, the use of drug puns in the dialogue cannot be counted as an independent or novel phenomenon, but has its origin in earlier Chinese rhetoric.

Given that the character shi詩 (poem) appears in P.2794V but is absent from S.328, it was, perhaps, deliberately added by the transcriber for the purpose of relating the dialogue to yao ming shi藥名詩 (drug poem). Under this title, some literati exemplified by Wang Rong王融 (467–93), Shen Yue沈約 (441–513) and Yu Jianwu庾肩吾 (487–551), and some emperors exemplified by Xiao Gang萧綱 (508–55), had composed the earliest (drug) poems in China.36 This poetic genre persisted in the Tang dynasty, though drug poems composed in the Tang dynasty remained limited.37 Nevertheless, the dialogue is not laid out in the form of typical pentasyllabic or heptasyllabic Tang (drug) poetry, and does not have consistent rhyming characteristics.38 It does not belong to the li shi律詩 (regulated poems) genre of the Tang dynasty.39 This is probably why some scholars, as previ-
ously mentioned, refuse to treat the dialogue as a poem. Here it is worth noting a mediæval poetic genre called zati shi 雜體詩 (‘poems in miscellaneous styles’). Jiang Yan 江淹 (444–505), for example, had composed 30 such poems under the general title of zati (‘miscellaneous styles’). 104 Although drug poems had been explicitly categorised as a subgroup of the ‘poems in miscellaneous styles’ since the late-Tang period, the dialogue originally alleged to be a drug poem in P.2794V does not match the features of the ‘poems in miscellaneous styles’ or poems of other genres. 105 This article does not see the dialogue as a poem, but would rather, inspired by the idea of suggesting it as a prose, 106 assign it to the category of pianwen 鈞文 (parallel prose, see below).

**Historical-Philological Backgrounds of the Dialogue**

A significant feature of the dialogue or WZXBW is the frequent occurrence of lines consisting of four characters. This immediately reminds us of the dialogue’s potential relationship with some well-known early Chinese literary and medical works such as Shijing 詩經 (The Book of Odes); Han poetic expositions grouped under the title of Fu 命; and Huangdi neijing 黃帝內經 (Huang Di’s Inner Classic). Four-character phrases characterise almost all the poetic lines in The Book of Odes (tenth to seventh centuries BC); the book of odes has many poems with titles that include/are plant or animal names. 107 Such phrases are also characteristic of Han poetic expositions — for example, Sima Xiangru’s 司馬相如 (c.179–117 BC) Shanglin fu 上林賦 (Fu of the Imperial Garden), which describes a variety of animals and plants when describing an emperor’s hunting activities in the Han imperial garden. 108 In Huang Di’s Inner Classic, whose role in Chinese medical history parallels that of the Hippocratic writings in ancient Europe, 109 the characters in the four-character phrases account for a significant portion of the total, and have been researched for more than a decade. 110 These secular works were still available in the Tang dynasty. There are examples in Dunhuang manuscripts of original words or quotations from The Book of Odes and Huang Di’s Inner Classic. 111 Such classics in Chinese literature could not have been unknown to the author(s) of the dialogue or WZXBW, who exhibited good literary ability.

Buddhist scriptures might have an even more direct influence on the wording of the dialogue WZXBW. Stephen F. Teiser points out that ‘four-character phrasing for most prose sections’ is one of the ‘stylistic features typical of Buddhist scriptures’. 112 This can be verified by the Dunhuang manuscript Dasheng sifa jinglun ji guangshi kaijue ji 大乘四法經論及廣釋開決記 (Disclosure of Extensive Commentaries on Catuṣkanihārasūtra, P.2794), which shares the same scroll with the dialogue in P.2794V. 113 Buddhist scriptures in Chinese constitute a majority of the Dunhuang manuscripts. 114 Furthermore, scholars have shown that from the Eastern Han dynasty onwards four-character phrases became popular in Chinese Buddhist scriptures. 115 Although existing opinion on the causes of this phenomenon are not quite consistent, the native Chinese literary tradition of using four-character phrases, as mentioned above, is generally considered among the important driving factors. 116 The circulation of Chinese Buddhist scriptures also promoted the vitality of four-character phrases in the Chinese language. 117 From a historical-literary perspective, the four-character phrases in the dialogue can be reasonably considered to have been composed under the combined influence of Chinese secular and Buddhist rhetoric.
The use of four-character phrases and the need to embed drug names would, in some cases, restrict expression and, therefore, result in difficulty in understanding the phrases. For example, it remains uncertain whether sheng ju bei mu 生居耳母 is talking about mu 母 (mother), wu 侮 (humiliation), or other possible subjects; and sheng ju 生居 in this phrase can also be understood as reside or living.128 Probably because of this, there are also some six-character phrases, though less common than four-character ones, being used in the dialogue. For example, the line qie shi wu qie zhi fu 截時五截之付 (I am a lady married into the Wu family) gives a clear sense which perhaps cannot be properly clarified in a four-character phrase. Of course, six-character phrases are usual in classical Chinese literature as well, for example, Qu Yuan’s 屈原 (c.340–278 BC) Jiuge 九歌 (Nine Songs), one of the songs of Chu,129 is a group of ‘shamanistic poems’ in the eyes of David Hawkes.130 As a whole, the four- and six-character (and few seven-character) phrases representing parallel forms make up more than 70 per cent of all the phrases in the dialogue. This stylistic trait calls attention to the literary tradition of pianwen 駢文 (Parallel prose), ‘the metrical pattern of characters and syllables that is most common in Chinese parallel prose’.131 Wang Bo’s 王勃 (c.650–c.676) Teng-wuang Xu 騰王閣序 (Preface to the Gallery of Prince Teng), a typical example of parallel prose, is composed of four, six-, and seven-syllable lines.132

Conclusion

Neither the story of Wu Zixu nor drug names were new to the late-Tang period. But a combination of them, which appears in the dialogue between Wu Zixu and his wife during Wu’s escape journey, makes the Dunhuang story of Wu Zixu unique in extant pre-modern stories of this revenge hero of the sixth–fifth centuries BC. The re-examination of the text and the contextualization of the dialogue within early and mediæval Chinese culture and society, as pursued in this article, help to further understand the dialogue, drug names, and related issues. The drug names hidden in the dialogue and tentatively re-identified in this article attest to written rather than oral transmission of the dialogue or even the story — adding to our understanding of how the stories in Dunhuang transformation texts were communicated. The drug names do not merely function as wordplay, but bear multiple senses. They accord with the theme of life and death in the dialogue — even in the whole story. Denoting plants, animals and minerals, they also help situate the escape story narrated in the dialogue in the natural world. Moreover, the drug names as puns meet the need to conceal Wu’s identity in the face of his wife’s prudent enquiry. The wording of the dialogue displays the influence of the culture of materia medica and the literary tradition of using puns, and engages with secular and Buddhist rhetorical traditions. It does not suggest that the dialogue is a poem, but rather it bears a resemblance to parallel prose. From a broad historical perspective, the Dunhuang story of Wu Zixu, so far as known, can be considered the earliest Chinese story that involves the use of drug names as puns. This case study is an attempt to seek a balance between the special and general senses of Dunhuang manuscripts in history.
Table 1: Drug Names Embedded in the Dialogue between Wu Zixu and His Wife

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Drug</th>
<th>Tentative Identification</th>
<th>Early Medical Record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wu qie (jia)</td>
<td>wu jia</td>
<td>Plant: Eleutheroscoccus</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>nodiflorus (Dunn) S.Y.Hu</td>
<td>神農本草經(c. 1st AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xi xin</td>
<td>xi xin</td>
<td>Plant: Asarum sieboldii</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Miq.</td>
<td>神農本草經(c. 1st AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yu liang</td>
<td>yu yu liang</td>
<td>Mineral: Limonite,</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FeO(OH)-nH2O</td>
<td>神農本草經(c. 1st AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiu li</td>
<td>jiu li</td>
<td>Wines</td>
<td>Bei ji qian jin yao fang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>偏急千金要方(c.652 AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dang gui</td>
<td>dang gui</td>
<td>Plant: Angelica sinensis</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(oliv.) Diels</td>
<td>神農本草經(c. 1st AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>du huo</td>
<td>du huo</td>
<td>Plant: Heracleum</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hemiselyanum Diels</td>
<td>神農本草經(c. 1st AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gao liang jiang</td>
<td>gao liang jiang</td>
<td>Plant: Alpinia</td>
<td>Ben cao jing ji zhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>diptantheran Hance</td>
<td>本草經集注(492-500 AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiang jie</td>
<td>jiang jie</td>
<td>Plant: Mosla dia nthera</td>
<td>Wu pu ben cao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Buch.-Ham. ex Roxb.)</td>
<td>吳普本草</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maxim. or Brassica juncea</td>
<td>(c. 3rd cent. AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(L.) Czern.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ze xie</td>
<td>ze xie</td>
<td>Plant: Alisma plantago-</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aquatica L.</td>
<td>神農本草經(c. 1st AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bin lang</td>
<td>bin lang</td>
<td>Plant: Areca catechu L.</td>
<td>Ben cao jing ji zhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>本草經集注(492-500 AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yuan zhi</td>
<td>yuan zhi</td>
<td>Plant: Polygala tenuifolia</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Willd.</td>
<td>神農本草經(c. 1st AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wang wu dao</td>
<td>wang wu liu</td>
<td>Plant: Vaccaria hispanica</td>
<td>Chen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Mill.) Rauschert</td>
<td>神農本草經(c. 1st AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cai hu, or chai</td>
<td>cai hu</td>
<td>Plant: Bupleurum spp.</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>神農本草經(c. 1st AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mang Xiao</td>
<td>mang Xiao</td>
<td>Mineral: Mirabilite,</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Na2SO4·10H2O</td>
<td>神農本草經(c. 1st AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mu zhu</td>
<td>mu zhu</td>
<td>Plant: Euphorbia kansui</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S.L.Liou ex S.B.Ho</td>
<td>神農本草經(c. 1st AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wei rui</td>
<td>wei rui</td>
<td>Plant: Polygonatum odoratum (Mill.) Druce</td>
<td>Wu pu ben cao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>神農本草經(c. 1st AD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shi dan</td>
<td>shi dan</td>
<td>Mineral: blue vitriol,</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mainly CuSO4·5H2O</td>
<td>神農本草經(c. 1st AD)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The information in the 'Tentative Identification' column is mainly based on Flora Reipublicae Popularis Sinicaceae (http://frps.eflorae.cn), The Plant List (http://www.theplantlist.org/) and Zhong hua ben cao (Chinese Materia medica, 1999).

- = embedded drug names extracted from medical texts; ★ = interspersed with disguised characters; ⋆ = totally consisting of disguised characters.

76 Yin Zhanhua, tong song wen xue yu wen xian cong gao, p.395. For an early medical record of yi yi 狗苓, see Ma Jixing 馬繼興, ed. Shen- nong ben cao jing ji zhu 神農本草經輯注 (Beijing: Renmin weisheng chubanshe, 1999), pp.69-70. In this book there is an entry for yi yi ren 氐 ي دن.

77 As far as i know, the word most similar to qi 葛 in the story is qie (家), which first appeared in Huangdi Neijing 太平 神農本草經(c. 1st AD) and is rarely found in pre-modern Chinese literature. See Yang Shanshang 楊善上, 'Zhezang mai xing' 真藏脈形, in eds Li Keguang 李克光 and Zheng Xiaochang 鄭孝昌, Huangdi Neijing taisu jiaozhu 神農本草經校注 (Beijing: Renmin weisheng chubanshe, 2003), p.434. In this book, the original note to qi 葛 (a variant form of qi 禽) says the sense of this character is the same as qi 禽.


79 However, I disagree with Xiang Chu's idea that xiang [MC]/xiang [LMC] and shuang [MLC] 霜 share a similar pronunciation, so qing xiang 青箱 (green box, often referring to the box used to preserve books, calligraphy works and paintings) is a pun on qing shuang 青霜 (grizzled hair/ autumn frost/sword/a kind of gown), see Xiang Chu, Xiangsong yu yin wen xue lunji, pp.161-62. For the LMC pronunciation of the two characters, see Pulleyblank, Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation ..., pp.290, 337.

80 Sima Qian 司馬遷, Shijii 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), pp.176, 2287.


128 Li Shizhen 李時珍, Ben cao cong gao 草本草通論, p.822.

129 Shen Yue 申悦, Shen nong bencao Jing Jizhu 神農本草經輯注 (Beijing: Renmin weisheng chubanshe, 1999), pp.176, 2287.


131 A pun on qing shuang 青霜 (grizzled hair/ autumn frost/sword/a kind of gown), see Xiang Chu, Xiangsong yu yin wen xue lunji, pp.161-62. For the LMC pronunciation of the two characters, see Pulleyblank, Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation ..., pp.290, 337.

132 Sima Qian 司馬遷, Shijii 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), pp.176, 2287.


134 Li Shizhen 李時珍, Ben cao cong gao 草本草通論, p.822.


136 Ren Fang, Shu yi jia, pp.11-12. A fifth-century text also contains a similar record, see Liu Jinghua 劉敬華, Yiyan 餘言 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996), p.29.

137 Mair, Tun-Huang Popular Narratives, p.276.

For a Tang example of this sense of *xing li* 行李, see Du Fu 杜甫, *Zeng Su Sixi* 增蘇四席, in ed. Qiu Zhao'ao 丘兆藻, Dashi xiangzi 杜詩詳 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), p.1547.


### Table 1 cont’d

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Drug</th>
<th>Tentative Identification</th>
<th>Early Medical Record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tao ren</td>
<td>tao ren</td>
<td>Plant: kernels of <em>Prunus persica</em> (L.) Batsch or <em>Prunus davidiana</em> (Carrière) Franch.</td>
<td><em>Ben cao jing ji zhu</em> 143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhu yu</td>
<td>zhu yu</td>
<td>Plants: <em>Evodia spp.</em></td>
<td><em>Wu shi er bing fang</em> 五十二病方 (3rd cent. BC) 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wang cao</td>
<td>wang cao</td>
<td>Plant: <em>Beckmannia syzigachne</em> (Steud.) Fernald</td>
<td><em>Zhou hou bei jing</em> 昭侯背方 (4th cent. AD) 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>li lu</td>
<td>li lu</td>
<td>Plants: <em>Veratrump spp.</em></td>
<td><em>Wu shi er bing fang</em> 五十二病方 144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ye gan</td>
<td>ye gan</td>
<td>Plant: <em>Belamcanda chinensis</em> (L.) Redouté; or an animal</td>
<td><em>Shen nong ben cao jing</em> 147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lang dang</td>
<td>lang dang</td>
<td>Plant: <em>Hyoscynamus niger</em> L.</td>
<td><em>Shen nong ben cao jing</em> 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chi shi</td>
<td>chi shi</td>
<td>Mineral: Red halloysite, mainly Al4[(OH)8/2]9Fe2O16 (Si4O10)4H2O</td>
<td><em>Shen nong ben cao jing</em> 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qing xiang</td>
<td>qing xiang zi</td>
<td>Plant: <em>Celosia argentea</em> L.</td>
<td><em>Shen nong ben cao jing</em> 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jue ming</td>
<td>jue ming zi</td>
<td>Plant: <em>Senna obtusifolia</em> (L.) H.S.Irwin &amp; Barneby or <em>Senna tora</em> (L.) Roxb.</td>
<td><em>Shen nong ben cao jing</em> 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juan bai</td>
<td>juan bai</td>
<td>Plant: <em>Selaginella tamariscina</em> (P. Beauv.) Spring</td>
<td><em>Shen nong ben cao jing</em> 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hou po</td>
<td>hou po</td>
<td>Plant: <em>Magnolia officinalis</em> Rehder &amp; E.H.Wilson or <em>Magnolia officinalis</em> var. <em>bilebii</em> Rehder &amp; E.H.Wilson</td>
<td><em>Shen nong ben cao jing</em> 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhi zhu</td>
<td>yang zhi zhu</td>
<td>Plant: <em>Rhododendron molle</em> G.Don</td>
<td><em>Shen nong ben cao jing</em> 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jun qian</td>
<td>jun qian zi</td>
<td>Plant: <em>Disopyros lotus</em> L.</td>
<td><em>Ben cao shi yi</em> 本草拾遺 (739 AD) 152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mai men</td>
<td>mai men dong</td>
<td>Plant: <em>Ophiopogon japonicus</em> (Thunb.) Ker Gawl.</td>
<td><em>Shen nong ben cao jing</em> 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cong rong</td>
<td>rou cong rong</td>
<td>Plant: <em>Cistanche deserticola</em> Y.C.Ma</td>
<td><em>Shen nong ben cao jing</em> 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long chi</td>
<td>long chi</td>
<td>Animal: Teeth of fossil animals</td>
<td><em>Shen nong ben cao jing</em> 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lang ya</td>
<td>lang ya</td>
<td>Plant: <em>Agrimonia pilosa</em> Ledeb.</td>
<td><em>Shen nong ben cao jing</em> 146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 cont’d

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Drug</th>
<th>Tentative Identification</th>
<th>Early Medical Record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jie geng</td>
<td>jie geng</td>
<td>Plant: Platycodon grandiflorus (Jacq.) A.D.C.</td>
<td>Yang sheng fang (3rd century BC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhi ke</td>
<td>zhi ke</td>
<td>Plant: Citrus aurantium L.</td>
<td>Lei gong pao zhi lun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhi zi</td>
<td>年子</td>
<td>Gardenia jasminoides J.Ellis</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xing li</td>
<td>车李</td>
<td>Plant: Prunus japonica Thunb.</td>
<td>Wu pu ben cao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ba shu</td>
<td>巴蜀</td>
<td>Plant: Croton tiglium L.</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huo xiang</td>
<td>霍香</td>
<td>Plant: Agastache rugosa (Fisch. &amp; C.A.Mey.) Kuntze</td>
<td>Ben cao jing ji zhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wu gong</td>
<td>蜈蚣</td>
<td>Animal: Scopolandra subspinipes mutilians L. Koch</td>
<td>Lei gong pao zhi lun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bei mu</td>
<td>螂母</td>
<td>Plant: Fritillaria spp.</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jin ya</td>
<td>金牙</td>
<td>Mineral: A kind of mineral</td>
<td>Ben cao jing ji zhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you zi</td>
<td>友子</td>
<td>Plant: Citrus maxima (Burm.) Merr.</td>
<td>Ben cao jing ji zhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liu ji mu</td>
<td>仇寄奴</td>
<td>Plant: Artemisia anomala S.Moore</td>
<td>Lei gong pao zhi lun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xu chang qing</td>
<td>西昌情</td>
<td>Plant: Cynanchum paniculatum (Burge) Kitag, ex H.Hara</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xiang he</td>
<td>熊河</td>
<td>Plant: Zingiber mioga (Thunb.) Roscoe</td>
<td>Ben cao jing ji zhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>han shui</td>
<td>寒水</td>
<td>Mineral: A kind of mineral</td>
<td>Wu pu ben cao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duan xu</td>
<td>断续</td>
<td>Plant: Dipsacus asper Wall, ex C.B. Clarke</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piao yao</td>
<td>桃圆</td>
<td>Animal: Mantis egg sheaths</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heng shan</td>
<td>恒山</td>
<td>Plant: Dichroa febriflua Lour.</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shi gao</td>
<td>史膏</td>
<td>Mineral: gypsum, mainly CaSO4·2H2O</td>
<td>Yang sheng fang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ba ji</td>
<td>巴戟</td>
<td>Plant: Morinda officinalis F.C.How</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


97 The record on the Dunhuang manuscript P.2583V is an example. See Shanghai guji chubanshe and Faguo guojia tushuguan, eds Faqo guojia tushuguan canq dunhuang xiyu wenxian, Vol.16 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), p.119.


102 For an example of Tang drug poems, see Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 et al., eds Quan Tangshi 全唐詩, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), p.3670.


108 Fei Zhenggang 費振剛 et al., eds Quan Hanfu jiaozhu 《全漢賦校注》 (Guangzhou: Guangdong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2005), pp.87–116.
Table 1 cont’d

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Drug</th>
<th>Tentative Identification</th>
<th>Early Medical Record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kuan deng</td>
<td>kuan deng hua</td>
<td>Plant: Tussilagag farfara L.</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing 176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhong ru</td>
<td>shi zhong ru</td>
<td>Mineral: Stalactite, mainly CaCO3</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing 177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ban xia</td>
<td>ban xia</td>
<td>Plant: Pinellia ternata (Thunb.) Makino</td>
<td>Wu shi er bing fang 178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yu jin</td>
<td>yu jin</td>
<td>Plants: Curcuma spp.</td>
<td>Yao xing lun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xiong qiong</td>
<td>xiong qiong</td>
<td>Plant: Ligusticum striatum DC.</td>
<td>Shen nong ben cao jing 179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yang chi</td>
<td>yang chi</td>
<td>Animal: goat teeth</td>
<td>Ben cao jing zu 180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

118 The former sense (reside of) sheng ju 生居 is easy to understand. For Tang and earlier examples of the latter sense (living of) sheng ju, see Sima Qian, 蘇秦, p.1986; Ouyang Xun, 欧陽詢, and 賈思勰, 馮, Xiangfang, 《漢譯佛經翻譯與漢語四字格的發展》, 中央民族大學學報(哲學社會科學版) 5 (2008): 177-85.
### Table 2: Drug Names Needing Adaptation to Fit into the Dialogical Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug Name</th>
<th>Possible Metaphorical Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wu qie (jia) 作茹(家)</td>
<td>wu jia 伍家</td>
<td>Wu family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xi xin 蘆辛</td>
<td>xu shen 蕾身</td>
<td>a lady's husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gao liang 薔良</td>
<td>gao liang 背梁</td>
<td>fine food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiang jie 薑芥</td>
<td>jiang jie 將塌</td>
<td>[fine food] is about to be exhausted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ze xie 澤細</td>
<td>ze xie 擇榭</td>
<td>select a pavilion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bin lang 橡榔</td>
<td>bin lang 賓郎</td>
<td>a lady's husband as a guest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yuan zhi 遠致</td>
<td>yuan zhi 遠至</td>
<td>come from afar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cai hu (chai hu) 材狐</td>
<td>cai hu (chai hu)</td>
<td>jackals and foxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mang xiao 芒消</td>
<td>mang xiao 亡消</td>
<td>die out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mu zhu 茹栗</td>
<td>gan sui 盧遂</td>
<td>readily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhu yu 茶茸</td>
<td>xu yu 頑夷</td>
<td>for a moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lang dang 類段</td>
<td>lang dang 浪蕎</td>
<td>wander outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jue ming 決明</td>
<td>jue min 激明</td>
<td>eliminate sorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juan bai 卷柏</td>
<td>juan bai 卷柏</td>
<td>(like) Selaginella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mai men 麥門</td>
<td>mai men 邁門</td>
<td>step to the door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cong rong 蓳蓉</td>
<td>cong rong 從容</td>
<td>keep calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lang ya 狼牙</td>
<td>lang ya 郎牙</td>
<td>[my] husband’s teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jie geng 桔梗</td>
<td>geng jie 耿芥</td>
<td>straightforwardly disclose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhi ke 枳椇</td>
<td>zhi ke 止渴</td>
<td>quench [my] thirst [for your information]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wu gong 吳公</td>
<td>wu gong 吳[伍]公</td>
<td>Mr Wu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bei mu 貝母</td>
<td>bei wu 卑侮</td>
<td>being humiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duan xu 断續</td>
<td>duan xu 断績</td>
<td>threads of feeling break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shi gao 石膏</td>
<td>shi gao 石高</td>
<td>high rocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ba ji 巴戟</td>
<td>ba ji 拔棘</td>
<td>pull thorns [from my body]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuan dong 款冬</td>
<td>kuan dong 款冬</td>
<td>go eastward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yu jin 鬱金</td>
<td>yu jin 玉金</td>
<td>jade and gold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xiong qiong 忏窮</td>
<td>xiong qiong 困窮</td>
<td>fearful and impoverished</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the excavated Han medical text *Wushier bingfang*, the word *zu yu* 朱臾 is considered to refer to *zu yu* 朱臾. See Mawangdai hanmu boshu zhengli xiaozu, ed. *Wushier bingfang* 五十二病方 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1979), p.71. In *Shennong Bencao Jing*, there are entries for *wu zhu yu* 吴茱萸 and *shan zhu yu* 山茱萸. See Ma Jixing, ed. *Shennong Bencao Jing jizhu*, pp.263–64, 273–74.

In *Wushier bingfang*, the word *li lu* 烈乳 is considered to refer to *li lu* 烈乳. See Mawangdai hanmu boshu zhengli xiaozu, ed. *Wushier bingfang* 五十二病方 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1979), p.109. In *Shennong Bencao Jing*, there is an entry for *li lu* 烈乳, see Ma Jixing, ed. *Shennong Bencao Jing jizhu*, pp.342–43.

In *Wushier bingfang*, the word *li lu* 烈乳 is considered to refer to *li lu* 烈乳. See Mawangdai hanmu boshu zhengli xiaozu, ed. *Wushier bingfang* 五十二病方 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1979), p.109. In *Shennong Bencao Jing*, there is an entry for *li lu* 烈乳, see Ma Jixing, ed. *Shennong Bencao Jing jizhu*, pp.342–43.
THE DRUG POEM IN THE DUNHUANG STORY OF WU ZIXU REVISITED


159 Ma Jixing, ed. Shennong Bencao jing jizhu, pp.259–60. See also Zhao Kuifu, ‘Wu Zixu bianwen yu li ren’ 蘆州出文與裏仁, pp.216–17; Mair, Tun-Huang Popular Narratives, p.277. This is an acceptable identification, but if so, it will be an exception that different characters in a word refer to different medicinal substances.

161 Ma Jixing, ed. Shennong Bencao jing jizhu, pp.383–85. In this book ba dou 巴豆 is another name of ba dou 巴豆.

162 Tao Hongjing, Bencao jing jizhu, p.256.

163 Lei Xiao, Leigong Paozhi Lun, p.119.

164 Ma Jixing, ed. Shennong Bencao jing jizhu, pp.328–29. This identification is based on Yin’s opinion.

165 Tao Hongjing, Bencao jing jizhu, p.179. I disagree with Mair, who considers cai bao 畏寶, the word that follows jin yu 鈴於, probably stands for cai bo 来伯 (Chinese small onion or ciboule). See his Tun-Huang Popular Narratives, p.278.

166 Tao Hongjing, Bencao jing jizhu, p.230. This book mentions you zi 潛子皮 (pomelo peel). While in Shennong Bencao Jing, there is an entry of ju you 桔柚 which, however, does not mention the word you zi 潛子. See Ma Jixing, ed. Shennong Bencao jing jizhu, pp.334–35.

167 Lei Xiao, Leigong Paozhi Lun, p.107.


169 Tao Hongjing, Bencao jing jizhu, p.489.

170 Wu Pu, Wu Pu Bencao, p.9.

171 Ma Jixing, ed. Shennong Bencao jing jizhu, pp.99–100. Washier bingfang records xu duan 頭端 which is considered to refer to xu duan 頭端. See Mawangdui hamu boshu zhengli xiaozu, ed. Washier bingfang, p.31.


174 Ma Jixing, ed. Mawangdui guyishu kaoshi, p.720.

175 Ma Jixing, ed. Shennong Bencao jing jizhu, p.77.

176 ibid., pp.240–41. Wu Pu Bencao records kuan dong 間冬 (the character kuan 間 is a variant form of kuan 間). See Wu Pu, Wu Pu Bencao, p.43.

177 Ma Jixing, ed. Shennong Bencao jing jizhu, pp.152–53.

178 Mawangdui hamu boshu zhengli xiaozu, ed. Washier bingfang, p.115.

179 Zhen Quan 鄭全, Tao Hongjing, Bencao jing jizhu (Hefei: Anhui kexue jishu chubanshe, 2006), p.50. The drug ya jin 羊金 also appears in Sun Simiao’s Qianjin Yifang (c.660 AD). See Sun Simiao, Qianjin yi fang jiao shi, p.9.

180 Ma Jixing, ed. Shennong Bencao jing jizhu, pp.198–99.


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‘GAZE UPON ITS DEPTH’: ON THE USES OF PERSPECTIVAL PAINTING IN THE EARLY-MODERN CHINESE VILLAGE

Hannibal Taubes

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a small group of villages in northern Hebei province began to adorn their opera stages and temples with Western-style perspective drawings. These drawings, painted in vigorous blue shades on the walls flanking the temple and stage rooms, depict fantastic amalgamations of Chinese and Western-style buildings, receding into pictorial space: immense multilevel mansions (Fig. 1), pagodas and minaret-like spires (Fig. 2), long rows of buildings lining the streets (Fig. 3), tall domes, and opulent porticoes. Around the bases and atop the roofs, belvederes and porticoes of these structures, complex scenes take place: godly personages sit in state, complex processions set out and return (Fig. 4), more groups of characters gesture or strike operatic poses, while others just lean on the balustrades, taking in the view. This paper attempts to ask the basic questions about these images. What are these pictures? Who are the people and stories in them? Why were they drawn on these walls? What did they mean to the people who drew them?

Prosaically, this paper represents a case study of the early-modern mural-painting traditions of a single Chinese county in northern Hebei province, describing the state of rural artistic traditions on the eve of the introduction of Western-style perspective, and then examining how these traditions changed with Western contact. I contend throughout this paper that these murals represent structural elements of complex compositions of village space, and are not comprehensible without this context. To this end, I begin by giving a brief history of these villages from 1500, focussing on religion, opera, and spatial discourses. In the second section, I narrate the arrival of perspectival techniques and particularly the use of these techniques in opera stage murals, where they were probably first applied. I identify two crucial themes within the stage murals for the ‘Pagoda of Gazing in the Four Directions’ (Si wang ting 四望亭) and the ‘Mansions of the Western Seas’ (Xi yang lou 西洋樓). I argue that these

All photographs were taken by the author. Many of the mural sites described in this paper are not in any way protected or even maintained, and several murals reproduced here have been plundered by thieves or otherwise destroyed since I took the photos. For this reason, I have cited the locations of these murals (that is, provided the village and temple name) in those cases where I am satisfied that they are not in danger, but elected to withhold the locations in cases where the site is vulnerable. Interested academic researchers may contact me at twosmallblocks@gmail.com or htaubes@berkeley.edu for precise locations and image galleries of all of the sites described here.

I am thankful to the following individuals, as well as innumerable others, for their help at various points in the creation of this paper: Zhao Wei 趙偉, Li Xinwei 李新威, Sophie Volpp, Lam Ling-hon 林凌瀚, Hannah Theaker, Kārlis Rokpelnis, Cao Xinyu 曹新宇, Hung Lichien 洪儷倩, Stephen Jones, David Johnson, Peter Bol, my advisor Jacob Dalton for his preternaturally accepting attitude towards my tangents, all the donors to my mural documentation fundraising campaign, and every Chinese villager who has assisted me over the last five years.

2 Works on the Chinese reception of Western artistic techniques have become legion. A particularly useful summary of recent scholarship is Wang Cheng-hua, ‘Wither Art History? A Global Perspective on Eighteenth Century

3 Petra Ten-Doesschate Chu and Ning Ding, ed. Qing Encounters: Artistic Exchanges Between China and the West (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2015).


6 Money for this original survey was kindly provided by the Gardener Traveling Fellowship of Harvard University.

7 I’ve been able to identify 50 structures (stages, temples, a few gatehouses) with drawings influenced by perspectival techniques, in 43 villages. These range from perfectly preserved full-wall murals to a few...
‘exotic’ architectural drawings establish the village stage as a crucial point of contact with the modernising world. In the final section, I re-examine the logic of both stage and temple murals, focussing on the idea of the temple and stage as ‘porticoes’ or entranceways that derived their power from access to holy, fictional, or otherwise ‘foreign’ spaces that extended away behind the altar or scena. I then show how in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this logic was reworked with Western-inspired painting techniques including perspectivalism and the use of cast shadows, catalysing a renaissance in rural mural painting that produced some of the most beautiful and complex works in the history of this art.

Beyond their simple artistic worth, these images are significant for a number of reasons. Scholarly study of the reception of Western artistic techniques in China, for reasons of preservation, access, and documentation, has tended to focus on images produced either in the imperial court, by members of the broader upper classes, or in well-known artistic centres in the southern cities of Jiangnan. To date, there has been little writing in any language on Chinese temple mural painting after about 1400, or on small-scale temple paintings not connected to elite sponsorship. What painting traditions existed in the early-modern countryside, and what effect Western perspectival techniques might have had on the construction or experience of painted temple or theatre space, are unexplored questions. In a country that was overwhelmingly rural until the turn of the twenty-first century, these images represent a uniquely village creativity, allowing us to see villagers as themselves ‘actors’ in early-Modern Chinese cultural history. From another perspective, it has long been an established fact in theatre studies that Chinese opera did not generally use stage sets. While the rural stage murals examined here were not set scenes in the strict sense, they certainly were elaborately painted tableaux intended to establish the stage as a theatrical space, and thus represent an important expansion to our preconceived ideas of the Chinese theatre. For these reasons, an examination of the apparently recherché painting traditions of a small north-Chinese county takes on some importance, as a case study of how the rural majority of Chinese people in their villages produced art, religion, theatre, and, ultimately, modernity.
structure of the fort at the time, which was typically based on the lijia 里甲 system. The number of Yu county fortress villages can be dated as: <1475; 0; 1475–99; 1; 1500–24; 8; 1525–49; 44; 1550–74; 7; 1575–99; 0; 1600–24; 2; 1625–49; 0; 1650–74; 0; 1675–99; 0; 1700–24; 0; 1725–49; 0; 1750–74; 1; 1775–99; 1; 1800–24; 2; 1825–49; 3; 1850–74; 1; 1875–99; 3; 1900–24; 2; 1925–49; 0. I strongly question the validity of dates after 1600 as foundation dates for the fort; many of these dates can be refuted by mentions of these forts in gazetteers prior to the stated date on the gate. My guess is that all or most of these post-Ming dates actually represent cases in which the fortress gate was refurbished and the new inscription simply did not specify this.

Chinese studies of Yu county fortresses so far have been hampered in their analysis by the lack of an accurate table of gatehouse dates. Important studies of Yu county villages consulted here include: Liu Wenjiong, ‘Shui li jia de lai yan jiu’; Deng Qingping, ‘Huabei xiangcun de baozhai yu Ming-Qing bianzheng de shenhui bianqian – yi Hebei Yu-xian wei zhongxin de kaocha’; ‘Huabei xiangcun de baozhai yu Ming-Qing bianzheng de shenhui bianqian – yi Hebei Yu-xian wei zhongxin de kaocha’; ‘Huabei xiangcun de baozhai yu Ming-Qing bianzheng de shenhui bianqian – yi Hebei Yu-xian wei zhongxin de kaocha’. These stage and temple drawings must be understood in the context of the history and culture of broader Xuan-Da region, which encompasses the contiguous area between the cities of Xuanhua and Datong north of the Taihang 太行 and Yan 燕 mountains. Over the course of this paper, I will speak specifically about Yu county while making repeated references to the culture and history of this larger historical and geographical region known as Xuan-Da 燕大, which encompasses the contiguous area between the cities of Xuanhua and Datong north of the Taihang 太行 and Yan 燕 mountains. Over the course of this paper, I will speak specifically about Yu county while making repeated references to the culture and history of broader Xuan-Da, which encompasses it. I came to know about the images over the course of a survey of rural antiquities undertaken in this and adjacent counties over the winter and spring of 2013–14, and then compiled by multiple subsequent visits over the last few years, particularly 2016 and 2017 spent in the field. The stages and temples on which these murals are painted are scattered across around fifty small villages and perhaps a thousand square kilometres. Few of these villages today have even nominal populations of over a few thousand people, and pre-Communist numbers would have been smaller. Almost none of these images have been reproduced, and, to my knowledge, only one brief analytical treatment of them exists — a chapter in a PhD thesis by Liu Wenjiong. In the following pages, I will attempt to describe the rural cultural world in which these images appeared, with particular emphasis on the historical development of religious, theatrical, social, and artistic space.

These stage and temple drawings must be understood in the context of the history and culture of the Yu county village. Both the temples and the stages were religious structures and they formed one component in physically and symbolically complex arrangements of village space. The villages of Yu county were established in their present form in the first half of the sixteenth century, when they were reconstructed and fortified en masse in response to continual Mongol raiding from the steppes. The religious system of these villages — that is, the temples that existed within, atop, and around
the village walls — seems to have appeared at the same time and as part of the same process. After the Longqing Peace from 1567, Yu county, in its isolated mountain basin, did not again see significant warfare essentially until the Japanese invasion in the 1930s. As evidenced by the stele record, from around 1700 the region entered a long period of relative prosperity, which saw the maintenance of old structures and forms of worship, with the much slower addition of new temples within the existing system. This prosperity peaked in the long Qianlong reign (1735–96) but continued through the nineteenth century (troubled elsewhere in China, but peaceful in Yu county) and even into the first decades of the twentieth.11 This period of fading but still-evident prosperity and peace in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is the one that produced the perspectival drawings that are the topic of this paper.

Temples in Yu county are usually one to three bays (jian 间) in width, often built upon a low stone and earth plinth (Fig. 5). Other temples, particularly those built into the north wall of the fort, are tall, stepped structures of multiple levels. (Fig. 6) Some of the larger and more important temples have a walled yard (yuanzhi 院子) extending in front of them, although the majority of small village shrines do not. The main gods are universally depicted on the rear wall opposite the door. These depictions were either statues set on an altar, paintings on the wall, or in some cases both; almost no pre-Revolution statues now survive in Yu county. For some iconographies, the altar extends around the shrine or in the courtyard as appropriate.12

Rural Xuan-Da religion was, broadly speaking, a system in which compositional or spatial relationships carried defining symbolic meaning. This was true both of the arrangement of villages and the compositions of village art. The village itself marked the power of particular ritual buildings via the village art. The village itself marked the power of particular ritual buildings via


11 This narrative is derived from Deng Qing-ping’s extremely useful collection of stele texts from around Yu county: Deng Qing-ping 邓慶平, Yu xian beiming jilu 延县碑铭录 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2009). Taking only those 71 steles in the collection that refer to villages, as opposed to the walled county seat or independent monasteries, I was able to identify 121 instances of creation or reconstruction of various structures around the village (mainly temples). This is an extremely imperfect way to gather dates; it’s often unclear what should be considered a repair (new paint around the eves as part of a general refurbishment of the village temple?) or new founding of structures (a new storage shed in a pre-existing temple?). The reader who wishes for a full case-by-case methodology and a spreadsheet may email me. It should also be pointed out that the sample size is too small.
to draw real conclusions, since the data can be easily throw off by, for instance, one stele that records the repair of six village structures. With the above strong caveats, the physical history of Yu county villages as seen by their stele record would go as below. I’ve divided the data into 50-year periods, and separately tabulated New Founding of Structures (N) and Repair and Refurbishment of Pre-Existing Structures (R): 1501–50: (N) 5 (R) 1; 1551–1600: (N) 1 (R) 2; 1601–50: (N) 1 (R) 1; 1651–1700 (N) 2 (R) 0; 1701–50 (N) 3 (R) 6; 1751–1800 (N) 8 (R) 2; 1801–50 (N) 6 (R) 17; 1851–1900 (N) 10 (R) 20; 1901–50 (N) 4 (R) 7. From a qualitative standpoint, there is a marked increase after 1800 in the number of newly founded things which are not temples — that is, stages, wells, special seating area for women to watch the opera, flagpoles, etc. This suggests either that the roster of village temples was essentially complete by this point or that there was no longer money for large-scale construction projects. It should also be pointed out that the surge of repairs during the second half of the eighteenth century suggests that most of the structures involved had originally been built some hundreds of years before (that is, in the sixteenth century), so that they began to grow dilapidated en masse after about 1750. This corroborates the evidence from Grootaers’ data and the narrative of the Yu county gate-plaques.

12 Grootaers, Hsüan-hua, p.12; Wanch’üan, p.219; Tat’ong, p.167 all give detailed descriptions of these temples and their accoutrement.

13 Grootaers does not dwell on this type of relationship in his surveys, but a close reading indicates that they also existed in his regions, in some cases from the original period of fortification. See for instance: Grootaers, ‘Tat’ong’, p.195, p.197 and p.199; ibid., ‘Hsüan-hua’, p.48 and p.57; ibid., ‘Wanch’üan’, p.240 and p.248. Important recent Chinese analytical studies of these axial temples specifically in Yu county include: Liu Wenjing, ‘Shui zhong bu,’ pp.106–42; Wang Xinlei, ‘Yu Xian gu bu zhong de Zhen wu xinyang’ 延慶縣古堡中的真武信仰, Hebei beifang xueyuan xuebao (Shehui kexue ban) 33.4 (2017): 51–54; et al.

14 Grootaers refers to this type of image as the ‘Pursuit of the Evil Ones’, and mentions it frequently. See, for instance, Grootaers, ‘Hsüan-Hua,’ pp.13 and 33; ibid., ‘Wanch’üan’, p.220.

The Xuan-Da religious system was also one that paid attention to the placement and motion of gods through both three-dimensional and painted space. Particular gods are depicted in temple murals as being positioned in particular ways. The Perfected Warrior and the Jade Emperor are generally
Figures 9a & b
Murals by Cui Wenxin 崔文新 in 1709, contained in the same building in Fig. 5. The right-hand wall is reproduced in more detail as Fig. 31.

Figure 10
A Ming-period stage; the front of the stage has been boarded up against the elements. Great Previous Fort Village, Yu county (Yu Xian Da Gu Cheng Cun 蔚縣大故城村).

15 The ur-source on Yu county opera stages is an internally published study produced as part of a series on materials for cultural history (wenshi ziliao 文史資料): Hebei sheng Yu xian zhengxie wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui 河北省蔚縣政協文史資料委員會, Yu xian gu xilou 蔚縣古戲樓 (Yu county: Yu xian hongsheng zhuanyan yinzhi chang, 2008). This was then reworked with diagrams and photographs to produce a second book of the same name: Yu xian bowuguan 蔚縣博物館 and Hebei sheng gudai jianzhu baohu yanjusuo 河北省古代建築保護研究所 ed., Yu xian gu xilou 蔚縣古戲樓 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2014). The two books share some material but differ in other places; I have cited the latter book throughout due to its availability outside Yu county. Useful analytical studies of opera stages in Yu county are: Wang Penglong 王鵬龍 and Liu Jinping 劉晉萍, ‘Hebei Yu xian gubu yu miaoyu: minjian yanju kongjian de chanshi’ 河北蔚縣古堡於廟宇:民間演劇空間的闡釋, Zhongguo xiqu xueyuan xuebao 中國戲曲學院學報 37.3 (2016): 45–52; Deng Dijiao 鄧弟蛟, 'Yu xian gu xitai diaocha yanjiu' 蔚縣古戲台調查研究 (Masters diss., Shanxi Normal University, 2017).

16 Yu xian bowuguan et al., Yu xian gu xilou, pp.384–404, gives a list of 233 opera stages in Yu county and their attributions. Of these, eight are attributed to the Ming dynasty (1368–1644); another eight are attributed to the Republican or Communist periods, and the rest are mostly mid- or late Qing. The situation regarding the eight putative Ming stages is unclear. The tables in the rear and the main text of the book disagree in many cases on the attribution. Even in the cases where the two agree, I have my doubts: the ‘Ming’ stages look to me no different from the Qing stages. The only stage which seems to me indisputably Ming is one located in Great Previous-Fort Village (Du gu cheng 大故城), which has beautiful mid-Ming brackets (dou gong 斗拱) under the eaves. Interestingly, despite the early date of this structure, its location (across from a Temple to Lord Guan (Guan gong miao 軍公廟), defining a small square in the village centre) follows the same pattern as the later stages. Although there may have been few stages in rural Yu county during the Ming
The graffiti (ti bi) on the stage walls support the dates 1800 to 1950 as the general period from which we may expect to find intact writings or drawings on stage walls. Traditionally, when one performed on a stage, it was common to write a small graffito on the backstage walls. These lively and often extremely colloquial writings contain information about the performers, the performance, messages to other performing troupes, jokes, poems, sexual innuendo, apotropaic formulae, and other random comments. They are often accompanied by ink drawings, topics of which include stages and performances, actors and tumblers, impressions of opera masks, soldiers, animals, calligraphic or possibly eroticistic marks, phaluses, bound (and therefore erotic) feet, sexual acts between both humans and animals, and sundry other things. The rear walls of these stages do also have a tradition of large-scale colour mural-

17 An excellent collection of transcribed Yu county stele texts mentioning opera stages or performances can be found at Deng Dijiao, Yu xian gu xitai diaocha yanjiu, pp.168-96.

18 According to Yu Xian Bowuguan et al., Yu xin gu xilu, p.3, exactly 233 stages now exist within the county, of originally over 800 that existed in the early twentieth century. I’m not sure if either of these numbers are necessarily scientific: many stages exist only as bare stone plinths or piles of rubble, and many more are located deep in the roadless mountains. I have visited 187 such stages in 409 villages of Yu county and counties immediately surrounding it, plus probably another dozen-odd stages in monastery courtyards and a further hundred or so more across a broad area of northern China. I also noted in my surveys of Yu county the locations of another 38 stages now vanished, although this was far from systematic and the absence of a stage in my survey should in no way indicate the absence of one historically. The point is, there are about 200 extant stages in Yu county, and there were many more before the Cultural Revolution; nearly every village had one.

19 Early dated examples include the murals at Stone-Waste Fort (Shi huang bu), discussed in the final section of the paper, which may have been painted in the eighteenth century. Another important piece of evidence are the murals at the Monastery of the Peaceful Sage in East Liu [Family] Village of neighbouring Guangling county (Guangling xian dong liu tuan can an xian si), dated from steles to a repair in 1818.

20 The graffiti (ti bi) on the stage walls support the dates 1800 to 1950 as the general period from which we may expect to find intact writings or drawings on stage walls. Traditionally, when one performed on a stage, it was common to write a small graffito on the backstage walls. These lively and often extremely colloquial writings contain information about the performers, the performance, messages to other performing troupes, jokes, poems, sexual innuendo, apotropaic formulae, and other random comments. They are often accompanied by ink drawings, topics of which include stages and performances, actors and tumblers, impressions of opera masks, soldiers, animals, calligraphic or possibly eroticistic marks, phaluses, bound (and therefore erotic) feet, sexual acts between both humans and animals, and sundry other things. The rear walls of these stages do also have a tradition of large-scale colour mural-

dynasty, the opposition between temple and stage was already established at this time, as was the use of that opposition to define open space within the village.

A Qing-period stage with the interior scenaes frons relatively intact. Note the faded perspectival drawings on either side. A detail of these murals is reproduced as Figure 3. Yu county. Unknown artist, undated, 19th or early 20th century.
ones in villages previously without them. As we will see below, the apparent difficulty with which many of the stages are fitted into the packed space of these villages suggests that many of them were late additions into the system. In any case, by the start of the twentieth century, nearly every village in the county had at least one stage. Of these, perhaps two hundred now remain, in various states of repair and collapse. The perspectival drawings that are the subject of this paper are almost never accompanied by clear dates. A few examples can be fixed to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. However, from the style and the topics depicted therein it is clear that bulk of them cannot have been painted before the year 1800, and that the majority were produced in the late nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth century. This gives us a basic timeline for things written on opera stage walls. The earliest date from which we should expect to see extant images on stage walls is around 1800; weathering on these three-sided structures would efface anything earlier than this. The high point of Yu county opera graffiti, and quite possibly of Yu county opera itself, was the Guangxu reign (1875–1908). This one reign accounts for half (85 out of 169) of all dated stage graffiti recorded in Yu xian gu xilou. After this period the number of attested performances drop off quickly, no doubt due to the impoverishment and conflict that finally in the twentieth century reached up
even into remote and mountain-ringed Yu. This list could be expanded and refined by dates from other stages than the ones listed in the book, but I think the basic contours would remain the same. (Another such list of graffiti can be found at Deng Dijiao, “Yu xian gu xitai diaocha yanjiu,” pp.153–67.)

21 See Wang Zhijun 王志君 and Tian Yongxiang 田永翔, Zhongguo yu zhou minsu wenhua jicheng: difang juzhong gaishuo 中国蔚州民俗文化集成:地方劇種概說 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiiju chubanshe, 2012), p.1. I’m not aware of a single pre-Revolution stage in Yu county that was not located across from some type of shrine. The stages that appear to lack temples generally turn out to be exceptions that prove the rule. I visited one stage located in Warm-Springs Town (Wuan quan zhen 暖泉鎮; 540 masl) that is a private ‘household stage’ (jia tai 家台) located within the mansion of a wealthy merchant family. The stage faces down the main axial line of the courtyards so as to be visible from the rear hall (zheng dian 正殿) where the ancestral shrine would have stood. Even private plays in private homes were offerings to the ancestors. In another village nearby (‘Su and Shao [Family] Fort’, Su shao fu 苏邵堡), there is an opera stage apparently without a temple. Locals related to me when I visited in January 2014 that a ‘grass canopy’ (cao peng 草棚) that stood across from the stage, and that the statues of all of the gods of the villages would be processed out from their temples and into this temporary grandstand whenever an opera was performed.


23 With some exceptions; such ‘mystery plays’ did exist and were performed on these stages too. The main occasion for these seems to have been the winter sai operas 戲社, in the first lunar month, which involved elaborately re-enacted divine combats and exorcisms intended to purify the village for the new year. For descriptions of these in Yu county or areas immediately adjacent, see Wang Zhijun et al., Difang juzhong gaishuo, p.28 for a narrative of the rituals, and p.165 for examples of the votive songs sung during these performances. David Johnson, Spectacle and Sacrifice: The Ritual tieth.19 The Guangxu reign (1875–1908) particularly may have represented something of a golden age for Yu county opera generally: dated graffiti on Yu county stages seems to have peaked in the last decades of the nineteenth century (Fig. 13).20

These stages were votive structures and all of them were located across from temples.21 The ritual use of opera in rural China is well documented, and Yu county is not an exception.22 Although the content of the plays was usually secular, in the sense that the operas were, for the most part, not ‘mystery plays’ specifically depicting acts of the gods,23 the operas were performed ritually as offerings during rainmaking rituals,24 temple fairs,25 and autumn festivals to repay and entertain the gods after the harvest.26 The ritual uses of opera are actually frequently depicted in temple murals themselves. The lower right-hand wall (according to the Chinese reckoning)27 of all important Dragon King temples almost always contained depictions of rituals performed in autumn to thank the gods at the end of the successful harvest. Here, we find images depicting processions of Daoist priests accompanied by shawm bands (Fig. 14),28 masked saishe 戏社 or sheluo 社火 processions (Fig. 15), and, not infrequently, images of opera being offered on stages facing the temple (Figs 16 & 17a & b). We will return to this type of mural later, but for now it is enough to note that for such ritual performance to be effective, a direct line of sight between the temple and the stage was necessary. The god had to physically see the opera.29

Of course, these walled villages were tightly packed spaces, and free space for an opera stage across from a suitable temple was not always easy to come by. Villagers went to great lengths and exercised considerable architectural...
Figure 14: Located on lowest register of the right-hand wall of a Dragon King temple, where dragons have finished dispensing rain and are returning in triumph to the Crystal Palace on the right, this ritual sequence and the ones below it show the festival to repay the gods after a successful harvest. An elaborate Daoist band with a priest and devotees in formal Qing dress approaches a recursive image of the temple itself. Yu county. Unknown artist, undated, 19th or early 20th century.

Figure 15: Another ritual sequence. Villagers pray while a priest brings votive willow branches (liu zhi) and a sacrificial goat to the temple steps. Behind them, a masked, exorcistic shenhao社火 or satirical spiritual procession is taking place. One of the mummers glances out theatrically from under his mask to make sure we understand that these are, after all, only men. Located at the Temple to Lord Guan in South Upper Fort village of Ying county (Ying Xian Nan Shang Zhai Cun Guan Gong Miao 延慶區花盆村關公廟). Unknown artist, painted 1860.

Figure 16: A ritual sequence. Actors in opera dress mingle with villagers bearing offerings. It is unclear whether the building at right represents a temple or an opera stage and may be intentionally ambiguous. Dragon King temple of Du Family Hollow village in Zhuolu county (Zhuolu Xian Du Jia Wa Cun Long Wang Miao 涿鹿縣杜家洼村龍王廟). Unknown artist, undated, 19th century.

Figures 17a & b: Left and right sections of a single long ritual sequence strip, split in two for visibility. Having completed the harvest and threshing (note the threshing-stone and discarded rakes), farmers pack grain into bags marked ‘for the Hall of Surplus Grain’ (yu mai tang 餘麥堂). Then they carry the bags into the storage building. On the right, a temple fair begins: actors perform on a stage while a crowd of villagers watch in the open square beneath. Behind them, a few more villagers pray at the temple gates. Within the temple stands a figure apparently representing the god, receiving the offerings and himself gazing out towards the stage. Located at the Lord Guan Temple of Flower-Pot Village in Yangning district (Yangning Qu Hua Pen Guan Gong Miao 延慶區花盆村關公廟). Unknown artist, painted in 1809.
33 One of the most important and most universally overlooked aspects of Chinese monumental architecture is that such buildings are frequently constructed atop low, flat-topped stone plinths which extend a few feet beyond the walls of the building. Temple, stage, and gatehouse plinths in present Yu county are visibly smoothed by generations of village bottoms. Glancing down while ascending temple stairs, one frequently notices chess-boards cut into the stone. Susan Naquin has argued that temple courtyards in Beijing were among the few ‘public spaces’ in the city, and thus played an important part in constituting urban civil society. See her *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), xxx–xxxii and 88–89.

34 See, for instance, Yin Jianhong 殷建宏,* Xitai yu shehui: Ming-Qing Shanxi xitai yanjiu 戏台與社會: 明清山西戲台研* (Peking: Guo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2009), p.68. Although I haven’t directly cited it elsewhere in the text, I should acknowledge here the debt of my thinking in this paper to this insightful book.


37 A primary source for this movement is again the graffiti on the stage walls. Yu Xian Bowuguan et al. *Yu xian gu xibu*, pp.370–82 gives transcriptions of a whole series of these writings, many or most of which seem to have been written by performers not local to the village in question. Performers are attested from far-off metropoles such as Beijing (p.370), Zhangjiakou (p.371) and Datong (p.372), as well as many other smaller but still distant locations. Opera troupes originating in Yu county are themselves attested in nineteenth-century stage graffiti from neighbouring Yanggao 阳高 and Datong counties (p.382). The latter county is a good hundred miles away, across rugged passes. The point is that there was a constant circulation of performers not only from village to village, but from county to county, and from the cities to the villages and back.

38 For an anthropological description of some of these fairs held in Yanggao county next door to Yu, see Jones, *Ritual and Music*, p.72 and onward.

39 Elsewhere in northern China, ‘Yang ge’ is a genre of folk song, but in Yu county the term refers to the indigenous county opera style.

40 For one of many such statements available elsewhere in northern China, ‘Yang ge’ was already occupied by a temple to Avalokiteśvara (Guan yin miao 觀音廟). The assembled villagers (zhong 群) were stymied until ‘an elderly man, racking his brains and with emotion’ (baisou dong nian kairan 白叟動念慨然) came up with the solution of shifting the Avalokiteśvara temple to the top of the gatehouse facing north and putting the stage in its previous place, thus satisfying the geomantic requirements of both structures. In another village a geomantic temple and a stage were folded into each other to form one awkwardly conjoined ‘franken’-building, in which the back wall of the stage is the front wall of the temple. In at least three other villages the stage has been cleaved in half on either side of the axial road so that it doesn’t impede the central geomantic axis. When an opera was to be performed, the gap over the road could be boarded over and foot traffic diverted around or under it. The point here is that creating and maintaining these lines of sight between votive structures was not necessarily easy, and villagers put a great deal of effort, resources, and ingenuity into doing so.

These processes, proceeding differently in each individual village, resulted often in the creation of complex architectural assemblages of many buildings and open spaces between them, linked by criss-crossing lines of sight. With a temple on one side, a stage on the other, enough open ground between them to fit the assembled villagers in, perhaps the fortress gate on the third side and a few other shrines and shops set adjacent, these lines between temple and stage often defined what are effectively village squares. The areas created in this way were and are the main centres of public life in the villages, comparable to the fora and agorae in the classical West. Today they are often busy and multipurpose spaces: farmers thresh grain, shopkeepers chat with their customers, itinerant peddlers lay out their wares on carts and blankets, children chase and play, old men sit sunning themselves on the temple steps or opera plinths, smoking, and exchanging gossip.39 Between the stage and the temple, Chinese villagers sang their opera, worshipped their gods, conducted their buying and selling, and held their public meetings. We should not overlook these village squares as among the principle spaces in which Yu county villagers eventually met and took part in the modern world.

It is a truism of Chinese village opera that it instructs, and that it forms one of the main ways in which illiterate villagers take part in larger historical and national narratives. Although we know very little about it, we do know that these stages were sometimes used for news-sheet re-enactments of current events. Arthur Henderson Smith, writing in 1889 of China generally, remarked that anti-foreign plays — for instance, depicting the Tianjin Masacre of 1870 — were frequently performed in villages, and that local events such as disputes between counties would be rapidly written into dramas and performed to acclaim in those areas. These stages and the squares in front of them could function as fora to relate and discuss local and national events. And of course opera troupes circulated, often very widely, moving frequently between the cities and the villages. Temple fairs were commercial fairs, and commercial fairs also had opera, held on stages in front of temples.38 It’s quite probable that for a villager in nineteenth or twentieth century China, even into the 1980s and ‘90s, the gatherings held in these spaces and performances represented one of the main venues for contact with the wider world.
Of course, to restate the obvious, these opera stages were also used for performing operas. In a largely illiterate society, these stages allowed Chinese villagers to interact both with local artistic forms and with the broad stream of Chinese national literature. Wang Zhijun and Tian Yongxiang in *Difang juzhong gaishuo* enumerate a broad typology of performances on Yu county stages as follows: Zither Tunes (*Xianzi qiang* 弦子腔), Lolo Tunes (*Luolu qiang* 羅羅腔), Sai Operas (*Sai xi* 賽戲), Great Operas (*Da xi* 大戲), Seedling Songs (*Yang ge* 秧歌),^43^ Operas of the Way and Emotion (*Dao qing* 道情), Playing with Children (*Shua hai'er 玩孩兒*), Lantern-Shadow Plays (*Deng ying xi 燈影戲*), Plays on Stilts (*Gaoqiao xi 高蹺戲*), Shanxi Operas (*Jin xi 賈戲*), and Assorted Tales of the Pear Garden (*Liyuan zashuo 梨園雜說*).^44^ Although the differences between each of these genres go far beyond the limits of this paper, the reader will appreciate the immense variety and sophistication of the rural performing culture in these regions. From the opera titles found throughout Wang and Tian’s book, it is clear that the rural Yu county repertoire included material in both national and local circulation: plots were drawn from pan-Chinese story cycles like that of the *Three Kingdoms* (*San guo 三國*), plus a great variety of plays popular in Peking or Shaxi opera, all freely merging with locally produced performance and song. These rural plays cover the full range of human experience, including love songs, political dramas, histories, comedies both secular and mythological, performances with votive or exorcistic content, and from the twentieth century onward, ‘new’ plays both Republican and Communist.

If this was the religious, spatial, and performing culture that produced these structures and the images on them, then what of the culture of fiction and theatricality within these villages, surely relevant to what seem to be essentially fantasy landscapes on opera stages? We must be wary of projecting onto rural Chinese life a Protestant dividing line between fiction and religion. Similar, perhaps, to classical Greece and Rome, Chinese society generally was one in which religion could be freely used as the raw material for fictional invention, as in *Journey to the West* (*Xi you ji 西遊記* or even *Dream of the Red Mansions* (*Hong lou meng 紅樓夢*),^44^ and in which fictional invention could, without any apparent cognitive friction, again form the basis for religious worship, as in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*San guo yanyi 三國演義*) and *Romance of the Investiture of the Gods* (*Feng shen yanyi 封神演義*).^45^ In Yu county villages, such fiction was consumed on the opera stage as part of elaboration, and often elaborately theatrical, religious rituals.^46^ The gods themselves might populate the stage at times,^47^ while the gods’ temples themselves often held elaborate panelled hagiographies apparently drawn from popular literature. Religion, opera, and fiction were interpenetrating realms in these villages, and we divide them at our own intellectual peril.

Nor can we assume that villagers were naïve about these relationships, or that the theatricality of the village stage was in any way less sophisticated than that of the urban or literati-produced opera. One fascinating window into rural ideas of religion, gaze, fiction, and theatricality are the ‘opposing couplets’ (*dualian 對聯*) that were written or inscribed on the two central pillars of the stage. Theatricality is front and centre here. We read: ‘We make a real empty meal — and discuss all the examples of history / we make True (zheng) a False (jia) image — and act out all the strange affairs of Now and Then’ 虛飲作實議論歷代故 / 假像變真扮演古今奇事. A repeated theme in many of these couplets, and one which will become very important later in

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40 Wang Zhijun et al., *Difang juzhong gaishuo*, p.1. The book on opera stages by the Yu County Museum (*Yu Xian Bowuguan, Yu xian qu xilou*, pp.13–14) gives a fascinating further typology of the ‘occasional’ types of operas, at which plays from the above genres might be performed. The list below outlines: plays to consecrate the statues in monasteries or temples (kai guang xi 開光戲); plays to repay vows to the gods, for instance for cure from sickness or the successful conclusion of a lawsuit (huan yu xi 還願戲); plays on market days (kai shi xi 開市戲); plays performed at marriages (qing hun xi 祭壇戲); plays to celebrate the building of an opera stage (kai xi 建台戲); plays at temple fairs (miao hui xi 市會戲); plays to beg the gods for rain (qi yu xi 祈雨戲); plays at funerals (fu sang xi 發喪戲); plays to celebrate the posthumous ritual marriage of those who died young (si hun xi 死婚戲); plays to thank the gods after a harvest, which the editors note was actually the most common type of play (xi chu xi 助花戲); ‘punishment plays’ (also called fu xie xi 資血戲) demanded if the opera troupe was late only to the occasion or otherwise remiss; ‘closing-the-box plays’ (*fa xiang xi 封箱戲*), which were performed in the tenth month at the end of the summer opera season in order to ‘shut the gods’ gate’ (*fengbi shen men 封閉神門*) and ritually signal the winter absence of the gods; and plays expressing Buddhist or Daoist moral or religious truths (*Fo Dao xi 儀道戲*). A similar list is found in Wang Zhijun et al., *Difang juzhong gaishuo*, pp.128–34.


43 David Johnson, *Spectacle and Sacrifice*, p.116 gives a fascinating description of an exorcistic ritual performed in a village in southern Shanxi in which an entire gruesome mock execution of a scapegoat was framed in specifically operatic terms. Spectators were
threatened that if they misbehaved, they too would be taken not to hell, but to another stage representing hell, where presumably an operatic representation of their torture and execution would also take place. He points to other sets of rituals performed next-door to Yu county in Hunyuan. Where, where the whole village would turn out during the New Year’s festivities to enact events from two popular novels, Shuihu zhuan (水浒传) and Feng shen yanyi (封神演義) (ibid., p.84). Wang Zhijun et al., Difang juzhong gaishuo (地方志中说书), p.31 records a ritual expulsion of the Draught Demon (旱魃) in Yu county. Although to the Western reader the ritual seems purely exorcistic, the main events take place on the opera stages, and the terms used at least in Wang and Tian’s book are operatic: the events are referred to as an ‘opera’ (ju戏剧 and xi 戏剧), the ritual as a ‘performance’ (yun 演 and yuanju 演剧); the character of the Draught Demon plays the part of a ‘clown’ (chou 叉) sitting on the stage and telling stories from books (shuo shu 说书) late into the night. As Johnson puts it, ‘… the boundaries between religion and drama collapse — [...] creating deep ambiguities’ (Johnson, Spectacle and Sacrifice, p.116).

44 Again, see Wang Zhijun et al., Difang juzhong gaishuo, pp.28–32.

45 Willem Grootaers, ‘Hisian-hua,’ p.65 and ‘Wanch’üan,’ p.247 for descriptions of temples to Guanyu that contained long panelled narrations telling the famous events of this god’s life, presumably drawn from the popular novel San guo yanyi. At least one painted narration of Feng shen yanyi exists in Yu county, and many more were painted in the counties of Hunyuan and Ying 盈 adjacent to the west.

46 The technical term for these is yinglian 楼聯 ‘front-piller-couples’, which refers to paired stanzas written vertically on long wooden plaques affixed to the front pillars of stages or porticoes (menlang 門廊).

47 These couples appear in an appendix to the Yu County Museum’s book on opera stages (Yu Xian Bowuguan, Yu xian gu xibu, p.383). The book does not say from which village each poem was collected, and I have not seen any of them myself in my survey. One of the main editors of the book, and the director of the Yu County Museum, Li Xinwei 李新维 (personal communication, 21 July 2017) explained that the couples in this collection were compiled from the few pre-revolution wooden pillar plaques which do survive, but mainly from the memory of elderly villagers about what had once been written on their stages. Although such verses seem slightly arcane to the modern this paper, is the way in which the physically small and bounded space of the stage can form an entrance into much larger historical and social realms. ‘People call it a house (fang)，but I call it a mansion (lou) / lords, dukes, kings, and ancestors — they’re all inside of it’ 人家叫房我叫樓 / 公侯王國在裏頭. ‘The surface-area isn’t big, but it has families, it has nations, it has all beneath heaven / there’s not many people, but they are sons, they are fathers, they are gentlemen ministers’ 地面不大有家有國有天下 / 人數無多為子為父為君主. Another longer poem refers to mirage-visions, ‘the cities of the sea, towers upon giant oysters’, 海市蜃樓 and ‘all the realms of illusion, from first to last’ 乾坤幻境. Thus the epigraphic culture of these stages describes them as a place of spatial recession into fictional space — a place at the boundary of true and false, between our reality and fantastic other worlds.47

To summarise here for the purposes of the remainder of the paper, the temples and spatial system of Yu county villages appeared in recognisable form in the early sixteenth century. The opera culture that we see there today achieved maturity later, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including a high-point at least of stage graffiti around the Guangxu reign (1875–1908). This culture was sophisticated and intentional about the connection between physical and symbolic space. Villages were planned settlements, and temples were constructed within and around this space with clear symbolic intent. Stages were located across from these temples so that the gods could watch the opera. The physical opposition between these two structures formed village squares that were the centre of most types of village events, including religious, operatic, commercial, and political. Important for understanding the perspectival murals, these spaces and the events held in them were the main gateways via which Chinese villagers interacted with the broader world. The epigraphic culture found around these structures emphasised the spatial liminality of both the stage and the temple as trespasses between religion, fiction, and worldly society. The operas, songs, and rituals performed on these stages belonged to a rich and sophisticated circulation of local and trans-local traditions, all of which freely mixed religion and fiction.

2) The Mansion and the Pagoda: Western Exotica in Yu County Village

The history of Yu county village art prior to the turn of the eighteenth century is difficult to trace. The Yu County Museum possesses many medieval-period objects of common types that have been the subject of studies in English. These include Northern Wei-period carved Buddhas set within arched niches, nested śarīra (舍利 舍利) reliquaries from the base of Liao-period stūpas, and Liao-period tomb murals depicting gateways flanked by musicians. From this, we should conclude that Yu county was well within the mainstream of medieval-period north-Chinese visual culture, and that later mural traditions should represent an outgrowth of these earlier genres. Importantly, recent studies on these types of medieval objects have emphasised the connection between their holiness as religious objects and various types of spatial recession, as well as the connection between theatrical space and entrances to other worlds, notably that of the afterlife.48 Given that the fortified villages and temples of rural Yu county were created in the sixteenth century, it seems reasonable to hypothesise that the main elements of village mural traditions took their present form in that period as well. This, however, must remain speculative until more dated examples come to light.49 The outstanding exceptions to this lack of clearly Ming-period murals are the
Western, it seems very plausible to me that Yu county villagers would remember this type of information accurately. The opera stages are the centre of a swirl of fond memories for elderly villagers, and questions about this structure always elicit interested and interesting discussion. Even after the physical destruction of the written poems, these stage couplets would have remained treasured bits of village lore.


Several publications propose Ming-period dates for various murals around Yu county, but given the lack of unambiguous textual evidence or a comprehensive stylistic study of Yu county art, I remain sceptical.

These murals are reproduced in full in Hebei sheng gudai jianzhu baohu yanjiusuo and Yu xian bowuguan ed., *Gucheng si bihua* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2010).

From around 1700, however, clearly dated and well-preserved murals become comparatively numerous. The situation at this earliest extant level in Yu county seems to have been one of relative conformity in composition and subject combined with great stylistic heterogeneity. All of these village temples have, on the central wall, images of the enthroned deities seated in state (Fig. 18). While three Dragon King side-wall procession murals from 1698 (Fig. 19), 1709 (See Figs 9a & b), and 1730 (Fig. 20) seem almost unrelated in style, the roster of different figures and their relative positions in the procession are all the same. Importantly, for later developments, the inner (northern) side of two out of three compositions depicts a portico-fronted building extending back behind the frame. This is the Crystal Palace (*Shui jing gong*水晶宫) from which the expedition of the Dragon Kings departs on the left-hand wall and to which it returns on the right. A similar procession of the Goddesses from 1724 departs farther afield stylistically from anything else in Yu county, to the extent that we may suspect some Tibeto-Mongol influence (Figs 21a & b). Although the portico-fronted building at the interior of the image and the small figures beneath are here missing, the main composition of the procession of the gods is similar to that of the Dragon King images and to other undated Goddess processions from around Xuan-Da. Clearly dated eighteenth-century examples of panelled story narratives and martial images of divine generals indicate that these genres and topics were well established in Yu county by this point as well. Thus we may describe Yu county village mural art before the clear appearance of Western perspective as capable of great beauty and stylistic variety, but possessing a limited range of subjects and compositions.

Figure 18

*The rear wall of a small shrine, depicting the God of the Five Ways (Wu Dao Shen五道神) and retinue. Unknown artist, undated, probably 19th century. Yu county.*
By the year 1700, however, European perspectival techniques and pictorial themes had already begun to have an influence on the broader sphere of Chinese art. Merchants and missionaries first brought European images to the coastal port cities towards the end of the Ming dynasty. By the mid-seventeenth century, the southern cities of Yangzhou and Suzhou were centres of large-scale production of woodblock ‘foreign images’ (yang hua 洋畫) depicting exotic Western scenes, as well as painted images of all types that adopted various aspects of Western perspective, shading, or composition.52 The eighteenth century saw the integration of European artists into Qing imperial court production in northern China, especially after the arrival of the celebrated Jesuit painter Giuseppe Castiglione (Lang Shining 郎世寧, 1688–1766) in Beijing in 1715. By the twentieth century, images of Western cities and scenes both real and imagined could be viewed all across rural and urban China via woodblock ‘yearly pictures’ (nian hua 年畫) and traveling zograscope displays. Woodblock perspectival drawings also made frequent appearances in reformist and modernising literature and illustrated newsprint.53 Although there is very little literature describing this process, Western pictorial techniques certainly had an influence on religious mural painting as well. Perspectival murals depicting imperial processions were
commissioned at Mount Tai in Shandong as early as 1677, and by the end of the nineteenth century, perspectival techniques were being used in murals even on the Tibetan border in modern Qinghai province.

It is difficult to date precisely when perspectival painting first appeared in Yu county villages. The vast majority of the extant perspectival murals in Yu county clearly date from the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, judging by both style and the adjacent graffiti. The majority of these are located on the walls flanking opera stages. We have seen that these stages were a centre of the public life of the village, and that opera troupes were one of the main agents of cultural circulation within these villages. Opera stages were a site naturally associated with spectacle, gaze, modernity, and encounters with the outside world; it is not surprising then that Western themes and pictorial techniques of receding space were painted there. We have also seen that the period of the appearance of opera stages in rural Yu county (beginning in the sixteenth century, but gradually achieving ubiquity only over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) roughly matches the period of Western art’s transfusion into China. Thus it may not be necessary to search for developed opera stage mural traditions prior to Western influence. It seems likely to me, although unproven, that perspectival murals first appeared on stages, which were, at the time, a relatively new site for mural painting and one not necessarily limited by religious prescription. Only afterwards did these paintings begin to spread into the temples.

Yu county to begin with, let alone the existence of Ming-dynasty stage murals. It is also clear that paintings of screens continued to be produced on stage walls into the twentieth century, right alongside the perspectival images.

I have not seen significant research on opera-stage murals elsewhere in north China, and thus I add here a few extremely scattershot notes based on my own travels around Shanxi and Hebei. Perspectival or Western-influenced paintings on opera stage walls certainly did exist outside of Yu county. I have seen perspectival images at the Temple of the Eastern Marchmount at Pu county (Pu xian dongyue miao 山西蒲縣東嶽廟), Fu village of Dai county (Dai xian fu cun 代縣富村), and the Monastery of the Mountain of Enlightenment in Lingqiu county (Lingqiu xian jueshan si 灵丘縣覺山寺), all in Shanxi province. Another, published set of perspectival murals from from central Shanxi can be found in Zhao Peiqing 趙培青 and Li Jingming 李晶明, Yu xian gudai bihu lu 盂縣古代壁畫錄 (Taiyuan: Sanjin chubanshe, 2014), pp.3–18. Perhaps most intriguingly, Scottish missionary Alexander Williamson reports seeing murals depicting ‘continental cities’, that ‘succeeded wonderfully well with the perspective’ in the City God Temple of Taiyuan in the 1860s (Taiyuan fu chenghuang miao 太原府城隍廟). These images, however, had recently been defaced on orders of the city government, perhaps because the painted buildings had crosses on top. Alexander Williamson, Journeys in North China, Manchuria, and Eastern Mongolia, with some account of Corea, Vol. I (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1870), pp. 305–306.
However, despite these interesting examples, outside Yu county such ‘exotic’ images seem to have been exceptions rather than the rule. The majority of extant rural stages north and east of Yu in Zhangjiakou cityship have images either of folding screens or of dynamic life-sized images of actors and tumblers. In northern Shanxi province to the west of Yu, most stages (and many temples) have austerely painted murals depicting scrolls hung on nails, usually a shan-shui landscape painting flanked by vertical couples (zuiyuan 醉園). Although less interesting in themselves as artistic productions, these images do sustain the connection (discussed below) between temple and stage walls, and the use of both surfaces as sites for trompe-l’œil painting. I have not visited villages or stages on the south-east slope of the Taihang mountains. Very provisionally, I suggest that the interest in perspectival and otherwise Western-influenced images represented a broad turn in rural north-Chinese opera and religious visual culture from at least the turn of the nineteenth century on, but that Yu county may have been unusual in the pervasiveness of this interest and in the particular form that these images took.

58. Liu, ‘Shui zhong bu,’ p.217. A few stages have unique decorations. One stage has massive battle scenes flowing across both flanking walls, in which the various heroes and villains of the Feng shen yanyi clash with each other amidst swirling clouds. (Bu Family North Fort [Bu bei bu 卜北堡]). Another one has the slightly Boschian trope of various scenes taking place in the interior of gigantic flora, particularly fruit. A general holds up the head of his decapitated enemy and strikes a martial pose inside of a gargantuan pumpkin, two finches perch on branches within a leafy stemmed apple, a domestic conversation is conducted between two women standing in a fine mansion located inside of a huge tulip, etc. This seems to be the work of an eccentric genius.

Figure 22
Stage mural of a folding screen, Yu county. Unknown artist, undated, probably early 20th century.

59. I intentionally use the vague and exogenous word ‘pagoda’ here to encompass several overlapping Chinese-language terms, referring to a broad range of structures. The tiered multistorey towers depicted in these images are referred to in the captions and in the source novel as both ting 亭 and lou 楼; in other contexts, the same types of buildings can be called ta 塔 or ge 銜. In fact, the English word ‘pagoda’ conjures up roughly the correct range of different structures, and the faintly chinoiserie connotation of the word fits very well with exotic Western phantasmasgoria (‘occidenteria’) of these images as a whole.

Liu Wenjiong has calculated that perspectival architectural paintings represent somewhat over 40 per cent of extant opera stage murals in Yu county, with the rest being images of folding screens, with or without figures peeping around the edges (Fig. 22). These paintings appear on the two flanking walls of the stage, exterior to the scenaes frons and perpendicular to the gaze of the spectators and the deity in the opposing temple. It is important to emphasise that these images were not backdrops in a strict sense; although they were visible to spectators sitting at angles to the stage, the only people who would have seen them head-on during the performance were the actors themselves. The use of perspectival technique is loose. It is apparent that this technique was new to the artists, and they used it with varying success. Some of the drawings succeed at simple point perspective, with long lines of buildings receding down an axial street. In other compositions, attempts at Western perspective are applied more unevenly to the slant of the railings of the structures, which become a crazy zig-zag of impossibly layered stories, with recession in height indicated by the reduced size of the upper figures. In still more compositions, the artists do not even attempt formal point perspective, instead achieving the effect of receding space by foregrounding some buildings and placing others on a distant horizon line behind it (Figs 23a & b). Although many permutations are possible, in the main these images contain two main structures or compositional elements, which I refer to here as the pagoda (ting 亭) and the mansion (lou 楼). Each of these seems to derive from a different source, and I will treat them separately below.

The ‘pagoda’ that usually occupies the centre or outer side of these compositions appears to derive, at least in some cases, from an anonymous mid-Qing novel called The Full Tale of the Green Peony (Lü mudan quan zhuan 綠牡丹全傳). The story is also known as The Full Tale of the Pagoda of Gazing in the Four Directions (Si wang ting quan zhuan 四望亭全傳). The novel was published in 1800. From that year until the end of the dynasty (1911–12), it was reprinted 26 times, and, over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a series of operas and later films were based on it. The story concerns two heroes, — young circus-performer named Jade-Lotus (Hua Bilian 華碧蓮) and her love interest, a somewhat bumbling scholar-aspirant named...
Luo Hongxun 路宏勋. Luo Hongxun, Jade-Lotus, her father, her spry old grandmother, and a band of swashbuckling friends all take up arms against the evil Empress Wu Zetian. At the end of the story, aided by the famous Judge Dee (Di Renjie 狄仁杰), the band of heroes defeats Wu Zetian and restores the rightful heir to the throne of China.

The relevant scene for our purposes occurs roughly a third of the way through the novel, over the nineteenth and twentieth chapters. By this point, the two heroes have professed their love to each other but have since become separated. Jade-Lotus and her father, Hua Zhenfang 花振芳, are driving a herd of horses in through the gate of Yangzhou city (Yangzhou fu 扬州府), where they arrive at a tower called the Pagoda of Gazing in the Four Directions (Si wang ting 四望亭). Here they find an old friend of Hua Zhenfang’s named Yu Qian 余谦, who has vowed in front of a crowd to catch an escaped monkey, which is clambering about on the roof. The monkey, by this point, has ascended the Pagoda of Gazing in the Four Directions, and Yu Qian is labouring around after it, steadily losing face. Hua Zhenfang calls Yu Qian down, and instead sends Jade-Lotus up to nab the monkey. In a series of acrobatic leaps she makes it up onto the roof of the pagoda. Granny Hua (Hua Nainai 花奶奶) leaps up after her. Jade-Lotus pursues the monkey up to the highest gable. Thereupon comes the moment of high drama:

Jade-Lotus slides herself stealthily towards the monkey. She reaches out an arm to grab him. The monkey sees that Jade-Lotus is blocking the escape route to the right: he’s got no empty space to escape through. The animal panics,
and uses all his might to leap, hoping that he can jump right over Jade-Lotus's head. For many years, though, nobody has maintained the Pagoda of Gazing in the Four Directions. The wood is rotten, the mortar and bricks split asunder — Jade-Lotus together with the monkey go plummeting down. On the ground the people exclaim: 'How terrible! Someone's fallen down!'

As Jade-Lotus falls, Hua Zhenfang, Yu Qian, and the Ba brothers are all dismayed and without any recourse. Jade-Lotus has no way of saving her own life. The only hope comes from one young man beyond the fourth or fifth ring of spectators, who shouts: 'You still haven't moved to save her — what are you waiting for!'

With a single leap he's there, and catches Jade-Lotus with both hands, and holds her in his embrace, sitting down into the dust. Everyone shouts: 'What an extraordinary hero! Without him, she'd have been crushed to meat-mush!'

Hua Zhenfang and a whole crowd all run over and with one glance they see — the person who'd saved Jade-Lotus was none other than Luo Hongxun! Jade-Lotus lays unconscious, pressed against Luo Hongxun's chest. For a brief moment, the narrative shifts into the first person as she regains consciousness: finding herself laying sweat-covered in the arms of her long-separated beloved, she decides to keep her eyes closed for a while longer. Only when her father has tactfully removed her onto a charpai does she admit to being awake. The various characters then turn to acrimony over the prize money.

This, then, is identifiably the scene represented on the opera walls in Yu county. At least five of these murals have buildings labelled 'Pagoda of Gazing in the Four Directions' and have visible pictures of Jade-Lotus and the monkey perched dramatically on the gables (Figs 24a & b). In two more compositions, the building is not labelled but nonetheless the telltale figures of a girl and a monkey are visible. In two of them you can also see an older woman balanced on a lower roof, and this must be Granny Hua. In some cases, the whole cast of characters is visible standing around the base of the tower, looking up and gesticulating at Jade-Lotus and the monkey, although it's difficult to tell who is who (Fig. 25). Given how heavily damaged most of the murals are, it seems certain that there were once many more figures visible in all of the scenes. Many more villages just have depictions of tall towers or pagodas without any visible or extant labels or figures.

What did this image represent to Yu county villagers? The scene itself is engaging, kinetic, and affecting. It features acrobatic stunts, a rooftop chase, a fall from a high place, and a last-minute rescue. It also contains the unexpected reunion of lovers, a moment of deeply felt romantic emotion (qing情), and the first-person expression of female erotic desire. It's fair to suppose that the image of a sensuous woman knight-errant (nixixia女俠) leaping about on an exotic southern pagoda would represent an engaging interruption into the social and architectural world of the average nineteenth- or early twentieth-century Yu county peasant. One can also imagine a whole variety of positive explanations for this scene's prevalence, although all of them are very speculative. It could have represented a rebus, or it had a relationship with village ritual. Liu Wenjiqong has suggested a link to the village stage as a site of sexual and gender exploration, and this may be so. In early twentieth century Shanghai, the scene was performed with elaborate rope-work special effects (jiaju bujing機械佈景); perhaps Yu county people somehow witnessed this impressive modern spectacle and attempted to depict it. The name Pagoda of Gazing in the Four Directions references the theme of archi-
But none of these arguments quite satisfies. Among other things, the operas based on *Green Peony* do not seem to have been particularly popular in Yu county, at least within living memory. Wang Zhijun and Tian Yongxiang’s volume on Yu county opera mentions hundreds of titles performed within the county in the pre-Communist era. As far as I can find, none of the various opera titles derived from *Green Peony* appear there. So these plays may have once been performed on Yu county stages, but there’s no written record of it, and nobody around now seems to remember it. Perhaps no explanation is needed. One stage-painter enjoyed the novel and painted the scene; from there it became popular and emulated within the community of painters and audiences around Yu county. It seems safe, however, to say that Yu county villagers painted the world they wanted to see. And in village after village, that world was a realm of swashbuckling women warriors, free-booting and foul-mouthed proletarian heroes, chases, humour, excitement, architectural exotica, and an easy-going eroticism, love, and adventure.

The second building in the opera stage murals, the ‘Mansions’, always appears on the inner side of the composition, where it abuts the edge of the *scenae frons* and the doors that pass through it. The images depict oblong, multistorey buildings with rows of windows facing the street, galleries along the upper stories, Italianate flourishes over the doors, long colonnades, tall architecturally established lines of sight, which we have seen is an important part of these stages’ function, and to which we will return again.

This association is extremely tempting, but, unfortunately, the geographic distance and late attestation of the mechanised performances make it difficult to confirm a connection. The Shanghai Jingju Theatre Company (Shanghai jingju yuan 上海京劇院) website notes that the earliest performance of *Green Peony* known to them was in 1875. By 1915, the performances used mechanical sets, real swords and real lances, suspension by ropes, and other special effects in order to attract customers. The Shanghai Jingju Theatre Company (Shanghai jingju yuan 上海京劇院, [Aug 2008], <http://www.pekingopera.sh.cn/Survey-cont.aspx?id=282>). Quoted in Zhang Yahui, ‘Xiaoyi xiaoshuo “Lü mudan quanzhuan”’, p.212. Another interview with an elderly Shanghai actor, published in the 1962 edition of *Shanghai xiju* 上海戲劇, describes how Jade-Lotus would leap up onto each level of the stepped pagoda, cry out ‘Ai-ya!’ as the topmost brick turned beneath her feet, and then plummet dramatically down into Luo Hongxun’s arms, all accomplished by means of ropes and pulleys. Even in the 1960s, the old performer seems to have been impressed by his memories of it; he emphasises how ‘new and fresh’ (xinxiān 新鮮) it seemed at the time. (Lü Jian 呂健, ‘“Hong bi yuan” de jijing bujing’ 宏碧緣的機關佈景, Shanghai xiju 上海戲劇 7 [1962]: p.24.) It’s possible that Yu county people travelling in the south could have witnessed these performances, or that such mechanised performances could have taken place in Beijing, but I have no record of it.

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Figure 25

Jade-Lotus and the monkey perch atop the Pagoda of Gazing in the Four Directions, while the other characters of the story gesticulate beneath. Spatial recession in height is indicated by the reduced size of the figures atop the tower. Notably, the building to the right is labelled ‘The Mansions of the Western Seas’ (Xi Yang Lou 西洋樓). The right-hand wall is reproduced as Figure 35.

Yu county. Unknown artist, undated, 19th or early 20th century.

minaret-like towers, and even domes — something truly exotic in eastern China. These structures are identified in several of the cartouches. One caption has them as The Mansions of the Western Seas (Xi yang lou 西洋樓), (see Fig 25). Another cartouche reads Yi da gong 意大宮 — ostensibly, The Intentions-Great Palace. This name is as awkward in Chinese as it is in English. Given the foreign form of the buildings, it seems more likely that the full name should be The Italian Palace (Yidali gong 意大利宮). The Chinese painter, finding Yidali ‘Italy’ a mouthful, simply lopped off the last syllable and gave the palace a more acceptably Chinese two-character name (Fig. 26). Another such mansion, in this case labelled The Mansion [sic] of Gazing in the Four Directions (Si wang lou 四望樓) has a row of nonsensical ‘Western’ alphabetic characters written along the top, although it is unclear to me even whether they are drawn from the Roman or Cyrillic scripts (Figs 27a & b). 71

The mansions of the Western Seas (Xi yang lou 西洋樓) was not only a generic name for Western-style buildings; it originally referred to a specific set of structures located in the imperial Garden of Perfect Radiance (Yuan ming yuan 圓明園) outside of Beijing. The buildings and the gardens, maze, and fountains around them were constructed by Jesuit artisans, headed by Giuseppe Castiglione, for the Qianlong Emperor over the course of the late eighteenth century. The mansions were then destroyed by foreign troops during the second Opium War in 1860. At the time these buildings were constructed, they were strongly associated with theatricality and perspectival modes of viewing. 72 Yu county people would certainly have been aware of these structures, since they sat along the well-travelled road to the capital. The multistorey Western buildings were adjacent to the northern wall of the Garden and would have been visible over that wall from the outside. After the violent destruction of the Garden, travellers had free access to the ruins, which still existed in substantially complete form well into the twentieth century. Yu county people could hardly have failed to notice, and taken imaginative interest in, the immense ivory-white ruins of the foreign palaces that rose out the fields along the carriage road to the capital. 73 One such depic-
Figure 26
The ‘Italian Palace’ (Yi Da Gong 意大宫). The right-hand wall of this stage is reproduced as Figure 1. Yu county. Unknown artist, undated, 19th or early 20th century.

Figures 27a & b
‘The Mansion of Gazing in the Four Directions’ (Si Wang Lou 四望楼) has a row of nonsensical ‘Western’ alphabetic characters written along the top, although it is unclear to me even whether they are drawn from the Roman or Cyrillic scripts. Yu county. Unknown artist, undated, late 19th or early 20th century.
These paintings in the Halls of the God of Wealth (Cai Shen dian 財神殿) and of the God of Literature (Wenchang 文昌) in the Six Gods’ Temple of Li [Family] Fort (Li Buzi Liu Shen Miao 李堡子六神廟) may actually be copied directly from the Mansions or from one of the various sets of lithographs which were produced depicting it. They depict bearded Central Asians bearing treasure to the mansion of a wealthy gentleman. Yu county. Unknown artist, undated, 19th or early 20th century.

The white colour of the buildings, the angles of the roofs, and the ornamentation over the windows all suggest that these images were copied either directly from the real Mansions or from the lithographs. For an examination of this, see Pedro Luengo, ‘Yuánmíng Yuán en el siglo XVIII,’ pp.210-12.

Feng Jicai 冯驥才, ed. Zhongguo muban nianhua jicheng, ershisan juan 中國木板年華集成, 二十三卷 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011).


However, the majority of these images are not literal depictions of the Jesuit-built mansions. A more proximate source for all of these Yu county depictions may be found in perspectival ‘yearly pictures’ and peep-box show or zograscope images that circulated widely through eighteenth- to twentieth-century Chinese society. The 23-volume Collected Chinese Woodblock Yearly Pictures (Zhongguo muban nianhua jicheng 中國木板年華集成) contains hundreds of perspectival prints from the late Qing and Republican periods. Dozens if not hundreds of these showcase exotic Western-style buildings of exactly the type found in the Yu county images, including long multi-storey façades, domes, and high, almost futuristic towers. We may point to specific depictions that may have been the source of particular depictions of the Pagoda of Gazing in the Four Directions at Yangzhou, which display the same scene from Green Peony. (It is relevant to point out here that the

Figure 28a & b

These paintings in the Halls of the God of Wealth (Cai Shen dian 財神殿) and of the God of Literature (Wenchang 文昌) in the Six Gods’ Temple of Li [Family] Fort (Li Buzi Liu Shen Miao 李堡子六神廟) may actually be copied directly from the Mansions or from one of the various sets of lithographs which were produced depicting it. They depict bearded Central Asians bearing treasure to the mansion of a wealthy gentleman. Yu county. Unknown artist, undated, 19th or early 20th century.
Pagoda of Gazing in the Four Directions is a real structure that still stands in Yangzhou city, and that Yangzhou was a major source of such prints.) Any of these images could have served as the model or inspiration for the Yu county opera-stage drawings. Many fantastical architectural scenes of this sort circulated as peep-box views, known in Chinese as ‘scenes of the Western seas’ (xi yang jing 西洋景) or the closely homophonous ‘lenses of the Western seas’ (xi yang jing 西洋镜). The name and format of these devices underscores the link between perspectival drawings, Western architecture, technological innovations in the creation of spectacle, and the emphasis on the linear, modern gaze.

Thus it seems closer to the truth to say that these stage drawings referenced a broader representation, popular across China from the eighteenth century until the Communist takeover, of a sort of architectural and visual ‘occidenterie’: an exotic new type of building, and an exotic new way of seeing those buildings. Although drawn from the broader stream of Chinese visual culture, this representation had specific connotations within Yu county. Perspectival architectural drawings were in no way unnatural to a society that used architecturally established lines of sight as one of its main physical structuring principles. We have also seen how the open communal squares thus established between stage and temple were among the main spaces in which villagers interacted with the broader world, and how the epigraphic culture associated with these structures stressed the ability of the physically bounded stage to include ‘all beneath heaven’ (tianxia 天下). A geographic and architectural imagination that extended to Beijing, Yangzhou, and even Europe was appropriate to these spaces. It was via these squares, stages, murals, opera performances, and commercial fairs that Yu county people first met the oncoming modern world, represented it to each other, and ultimately integrated it into their own cosmology and sense of self. These images of the Pagoda of Gazing in the Four Directions and the Mansions of the Western Seas are one artifact of that process.

4) The Portico of the Gods’ Realms

James Cahill has commented on the introduction of Western art to China that, ‘in China as in France, [artistic] appropriations were liberating rather than confining, giving artists the courage to break out of old habits that had become stultifying’. This was certainly true in Yu county. The last 150 years of Yu county mural art, from ~1800 to 1950, were a period of extraordinary innovation. As these Westernising themes and perspectival techniques moved from the stage into the temples, traditional compositions were promiscuously remixed and reinvented. Rather than representing the breakdown of traditional mural-painting culture, I argue that this period represents its lost renaissance. Yu county artists combined Western techniques of depicting receding depth with the traditional spatial logic of the stage and temple to create what are undoubtedly the most complex and innovative compositions in the history of this art. To this end, I will first return to the earliest stratum of extant murals in the early eighteenth century. I argue that their efficacy as religious images derived from a combination of the recursion of the temple room with the realm of the gods depicted, and the evocation of a hidden space behind the altar from which the gods’ power emanated. I will then show how this logic was reworked with the new perspectival techniques, allowing for unique compositions that stretch across multiple buildings and surfaces and
establish complex and efficacious connections between our world and the holy, fictive, or otherwise ‘exotic’ realms beyond.

Perhaps the most consistent single element of all of these depictions on temples and stages, both early and late, is a large portico (menlang 門廊) opening on the inner side of the composition (Fig. 29). In fact, we could reasonably refer to the entire genre of images examined in this paper as ‘portico-pictures’, since the great roofed portico on the inner side of each composition is their most consistent and distinctive feature. This structure is a flat, raised plinth, sometimes with railings but always bounded by pillars supporting the roof. Especially in the later images, the ‘sky-flower panels’ (tianhua ban 天花板) on the portico ceiling became an object of obsession for painters, who distorted space to bizarre degrees to display the perspectival recession of this grid (see Figs 1, 2, 26, 28b, et cetera). In the later opera stage images, this portico fronts the structure that I have earlier referred to as the Mansion and provides an entrance to its interior. In the temple images both early and late, this structure represents the façade and gateway into the gods’ palace.81

It is worth pointing out here that the physical porticoes of real Xuan-Da temples remain symbolically important places today. During a visit in the summer of 2017, the Daoist cleric resident in the Goddesses Temple of the Cock’s-Crow Postal Station (ji ming yi 雞鳴驛) remarked to me, unprompted, that the gods would sit on the small portico space jutting out of the front of the temple in order to watch the opera being performed on the stage opposite. This raised and roofed entranceway, apparently empty, was thus one of the most important symbolic spaces of the temple complex, strongly associated with divine, spectatorial gaze from the temple to the stage, and with the actual historical performance of opera at temple fairs (Fig. 30). It is probable that in many temples the statue of the god would be physically carried out and set on this space during rituals and performances; I have seen this done in other parts of north China, although not in Xuan-Da proper. These porticoes are also, of course, the gateway or anteroom through which the devotee must pass in order to reach the inner sanctum.

The above examples point to two important interpretive aspects of these depictions, apparently unrelated but in fact intertwined. The first is that these porticoes do, after all, represent gateways, or epi-structures around gateways, that lead into sacred or otherwise alteric space. The second is that there is, from the earliest examples until the latest, a persistent conflation and even recursion between the space of the depiction on the wall and the three-dimensional space in which it was set, either temple, stage, or fortress. We will examine these propositions in tandem so that their relationship becomes clear.

To begin with, the earthly temple to the god was frequently conflated with the god’s celestial (or submarine) palace. The name of the palace in which the god is thought to reside is often used as a metonym for the physical temple building, both in the stele texts and on signs over the gateways of the actual temple buildings. Thus a
Dragon King temple might have a gate inscribed with the words The Crystal Palace,82 a Temple to the Perfected Warrior might be called The Palace of the Northern Dipper (Bei dou gong 北斗宮),83 or a temple to the Goddesses referred to as The Travelling Palace of Mount Tai (Tai shan xing gong 泰山行宮),84 etc. We have already noted that the interior of the temple is often creatively furnished to indicate the grotto or palace in which the god is thought to hold court. In this way, the temple space mimics the divine space of the gods. In the case of the portico images, however, a slightly more complex logic is at work. The flanking-wall porticoes are invariably painted on the interior side of the wall, with the building extending back outside the frame of the image. Thus in these earliest extant images, the position of the portico suggests the exterior façade and gateway of a mysterious interior or ‘backstage’ through these painted gates. This holy interior, the realm of the gods, is located at or extends away behind the altar where the statues sit.

As Dragon King temples were the most common type of large temple in Yu county, the spatial logic of these depictions is most developed in those compositions, and many intact examples exist. In these temples, the inner side of both lateral walls always holds an image of both the Crystal Palace and, beneath it, a smaller recursive image of the temple building itself in which the image and the shrine is held (Fig. 31). The rain-giving procession of the dragons around the space of the shrine room (that is out and back from their palace, and around the human world) is almost always echoed by miniature, sympathetic images of mortals on the ground beneath, fleeing from dragon-sparked lightning, then plowing, planting, harvesting, and, finally, forming themselves into a votive procession with a shawm band or shehuo mumbers’ parade that arrives to give thanks at the gates of the recursive temple. As we have seen above, several extant images even show opera performances performed on stages facing the temple gate (see Figs 14, 15, 16 and 17). The visual recursion between the small temple below and the great temple above, and between the painted image and the physical temple space, is clear — by facing north towards the altar in the temple, the devotee is able to access the Crystal Palace of the Dragon Kings. The space of the workaday human world is coterminous with the circuit of the Dragon Kings’ dominion, and the physical temple is the anteroom to their divine realm.

That the rear walls of Chinese temples were understood to recess into holy space is spectacularly confirmed by two temples in areas immediately adjacent to Yu county that have, on the central/rear wall, chiaroscuro trompe-l’œil images of hanging prayer beads that cast painted shadows on the wall — something genuinely unprecedented in traditional Chinese art. One of these

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81 This type of image also existed in the imperial court. One image titled ‘The Qianlong Emperor Watches a Play’ (Qianlong guan ju 乾隆觀劇圖) depicts the emperor seated on one side of a courtyard, watching opera on the other side. In this case, both the area where the emperor sits and the stage upon which the actors stand resemble the Xuan-Da portico images. Zhongguo xiqi zhi wei yuanyi, p.249.

82 For instance, the Dragon King Temple of Kaiyang Fort (開陽堡) in neighbouring Yangyuan county, for instance, has a sixteenth-century stele that refers to the axial Temple of the Perfected Warrior as a ‘Palace of the Dark Emperor’ (Xuan di gong 玄帝宮). For other examples of these metonymic naming conventions, see Grootaers, ‘Wanchüan,’ p.249.

83 For instance, the 1785 stele at Stone-Waste Fort (Shi huang bao 石荒堡), reproduced in Deng Qingping, Yu xian beiming jilu, pp.432–33.

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Figure 31
The right-hand wall of a Dragon King temple, painted in 1709 by Cui Wenxin 崔文新. Note the small figures of a temple procession leading along the base of the wall to a recursive drawing of the temple itself, which leads up, via the figures of the God of the Earth and the God of the Mountains (Tudi Gong 土地公, Shan Shen 山神) to the Crystal Palace above. The front and left-hand walls are reproduced as Figures 9a & b. The exterior of the building is reproduced as Figure 5.
images was painted in 1783, while the other is undated but appears to be in early nineteenth-century style, indicating the early spread of Western painting techniques into rural Xuan-Da, and their use from the very start to compose sacred space. In both cases, the realistic illusion of these shadow-casting beads serves to emphasise the spatial recession of the wall into a specifically feminine interior space located through the gates of a portico structure. In the 1783 temple, this is apparently the interior quarters of the palace of a draconic water god and his wife (Figs 32a, b & c), and in the other case, it is a wall fronting the inner sanctum of the Goddesses (Figs 33a & b). The former temple also makes it clear that this harem interior is the fount or source of the divine fecundity — from under the table in the interior quarters and over the rooftops of the portico on the side wall pour great waves of life-giving water. The optical illusion of the beads in particular breaks the boundaries between painted surface and physical space, allowing the gods’ realm, and their blessings, to inhabit our mundane world.

Similar to the case of the porticoes in front of the temple, this idea of a secret, often specifically feminine interior behind the altar corresponds to the actual construction and ritual use of physical temple space. I have visited several temples across Xuan-Da where a male god was worshipped in two separate buildings — a front hall where he ‘did work’ (ban gong 办公), and a rear hall, which was his living quarters (zhufang 住房, qin gong 寝宮). In one of these rear halls, the statue of the God of Walls and Moats (Cheng huang ye 城隍爷) could be found enthroned together with that of his wife, referred to

85 The 1783 temple appears to be devoted to a local water deity whose cult differs only slightly from that of the Dragon Kings. The shrine is known as the Holy Shrine of Musical Harmonies (Lülü shenci 律呂神祠), located at the edge of a marsh in a village called Holy Creek in Hunyuan county (Hunyuan xian Shen Xi Cun 滹沱縣神溪村). The 1783 repair stele in the courtyard explains that ‘Harmony’ refers to the modulation of yin and yang 奠律呂著調理陰陽之謂, hence the regulation of rainfall. Two statues are enshrined in the main room, one male and one female. The murals match the standard Dragon King processions figure-by-figure, except instead of the usual five dragons of the five oceans, only one male god rides out and back on the two walls, while the female god awaits him at the palace.
simply as ‘the Goddess’ (Niángniáng). The room had been painted in the 1990s with murals of the god’s household furnishings including a television, radio, fan, tea thermos, bookshelf, et cetera. Today, villagers consider this rear hall a location possessing a particular power of miraculous response (lingyíng 靈異) within the temple complex, especially efficacious to prayers for human fertility.86

This unseen rear space and the portico that is its entrance are important from the earliest extant images to the last, Western-influenced ones. However, the size and centrality of the side-wall portico structure grew over time, as well as the range of contexts where it might appear. In a God of Wealth mural dated to the Daoguang reign (1820–50) at the Cock’s-Crow Postal Station (ji míng yì cāi shén miao 鳥鳴驛財神廟), the portico is still rendered in traditional isometric Chinese style, but it has expanded to cover nearly half of the wall. Here, the structure seems to represent the gateway of a wealthy devotee’s house. Towards this house, approach the God of Wealth from a celestial cloud and bearded Central Asians on the ground level, all bearing gifts (Fig. 34). By the late-nineteenth or early-twentieth century, the portico was depicted in ostentatiously Western style, with the receding grid of tiles on the ceiling now expanded to fill the entire composition; gods, who, in earlier murals would have processed across the mortal world, now sit upon this stage in state. While the earliest images already employ trompe-l’œil, European techniques allowed the effect to be perfected. The Yu county heavens had been Westernised, both in their architecture and in their mode of depiction, and the evocation of this hidden interior receding behind the altar wall had become the central theme of the murals.

This spatial recession is even more the case on opera stages, where the painted portico fronts the Mansion of the Western Seas and appears to represent both the entranceway to the Mansion and a stage in itself. In this case, the mysterious interior to which the gates lead is the backstage, actual and imagined, hidden beyond the two perforating gates of the scaenae frons (Fig. 35). Marvin Carlson has called this space ‘the hidden “other” world of the actor, the place of appearance and disappearance, the realm of events not seen but whose effects conditioned the visible world of the stage’.87 Stage performers would traditionally enter the stage through the right-hand door and depart from the left.88 Thus the circular, clockwise motion of the temple gods through the mortal world is mirrored by the circular motion of stage performers across the theatrical ‘world’ of the stage, while the painted portico-stages

86 This location was the Temple to the God of Walls and Moats at Holding-the-Gate Fort of Yanggao county (Yanggao xian zhemen fó dìan 阳高縣鎮門城隍廟). Small nooks in this rear hall are full of little infants made of clay, deposited there by women to ‘return the child to the god’ after prayers for reproductive fertility had been answered (personal communication, shrine caretaker, 13 and 14 June 2018). According to villagers at North Tower Gate Village of nearby Ying county (Yìng xiàn bei lòu kǒu fó dìan 陽縣北樓口村), personal communication, 26 August 2018), the Temple to the Northern Marchmount (bì yue mào 北岳廟) on the mountain-top by their village once had similar front and back halls for the god to work and rest, although the rebuilt rear hall is now a shrine to the Buddha (Fó diàn 佛殿). This type of arrangement may be very old. Jing Anning makes the fascinating suggestion in his study of the Water God’s Temple at Guanzheng Monastery that the rear-wall trompe-l’œil murals of female attendants offering food were originally painted in the early fourteenth century as a substitute for a physical ‘rear palace’ (hòu gōng 後宮) building that had been destroyed in an earthquake (Jing, The Water God’s Temple, pp.128–29).

in the murals mirror the actual stage space. A portico is particularly useful as a sign in this context because it can represent a stage just as well as it can represent the pavilion at the gate of a palace; both structures are, after all, just a flat plinth with pillars supporting a roof. And this equivocation points to the shared function of these two types of physical structures. Both temples and stages, as we have seen, are, in some sense, anterooms built around the access points to other worlds, be they exotic-to-fictional (the Mansions of the Western Seas) or holy (the various divine palaces) or both. Moreover, the symbolic ability of these physical structures and spaces to access phantasmagorical and efficacious realms derives precisely from their equivocation or mirroring with the painted images of gateways on their walls.89

This understanding gives us the key to understanding many of the more unusual perspectival paintings around Yu county, and allows us to make sense of the innovation that these perspectival techniques unleashed. The undated Goddesses Temple of Stone-Waste Fort (Shi huang bu nian niang miao) and ‘The Minister Enters’ (ru xiang); none of the pre-revolution stages I’ve seen have such plaques, but they may once have existed.

89 Jeehee Hong has made a very similar argument about Liao-period tombs, specifically about the efficacy of three-dimensional carving to represent an intermediate or ‘third realm’ between flat and receding space: ‘These sculptural elements [in the tomb] possess an anomalous sense of depth and volume that complicates the binary spatial division in the tomb, breaking the conceptual distance between pictorial and real spaces. They are projected into the real space to an extreme degree, as if they could transcend the border between the two spaces and eventually belong to both. [...] As the counterpart of the hidden realm of the dead existing beyond the architectural surface, this tomb space is redefined as a realm still conceptually accessible to the living.’ (Jeehee Hong, Theater of the Dead, p.100).

90 The steles outside the temple describe the re-creation of the temple and opera stage from scratch with images and paintings in a new location in 1710, and then the repair of the temple walls and gates in 1785. (These are reproduced in Deng Qingping, Yu xian beiming jilu, pp.428–29, 432–23.) If we accept either of these dates as the date of the mural paintings, then this beautiful room represents by far the earliest perspectival drawings now extant in Yu county. However, not all of the steles are now legible, and there may have been later reconstructions. The dated graffiti in the opera stage adjacent (which has murals in the same hand as those of the temple) are all from the nineteenth century.

Figure 34
In this God of Wealth mural dated to the Daoguang reign (1820-50) at the Cock’s-Crow Postal Station (Ji Ming Yi Cai Shen Miao 鳥鳴驛財神廟), the structure seems to represent the gateway of a wealthy devotee’s house. Towards this house approach the God of Wealth from a celestial cloud and bearded Central Asians on the ground level, all bearing gifts. Huailai county (Huailai Xian 懷來縣). Unknown artist, Daoguang regnal period is written on a scroll held by one of the figures.

Figure 35
In this opera stage mural, the mysterious interior to which the gates lead is the backstage, actual and imagined, hidden beyond the two perforating gates of the scenafrons. Unknown artist, undated, 19th or early 20th century. The left-hand side of this room is reproduced as Figure 25.
I have not touched on the issue of painted images of screens on the rear walls of temples and the side walls of opera stages elsewhere, but they are nevertheless an interesting subject. It should be pointed out that a screen, just like a perspectival drawing, represents a sort of *trompe-l’œil*—implying a hidden space behind. A screen is also a potent way to play with surface and depth. Wu Hung sums up this logic when he defines three uses of the screen: ‘The screen as a three-dimensional object that differentiates an architectural space; the screen as a two-dimensional surface for painting; and the screen as a painted image that helps construct a pictorial space and supply visual metaphors’. Wu Hung, *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996), p.24.

See Cahill, *Pictures for Use and Pleasure*, pp.149–98 for a description of this genre and its connection to Western-inspired ideas of inner space.

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92 See Cahill, *Pictures for Use and Pleasure*, pp.149–98 for a description of this genre and its connection to Western-inspired ideas of inner space.

Figures 36a & b

Proc. of the three goddesses out and back from their Mansion, rendered in skilful perspectival style. The right-hand wall of the room is reproduced as Figure 4; a panel from the rafters of the same room is reproduced as Figure 37. Unknown artist, undated, possibly 18th century.
procession across the exterior world, and finally up to triangular panels in the rafters, where cartoonish images depict two women seated in a mountain grotto (Fig. 37), and the moon-goddess Chang’e with her rabbit, pounding the elixir of immortality. The artist here has used Western perspective as one among many stylistic tools to break the boundaries between flat and three-dimensional space, producing a work that fascinates with its glimpses into illusory feminine realms as much as it functions as an efficacious religious and theatrical tableau.

Other works are still more innovative in their composition. Song Family Village (Song jia zhuang 宋家莊) has a ‘split-centre opera stage’ (chuan xin xilou 穿心戲樓), built as a square archway over the main village street (Fig. 38). Carved stone panels on either side of the stage depict actors peaking out from half-opened doors, emphasising the function of the stage as a gateway. The two flanking walls of this stage have murals depicting a receding perspectival view through the centre of a portico structure, which is signalled by the pillar-couplets and the sky-flower panelled roof. At the end of the perspectival corridor, the climactic scene of the opera Officials All Around the Bed (Man chuang hu 滿床笏) is taking place. The scene describes the joyous pageant of the sixtieth birthday of the main character, Guo Ziyi 郭子儀, who has, over the course of the play, defeated the famous rebel An Lushan 安禄山, and brought peace to China. His seven sons have all attained high office and his grandson has just achieved the first place in the examinations (zhuangyuan 状元). Together with all the daughters and servants, they gather around to congratulate him.93 The receding view through the portico in the stage-painting mirrors the physical view of the spectators and the god, through the split-centre opera stage and down the axial road of the fort (Fig. 39). To drive home the parallelism, a wooden plaque (bian 牀) originally hung over the stage with the epigrammatic words ‘Gaze Upon Its Depth’ (Guan qi shen 觀其深), referencing the votive use of the stage across from a temple to the Perfected Warrior (Zhen wu miao 真武廟). These murals themselves have an interesting history. When I first visited the village in 2014, they were not visible. Since then, the stage has been repaired, in the course of which the mud plaster that had covered the walls since the Cultural Revolution was scraped away, revealing the murals beneath. One of my volunteer documentarians (Hannah Theaker) photographed the murals on the renovated stage in January 2017. Since then, they have been vandalised with a spray-paint bottle.


94 According to elderly villagers at Song Family Fort, this plaque was destroyed around the time of the Cultural Revolution; its existence is mentioned in Yu Xian Bowuguan et al., Yu xian gu xilou, p.374. On the rear of the stage, there remains a second plaque by the same calligrapher (one Feng Guohua 馮國華), with the words ‘Repeatedly Celebrate the Harvest Plenty’ (Lü qing nian feng 屢慶年豐), referencing the votive use of the stage across from a temple to the Perfected Warrior (Zhen wu miao 真武廟). These murals themselves have an interesting history. When I first visited the village in 2014, they were not visible. Since then, the stage has been repaired, in the course of which the mud plaster that had covered the walls since the Cultural Revolution was scraped away, revealing the murals beneath. One of my volunteer documentarians (Hannah Theaker) photographed the murals on the renovated stage in January 2017. Since then, they have been vandalised with a spray-paint bottle.
in a curious northern barbican space of the fort, the temple was accessed only via a tiny gate through the inner fortress wall labelled The Palace of the Dark Emperor (玄帝宮 Xuan di gong) (Fig. 40). A line of sight stretched through this diminutive gate and down the axial street of the fort to an opera stage in the southern barbican. Within the temple, on the two side walls flanking the shrine room, were two immense full-wall images of the palace of the Perfected Warrior, composed in traditional isometric style. This painted palace was part temple, and part fortress, accessed by a fortified gate facing south, with corner towers in the style of the Forbidden City. Inside the palace, the Perfected Warrior was seated within a raised and roofed portico, flanked by his retinue of richly adorned generals, beautiful palace ladies, and fairy girls with slim swords. On the floor of the fortress-palace, beneath the portico, a mortal supplicant knelt (Figs 41a, b & c).

The mirroring argument was clear: the temple is an entrance to the palace of the god, which is the fortress, which is the god’s axial domain. Therefore, the worshipper may identify himself with the painted supplicant on the wall, who has entered now into the god’s realm and is communicating directly with the deity.

The rear (northern) wall of the room, which survived only partially when I first saw it in 2013, has now totally collapsed. One of three original panels survived: on the right side of the altar and facing south, so that the right (eastern) side of the image led into what was presumably once the centre of the depiction. Originally, statues would have stood on the altar-top, implying that one aspect of this image that I don’t fully understand is the fact that there were two Perfected Warriors per palace — one on each visible inner face of the courtyard, to make a total of four. The mirroring argument was clear: the temple is an entrance to the palace of the god, which is the fortress, which is the god’s axial domain. Therefore, the worshipper may identify himself with the painted supplicant on the wall, who has entered now into the god’s realm and is communicating directly with the deity.

The receding view through the portico in the stage-painting mirrors the physical view of the spectators and the god, through the split-centre opera stage and down the axial road of the fort. This image is located on the side wall of the building seen in Figure 38. Unknown artist, undated, 19th or early 20th centuries.

Figure 38

Song Family village has a ‘split-centre opera stage’ (穿心戲樓 chuān xīn xì lóu), built as a square archway over the main village street. The murals on the two inner side walls of this structure are reproduced as Figure 39. Note also the two small square panels set high up on the outer faces of the two side walls. These contain carved friezes of actors peaking out through doors.

Figure 39

The receding view through the portico in the stage-painting mirrors the physical view of the spectators and the god, through the split-centre opera stage and down the axial road of the fort. This image is located on the side wall of the building seen in Figure 38. Unknown artist, undated, 19th or early 20th centuries.
the images on the wall represented the imagined space behind the physical and spiritual position of the god. Thus the image represents a glimpse beyond the scaenae frons of the Perfected Warrior’s heaven and into the mysterious interior beyond. In the mural, the palace had become a Western-style mansion, painted in clumsy but effective perspectival style in shades of deep blue and black, with a gallery of fantastic multistorey buildings receding towards the right, sharp spires and upper stories, walkways and pavilions. This was, evidently, the ‘rear palace’ (hou gong 後宮), the antahpuram or seraglio, for it was populated by strolling women in beautiful robes. At the far right or inner side of the receding line of structures, was a giant portico that led off-frame towards the vanished central panel of the main wall. Through the pillars of the portico we saw, distantly, even deeper apartments, an inner room, two servant girls in conversation, and a languid lady in red robes, drowsing upon her boudoir bed (Fig. 42).

All the elements we have identified above were present in this assemblage: the opposition between temple and stage; the physical construction of village space in a way symbolic of the spiritual positions of the gods; the spatial, textual, and visual recursion between the palace of the god and both the temple and the fortress; the use of this almost metafictive mirroring as a gateway or means of access into fantastic alternate realms, most commonly a holy interior located behind the altar wall; the function of the portico as one particularly powerful symbolic structure via which one could do this; the still-incomplete architectonic and pictorial ‘Westernisation’ of the village heavens; and, at a basic level, the extraordinary willingness of nineteenth and early-twentieth century village artists to experiment with the composition of space. This, then, was the effect of contact with the West and with perspectival painting in the Yu county village: a renaissance of artistic creativity and a reinvention of religious and theatrical space, which bloomed unexpectedly in these remote villages and was then cruelly and utterly cut off when the axe of Communism fell.

4) Conclusion

Jeehee Hong, speaking of Liao, Jin, and Yuan dynasty depictions of stages in north-Chinese tomb art, argues that the side passages of stages or ‘ghost-gates’ (gui men 鬼門) were used symbolically to represent the boundary of ‘fictive “elsewhere”’ — a gate between worlds, in this case, between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Only actors could move between these ‘ontologically heterogeneous spheres’. In the context of the Yu county opera paintings, these observations can be usefully combined with those of scholars working on Western-influenced perspectival drawing. Columbia scholar Shang Wei has recently attempted to show how, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, newly introduced Western perspectival techniques fused in the popular literature with pre-existing Chinese associations of mirrors, lenses, and magic, and techniques of gazing. He tells us:

What arrived with perspectival techniques and Western viewing lenses was not concepts of reproduction or representation, nor was it the fixed forms of realism. Instead it was an exploration of the subjectivity and uncertainty of vision, the discovery of receding space, and an interest in true and false, emptiness and reality, existence and nonexistence. In this way the indigenous language of phantasmagoria and illusion (meiying mohuan 魅影魔幻) was reinvigorated and endowed with new meaning.”
Figures 41a, b & c
The receding view through the portico in the stage-painting mirrors the physical view of the spectators and the god, through the split-centre opera stage and down the axial road of the fort. This image is located on the side wall of the building seen in Figure 38. Unknown artist, undated, 19th or early 20th centuries.

Figure 42
This image is located on the side wall of the building seen in Figure 38. Unknown artist, undated, 19th or early 20th centuries.
These perspectival drawings in some ways represent the imaginative synthesis of all these discourses, and discourses local to Yu county as well. The Yu county stage and temple drawings do seem very much to belong to the world of which Shang Wei speaks: the world of *Supplement to the Journey to the West* (*Xi you bu* 西遊補), *A Tower for the Summer Heat* (*Xia yi lou* 夏宜樓), and *Dream of the Red Mansions* — all stories in which architectural spaces, devices of viewing, and the magical realms and beings of Chinese folk religion provide portals into new and bewitching fictional universes. These drawings also suggest, as Jeehee Hong does, gateways into other fictional or ontological spaces, receding off laterally from the divine or spectatorial line of gaze. And the stages and temples do belong, as well, to the very specific world of the Yu county fortress — a world in which the symbolic power of particular buildings was defined according to their imperial command over architecturally defined lines of sight. These images, axial views into fantastic and otherworldly architectural landscapes, serve to underscore the spatial symbolism from which Yu county temples derived their efficacy, and to establish the village opera stage as a powerful and separate space in its own right. They became structures through which we gaze into other possible universes, branching off from ours, at once here and elsewhere, and new, and old, and other.

Finally, and at the risk of stating the obvious, these scenes are the products of a formidable creativity and intellectual engagement. If we go looking for a Chinese intellectual and artistic response to the Western world, we should not neglect to seek it on the temples, stages and public squares of the Chinese village. When these illiterate farmers discovered the West, their response was one of admirable curiosity and imagination. They took these foreign techniques and adapted them to their own sophisticated indigenous language of space, gaze, architecture, fantasy, and religiosity. They painted perspectival pictures on their temple and opera stage walls and then they filled those newly created spaces with the things they wanted to see: light, colour, action, and excitement; exotic cities, skyscraping spires, and fantastic palaces; new technologies of spectacle; holy sanctuums of the ancient gods; tough, smart, working-class heroines who took up arms against the powerful and unjust; and dizzying, axial views down the main streets of the new world.
Featuring shopping streets, financial centres, top national universities, luxury residential complexes, and a large forest park, Da’an District (Da’an Qu 大安區) in central Taipei City represents the contemporary city life of bourgeois Taipei. Because it hosts several Chinese-language schools, including the renowned Mandarin Training Center (part of National Taiwan Normal University), Da’an District is also a popular location among international students in Taiwan. However, behind these modern and cosmopolitan images, the historical landscape of the district has long been forgotten. Most people are unaware of a big pool called Tōa-oan 大灣 that lies under today’s shopping streets.1 Moreover, most people are unaware that the story of the big pool serves as a microhistory of environmental modifications since the seventeenth century in Taipei.

Agriculture and colonisation cause fundamental changes to the environment. Eduard Vermeer distinguished five basic forms of agricultural land expansion in premodern China: (1) socioeconomic reconstruction after social unrest, (2) military or civil colonisation promoted by the empire, (3) illegal settlement of migrants in frontiers, (4) expansion or intensification of land exploitation for land development projects, and (5) gradual encroachment of villages on surrounding wasteland.2 The history of Tōa-oan attests to Vermeer’s final two patterns of land expansion. This history begins with colonisers’ exploitation of forest resources, followed by cultivation and irrigation. The intensified land exploitation caused siltation that eventually led to a conflict between reclamation and irrigation parties in the region.

Reclamation and irrigation of the same body of water are in conflict with each other, and the struggle between them is not a new story in premodern East Asia. Shiba Yoshinobu 斯波義信 discussed several cases of water control around Hangzhou Bay 杭州灣 and revealed that siltation is a natural threat

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1 There are three conventions of romanisation adopted in this paper. Modern names and the bibliography are transcribed in Pinyin without tonal markers, which is also the current standard for transcribing place names in Taiwan. For conventionalised names, such as Taipei and Tamsui, I retain them as is. Historical names are transcribed in Peh-oe-ji — the romanisation of Hokkien developed by British and American missionaries in the late nineteenth century. This transcription represents the Taiwanese pronunciation of historical names. For Japanese names, I adopt Hepburn romanisation.

to artificial water control. Such cases of water control include artificial reservoirs, dams, and canals that regulate water and utilise it for cultivation, which has benefitted farmers for centuries. However, as demand for arable land increased with population growth, expansion of arable land was prioritised over conservation of water resources. When open space in the region was exhausted, people turned their attention to the reservoirs. This caused the disappearance of the Mirror Lake of Shaoxing 在南方宋朝 (1127–1279). During the Qing dynasty, in Yuhang 餘杭, a nearby district (xian), exploitation and deforestation in the upstream hilly districts intensified erosion, and another reservoir in this region had been completely transformed into paddy fields by the end of the nineteenth century. Both lakes were public enterprises maintained by local governments; however, erosion and siltation still resulted in eventual reclamation.

Although Shiba’s study of water reservoirs in China is comparable with the case of Tōa-oan, Taiwanese scholars have paid more attention to running water in irrigation systems than to still water in reservoirs. Regarding artificial irrigation in the Taipei, earlier studies have focussed on the construction of such facilities and tried to find common features among them. Recently, consideration of the geographic factors involved in constructing irrigation channels and their social consequences, such as conceptual communities formed by irrigation channels, has increased. The interrelated interests of the community ensured the maintenance of water conservancy order along the channels. However, this order was challenged by environmental changes caused by deforestation in the upstream hilly region in the late nineteenth century, and the order collapsed prior to Japanese colonial rule.

Although studies on irrigation systems have enhanced our understanding of water control, they have neglected the fact that major irrigation channels in modern Da’an District bypassed and avoided joining Tōa-oan. As a naturally formed and pre-existing body of water, Tōa-oan determined the directions of irrigation systems and politics of agricultural exploitation in this region. Because of bias, studies on irrigation systems have overlooked considerable parts of Da’an District’s geographic history and the history of Taipei City. This paper addresses that gap by exploring this history from the mid-seventeenth century to the late twentieth century, from natural forest to modern metropolis.

Methodology

The current area of Da’an District was a rural area of paddy fields and scattered small villages until the mid-twentieth century. Similar to most rural areas in Taiwan, the historical sources that can reveal the district’s past are a few land deeds, some lines in the local gazetteers, a simple chronology of an irrigation system, a map surveyed by the Japanese army in the 1900s, and several historical place names. Each source discloses some aspects of old Da’an, but synthetic methodology is required to complete this puzzle. The methodology I adopt was proposed by Japanese historian Hattori Hideo 服部英雄, who recommended conducting fieldwork on site. The historian posited that during fieldwork, a researcher should learn the local pronunciations of place names, record the lifestyle of the place in question, describe the lives of people living around the collected place names, and finally use the collected information, including place names and people’s lifestyles, to write the his-

3 Shiba Yoshinobu 斯波義信, 'Environment Versus Water Control: The Case of the Southern Hangzhou Bay Area from the Mid-Tang Through the Qing,' in Elvin and Liu, Sediments of Time, pp.161–64.
5 Li Chung-hsin 李宗信, Ku Ya-wen 顧雅文 and Chuang Yung-chung 莊永忠, ‘Shuili zhixu de xingcheng yu beng jie: shiba zhi ershi shiji chuqi liugongjun zhi bianqian’ 水利秩序的形成與崩解：十八至二十世紀初期瑠公圳之變, in ed. Huang Fu-san 黃富三, Hai, he yu taiwan juhu bianqian: bijiao guandian 海、河與臺灣聚落變遷: 比較觀點 (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 2009), pp.145–228. However, it is necessary to point out that the authors greatly relied on the 1900s map and the official surveys conducted at the beginning of the twentieth century which limits their accuracy on the discussion about the historical landscape before 1900.
In Hattori’s methodology, place names are crucial for connecting other materials to perform historiography. In the present study of Tōa-oan, place names serve as the essential core; however, interviewing natives for pronunciation and observing local lifestyles is difficult because of the influx of non-native populations, and urbanisation fundamentally disturbed the local culture of Da’an District many decades ago. Instead, I intend to reconstruct local pronunciation and lifestyles from historical linguistic materials. My reliance on literature does not mean that I neglect fieldwork; fieldwork is key to finding traces of the big pool and verifying the literature, especially micro-terrain that is not usually depicted on maps. Adopting this slightly revised methodology, this paper provides a longitudinal history of the environmental changes around Tōa-oan — including deforestation, water control, and siltation — by providing a detailed case study about a geographically trivial but historically significant place.

**Etymology of Tōa-oan: Big Pool**

Historical place names usually describe geographical features that existed in the past. To connect other historical materials in order to reconstruct the history of Tōa-oan, I provide a short account of the etymology of Da’an and the earlier name of this region, Tōa-oan. The name Da’an, which literally means ‘great peace’, first appeared in the 1820s. This is an abstract and fortunate name that does not describe any geographical feature; such names are often alterations of earlier names. This is exactly the case with Da’an. Before the 1820s, the name of today’s Da’an was Tōa-oan. The land deeds preserved by the Lîm-an-thài 林安泰 clan clearly document the change of name. There have been several interesting attempts to explain this change, but I believe that the inhabitants changed the place name because they simply believed that it sounded better.

Although the change of place name from Tōa-oan to Da’an is evident, the meaning of the previous name is not. Tōa means ‘large’ in Hokkien, and thus it seems to describe a significant geographical feature, namely oan; however, it is unclear to historians what that feature was. According to the Chinese-English Dictionary of the Vernacular or Spoken Language of Amoy 廈英大辭典, which was published by American missionary Carstairs Douglas in 1873 and is still authoritative today, oan means ‘a bay; a bend in a river or channel’. Tōa-oan is not a coastal location, and thus in this case, oan cannot mean a bay. ‘A bend in a river or channel’ seems more probable. My predecessors, who attempted to explain the etymology of Da’an or Tōa-oan, usually adopted this meaning and believed that Tōa-oan meant ‘great bend’. They further suggested the two nearly 90-degree turns of the Liugong-chun 瑠公圳 — the most important irrigation system in Taipei — as possible candidates for the etymology of Tōa-oan, but could not agree on which bend contributed the name. However, this theory has an obvious chronological fault: the village of Tōa-oan had already been founded by 1741 — two decades before the irrigation channel ran through it in the 1760s. Thus, the etymology of ‘great bend’ must be rejected.

Language always changes. Douglas’s dictionary was published in 1873, and thus the documented language of the time was not the one spoken in the mid-eighteenth century when Tōa-oan was named. Earlier sources are required to decode the etymology. I located Hō-im-biāu-gō 彙音妙悟 — a Hokkien rime
HUNG-YI CHIEN

book of the Quanzhou dialect first published in 1800. This book has had many reprints with slightly altered titles, and in this paper I refer to the facsimile copy of an 1831 reprint. This rime book is believed to represent the Hokkien phonology of the eighteenth century, and it notes brief definitions or examples for most characters under their entries.

In the Rime of Oan, I found the character for 'abyss' 深, which is homophonous to the character of 'bay or a bend of river' 湾; the pronunciations of both characters are oan. This is an intriguing entry because the character for 'abyss' is pronounced ian in modern Taiwanese and Hokkien, and this pronunciation is also confirmed in Douglas’s dictionary. In fact, this entry is not a mistake; it reflects the historical usage of this character. The definition under the character for 'abyss' 深 notes: 'Vulgar usage; water that runs out but does not flow is called oan'. Although this definition is obscure, it indicates that the signified object is something like a water reservoir, and this corresponds to the meaning of the character for 'abyss'. Moreover, the compiler considered that character as 'vulgar usage', which suggests that use of the character for 'abyss' to represent 'pool' was not considered standard. Another rime book compiled in 1820 (the copy referred to was published in 1928), Cheng-pó-ψ-im增補彙音, which documented the Zhangzhou dialect of Hokkien, has a similar entry. Under the character for 'bay', the definition notes a bend of water channel, and a name of pool.

Combining the aforementioned two rime book entries, it is clear that in the eighteenth century, a historical word oan, 'pool', existed in Hokkien, and Hokkien speakers used the character for 'abyss' or 'bay' to write this word according to the rime books. However, only the character of 'bay' is provided in our sources, and the instance is the place name in question, namely Tōa-oan. The use of this word was waning in the nineteenth century, and by the time Douglas compiled his Amoy dictionary in the 1870s, the word had become obsolete. Therefore, modern historians who do not refer to historical linguistic sources published prior to the mid-nineteenth century cannot correctly decipher the meaning of Tōa-oan, which meant 'big pool' in the eighteenth century when the village of Tōa-oan was named.

The next question is where the big pool was located, and the answer is obvious. A historical pool was situated in the area of today’s Da’an District; the pool lasted until 1911, when it was fully drained. The pool was definitely a significant geographical feature; its history can be traced back to the mid-eighteenth century in Chinese sources, and likely back to the seventeenth century in Dutch sources. By investigating these sources, we can uncover a history of environmental change at and around Tōa-oan from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century.

Unnamed River on a Dutch Map

The Dutch East India Company, or VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie), occupied Taiwan (Formosa) from 1624. The occupation started from an offshore barrier island where Fort Zeelandia was built at today’s Anping in Tainan City. The Dutch gradually expanded their domination to the Formosa mainland. In 1642, the VOC expelled the Spanish troops occupying Kelang 集慶 (today’s Jilong 基隆) to control northern Formosa. Today’s Taipei City was administered by a junior factor stationed at Fort Antonio in Tamsui. In 1650, Junior Factor Simon Keerdekoë was appointed district chief of Tamsui and Kelang; his most notable achievement was the production of a map of
Tamsui and Kelang that detailed the geography of the region. Keerdekoe’s original map no longer exists, but a copy kept at the Nationaal Archief in The Hague was traced by Batavia cartographer Johannes Nessel (c. 1655). Keerdekoe’s map was likely the first documentation of Tōa-oan. Between No.4 Kimalitsigowan and No.9 Kimotsi is an unnumbered stream without any notes. This stream joins another stream from the south and flows into a large river (today’s Jilong River) at No.9 Kimotsi. Ang Kaim interpreted these lines as irrigation channels built by the aborigines. My interpretation is different. Compared with No.13 Spruijt van Kimassauw (lit. Spring of Kimassauw), a similar method of drawing indicates that the unnumbered lines joined at No.9 Kimotsi have the same geological characteristic as No.13, and thus they are natural rivers.

A comparison of Keerdekoe’s map and Taiwan Hōzu reveals more subtle facts. Taiwan Hōzu, surveyed by the Japanese army in the 1900s, clearly shows that two minor rivers ran through today’s Da’an before joining together and running for another four kilometres northwards in a curved course, before finally reaching a major river. This stream had many influents and effluents from paddy fields, indicating that these were crucial for local irrigation. Irrigation supplied paddy fields farmed by Han Chinese colonisers from the second half of the seventeenth century. These streams likely underwent many modifications for irrigation in the subsequent centuries, and the result was recorded in the 1900s map Taiwan Hōzu.

Map 1: Comprehensive Map of Area around Tōa-oan — the Big Pool (17th to 19th Century)

Map by Huang Chingchi. The base map is Taiwan Hōzu, surveyed in the 1900s.
Two Dutch Officers’ Excursions for Wood

Keerdekoe’s map must be reviewed alongside his report on the geography of Tamsui and Kelang. Keerdekoe described the flat land as uncultivated (onbeboude); this indicates that he noticed the agricultural potential of the locality, which was realised over the subsequent two centuries. However, in the mid-seventeenth century, the VOC focussed on forest resources more than agricultural potential. Keerdekoe mentioned this in his descriptive report but did not provide any further detail about the forest resource because he believed it was irrelevant to the subject of his report; his concern was geography, not exploitation. Thus, we have no record of what Keerdekoe observed.

The first documented Dutch expeditions to the forest resource in northern Formosa were undertaken in 1655. On 30 March 1655, Captain Thomas Pedel was commissioned to explore the forest resource in Tamsui and Kelang. He left Fort Zeelandia with the new chief of Tamsui and Kelang, Factor Pieter Elsevier, on the 19th of April and arrived on the 25th. While Elsevier stayed in Tamsui to assume charge of the administration, Captain Pedel examined the forest around Fort Anthonio in Tamsui and sailed upstream to inspect the forests. He returned to Fort Zeelandia on the 22nd of May and orally reported his findings to Governor Cornelis Caesar and his council. Pedel’s oral report was preserved in the Dagregister and in Governor Caesar’s missive to Factor Elsevier in Tamsui to instruct him how to exploit the forest. However, Elsevier felt that the instruction was too difficult to execute; although he visited the same places after Pedel, his observation was not as optimistic as Captain Pedel’s report. He replied to the governor with his opinion on the forestry enterprise in the next missive dated 30 June. Eventually, the council at Fort Zeelandia decided that exploiting the forest in northern Formosa was not worthwhile.

Although no Dutch officers mentioned Tōa-oan in their reports, the evidence suggests they went to the neighbouring region to inspect the forest, and thus their reports can further explain the stream drawn on Keerdekoe’s map and help to reconstruct the historical landscape of the region. For this reconstruction, we must scrutinise Pedel and Elsevier’s reports. Captain Pedel stated that he sailed upstream and found beautiful forests that ‘make many forests in East India feel ashamed’ in comparison; however, he only vaguely described the locations. Fortunately, Pedel’s oral report left some traces. He described how the people of Tamsui removed logs from the forest. They dammed the river to flood the forest, and the logs that floated were taken down to the main river to Tamsui in proas (aboriginal Formosan canoes made by splitting timber in half). This method of removing logs indicates that a river or brook flowed through the forest, and the forest must have been situated on relatively flat land so that the dam did not need to be too high. Moreover, downstream, the river needed to have a certain amount of water so that logs could float and be brought down by proas. Thus, the river that formed Tōa-oan is a likely candidate for the one that Pedel planned to use to remove logs.

Shortly after Captain Pedel left to report back to Fort Zeelandia, Factor Elsevier made his own excursion for timber. In Factor Elsevier’s reply to the governor, he described the location much more clearly than had Pedel. To visit the forest, Elsevier said he ascended a small branch of the river for a Dutch mile (7.407 kilometres). Elsevier must have walked a different branch
of river to the one that Captain Pedel had visited. Elsevier stated that he found fine camphor situated on a high mountain range. Evidently, this was not a place on flat land where people could float logs; however, he believed that it was where Captain Pedel had been. Elsevier noted that the sawn logs could be brought down to the river, although such an enterprise would involve enormous effort. Thus, he agreed with Pedel’s suggested method of removing logs from the forest through waterways.

Considering Pedel and Elsevier’s reports together, it appears they visited a forest composed predominantly of camphor trees that covered highland and lowland areas. The river flowing through the forest had two branches: the one that Pedel planned to dam ran through the lowland forest, whereas the one that Elsevier visited sprang from the forest on the high mountain range. These two branches still existed at the beginning of the twentieth century, and were recorded on a Japanese map surveyed in the 1900s. Although proving the existence of Tōa-oan as a big pool based on the Dutch sources is difficult, the Dutch officers’ reports support the existence of such a watershed in the seventeenth century. However, on the twentieth century map, most areas of flat land were paddy fields as opposed to forest. The forest had perished and only the place names preserved traces of it. This toponymic research could further assist in reconstructing the historical landscape and documenting environmental changes around Tōa-oan.

**Han Colonisers’ Deforestation: Evidence in Place Names**

The 1900s Taiwan Hōzu preserved many historical place names that had almost faded from modern inhabitants’ memories; these historical place names recorded the deforestation and cultivation that occurred around Tōa-oan from the eighteenth century. Environmental changes were caused by the Han colonisers who exploited the forest and farmed the cleared land. Their enterprises eventually left traces in place names such as Nâ-kháu 林口, Nâ-bóe 林尾, and Kun-kong-liâu 軍工寮.

Nâ-kháu 林口 and Nâ-bóe 林尾 constitute a pair of place names derived from the historical forest that Captain Pedel visited in 1655. Nâ-kháu, literally meaning ‘forest mouth’, indicates the entrance to a forest. The location of Nâ-kháu is near the modern-day main gate of National Taiwan University. Nâ-bóe, literally meaning ‘forest tail’, refers to the end of a forest and likely to the exit from a piece of the historical forest that started at Nâ-kháu. Nâ-bóe is very close to the centre of today’s Da’an District, and on the 1900s map, it was less than a kilometre from Tōa-oan. However, there was an area of naturally elevated land between them, which still leaves observable elevation today. According to a 1940 survey, the relative height of this area was two to three metres, which was sufficient to affect the flow of the natural stream and define the direction of irrigation channels.

Nâ-kháu 林口 (forest mouth) and Nâ-bóe 林尾 (forest tail) mark the two ends of the historical forest in Da’an. It should be here that Captain Pedel planned to dam a brook to transport felled logs downstream. However, the VOC did not undertake the forestry enterprise in the mid-seventeenth century, and the next literary reference to this forest was made in 1745. The 1745 land deed is a lease contract indicating that the headmen from an aboriginal village leased a forest field to a Han farmer. The leaseholder was entitled to fell the trees and cultivate the land in exchange for annual rent. This is the first
evidence of deforestation around Tōa-oan, and thus it is worthy of further examination.

Similar to traditional Chinese land deeds, this document names the leased place and its borders in four directions, which (though they are not precisely the four cardinal directions) approximately mark the area of leased forest field. The western border was marked by a kun-kong-liâu軍工寮, which sounds like the word for a hut (liâu) for military work (kun-kong). This is an intriguing place name; in Taiwan under Qing rule, kun-kong specifically referred to the vocation of providing timber, especially camphor, to build military ships. This was a privilege because military lumberjacks could dominate forest resources exclusively. Ch’en Kuo-tung highlighted that military lumberjack chiefs monopolised the lawful exploitation of forest resources from the establishment of a military shipyard in 1725 right through to 1875. However, because deforestation was necessary before cultivation, no restrictions against felling trees on authorised plantations were issued against ordinary colonisers. In addition, the resources that ordinary colonisers gained by clearing fields before cultivation such as lumber, rattan, and refined camphor were still under the military lumberjack chiefs’ monopoly.28 In the case of Tōa-oan, the existence of kun-kong-liâu can suggest the military lumberjack chiefs’ activities around the pool during the deforestation before ordinary farmers began agricultural exploitation there.

Kun-kong-liâu was the temporary base of military lumberjacks near a forest. As the mark of the western border, this base indicates that certain forestry activities occurred near Tōa-oan before 1745 and that the forest featured camphor — the most valuable wood in Taiwan — which was sought by the Dutch. This kun-kong-liâu did not become a long-lasting place name but other kun-kong-liâu did. The nearest one to Tōa-oan called Kun-kong-khi軍功坑 (Kun-kong ravine) was marked on the 1900s map29 and was approximately four kilometres southeast of the big pool. It mirrors the Dutch source that stated that Elsevier ascended a branch of Tōa-oan for more than seven kilometres and found the finest camphor trees on a high mountain range. What Elsevier found in 1655 must be the same place that the woodcutters named Kun-kong-khi. However, because of deforestation, the area between Tōa-oan and Kun-kong-khi had become wilderness by the 1900s; the camphor trees were long gone.

**Cultivation, Irrigation, and Muddy Runoff**

Deforestation was conducted throughout the eighteenth century. According to the 1745 deed, the land would be cultivated after the wood had been cleared. Once the wood field became a paddy field, more agricultural infrastructure followed. Most of the first irrigation facilities were built at the foot of the mountain where ravines could be dammed to form small reservoirs to water the field.29 The 1745 deed stated that the eastern border was ‘the big mountain range’. Ravines suitable for building reservoirs must have been present, but there are no traces of any such ravines in place names. Some reservoirs in nearby regions survived until the 1900s and are reflected in several place names with pi陂 (irrigation pool). These small reservoirs offered limited water, and thus water shortages were inevitable when the paddy fields expanded. Thus, it became necessary to channel water from upstream rivers. By the 1760s, two major irrigation systems had been completed in Taipei. However, the channels of both systems avoided joining Tōa-oan; this was an
understandable choice because there was no reason to pour precious water channelled from the deep mountain into a pool, and the fields around the big pool and those downstream did not require artificially channelled water because they had the pool. Thus, the existence of Tōa-oan determined the watercourses of these major irrigation channels.

Although people would be unlikely to pour fresh water into a pool, farmers still needed to drain runoff, which contained more sand and silt after cultivation. When water carrying sand and silt flowed into the relatively calm Tōa-oan, siltation accelerated. Siltation is natural but not neutral. These natural processes yielded winners and losers and eventually led to a dispute between farmers upstream from Tōa-oan and those downstream.

Conflicting Interests between Downstream and Upstream Farmers

Although Tōa-oan was a naturally formed pool, it was privately owned. The ownership of Tōa-oan is difficult to determine from existing sources, but it was not necessarily important for a long period because the pool had little direct economic value except for small-scale fishing. Upstream deforestation and cultivation changed this situation; as the runoff carried sand and mud into Tōa-oan, siltation intensified. The deposited sediment could be reclaimed and used to create fertile fields, and the owner(s) of the pool were entitled to the newly reclaimed land and to reap profit. This made ownership of Tōa-oan attractive; however, reclamation reduced the size of the pool and affected downstream irrigation.

The 1745 deed suggests that Tōa-oan — the most significant waterbody in this area — had been used to water paddy fields. The alternative name of Tōa-oan in later years — Siōng-pi (upper irrigation pool) — denotes its agricultural purposes. Thus, the big pool must have been exploited for irrigation prior to 1745. As illustrated in the following discussion, downstream farmers did not need to purchase water from artificial channels for irrigation; they simply took water from Tōa-oan. As reclamation of Tōa-oan expanded, water storage suffered. Therefore, the wealth of the landlord of Tōa-oan was based on the losses of the landlords downstream, and thus conflict was inevitable.

The process of siltation in Tōa-oan cannot be reconstructed because the earliest map depicting Tōa-oan as a pool is from the 1900s. Viewers of this Taiwan Hōzu map must be aware that the bank line depicted was a result of siltation, and the assumption that the 1900s map depicts the situation in previous centuries is anachronistic. In the following discussion, we observe that the reclamation began in the nineteenth century, and the siltation in the pool must have begun even earlier. In Tōa-oan, the place name Pi-sim (heart of pool, for irrigation), marked on the west bank of Tōa-oan suggests that the place was once in the middle of Tōa-oan, serving as convincing evidence that Taiwan Hōzu reflects the result of the reclamation of Tōa-oan.

The first document to attest to the existence of reclaimed land in Tōa-oan is the deed of absolute sale in 1860. According to the deed, corporate landlord Kim-chìn-an 賢信安 purchased a large quantity of real estate, including a big pool — that is, Tōa-oan, the reclaimed lands, the cultivated and uncultivated fields, and the building plots. The transaction was settled with 600 Spanish peso (real de a ocho). This deed served as evidence that this landlord presented to claim his dominance of Tōa-oan. Another document regarding the reclaimed land and Kim-chìn-an is dated 1872. A peasant who had leased land

from *Kim-chìn-an* to build his house asked the landlord to lease him another piece of newly reclaimed land for cultivation.\(^{31}\) These documents suggest that Tōa-oan had been shrinking because of deforestation upstream and accelerated siltation since the mid-eighteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, reclamation had been undertaken to a certain degree. The landlord who claimed ownership of the pool benefitted from the siltation because possessing the pool gave him the right to occupy the newly reclaimed land. Therefore, profit was earned by not only growing crops but also enlarging the land area. The corporate landlord *Kim-chìn-an* was the greatest beneficiary of siltation.

While *Kim-chìn-an* reaped the benefits of the aforementioned change, the downstream farmers worried about the shortage of water. The shrinking Tōa-oan stored a decreasing amount of water for irrigation of the downstream fields, and the downstream farmers had to react to prevent water shortages in the mid-nineteenth century. Clearly, the downstream farmers did not purchase a large piece of land to build a reservoir; it was neither economical nor necessary to do so because they had Tōa-oan to water their fields. However, the lack of ownership meant that downstream farmers were unable to prevent other people from trespassing on their water resource, and they were concerned about this.

When the downstream inhabitants noticed that Tōa-oan was shrinking because of siltation in the early nineteenth century, they undertook a project to clear the sediment and likely repair the gates and channels that routed water to their fields. They had this undertaking noted in the local gazetteer in 1834 to secure their enterprise.\(^{32}\) Nevertheless, natural siltation continued, and the upstream landlords continued their artificial reclamation efforts.

**Lawsuit Dated 1895 on the Reclamation of Tōa-oan and the Ruling**

Eventually, the conflict between upstream landlord and downstream farmers escalated in the final years of Qing rule in Taiwan. The upstream landlord *Kim-chìn-an* reclaimed more land from Tōa-oan, and this infuriated the farmers from the five downstream villages. They gathered men to tear down the banks for reclamation and then sued *Kim-chìn-an* for their reclamation of Tōa-oan. The lawsuit was significant because the upstream corporate landlord was powerful; notable members of the corporate landlord included the Lîm family of *Pi-sim*陂心林家, who built a luxury residence next to Tōa-oan (akin to a floating fortress), and organised martial arts training groups among the young men in their lineage, thereby creating a virtual private army. The flagpole in front of the residence indicated that a family member held a degree from the imperial examination — a significant symbol of the local elite. When the Lîm family built their luxury residence in 1853, they ordered porcelain tiles and many other excellent materials from China. Barges carried these materials from Tamsui by ascending the rivers to Tōa-oan and finally anchoring in front of the Lîm’s residence to unload.\(^{33}\) This route brings to mind the Dutch officer’s idea to flow timber down the waterway. The Lîm family transported their valuable materials in the opposite direction.

The downstream landlords were also prominent. One was *Lîm-pún-goân*林本源 — the richest familial corporation in northern Taiwan, who possessed tremendous estates, luxury residences, and a beautiful garden. Moreover, *Lîm-pún-goân* fully owned Liugong-chun from 1829.\(^{34}\) The water...
from Liugong-chun flowed through the upstream paddy fields and the runoff became one of the head waters of Tōa-oan. Therefore, Kim-chin-an’s estates and Tōa-oan were geographically and hydrographically surrounded by Lim-pün-goân’s dominance.

The district magistrate’s ruling on 14 January 1895 favoured the downstream contingent. Evidence of ownership presented by those upstream was refuted, and the upstream landlords were found guilty of reclaiming Tōa-oan, but this action was pardoned because their reclamation had been destroyed by men downstream. No further reclamation was allowed, but the legal status of the existing reclaimed fields from the pool was reaffirmed because they had been surveyed, registered, evaluated, and levied by the government since 1889. The downstream landlords inscribed the ruling’s placard on a stele to commemorate it and warn others not to covet their water. The downstream landlords had secured their water, but the Qing empire was losing the war against Japan. On 17 April, approximately three months after the ruling, the Qing empire ceded Taiwan to Japan, and the battles in Taiwan after 29 May brought the island into chaos.

It took several years for Japan to restore order and even longer to establish a firm base for colonial rule in Taiwan. One of the pillars to support colonial rule was to modernise land control in order to lay a firm financial foundation. Thus, Gotō Shinpei 后藤新平, the second in command in colonial Taiwan between 1898 and 1906, founded the Temporary Taiwan Land Survey Bureau (Rinji Taiwan Tochi Chōsa Kyoku 臨時臺灣土地調查局) to register all land, study the local customary law, and survey the new colony. The product of the survey was the aforementioned 1900s map Taiwan Hōzu. The upstream landlord Kim-chin-an, who lost the lawsuit under the Qing administration, now considered the land survey an opportunity for revenge. In March 1900, Kim-chin-an hired a Japanese attorney to submit a petition to the land survey bureau. The attorney’s letter revealed more about the upstream landlords’ ambitions; they not only claimed the title of Tōa-oan, thereby reaffirming their right to levy the reclaimed fields, but also demanded the right to charge downstream farmers for using the big pool to water their fields. To counter this demand, the downstream party cited the January 1895 ruling and presented it to the bureau.

To deal with this petition, the Japanese official in charge wrote a proposal dated 13 June, reporting his investigation of boundary issues between villages and the title of the pool. He examined documents presented by both parties, interviewed local elders, and observed the geography around Tōa-oan. His judgement was that Tōa-oan was actually a section of a natural river, even though the landlords called it an irrigation pool. Because Tōa-oan was naturally formed, he proposed drawing the boundary of the surrounding villages in the middle of Tōa-oan so that no local party could dominate the pool. This became the boundary shown on the 1900s map Taiwan Hōzu. Moreover, Tōa-oan was the source of several smaller irrigation pools downstream, and the farmers had installed gates in the watercourse to divert water into their fields. Thus, if implemented, the upstream party’s demands to levy the water would affect hundreds of downstream farmers and lead to further conflict. So, regarding the demand for title, the official suggested treating Tōa-oan as a common river, thereby implying de facto nationalisation. This proposal was approved in March 1901. It was now the colonial government’s prerogative to decide the future of Tōa-oan.
Agriculture was the primary economic sector in Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule, and the colonial government aimed to increase production. The surplus could build a firm financial foundation for the colony and supplement the wider Japanese empire, for which food supply was a key concern. To achieve this goal, the colonial government implemented numerous policies to improve agricultural production. In addition to the land reform executed by the Temporary Taiwan Land Survey Bureau, reform of the irrigation system was initiated in the mid-1900s, which unified irrigation systems in a region under a single authority to improve efficiency.41

Subsequently, the efficiency of irrigation in Taipei significantly increased, and traditional irrigation pools were no longer necessary. Tōa-oan ceased to serve an irrigation function, and the big pool was drained and reclaimed for more productive purposes. Eventually, the authority that managed irrigation in Taipei drained and reclaimed Tōa-oan. The project commenced after the harvest of 1910 and was completed by the sowing of 1911.42 The reclaimed Tōa-oan became a narrow river to receive and drain the original headwaters from the upstream area.

The next great change for Tōa-oan occurred in the 1960s, and this time the impetus was on not agriculture but urban development. Urbanisation in eastern Taipei City accelerated during this period. Two boulevards (Zhong-xiao East Road and Ren’ai Road) across the reclamation of the historic Tōa-oan were gradually completed in the 1950s and 1960s, and the magnificent Ren’ai Roundabout was placed at the centre of the land reclaimed from Tōa-oan. As shown in maps of Taipei City from this period, many residential complexes were erected along these new roads, and the historical watercourse left by Tōa-oan was completely surrounded by dense, modern concrete buildings.43 However, much of the infrastructure was unable to keep pace with rapid urbanisation. The site where the two headwaters joined was called Lām-té (mud bottom), indicating that the earth was unstable because of constant flooding. When the mud fields became residential areas, the residents inevitably experienced floods after heavy showers. This situation did not improve until 1966, when the city diverted the headwaters.44 Another problem was sewage: no adequate underground system was in place, so residents simply ditched their waste into the nearest watercourse, and the historical watercourse left by Tōa-oan filled up with putrid sewage. By 1983, Taipei City culverted the open-air channel to improve the environment.45 Subsequently, the last above-ground remains of Tōa-oan disappeared with the development of the main shopping district, and the big pool soon faded from collective memory.

Concluding Remarks

As described in this paper, I have synthesised various sources from Dutch archives, place names, and land deeds for modern urban planning to reconstruct the history of Tōa-oan since the mid-seventeenth century. By revisiting the history of Tōa-oan and Da’an, I have rediscovered the forgotten past of this modern metropolis. Toponymic study was essential in this reconstruction because historical place names are crucial links that connect sources from different periods and in different languages. Dutch officers envisioned the exploitation of forest and land resources in the mid-seventeenth century,
and planned to fell trees upstream from Tōa-oan and transport the logs down the river. Ultimately, this exploitation was accomplished not by the Dutch but by the subsequent Han Chinese colonisers, who had cleared the forest on the plain by the mid-eighteenth century, as shown in the surviving land deeds.

Deforestation, cultivation, and intensified irrigation rendered the muddy runoff flowing into Tōa-oan, and this increased siltation in the pool. This siltation benefited the party claiming to be the landlord of the pool because it gained more arable land; however, it also reduced water resources for the irrigation of downstream villages. The conflict between the upstream landlord and downstream farmers resulted in a well-documented dispute over the ownership of Tōa-oan. The landscape around Tōa-oan at the end of the nineteenth century can be reconstructed based on a Japanese official’s investigation, which supported earlier sources suggesting that Tōa-oan was part of a natural river, and Tōa-oan was then de facto nationalised; this decision eventually resolved the dispute and determined the fate of Tōa-oan in the twentieth century.

As suggested at the beginning of this paper, the history of Tōa-oan reflects two basic forms of agricultural land expansion in premodern China — land development projects and gradual encroachment on villages. This study agrees with Vermeer’s basic concepts but also portrays a more complicated situation involving siltation and ownership. In contrast to the lakes around Hangzhou Bay discussed by Shiba Yoshinobu, which were public enterprises, private ownership meant that siltation caused benefits and losses for different groups of people, resulting in conflict. This conflict across six villages in Taipei is historic, and the consequence, namely de facto nationalisation, determined the landscape of this region in the twentieth century. As the history of irrigation in other parts of Taiwan at the beginning of the twentieth century shows, infiltration from colonial rule seems inevitable, and Tōa-oan might have lost its function and ended up fully reclaimed without the conflict. However, although the conflict over water was a significant event in Taipei, it has now largely been forgotten. By reconstructing the longitudinal history of Tōa-oan, this research enhances our understanding of this region and contributes a notable case for future comparative studies on deforestation, water control, and urbanisation in environmental history.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Chinese characters</th>
<th>Meaning /Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheng-pó-hoē-im</td>
<td>增補彙音</td>
<td>a Hokkien rime book in Zhangzhou accent published in the early 19th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-English Diction</td>
<td>增補彙音</td>
<td>a dictionary compiled by American missionary Carstairs Douglas in 1873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da’an</td>
<td>大安</td>
<td>place name; lit. ‘great peace’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gotō Shinpei</td>
<td>後藤新平</td>
<td>personal name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hangzhou Bay</td>
<td>杭州湾</td>
<td>a bay in Zhejiang province, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Kip-tian</td>
<td>何及展</td>
<td>personal name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoē-im-biāu-gō</td>
<td>彙音妙悟</td>
<td>a Hokkien rime book in Quanzhou accent published in 1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ian</td>
<td>淵</td>
<td>abyss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jilong River</td>
<td>基隆河</td>
<td>name of a major river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim-chin-an</td>
<td>金寗安</td>
<td>name of a corporate landlord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kun-kong-chhiūⁿ-súú</td>
<td>軍工匠首</td>
<td>military lumberjack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kun-kong-khiⁿ</td>
<td>軍功坑</td>
<td>place name; lit. Kun-kong ravine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kun-kong-liâu</td>
<td>軍工寮</td>
<td>naval lumberjack’s hut; lit. military work hut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lām-té</td>
<td>綠底</td>
<td>place name; lit. mud bottom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Līm family of Pi-sim</td>
<td>陂心林家</td>
<td>a clan’s name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Līm-pún-goân</td>
<td>林本源</td>
<td>a clan’s name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liugong-chun</td>
<td>瑣公圳</td>
<td>Master Liu’s Channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nā-bóe</td>
<td>林尾</td>
<td>place name; lit. forest tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nā-kháu</td>
<td>林口</td>
<td>place name; lit. forest mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oan</td>
<td>灣/淵</td>
<td>pool (obsolete after the 19th century)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oan</td>
<td>灣</td>
<td>a bay; a bend in a river or channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pi-sim</td>
<td>陂心</td>
<td>place name; lit. pool heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quanzhou</td>
<td>泉州</td>
<td>a historical prefecture in Fujian province, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaoxing</td>
<td>紹興</td>
<td>a city in Zhejiang province, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siōng-pi</td>
<td>上陂</td>
<td>name of a pool; alternative of Tōa-oan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taipei City / Taihoku-shi</td>
<td>臺北市</td>
<td>a modern political division since 1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan Hōzu</td>
<td>臺灣堡圖</td>
<td>title of the map surveyed in the 1900s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamsui</td>
<td>淡水</td>
<td>place name; lit. fresh water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamsui River</td>
<td>淡水河</td>
<td>the modern name of the largest river in Taipei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Taiwan Land Survey Bureau / Rinni Taiwan Tochi Chōsa Kyoku</td>
<td>臨時臺灣土地調查局</td>
<td>the agency in charge of land survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tōa-oan</td>
<td>大灣</td>
<td>place name; lit. big pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tōa-oan-chng</td>
<td>大灣莊</td>
<td>place name; lit. Tōa-oan village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuhang</td>
<td>餘杭</td>
<td>historical district in Zhejiang province, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhangzhou</td>
<td>漳州</td>
<td>historical prefecture in Fujian province, China</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perhaps I should have entitled this paper 'The Names of the Mongols in Asia and Europe', since, at the time of their greatest expansion in the thirteenth century, the Mongols were known by several names which, curiously enough, were mostly inaccurate for different reasons.

In a Chinese source of the mid-10th century (the Chiu T'ang-shu), which refers to events in the previous century, the Mongols' tribal name appears for the first time. The Chinese transcription meng-wu 蒙兀 (*mung-nguat) represents an original *Mongγut or *Mongγul. In the corresponding passage of the Hsin T'ang-shu, in place of meng-wu we find meng-wa 蒙瓦 (*mung-ngwa), that is, *Mongγa. Although this may well be a mere graphic variant of meng-wu, as claimed by Pelliot, it is possible that *Mongγa is a phonetic variant of *Mongγut/*Mongγul in the form of *Mongγa(l), as suggested by H. Serruys. If the correct interpretation of meng-wu is *Mongγut, as I believe, this form is in all probability an ancient plural of *Mongγul. The tribal name in question would then occur in its earliest recorded forms as *Mongγul/*Mongγal.

By the thirteenth century, *Mongγul had developed into Mongγol through regular progressive assimilation in some Mongolian dialects, but Mongγul was still retained in other dialects and the form Mongγal is also well attested. The Mongols' name is first recorded in Uighur script (which the Mongols had adopted early in the thirteenth century) in the legend of the seal of Güyük (r. 1246–48) on the famous letter to Pope Innocent IV (1246) in the form MWNKQWL, that is, Mongγol or Mongγul. From then on, and irrespective of dialect variations, this name has always been written in the same way, which we have conventionally transcribed as 'Mongγol'.

(Regarding the etymology of the name Mongγul, the ending yul may be a suffix denoting a clan, tribe or people. If so, we are left with the root mongγ which first appears (under this name) as a small branch of the Shih-wei 室韋 tribe which in the 9th century resided in the valley of the Argun River near the present Sino-Russian border. In the following two centuries, no doubt as a result of internal and external pressures, they moved westwards, almost certainly along the Kerulen River (Xerlen Gol), eventually settling at the sources of this river on the wooded slopes of the sacred mountain Burqan Qaldan of The Secret History of the Mongols, that is, present-day Kenti Qan (Xentii Xan) in northern Mongolia. Except for their mention in the T'ang Histories (see n.2) in connection with the Shih-wei and a few other tantalisingly brief and enlightening references to them in the Chinese sources (s.a. 1071 and 1084), the Mongols do not reappear historically as such until the 12th century. All we have for the preceding period are semi-historical accounts and legends preserved in The Secret History of the Mongols and in Rašid al-Dīn’s great work. See P. Ratchnevsky, 'Les Che-wei étaient-ils des Mongols?', in Mélanges de sinologie offerts à Monsieur Paul Demiéville (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1960),
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In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, the name of the Mongols in Central and Western Asia, as well as in Europe, was either Tatar/Tartar, or a variation of Mogol (Moyol); only occasionally, but never in Central or Western Asia, do we find the name Mongol (Mongol).

I shall only briefly review the designation Tatar/Tartar, since much has been written already on the subject and there is not much I can add to it.

In the 12th century, the Tatar people of eastern Mongolia were the most powerful tribal complex north of the Gobi. Therefore, in China and Central Asia, and further west, the name Tatar became the common, general designation for all Mongol- and Turkic-speaking peoples of Mongolia just as, in the Middle Ages, 'Frank' designated any western European. The Persian historian Rašīd-al-Dīn (ca. 1247–1318), who discusses this question at length in his great work, can hardly disguise his wonder at the fact that the Tatar tribe's name and renown should have spread so far and wide, from China and India to Dašt-i Qipçeğ and Syria, and to the Arab populations of north Africa, indeed as far as the Maghreb.

Because of this, the Mongolian tribesmen in Činggis Qan’s time were also called Tatars by the Chinese and other peoples of Asia, and even after the destruction of the Tatar tribe by Činggis Qan in 1202, the Mongols continued to be referred to as Tatars, not only because the name had stuck, as it were, but also (and chiefly) because they had replaced the latter in the hegemony of the steppe. We must not forget that very few people outside the vast grass-land of Mongolia knew what was happening there, and which of the many barbarian tribes roaming the steppe had conquered which.

The Tatars thus enjoyed a posthumous, albeit undeserved glory (or notoriety) as their name penetrated Europe in the first decades of the thirteenth century from the south through the Near East and the crusaders, and via the Cumans, the Bulgars and other populations of the Volga regions in the north. The terrifying horsemen from the depths of Asia who defeated the Russian princes, destroyed Kiev, routed the Polish and Hungarian armies and nearly took Vienna in 1242 were, of course, the dreaded Tatars, promptly and pointedly renamed Tartarus (Hell), and the invaders’ resemblance (in popular imagination) with devils.

And so the Mongols, assimilated on the one had to a tribe which, ironicaly, had been their worst enemy, and on the other to a host of devils released from Hell, continued to be called Tatars by the Russians, and Tartars by the rest of Europe, and this not for a few decades but for centuries — in fact until modern times.

This does not mean, however, that the name Mongol remained unknown in Europe after the European nations had established direct contact with the Mongolian empire through various diplomatic missions. Nevertheless, this true name was regarded as just another name for the Tatars, the latter designation being by now well established and widespread. The name Mongol appears sporadically in the thirteenth century chronicles and envoys’ reports in several forms, often greatly corrupted in the course of transmission. Thus we find Mongal(i) in John of Pian di Carpine’s Historia, Molal in William of Rubruk’s Itinerarium, and Mongul in Marco Polo’s Il Milione. Simon of St Quentin alternates between Mongli and Mogli, Mongol and Mogol. Some of
the forms recorded by these travellers are either contracted (Moal) or denasalised (Mogli, Mogol), and this poses an interesting problem.

If we look at the name of the Mongols in Central and Western Asia at the time (middle and second half of the thirteenth century), we see that neither the Turks, nor the Persians, nor for that matter any other people who had close relations with the Mongols actually spelled their name with an n. The Turks called them Moyul and Moyal (Moyul in Chaghatai), corresponding of course to Mongolian Mongyl and Mongyal respectively; the Persians called them Moyöl/Muyül and Moyâl/ Moyül (according to the different transcriptions of the same words); in Arabic we have Mughül (as in Persian); in Hindustani Mugh(a); in Armenian Muγal; in Syriac Mûglâyê — a metathetical form from Mûgâl; and in Greek Μουγούλιοι (from Muγul). All the vowel changes in these forms can be easily explained, but what happened to the n?

The mystery of the missing n has been puzzling me for a long time. It is evident that all the above-mentioned forms originally go back to Uighur Turkic. Now, phonetically, an alternation Moηγul ~ Moγul is certainly possible in the Turkic languages, but in Uighur we find only the non-nasalised forms Moyul and Moyal. When it comes to the name of the nation there is no alternation: the form with –η- simply does not exist in Uighur, witness the fact that in Persian and all the other languages which ultimately borrowed the word from Uighur we find only the denasalised form.

We must then ask ourselves: what made the Uighur Turks, who first taught their script to the Mongols and who, for several decades, acted as their scribes and secretaries, use the correct form Mongγol in the edicts and documents that they drafted in Mongolian for their masters, but Moyul (=Moyal) in those they wrote in their own language? There is no doubt that the Uighurs could write the correct form, and did so when it was part of an individual’s personal name (as in contract or business transaction), but not in the case of the name of the ruling nation. The answer, I think may be provided by a passage from the Suvarnaprabhāśa in Uighur (the Altun yaruq) in the illustration at hand (Figure 1).


6 The names in Chinese transcription found in the Chiu T’ang-shu 195, 3a; in the Wu-tai shih 5代史, 73, 9a; and in the Liao-shih 遼史 33, 8b, 35, 9a, and 46, 5a, which have been hypothetically reconstructed as *mäkas and *moyos, refer to Tangut and Turkic tribes, not to tribes or clans of Mongol stock. Therefore, these names cannot be called into question in the present discussion. See Serruys, op. cit. pp.676–77. Cf. K. A. Wittfogel and Féng Chi-a-shêng, History of Chinese Society. Liao (1007–1125), Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, N.S. 36 [1946] (Philadelphia, 1949), p.91, n.23.

7 The form Mongyl (=*Mongyl*) is found, for example, in Simon of St Quentin’s Historia Tartarorum. See S. de Saint-Quentin, Histoire des Tartares, ed. J. Richard (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1965), p.92 (XXXII, 34): ‘Ipsi quoque Tartari proprie loquendo se vocant Mongli sive Mongol’. The form Mongyl is the one regularly attested in the Chinese transcriptions of the 13th and 14th centuries (in the Yüan tien-chang 元典章, Yüan-shih 元史, etc.) as mong-hu 蒙古 (*Mongyl[i]*); it is also the one
In Uighur there is a word muγul meaning ‘unwise, fool’ which in Uighur script is written exactly as the name Mongγol (as can be seen from the legend on Güyüg’s seal, Figure 2). Clearly, it would have been courting disaster for a scribe in the Mongol khan’s service to employ the same name in Turkic (thus making the two words synonymous), for this would have been regarded as deliberately offensive. An act of lèse-majesté of this kind brought to the notice of the khan by a jealous colleague or enemy of the scribe would undoubtedly have cost him his life. But a very slight orthographic change — allowed moreover by the nature of the language (because of –ηγ- ~ -γ-) — would have easily solved the problem. This is why, in my opinion, Mongγol became Mongγol in Uighur and, ultimately, why the Mongols of Afghanistan are called Moghols and not Monghols, why the famous Turkish rulers of India are called Mughals and not Munghals, and also why today we read about ‘media moguls’ and not ‘media monguls’.
As we find, for example, in the word Sartaγul (Middle Mongolian Sarta’ul) ‘Muslim native of Central or Western Asia’, from sartay = ‘Turkic sart (= Sanskrit sártha ‘caravan, wealthy’ = an Iranian; merchant’. See G. Clauson, An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p.846a.


11 Rašīd al-Dīn says that the word ‘Mongol’ was originally ‘Mūngōl (mūng-ōl) meaning ‘feeble’ and ‘naive’ — clearly a folk etymology still current in Rašīd’s own time which, as we shall see, was not without some justification. (Rašīd naturally thought that mūng-ōl was a Mongolian expression and, in this respect, he was of course mistaken.) Other proposed etymologies include: < Mongolian mūngagī ‘silver’; Mongolian Mong Gol ‘the Mong (? River’; Chinese meng ū ‘fierce, valiant’; and Yakut mopol ‘great, big’. See Ratchnevsky, Činggis-khan, pp.5–6, n.23; G. Doerfer, ‘Der Name der Mongolen bei Rašīd ad-Dīn’, Central Asiatic Journal 14 (1970): 68–77.


13 On the Tartar tribe see Ratchnevsky, Činggis-khan, pp.3–4, and the literature cited on p.4, n.15. Pelliot (Histoire de campagnes, p.2) makes some interesting remarks on the manner in which the tribal name Tatar became the generic name for the Mongols and also for part of the Turks. Pelliot’s remarks were prompted by Rašīd al-Dīn’s statement on this very question. See below, n.15. Cf. S.G. Klyaštornyĭ, ‘Gosudarstva Tatar v Central’noĭ Azii (dočingisova ėpokha),’ in eds V.M. Solncev et al., Mongolica: K 750-let’yu ‘Sokrovennogo skazaniya’ (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), pp.139–47; and Central Asiatic Journal 36 (1992), pp.72–83.

14 For the Chinese generic designation Ta-ta 蒙古 (= Tatar/Mongol), see Meng-Tapei-lu and Hei-Ta shih-liü. Chinesische Gesandtenberichte über die frühen Mongolen 1221 und 1237, trans., annot. and ed S. Haenisch, Yao Ts’ung-wu, P. Olbricht, E. Pinks and W. Banck (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1980), pp.6–7, nn.1–5 [Asiatische Forschungen, 56]. It should be mentioned, however, that once China was under Mongol rule, the name Ta-ta was replaced by Meng-ku (see above, n.7).


16 For the Chinese generic designation Ta-ta 蒙古 (= Tatar/Mongol), see Meng-Tapei-lu and Hei-Ta shih-liü. Chinesische Gesandtenberichte über die frühen Mongolen 1221 und 1237, trans., annot. and ed S. Haenisch, Yao Ts’ung-wu, P. Olbricht, E. Pinks and W. Banck (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1980), pp.6–7, nn.1–5 [Asiatische Forschungen, 56]. It should be mentioned, however, that once China was under Mongol rule, the name Ta-ta was replaced by Meng-ku (see above, n.7).


19 This fact is epitomised in Marco Polo’s statement cited.

20 See above, n.7


22 Türkic Moyal is evidenced by William of Rubruck’s “Moal” which can only be a development of Moyal (= Mo’al = Moal), a form that must be either Turkic or Persian, not Mongolian. The transcriptions from Persian sources (Juvanī, Rašīd al-Dīn, etc.) vary from author to author because of the ambiguity of o/a in Persian. In Juvanī the usual form of the name is Moyal/Muyūl — the form used also by Rašīd — but occasionally we find also Moyal/Muyūl. It is my opinion that


24 In the third line of the Uighur (private) document published by W. Radloff in Uigurishce Sprachdenkmäler (Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1928) [repr. Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1972], p.137, no.81, we find a proper name spelled MWNKWL PWQ’, that is, Moŋol (? Moŋul) Buqa. On the basis of this reading, L. Ligeti, loc. cit., gives the Uighur word for ‘Mongol’ as ‘Monγul’. This is not correct, since the word in question is the first element, that is, an integral part, of a proper name and does not refer to the Mongol state. In a document of this kind, individual names would have, of course, to be spelled correctly, and here, in any case, the reading MWNKQWL may well be Turkic muŋul (= muŋγul) ‘foolish’. It is interesting to note that in this name we have a good example of ŋγ > ŋ (Moŋγul/Moŋγul > Moŋol/Moŋul). Cf. the Mukaddimat al-Adab, loc. cit., where the Mongol form is ‘Mongol’ not ‘Monggel’.

QAN, QA’AN AND THE SEAL OF GÜYÜG

Igor de Rachewiltz

Two of the most important ‘mots de civilisation’ of Inner Asia are undoubtedly the title qan and qa’an (qayan), the origins of which are lost in the prehistory of the Altaic languages. These titles have been the subject of investigation by several distinguished scholars, such as K. Shiratori, B. Ya. Vladimircov, P. Pelliot, L. Hambis, F.W. Cleaves, L. Krader, H.F. Schurmann, L. Ligeti and G. Doerfer, to mention only the authors of some of the most important contributions. Valuable, however, as these contributions are, we still lack a comprehensive historical survey which takes into account all the available sources, including evidence from coins. The present tentative review is an attempt towards comprehensiveness with regard to the use of qan and qa’an by the Mongols in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, fixing as terminus ad quem the collapse of the Mongol Yüan dynasty in A.D. 1368. Unfortunately, space limits make it impossible for me to dwell on the sources as I would wish, and my choice of references and illustrations is, therefore, confined to the essentials.

The turning point in our survey is the year 1229 in which Ögödei, the third son of Činggis-qan, was elected to succeed his father as supreme ruler of the Mongol world-empire. Accordingly, we shall divide the survey in two parts: (A) the use of qan and qa’an before 1229, and (B) the use of qan and qa’an after 1229.

A. BEFORE 1229
1. Qa’an was not used as a title by the tribes of Mongolia or by Činggis-qan.
2. Qan was used as:
   a. the title borne by the elected leaders of important tribes of people (ulus), such as the Mongqol, e.g. Qabul-qan, Qutula-qan, Ambaqai-qan; the Kereyit, e.g. To’oril/Ong-qan; and the Naiman, e.g. Buiruq-qan, Incančabilge-qan, Tayang-qan, Güčülük-qan;

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1. The linguistic relationship between these two terms is still a moot point and I shall not discuss it in the present paper. For an overview of the problem, see now G. Doerfer, Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen, III (Wiesbaden, 1967), no.1161 (pp.176–79). Paul Pelliot was going to deal with this question in his note on Marco Polo’s ‘Ka’an’, but he unfortunately never did. See his Notes on Marco Polo, I (Paris, 1959), p.302. The reading qa’an which I use throughout the paper is the Middle Mongolian form of Old Turkish (*Precl. Mong.) qayan. It corresponds to Persian qā’ān/xāqān.

3. The variant qa that we find in the Secret History of the Mongols (hereafter SH) deserves special study. For the text edition of the SH, see I. de Rachewiltz, Index to the Secret History of the Mongols (Bloomington, 1972), Part One.

4. See SH $21, 57, 74, 112, 149, 244, 272. In $244, qa is defined as the person whose function is ‘to hold the nation’ (ulus bari). With regard to ‘the lords and rulers of land and rivers’ (qajar usun-u efet qat), cf. the later use of qa (Khalkha xan) as an honorific term for mountains: Xentei-xan, Delger-xan, Burin-xan, etc.


b. the title borne by the leaders of tribal confederations, including Činggis’ pan-Mongolian nation, hence Činggis-qan, Jamuqa-qan;

c. the title employed by the Mongols and, presumably, other tribes of Mongolia, for the rulers of other countries and the leaders of important tribes or tribal confederations outside Mongolia, e.g. Altan-qan of the Kitat, Burqan-qan of Qašin or Tangut, Arslan-qan of the Qarlu’ut, Qan Melik of the Qangli;

d. a term (~qan, pl.qāt) designating the leader of a tribe or confederation, the ruler of a nation, and the powerful nature spirits in the Altaic shamanistic conception of the world. See the SH: tus qa, qa ergii-, qamuq-un qat, qajar usun-u efet qat, etc.;

e. a term (~qa) meaning ‘qaan-ship’, i.e. ‘rulership, government’, hence ‘pertaining to the government’, as in the expression qa bolqa- of SH §249 (where qa = ‘government property’). This meaning seems to be an extension of 2(d).

After the death of Činggis-qan in 1227, his sons inherited the vast Mongol empire and each of them became qa in his respective dominion (ulus). Since these dominions had been established before Činggis’ death, the imperial princes were no doubt called qa already before 1227. In any event, the title of qa became unsuitable to designate the appointed successor to Činggis’ throne also because this was a title traditionally associated with the leader of a tribe or tribal confederation. Mongol expansion and world rule called for the adoption of another, more exalted title. As the Mongol court was then largely under Uighur Turkish cultural influence, the title they adopted was that ancient Turkish title of Ämlik or Ämlik-u, which was used as: qa= (Middle Mongolian qa’an, first assumed by Ögödei when he was elected emperor in 1229.

B. AFTER 1229

Qa’an was used as:

a. the imperial title and personal epithet of Ögödei — the first ruler to use this title — who, as a result, was thereafter usually referred to simply as ‘(the) Qa’an’, i.e. ‘the qa’an par excellence’;

b. the title borne by all subsequent emperors of the Činggiside line, even when their authority as qa’an of the greater Mongol empire had become largely nominal, as was the case already under Qubilai (r. 1260-94). This title ceased to be used when the Mongols were overthrown and replaced by the Ming in 1368;

c. The title retrospectively conferred on Činggis-qan and his most illustrious ancestors, both direct and collateral (Qubul, Qutula, Ambaqai and Yisügei). I think this retrospective conferment took place early in the reign of Qubilai, perhaps in 1266 or thereabouts, but this point requires further investigation;¹⁰

d. the term for ‘emperor’, with reference to (b), as in the expression qa’an-u frīy-iyar ‘by imperial edict’;¹¹

e. a term (~qa) designating the ruler of a nation or people (‘king, sovereign’), also used as a title, mainly in Buddhist texts, e.g. Ašuqi (~Aśoka) qa’an.¹²
2. Qan was used as:

a. the title borne by the imperial princes, son of Činggis, and their descendants, such as the khans of the Golden Horde and Il-Khans of Persia. Thus: Tolui-qan, Batu-qan, Hūlegū-qan. The implication of this usage is that these rulers, although sovereign (qa'an) in their respective dominions (ulus), were still subject to the supreme authority of the qa'an/emperor;19

b. a term (=A.2[d]) designating the ruler of a nation, and, specifically, the Mongol sovereign, this being the ruler of the Great Mongol nation and the world, e.g. qa'an ergi-i (SH §269), yeke Mongγol ulus-un qa'an, dalai-yin qa'an (see below);

c. a term (=A.2[e]) meaning 'government'.14

With regard to the expressions yeke Mongγol ulus-un qa'an and dalai-yin qa'an quote above (b), some comments are necessary. In the SH §280, Ögödei is called dalai-yin qa'an (read qa'an),15 rendered into Chinese as hai-nei huang-ti 'emperor of [all] within the seas'[.] The same concept is expressed in lines 2–4 of the legend of the famous seal of Güyük: yeke Mongγol ulus-un dalai-in qa'nulu jir' Order of the ruler of the Great Mongol nation and of [all within] the seas (= 'the whole world').16 My interpretation of these lines diverges from that of Pelliot ('du khan océanique du peuple des grands Mongols, l'ordre'),17 and of Mostaert and Cleaves ('Ordre du统治者 of the Great Mongol Nation' is well attested. It is found in Innocent IV on which the seal in question is affixed. In the preamble, As W. Kotwicz noted long ago,19 the corresponding expression is 'Order of the ruler of the Great Mongol nation and of [all within] the seas [of the whole world]').20 The expression yeke Mongγol ulus is to be compared to expressions like qamuy Mongγol ulus 'the entire Mongol nation',olon Mongγol ulus 'the numerous Mongol people', etc. The expression Mongγol ulus 'the Mongol nation (or people)', without the attribute yeke 'great', is, of course well attested in the SH and other documents of the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries.22 Moreover, yeke ulus 'the Great Nation', that is, the Mongol state or world-empire, is a well-known expression in later Mongolian political writings.23 While I do not for a moment wish to deny the existence of the expression yeke Mongγol 'Great Mongols', amply documented by Mastaert and Cleaves,24 I do not share their view that in the present instance this expression constitutes 'une locution adjective déterminant ulus'.25 The interpretation of Mastaert and Cleaves should also be reviewed in the light of the recent comments by N.C. Munkuev and J.-Ph. Geley.26

Secondly, I take the two expressions in the genitive case, i.e. yeke Mongγol ulus-un and dalai-un, as both qualifying qa'n (gen.), but independently of each other ('of the ruler of the Great Mongol Nation and of the whole world'), whereas Mastaert and Cleaves understand 'du Dalai-in qa'n (m.à m.: "Souverain [de ce qui est à l’intérieur] des mers") de l’empire des Grands Mongols'.27 This use of the double genitive without the conjunction ba is fairly common in Middle and Preclassical Mongolian.28 Moreover, the expression yeke Mongγol ulus-un qa'n ‘ruler of the Great Mongol Nation’ is well attested. It is found in

† Professor de Rachewiltz made the following written addition in his offprint at this point: Cf. F.W. Cleaves in HJAS 46 (1986), 191, n.4.

8. Juviain, and Rašīd al-Din following him, always refer to Güyük (r. 1246–48) as Güyük-xān, i.e. Güyük-qa'an, not Güyük-qa-an, no doubt because the legitimacy of his rule was questioned when, with Möngke (r. 1251–59), the imperial dignity passed from the line of Ögödei to that of Tolui. Cf. H.F. Schumann, in HJAS 19 (1956), p.315, n.11. However, Pelliot, loc. cit., was mistaken when he stated that Qubilai was the first Mongol ruler to take the title of qa’an as a mere epithet. Like Ögödei, Güyük too bore the title of qa’an during his short reign, as attested by the legend on his coins (Güyük-qa-an). See M. Weiers, ‘Münzaufschriften auf Münzen mongolischer Il-khane aus dem Iran, Part One’, The Canada-Mongolia Review 4.1 (April 1978), 43. Weiers’ authority is E. Drouin’s article ‘Notice sur les monnaies mongoles faisant partie du receuil des documents de l’époque mongole publié par le prince Roland Bonaparté’, in Journal Asiatique, IX Sér., 7 (Mai–Juin 1896), pp.485–546, p.506. The coin in question is ‘un dirhem frappé en Géorgie par Davith V, en l’année 646’, i.e. in A.D. 1248. Coins issued during Güyük’s short reign are extremely rare, and I failed to find the one described by Drouin in the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque nationale in October 1981. I wish to express here my thanks to Mme A. Nègre, Chargée des monnaies orientales, for her kind assistance in my research at the B.N.). However, Güyük’s title of qa’anis confirmed by other documents in Latin in which Güyük is actually designated as chaam (= qa’an). See Simon de Saint-Quentin, Histoire de Tartares, ed. J. Richard (Paris, 1965), pp.90, 92, 94; F. Pelliot, Les Mongols et la Papauté (rep. in one vol., by the Persian authors and on his coins (see Weiers, loc. cit.), he is also designated as qa’un in the Mongolian inscription on the monument in his honour erected in 1257 (i.e. two years before his death), and in the legend of the seal that he bestowed on the Il-Khans to Islam (1295); and in the Persian tributary documents of the early Ming even the Chinese emperor is addressed as xān, i.e. Güyük, not Güyük-qa-an. See B. Spuler in The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Ed., III (Leiden–London, 1971), p.1121b; Schurmann, op. cit., p.315, n.11.

9 See Pelliot, Notes on Marco Polo, II (Paris, 1963), p.657. In Iran the name and title of the qa’an ruling in China disappears from coinage after Qubilai’s death and the conversion of the Il-Khans to Islam (1295); and in the Persian tributary documents of the early Ming even the Chinese emperor is addressed as xān, see B. Spuler in The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Ed., III (Leiden–London, 1971), p.1121b; Schurmann, op. cit., p.315, n.11.

10 The date for the beginning of this practice is uncertain, but it must be placed between 1260 and 1271, as the title qa’an is not used for Činggis by Juvinai, but it occurs already in Grigor of Akn RE’s History of the Nations of the Archers. See F.W. Cleaves in HJAS 12 (1949), pp.418–19. Thereafter, the title appears in Sino-Mongolian inscriptions
in Uighur-Mongol script, in the ‘Phags-pa inscriptions — albeit irregularly (see below) — in the SH (see also below), and in the later Mongol sources, such as the seventeenth century chronicles and inscriptions. Rashid al-Din, like Juwaini, uses xan throughout for Činggis, but both xan and qa’an for his ancestors. A comparison of all the MSS of his work is, however, necessary to throw light on the peculiarity of his usage of qa’an. See, provisionally, Doerfer, op. cit., pp.150–53. Since posthumous titles were conferred on Činggis’ father Yisügei (or Yesügei) in 1266, it is possible that the extension of the title qa’an to Činggis originated about that time. See Pelliot et Hambis, op. cit., p.2.

11 See F.W. Cleaves in HJAS 17 (1954), pp.43 [4–166a7], 85.


14 Schurmann, op. cit., p.316, n.11; Poppe, op. cit., p.129a.

15 See Yüan-ch’ao pi-shih (Ssu-pu ts’ung-k’an ed.) S.2, 52a. For the reading qa’an in place of qahan, see my discussion further on. On qa’an – qa’an, see F.W. Leaves in HJAS 12 (1949), 107n.64; A. Mostaert, ibid. 13 (1950), p.347, n.58.

16 The legend in Uighur-Mongol script is reproduced as Figure 1, from Pelliot, Les Mongols et la Papauté, Pl. II (opposite p.22), but with some modifications. These are: 1) the filling in of the damaged areas of the border of the seal, and 2) the addition of the small circle at the end of line 6. This will give a better idea of how the original seal impression looked like. For the question of the final circle, corresponding to course of a dot or punctuation mark, see F. de Rachewiltz, ‘Some Remarks on the Stele of Yisüngge,’ in W. Heissig a.o. (eds), Tractata Altaica: Denis Sinor, sexagenario optime de rebus altaicis merito dedicato (Wiesbaden, 1976), pp.503–504, n.39.


in the Sino-Mongolian inscription of 1362, where it occurs followed almost immediately by the expression delekei-yin ejen ‘lord of [all] the earth’, which matches our dalai-in qa’an.22 The corresponding text of the preamble in Turkish presents also the same double genitive construction of the Mongol text of the seal and must be interpreted in the same way as the latter, i.e. ‘ruler of the whole Great Nation (= the Great [Mongol] Nation) and of the whole world’ (kü uluy ulusunun tahlüymän qa’an).

With regard to the term dalai (= Tu. talui), I cannot accept P.D. Buell’s interpretation of it as meaning here the qa’an’s ‘estate’.31 The special meaning of dalai, as the ‘imperial patrimony’, which developed later in Central and Western Asia, is definitely excluded in my view because of the overwhelming evidence from Mongol, Persian and Chinese sources to the effect that in the expression dalai-in qa’an with which we are concerned, dalai can only mean ‘all that is found in the land within the seal(s)’, hence ‘the whole world’.32 This is confirmed also by the corresponding imperial titles in the Persian sources discussed by V. Minorsky33 and on contemporary coins, such as pādshāh-i jahān ‘sovereign of the world’ and xān-i ‘alam ‘ruler of the world’. The ruler in question, Gıyūg, is designated in his coins with these titles, as well as with that of qa’an discussed earlier.34

From the above it appears, then, that a Mongol sovereign like Gıyūg and Möngke bore the title of ‘emperor’ (qa’an) because he was the formally elected and consecrated successor of Činggis, hence the legitimate inheritor of the highest dignity in the empire which, since Ögödei, pertained to the qa’an. He was, at the same time, designated as ‘ruler of the Great Mongol Nation’ (yeke Mongol ulus-un qa’an) and ‘ruler of the world’ (dalai-in qa’an), i.e. ruler of the Mongols (senu lato) and of the world at large — the whole world belonging by divine right to the Great Mongol Nation.35 Thus, the term qa’an found in the legend of Gıyūg’s seal is not the imperial title borne by Gıyūg, which as we have seen was qa’an, but a term (see above, B 2[b]) occurring in, and an integral part of, the standard designations or appellations of all Mongol emperors. It follows, then, that from the point of view of the legend alone, the ‘seal of Gıyūg’ could have been the one belonging to Ögödei or even to Činggis-qa’an, and doubts concerning the origin of this seal have, indeed, been expressed by Kotwicz, although on different grounds

Figure 1
See note 16
The above covers, I think, the main points. I should mention, however, that as with almost all Mongol institutions and practices, there is also a certain inconsistency in the actual usage of the terms qan and qa’an. This is particularly evident in the ‘Phags-pa inscriptions, where ‘Jingis qan’ alternates with ‘Jingis qa’an’ (qan in Ligeti’s transcription).27 In the Sino-Mongolian inscriptions in Uighur-Mongol script studied by Cleaves we observe the same phenomenon.28 In my opinion, the reason for this inconsistency is that, in the case of Činggis-qan, after he was retrospectively conferred the title qaγan, both forms existed side by side. In written language and the administration, the Mongols relied heavily on people of different countries, background and culture, and had no means of effectively and strictly enforcing uniformity of style and usage, since most of the Mongol officials lacked competence in such matters. This largely accounts for our own misunderstanding of their practice.

Another problem related to qan and qa’an which deserves full re-examination is the influence Chinese, Turkish and Nestorian political and religious elements in early Mongol statecraft, but the problem is too complex to be discussed here.42

Figure 2
See note 30
30 For the text and transcription of the preamble, see Fig. 2 and Pelliot, op. cit., pp.15, 22. Pelliot’s rendering (ibid., pp.16, 22) ‘[nous] le khan océanique du grand peuple tout entier’ is not correct. Equally faulty, therefore, are those citations or translations of the preamble by authors (like G. Soranzo, A. Van den Wyngaert, F. Voegelin, N.P. Sastina, B. Spuler, J.A. Boyle, J.J. Saunders, etc.) who followed Pelliot’s interpretation. A notable exception is Doerfer (op. cit., no.1672, p.634), who rendered it as follows: ‘Chan des machtvollen großen (Mongolen-) Staates und des Weltkreises’. Cf. also his remark (loc. cit.) that ‘das ist in etwa eine Übersetzung des mo. Siegels’.


33 In Iranica. Twenty Articles, University of Teheran, Vol.775 (1964), p.65.

34 See above, n.8. As I explained there, a reproduction of the coin bearing the legend ‘Gūyūg qaγan’ is not available to me at present; however, thanks to Prof. Weiers of Bonn I have obtained a photograph, reproduced in Fig. 3, of Gūyūg’s coin from Sayyid Jamal Turābī Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s Catalogue of Mongol coins from Iran (see Weiers, op. cit., p.42, n.2). The full text of the legend is: 1 Guyūk 2 pād(i)šāh-i 3 ḥahān xān-i 4 ālam. See ibid., p.43. For pād(i)šāh-qa’an, see Schurmann, op. cit., p.315, n.11, and Ligeti in Acta Orientalia Hung 14 (1962), p.40, n.57. As is known, neither John of Pian di Carpine nor William of Rubruck distinguishes between qa’an and qān, and in their reports they use chan (~ kan, can, cham) throughout, whereas Marco Polo seems to make a distinction between the two. See Pelliot, Notes on Marco Polo, I, p.302. In the case of Pian di Carpine and Rubruck, their ‘chan’ obviously corresponds to both qa’an and qān (~ qa’un); however, this problem deserves further study. For additional references to coins minted under Ögödei and Gūyūg containing the title qa’an, see ibid., pp.155–56, 158, 165–66; E.A. Pakhomov, Money Gruzī (Tbilisi, 1970), p.119.


36 See Kotwicz, op. cit., p.278, n.1.


39 For example, Qabiq-qa’an in §8139, 140; Činggis-qa’an in §8255.

40 For example, Ong-qa’an in §8150, Altan-qa’an in §8250, 251. See Pelliot et Hambis, op. cit., pp.15, 212.

41 See, for example, L. Ligeti in Acta Orientalia Hung 27 (1973), 15, n.44. Cf. also the Uighur text of the Sino-Uighur inscription in honour of the Īduq Qut of Qočo of 1334. See Geng Shimin and J. Hamilton in Türkica 13 (1980), 51a.

42 For some interesting insights, see H. Franke, From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God: The Legitimation of the Yüan Dynasty (München, 1978), pp.18–19, 26ff.