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Secret Scroll: The Production of Occult Knowledge in China's Age of Print

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Secret Scroll:
The Production of Occult Knowledge in China's Age of Print

By

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Abstract

This dissertation studies the paradoxical relationship between print culture and occult knowledge production in China's age of print, i.e., the epoch between the Chinese commercial print revolution in the late sixteenth century and the coming of a multimedia age in the early twentieth century. While in print culture studies it has become a commonplace that print helps disseminate knowledge and creates a reading public, this dissertation asks: what happens when a book about occult knowledge is printed and thrown into the market for popular consumption? To what extent does this book still bear any of the "secrecy" that it claims? This question arises from the discovery of a vast network of books known as "secret scrolls" (*miji* 秘笈) that were produced in this age of print. They include magic kung-fu guides, sectarian scriptures, secret society manuals, notes from séances, spirit photography, and Mesmerism how-to books. Delving into the textual and intertextual histories of these materials, as well as various literary works and social discourses that engaged with the "secret scroll" as a cultural trope, this dissertation conceptualizes the paradox of secrecy in an age of print. It argues that the secrecy of a "secret scroll" is established precisely because it is revealed and multiplied by way of a new public constituted by print culture.

This dissertation has five chapters, each focused on a single or a cluster of secret scrolls about a particular form of occult knowledge. The chapters are all related, in different ways, to the late Qing novel *The Travels of Lao Can* authored by Liu E 劉鶚 (1857–1909), which this dissertation reads not only as a secret scroll par excellence, but also as a theory of how to read secret scrolls and approach occult knowledge. Each chapter, in addition to manifesting the "paradox of secrecy" that the dissertation conceptualizes, also attends to a particular aspect of occult knowledge production in its historical context. Chapter 1, "*The Travels of Lao Can* as Book of Prophecy," concretizes how and why *The Travels of Lao Can*, a canonical novel in contemporary literary historiography, was received as a secret scroll, replete with prophetic knowledge, in its own historical time. Through the discovery of a "fake edition" which was in fact the best-selling edition of this novel in the early Republican era, this chapter highlights the marketing logic of the "secret scroll" and the role played by the profit-seeking publishers. Chapter 2, "Restoring the Taigu Genealogy" provides a new narrative of the relationship between Liu E, *The Travels of Lao Can*, and the so-called "lost scrolls" of the "Taigu school," an esoteric and "heretical" teaching originating in the eighteenth century with which Liu E was associated. Analyzing a dispute regarding whether the school's "lost scrolls" should be published in printed form or kept secret as manuscripts, this chapter underlines the tension between manuscript culture and print culture. Chapter 3, "Transforming the Body, Transforming the Book" focuses on the *Yijin jing* 易筋經 (Sinew Transformation Classic), the most famous kung-fu secret scroll in postwar martial arts popular culture. Examining dozens of editions of the book produced throughout the age of print, this chapter argues that the *Yijin jing* is not a singular or bounded book, but is instead comprised of a network of numerous actors, including both things and human agents, that is in constant making, remaking, and reconfiguration. Chapter 4, "Rivers and Lakes" reads "Chinese martial arts fiction" born in the early twentieth century not as a self-conscious literary genre, but as a new manifestation of secret scrolls about the mysterious world known as *jianghu* 江湖, or the "rivers and lakes." The interplay between secret scrolls, literary works, and serialization as a mode of literary production is a key concern of this chapter. Chapter 5, "The Spiritual and the Global," shifts from traditional Chinese occult traditions to the influence of Western occultism since the late nineteenth century. It focuses on how secret scrolls

about Western occultism, most noticeably how-to manuals to Mesmerism, were disseminated and consumed by way of a global postal network, and how they fostered an "imagined global community," which not only granted Chinese readers access to the spiritual world, but also invited them to imagine their positions in the modern global order in a new way.

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Acknowledgments

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There are too many names now in my mind when I think about every step of the dissertation as well as my graduate studies in the past years: my mentors, colleagues, friends, and family. However, I have to, for the time being, withhold the impulse of saying their names and expressing my gratitude. Because in my mind, this project is far from completed. The day when the dissertation is published as a monograph is the time when I pay off this emotional delt. Let me keep working, knowing I own them.

Introduction

Buddha's Palm

Figure 0.1, film still from *Kung Fu Hustle* (Stephen Chow, 2004).

Those who have watched *Kung Fu Hustle*, Stephen Chow's 2004 film that created a new box-office record in the history of Hong Kong cinema, would not forget the scene, pictured above, when we see a close-up of a book called *Buddha's Palm* (Figure 0.1). The protagonist of the film, Sing, is a small-time hooligan hoping to join the "Axe Gang," the most notorious and powerful criminal organization in the film's setting, which is implicitly alluded to as Shanghai in the 1930s but never explicitly stated. Sing was, however, not born wicked. A flashback, from which scene the above film still is taken, tells how Sing changed from a kind-hearted and valiant boy to someone who believes that deception and violence are the only keys to survival. One day, the young Sing is stopped by a man in rags, who assures him that he has a once-in-a-century gift for kung fu, and that if his flow of *qi* is channeled, he could be like "a dragon flying in the sky." "The responsibility to defend justice and uphold world peace will be yours. Will you take it?" Sing nods, and then the man takes out the book: "This *Buddha's Palm* is a secret scroll 秘笈 and it is priceless. But I can see that it is destined to be yours. I will let you have it for ten dollars." The young Sing breaks open his piggybank without the least hesitation, giving away the money that, according to his recollection many years later, he had saved for his education so that he could become a doctor or a lawyer when he grows up. It turns out, however, that the man is just a swindler. The young Sing stands up for the girl he dotes on with his newly learned "Buddha's palm," but only ends up being pinned to the ground and punched by the bullies he hopes to resist. His newly acquired "secret scroll," falling to the ground in the melee, becomes a laughingstock. "Look at this! It teaches "Buddha's palm"! And it's worth all of two cents! You must be a rich kid!" The worst of the bullies laughs boisterously, and the camera closes in on the colophon of the book: "Printed and distributed by the Dinghao Lithography Company. Retail price: two cents." (Figure 0.2)

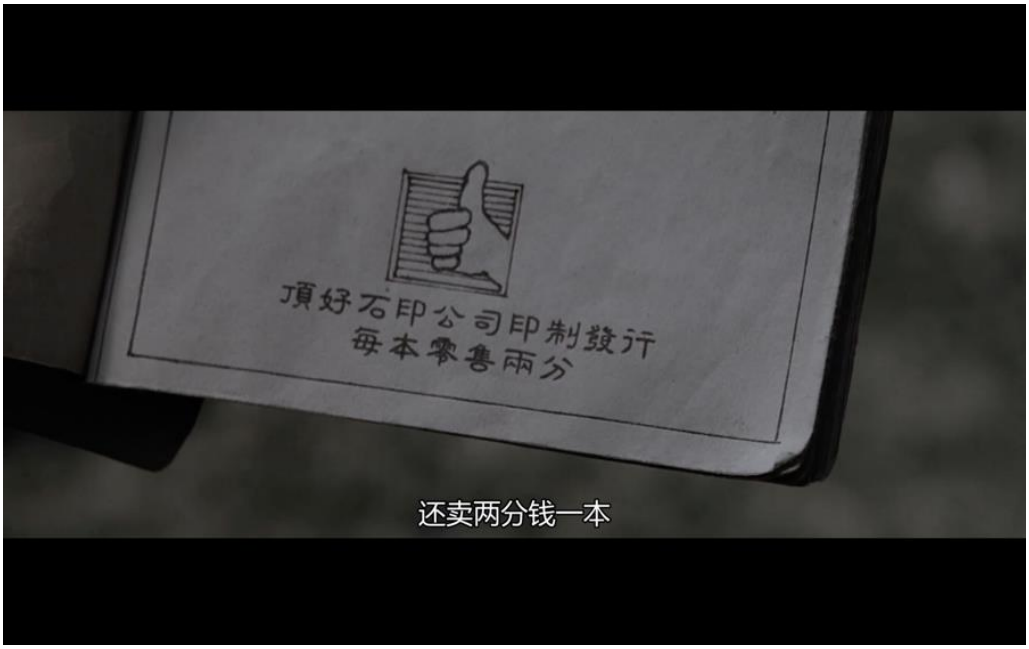

Figure 0.2, film still from *Kung Fu Hustle* (Stephen Chow, 2004).

The fraudulence of the so-called "secret scroll" thus seems self-evident. Here the assumption shared by the filmmakers and the audience is that a mass-produced pamphlet with a cheap retail price must be fake, and that the kung fu skill called "Buddha's palm" promised in the pamphlet is, to use the word in the film's English title, but a "hustle." Yet, the problem becomes more complicated as the story goes on. In the final combat with the supervillain, Sing's "flow of *qi*" is indeed finally "channeled," and the supreme power of the "Buddha's palm" suddenly makes its appearance through Sing's body, marking his final transformation from hooligan to a righteous kung fu master. At this point what we had assumed was a "hustle" proves to be a revelation, one that has taken the whole story to unfold: every word that the man in rags spoke has proven true as prophecy: Sing has a special gift for kung fu, he indeed becomes invincible, and by making the difficult but righteous decision of standing with the good and fighting the bad, he has indeed shouldered the responsibility of "defending justice and upholding world peace." Since the two-cent book from the man in rags is the only source that has ever guided Sing in his martial arts training, the authenticity of the "secret scroll" must be reevaluated.

But wait — that conclusion should not be drawn too fast either. Toward the very end of the film, another layer of complication is added. As the camera spins around, Sing the adult kung fu master becomes once again a little boy, and all the characters that have been playing their proper roles in the film — be it the good, the evil, and the comic — reenter the frame, but now only as ordinary passers-by in an urban street scene. The temporal structure of Sing's Bildungsroman suddenly collapses and is replaced by that of fantasia: could it be that the entire story has never happened? Perhaps the triumphal ending was but a fantasy fabricated in the little boy's imagination? A fantasy about the weak becoming the strong, good defeating the evil, in recompense for the sufferings of a traumatized boy after he has been cheated and humiliated. In the very last shot of the film, the man in rags appears again and tries to sell the very same *Buddha's Palm* to another young boy. Sensing that the boy might not be interested, the man continues: "You don't like this one? I have more." Like a magician adept at sleight-of-hand, he suddenly produces five more different kinds of "secret scrolls" with a flourish, each pamphlet

promising to reveal the secrets of kung fu moves that the audience — assuming a basic knowledge on their part of twentieth-century martial arts and popular culture — would no doubt find familiar. By now, we are all too aware that these books are merely two-cent products of the Dinghao Lithography Company. But the boy is obviously impressed. His eyes become saturated with inspiration and determination. Can we tell what is going to happen next? Will this boy find himself deceived? Or will he ultimately come into possession of the true kung fu? The film ends here.

The film ends here, and precisely by leaving this question unanswered, it offers a most sophisticated insight into the problem of the so-called "secret scroll." Does there ever exist anything that qualifies as a "secret scroll"? If so, what does it look like? How come supposedly "secret" knowledge ends up publicized in printed form, and does it still bear any secrecy after being manufactured and thrown to the market for mass consumption? If not, and if the so-called "secret" is simply a marketing gimmick of a profit-seeking print industry, then who, drawing on which sources made up these "secret scrolls," and what made them believe that "secrecy" would sell?

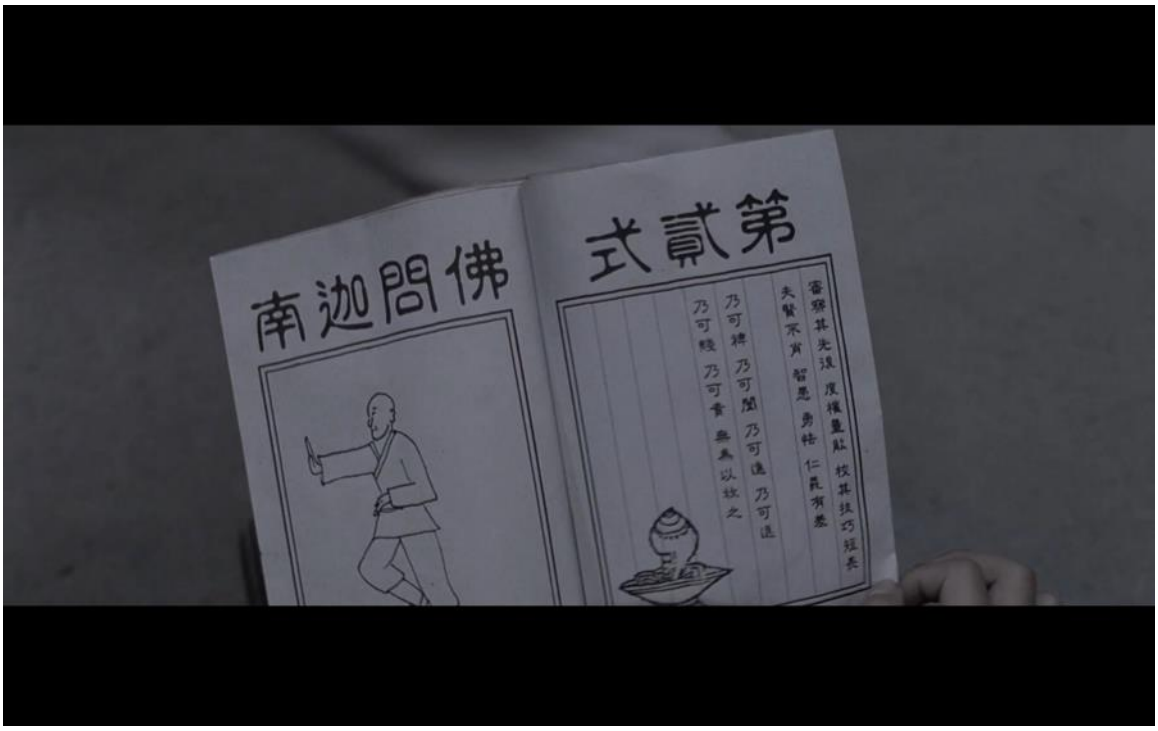

Figure 0.3, film still from *Kung Fu Hustle* (Stephen Chow, 2004).

These are the questions explored in this dissertation. But to avert the impression that this study is an ahistorical and philosophical inquiry into what a "secret" is, something has to be said about the particular historical and material backdrop in which a "secret" becomes a problem. Steven Chow's films are famous for making fun of the very notion of historical significance and playing with anachronistic jokes. *Kung Fu Hustle* seems to be no exception. As the young Sing studies the *Buddha's Palm*, we get a quick glance from his point of view at the contents and materiality of the book (Figure 0.3). The paper stock is too smooth and reflective to resemble the texture of a Republican-era pamphlet, the lines of the illustrations are too kitschy and mechanical to convey any sort of historical aura, and the Chinese characters are clearly printed in a

contemporary computer font. As we freeze the frame and zoom in to observe the words on the page, we will be amused to learn that the supposedly mysterious narrative, transmitting the supreme knowledge of the "Buddha's palm," is actually made up of random phrases excerpted from the *Guiguzi* 鬼谷子, an ancient Chinese text on political strategies. Nor could have the "Buddha's palm" appeared in a film set in the 1930s, because this supposedly supreme attainment in kung fu would not be invented by the Hong Kong film industry until in the 1960s. Nor could the other secret scrolls that the man in rags peddles in the end of the film be for sale in prewar Shanghai, because the kung fu moves they reference derive, without exception, from Jin Yong and Gu Long's martial arts fictions from the 1950s and the 1960s, and were only adopted into the scenarios of Hong Kong cinema thereafter. Obviously, by deploying this overtly anachronistic joke, Steven Chow pays homage to the golden age of Hong Kong's martial arts cinema. However, a tiny detail lets slip the fact that this film has a deeper understanding of its historical setting, and this detail alone most convincingly makes of this seemingly anachronistic secret scroll a product of its supposed time period. This detail is hidden in the name of the publisher of this two-penny pamphlet: Dinghao Lithography Company.

The word "lithography," in Chinese "*shiyin*" 石印 (literally "stone printing") is not a familiar term for today's audience. If the point is simply that a mass-produced "secret scroll" cannot pretend to secrecy and authenticity, then there are many easier and more familiar ways to name the publisher: by specifying a press, a publishing house, a printing company, or a bookstore. But why specify a "stone printing company?" What is this outdated term doing here? For people living in the 1930s Shanghai, lithography was not unfamiliar. In fact, it was most likely the technological means that would be used to produce a secret scroll like the *Buddha's Palm*. Invented by Alois Senefelder (1771–1834) in 1796, lithography soon became popular throughout Europe as a cheap alternative to movable type. In the first half of the nineteenth century, it was introduced into China by missionaries. With the founding of the Dianshizhai Books 點石齋書局 in 1878, Shanghai witnessed the local coming of the age of lithography, and similar "stone printing" publishers mushroomed in the years thereafter, although the traditional Chinese wood-block printing and the newly imported Western movable type also coexisted with the medium. By the beginning of the Republican era in 1912, moveable type became the overwhelming favorite, dominating the print market throughout the twentieth century. However, lithography continued to facilitate the Chinese information exchange because of its irreplaceable merits: a low entry threshold for aspiring print capitalists, portability, and most importantly, its ability to faithfully duplicate pre-existing materials, no matter whether they were manuscripts, hand-drawn images, or woodblock and movable type imprints.[1]

These merits made lithography a favored choice — even in an age of moveable type — for the production of materials of certain kinds. Secret kung fu scrolls were apparently one such kind, not only because they usually featured many illustrations, but also because they were expected to have an aura of antiquity, creating the impression that they were reproduced from some older and thus more authentic sources. We cannot find an "authentic" Republican-era edition of the *Buddhist Palm*, because, as we have said, this form of kung fu awaited to be invented in the future. But the example of another martial arts manual called *The Quintessence of Shaolin Boxing* 少林拳術精義, one that also claims a Buddhist origin, will quench our curiosity as to what an "authentic" Republican-era lithographed kung fu secret scroll would look like. To

[1] For an extensive history of lithography in China, see Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), pp. 88–127.

correspond to the film stills above, I also present three pages from the book: a profile of the alleged original source of its kung fu, the colophon page, and a page with an illustration guiding readers toward the proper practice of the secret arts the book aims to impart. (Figure 0.4)

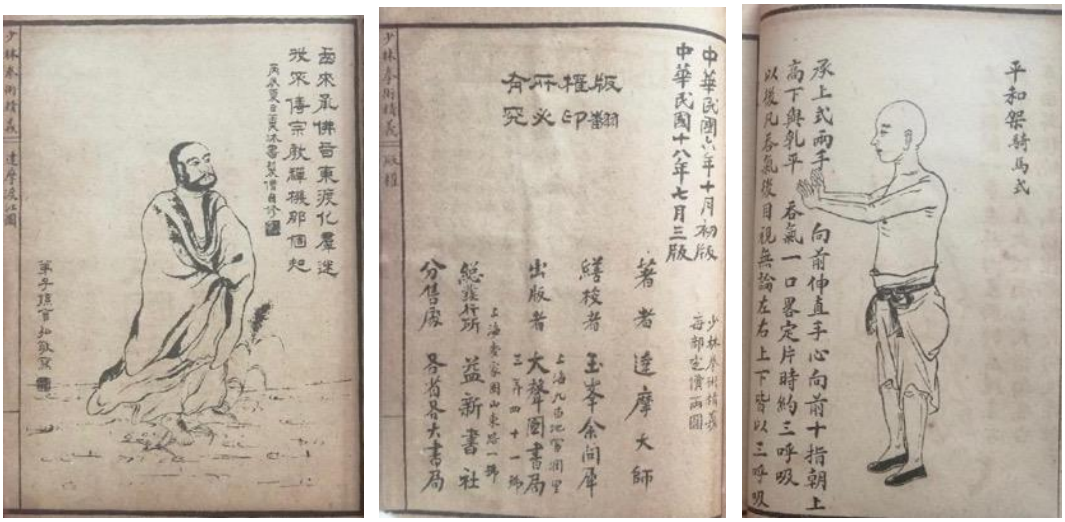

Figure 0.4: pages from *Shaolin quanshu jingyi* 少林拳術精義, the 3rd edition (1929).

The first edition of the book was published in 1917 by an now unknown Shanghai-based firm called Dasheng Books 大聲圖書局, which was likely a small workshop that left little mark on the larger print industry.[2] The book, however, was not an ephemeral product. Its third edition, published in 1929, shows that it had held on to its market for at least twelve years. From the scratchy handwriting style of the colophon as well as text and images elsewhere, we can easily tell it was a typical lithographic product. The role of the "amanuensis" 繕校者 on the colophon page suggests that the contents of the book came from a pre-existing source. After the "amanuensis" copied the old source with his handwriting, the inverted images of the new manuscript were impressed onto the surface of a stone plate (or metal plate, if they used the more expensive photolithography), which then could produce as many paper copies as the publisher desired.[3] This old source, as the profile of the bearded monk suggests, originated from the transmission of Bodhidharma, the semi-legendary Indian or Persian monk who was believed to have brought to China the Chan Buddhism as well as the Shaolin martial arts sometime between the fifth and the sixth centuries. Bodhidharma hid the "quintessence" of the martial arts in a secret scroll, and this secret scroll was passed down from one generation to the next, until it finally came to the hands of the "amanuensis" of Dasheng Books — so is it told by the several essays that are supposed to have been authored and bound to the secret scroll by witnesses of the transmission from different historical periods. Merely by gazing at the motions of the young monk in the illustrations (which are eerily similar to the illustrations in the apocryphal *Buddha's*

[2] For the thus far most compete survey of lithography publishers in Shanghai in late-Qing and early Republican China, see Yang Liying 楊麗瑩, *Qingmo Minchu shiyinshu yu shiyinben yanjiu: yi Shanghai diqu wei zhongxin* 清末民初石印術與石印本研究——以上海地區為中心 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2018): pp. 168–201. The Dasheng Books does not appear in this survey.

[3] For a detailed explanation of the process of a lithography production, see Yang Liying, *Qingmo Minchu shiyinshu yu shiyinben yanji*, pp. 29–40.

Palm), a Republican-era reader was guaranteed direct access to Bodhidharma's original and authentic transmission.

This Republican-era reader would not necessarily figure out, however, that this book was but a miscellany assembled by the Dasheng Books from a tapestry of seemingly random sources. As I will study in depth in Chapter 3 of the dissertation, a portion of the contents and some of the narratives of the transmission history included here were lifted directly from the *Yijin jing* 易筋經 (*Sinew Transformation Classic*), a "family" of secret scrolls that originated at the turn of the Ming and Qing dynasties and expanded to become an extensive textual network thanks to the efflorescence of woodblock printing in the Qing dynasty, whilst other parts of the book were a hodgepodge of martial arts and gymnastics manuals produced by the same Ming-Qing agents of occult knowledge production. How about the book's origin with Bodhidharma? Alas! We don't even know whether Bodhidharma ever existed as a historical figure, or if he was simply a fictional persona. In other words, *The Quintessence of Shaolin Boxing*, despite its unquestionable existence as a Republican era text, still has to be confronted with all the questions that Steven Chow has thrown to the fictional *Buddha's Palm*: does it really transmit authentic *kung fu*, or is it simply a *hustle*? The film *Kung Fu Hustle*, in this sense, is a far cry from a "nonsense" (*wulitou* 無厘頭) comedy which is Chow's branded genre. Produced in the new century, set in the 1930s Shanghai, and driven by a secret scroll that transmits an ancient Buddha's miracle, the film's box-office magic is to a great extent predicated upon its seizure of and confrontation with the contemporary audience's epistemological dilemma — that is, to believe or not to believe in the credibility of the occult — that are both rooted in and cultivated by the historical past.

Dissecting the "Secret Scroll"

This dissertation is a cultural history of "secret scroll" in China' age of print. What exactly does "secret scroll" mean? What are the materials studied in this dissertation and what makes them interesting? By way of clarifying the scope of the study and articulating its significance, I will dissect the very term "secret scroll" in three steps. First, I will survey the history of this label in the Chinese bibliographic tradition and make it clear that the "secret scroll" as we know of it today is a late Ming invention. Second, I focus on the term "secret" and clarify how the "secret" told in the "secret scrolls" can be best characterized as occult knowledge. Third, I move on to "scroll," the media form of the occult knowledge. Resuming the argument made in the first step, namely "secret scroll" is a late Ming invention, I further articulate that this invention was driven by an unprecedented commercial print culture, which not only resulted in an exponential growth in the number of books circulating in the market, but also started to reshape how occult knowledge was produced, spread, and consumed. This print media culture defines what I call "China's age of print," which spans the late Ming print revolution and the Republican era's ushering in of a new multimedia epoch, i.e., the period in which new media forms such as radio, cinema and photography started complementing — and to some extent eclipsing — printing in shaping people's collective imagination.

First, "secret scroll" is not an analytical term invented by this dissertation. It is my rendering of the Chinese word *miji* 秘笈 — the very word that the man in rags uses to characterize *Buddha's Palm*. This word has a particularly strong contemporary relevance. For one thing, it is a standard trope for secret knowledge production and transmission in today's popular culture. From martial arts fiction to video games to the Internet literature of immortality 修仙文學, a *miji* is a must-have item by means of which the protagonist achieves transcendence.

For another, it is a highly acclaimed (and abused) type of nomenclature in the actual book market. Any kind of how-to manual would find it desirable to have "*miji*" in the title, from *The Miji of Investing in the Stock Market* to *The Miji of Having a Better Marriage*. Historically, however, the *miji* was a much narrower concept. The literary meaning of the word is a container fashioned of bamboo (as the bamboo radical of the character *ji* suggested) used to keep precious objects in secret. From the Tang through the Song and Yuan dynasties, this literal meaning remained stable. In many contexts the "container" was used to enclose precious religious scriptures; in other contexts, it was for precious artworks; but it never had a direct association with books in general or was found in particular book titles.[4] Arriving in the late Ming period (the beginning of China's age of print, of which more later), however, "*miji*" started to appear in book titles and library names. The most famous example was probably Chen Jiru's 陳繼儒 (1558–1639) elaborate woodblock printing project which yielded a series of 229 book titles collectively known as *Baoyantang miji* 寶顏堂秘笈. The paradox of *miji* was already explicit here: apparently, the greatest virtue of Chen Jiru's project was to preserve and widen the circulation of previously unknown or inaccessible books, yet this practice of publicization was presented as keeping these books in secret. If in this case, "*miji*" can still be interpreted in a literal sense, meaning Chen Jiru's "secret bamboo case" which enclosed 229 books, then in examples like Wu Daonan's 吳道南 (1550–1624) *Miji xinshu* 秘笈新書 and Du Wenhuan's 杜文煥 (1607 *jinshi*) *Taixia miji* 太霞秘笈, "*miji*" as a metonym for "secret books" was unambiguously established.

The fact that *miji*'s original meaning was not a "secret book," but a "secret container," and that this "container" eventually became a metonymy for "book" (or "scroll"), is not merely accidental. For the purposes of this study, it might be understood as a down-to-earth manifestation of Marshall McLuhan's famous slogan: "The medium is the message," which arguably declared the birth of media studies by shifting the attention from the "message" contained by a medium to the medium itself.[5] The conceptual history of "*miji*" seems to call on our critical vision in the same fashion: what matters is not only the content, but also the "container" of the contents. This attention on the "container" necessitates a renewed examination of the print culture that provided the very media form for secret scrolls, of which more later.

Around the same time, the word *miji* 秘笈 started getting conflated with its homonym, *miji* 秘籍, literally "secret books," which had emerged in at least the early medieval period as an synonym for *mishu* 秘書, or the imperial library. (In contemporary Chinese, the two *miji* have become completely interchangeable. In fact 秘籍 is used more often in today's book market because the character 籍 is more familiar and straightforward. But it should be pointed out that the two had different etymologies, according to which 秘笈 is more appropriate for books transmitting occult knowledge whilst 秘籍 is better for rare editions.) Likewise, nomenclature

[4] The earliest example of *miji* I have identified is in Lu Wen's 呂溫 (772–811) "Nanyue dashi Yuangong ta mingji bingxu" 南嶽大師遠公塔銘記並序. In this context, *miji* is best interpreted as the container of precious Buddhist scriptures. See Lu Wen, *Lu Hengzhou wenji fu kaozheng* 呂衡州文集附考證, 10 *juan*, in *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1935), p.69. I need to point out, however, that this is the only Tang dynasty source in which "*miji*" written in the two characters 秘笈 is found. Therefore, it is very likely that "*miji*" 秘笈 did not become a word in the Tang at all. The original characters could have been something like "*miji*" 秘籍, and they became 秘笈 only in the later textual transmissions. In the Song and Yuan sources there are much more examples of the word, and in many cases the "case" is used to store Daoist scriptures. The mysterious connotation of this word in later periods should have come from this Daoist associations.

[5] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994), p. 7.

that builds on this basic formula, such as *mice* 秘冊 (secret album), *mijuan* 秘卷 (secret volume), *michuan* 秘傳 (secret transmission), *milu* 秘錄 (secret documentation), *miyao* 秘要 (secret quintessence), *miwen* 秘聞 (secret hearsay), *mishi* 秘史 (secret history), *mijue* 秘訣 (secret code), and *mifang* 秘方 (secret prescription), all emerged and flourished starting from this period, and are also considered in this dissertation under the general rubric of the "secret scroll." From the late Ming to the Republican era, these books were a nonnegligible phenomenon, yet this phenomenon has never been properly acknowledged, not to mention being seriously studied. Part of the reason is that these books do not constitute a self-sufficient category in the traditional Chinese bibliographical tradition. This "secret" nomenclature fashion in most cases worked as a commercial gimmick, and books sold with this gimmick were more often than not cheap and hastily assembled products beneath the notice of serious scholars. In this sense, this dissertation does not consider the secret scroll as a typical case in the field of "history of books" and it does not attempt a comprehensive bibliographical survey of secret scrolls, because it does not assume the existence of such an essentialized category in the first place. Instead, it studies the "secret scroll" as a cultural trope and a node of significance in a growing network of materials, discourses, and human agents. By the same token, the label "secret scroll" also does not fully define the scope of the dissertation. Any materials claiming the transmission of secret knowledge (regardless the nomenclature) in the age of print will be considered in this dissertation. Yet, what exactly does the "secret" in "secret scroll" mean? Does this study concern itself with "secrets" in an ordinary sense, for example, one's private (and thus secret) life or the secret military intelligence in the wartime?

The dissection thus moves on to the second step. What is a secret? In the next section we will dive into some of the most insightful observations scholars (and especially sociologists) have made about this problem in the past century. But for the moment, and for the purpose of articulating the scope of "secret scroll" materials which were produced in particular historical contexts, let me quickly state that the "secret" concealed in a "secret scroll" is a form of knowledge, and this knowledge is supposed to extract the subject from the everyday realm of experience and reach a hidden truth, wisdom, or ability at a higher register. I invoke the English word "occult" as a denominator for this sort of knowledge. In other words, the "secret scrolls" studied in this dissertation are "secret" because they claim to transmit some form of occult knowledge. This, however, does not mean that I will invite the Western tradition of occultism to linguistically colonize the forms of secret knowledge produced in the Chinese historical context. Three reasons convince me that "occult" is the right word in English that helps articulate the "secret" of the "secret scrolls." The first is the word's literal meaning, "to hide." When it meets "knowledge," which is something not supposed to be hidden, a paradox arises, and this paradox is precisely what underlines the significance of the materials studied here. How do we make sense of something that is supposed to be hidden and transmitted at the same time? To confront this paradox is a consistent concern of this dissertation, and an overview of this problem will follow in the next section. Second, I found the denominator "occult" useful because in the Western context it also alludes to a particular power structure, in which occult knowledge is contrasted to both the religious orthodoxies and the modern scientism. The same power structure is observed in the materials studied in this dissertation. Whilst the word *miji* 秘笈 never loses its affordance of naming libraries in a neutral sense (such as the aforenoted Chen Jiru's *Baoyantang miji* in the late Ming and the Commercial Press's library *Hanfenlou miji* 涵芬樓秘笈 in the Republican period), in most cases a secret scroll claims for itself knowledge that tends not to be favored by both established thought systems (Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism) and modern

rationality. As a result, and as will be exemplified through particular cases in the ensuring chapters, these secret scrolls were often denounced as either heretical or superstitious, which is one of the reasons why these materials have not received due scholarly attention. The third reason the occult remains appropriate in this case is based on the fact that some of the knowledges transmitted in the Chinese secret scrolls did indeed come from the Western occult tradition. As Chapter 5 will make clear, the global flow of Western occultism (often in the name of scientism) in the second half of the nineteenth century had a direct (if somewhat delayed) influence on the Chinese world of knowledge, resulting in a general tendency toward reconsidering Chinese knowledge and practices, such as theories of ghosts and *fuji* spirit writing, in new terms and in new frameworks. In other words, occult knowledge is not an enclosed system that can be demarcated as belonging either to the "Chinese" or to the "West." Like its media container, the secret scroll, these forms of knowledge formed in aggregate an open and ever-growing network in which new associations were consistently made and through these conjunctions, new significances arose. But how and why did this network grow? What were the driving forces that shaped this open system of knowledge production?

To answer that question, we would do well to ask what the "scroll" in "secret scroll" might mean? The "scroll" here is a metonym for the mediality and materiality of the occult knowledge. As we have already established, the "secret scroll" is an invention of the late Ming commercial print culture. Therefore, the "scrolls" studied in this dissertation are specifically printed materials produced from the late Ming to the Republican era, a historical span that I term "China's age of print." (Of course, many of such printed materials had existed in manuscript forms, and the transition from manuscript to the print is one of the central issues explored in the ensuing chapters.) The somehow unconventional periodization of "China's age of print" needs to be clarified. Print has a long history in China and its beginning can be traced at least back to 868, the year to which a Dunhuang excavated copy of the *Diamond Sutra*, the earliest extant printed material is dated. Existing scholarship on print culture in China has focused on three periods: the Song dynasty when print became a major medium for knowledge production, the late Ming which witnessed the coming of an unprecedented wave of commercial woodblock printing, and the modern period (the late Qing and the Republican) which ushered in new printing technologies (lithography and movable type) and saw the birth of China's modern print capitalism.[6] My definition of "China's age of print" from the late Ming to the Republican era

[6] Major research on the Song dynasty print culture in English include Susan Cherniack, "Book Culture and Textual Transmission in Sung China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54.1 (1994): 5–125. And *Knowledge and Text Production in an Age of Print: China, 900–1400*, ed. Lucille Chia and Hilde Godelieve Dominique De Weerdt (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011). Note that it is this book that first uses the term "age of print," though it means the Song dynasty. Lucille Chia's research on the Jianyang publishers spans from the Song to the Ming-Qing transition. See *Lucille Chia, Printing for Profit: The Commercial Publishers of Jianyang, Fujian (11th–17th Centuries)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). Major research on the late imperial (or "early modern") period includes Kai-Wing Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modem China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), Yuming He, *Home and the World: Editing the "Glorious Ming" in Woodblock-Printed Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013) and Suyoung Son, *Writing for Print: Publishing and the Making of Textual Authority in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018). Cynthia J. Brokaw's Sibao case (another commercial printing center near Jianyang) spans from the Qing to the Republican period. See Cynthia J. Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2007). For the modern period, the most comprehensive study remains Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004). Fei-Hsien Wang's recent study has added the important angle of copyright. See Fei-Hsien Wang, *Pirates and Publishers: A Social History of Copyright in*

thus needs to answer two questions: First, why does it start at the late Ming, instead of the Song? If the answer is about the late Ming's commercial print, doesn't the Song also have highly advanced commercial print? (Afterall, the Northern Song had already started printing paper money.) Second, why do I combine the late Ming and the modern? Aren't there fundamental differences between the two periods in almost every regard, from the technology to the capital, from quantity to quality, from the producers' business models to the consumers' patterns of social stratification?[7]

I am aware of the validity of these questions. My periodization, however, does not come from a deliberate revolt against the existing scholarship. It is based on a simple fact: the secret scroll materials are found in this time span. (To be sure, this fact, and the implications that will be studied based on this fact, definitely help us rethink the conventional division between "premodern" and "modern" China, which has been a scholarly undercurrent in the past decades.[8]) In the earlier periods, the printed materials that most seemingly resembled the secret scrolls were probably religious scriptures, yet they were usually imperial projects (for example, the earliest woodblock printing of the Daoist canons, *Wanshou Daozang* 萬壽道藏, in the early twelfth century) far from popular consumption, not to mention that the religious and the occult are two mutually exclusive domains of knowledge, as explained above.[9] It was only in the late Ming commercial printing boom that the "secret scroll" was born as a category and occult knowledge became consumable in the book market. This production and consumption continued into the Qing dynasty and reached a crescendo in the modern era. To be sure, the overwhelming majority of secret scroll materials are found in the late Qing and Republican period, which was a necessary result of the overall explosion of book production with the coming of machine-age modernity. However, I don't see a radical rupture that distinguishes secret scrolls produced in the

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Modern China (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press). Two edited volumes also extends the modern print culture to the contemporary. See *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008*, ed. Cynthia J. Brokaw and Christopher A. Reed (Leiden Boston: Brill, 2010), and *Religious Publishing and Print Culture in Modern China: 1800–2012*, ed. Philip Clart and Gregory A. Scott (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2015). I should clarify that for each time period I have only mentioned some monography-length studies and edited volumes that are meant for compressive surveys or publisher-specific case studies. There are much more that must be left out for the lack of space.

[7] I am, however, definitely not the first to discuss the two periods together. As the above literature review shows, Cynthia J. Brokaw has already done so (though she starts from the Qing instead of the late Ming), and her reason is also imperative: the Sibao book business has simply existed in that period. See Cynthia J. Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture*.

[8] According to William Rowe, Frederic Wakeman, Jr. in 1975 for the first time stated the idea that the late Ming could be seen as the beginning of China's modern time. See William Rowe, "Approaches to Modern Chinese Social History," in Reliving the Past: The Worlds of Social History, ed. Olivier Zunz (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985): pp, 236–96. Since then, many scholars have noticed the continuity in the cultural field from the late Ming to the late Qing, and it becomes more and more visible to refer to the Ming-Qing dynasties as "early modern" instead of "late imperial." However, it remains a standard historiography to use the late Qing to divide the "premodern" and "modern."

[9] The relationship between print culture and religion is explored in the aforenoted edited volume *Religious Publishing and Print Culture in Modern China: 1800–2012*, ed. Philip Clart and Gregory A. Scott. Articles in this volume covers *Bible*, Buddhist scriptures, morality books and "Precious Scrolls" (*baojuan* 寶卷). The other materials are apparently not the concern of this dissertation. The *baojuan* genre, however, has many aspects that could be compared to secret scroll, such as the transformation from manuscripts to the print and their appeals in the low-end book market. (The differences are equally obvious: *baojuan* is mostly narrative works for religious performance.) For a study devoted to this genre in late imperial China, see Rostislav Berezkin, *Many Faces of Mulian: The Precious Scrolls of Late Imperial China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017).

modern days from those of the late Ming. Compared to the other forms of knowledge that were radically reformed and redefined in this changing time, the occult seemed to have been by and large left undisturbed, since they were deemed as the "heretical" and the "superstitious" that needed to be abandoned anyway. The changes that did take place were evident in the forms, materials, presentation, and quantity, but the fundamental paradox inherent in the compound of "secret scroll" since its birth in the late Ming was — instead of being challenged — pushed to an extreme in this new age. To reveal this paradox is this dissertation's contribution to the general field of print culture studies, China or elsewhere.

The Paradox of Secrecy in An Age of Print

How is it possible to publicize something but at the same time keep it a secret? When a book of occult knowledge, for example the *Buddha's Palm*, is made into thousands of printed copies and placed on the market for popular consumption, to what extant does it still retain the secrecy that it claims for itself? To answer these questions necessitates a quite simple but fundamental question: what is a secret? Ever since Georg Simmel's seminal essay "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies" first published in 1906, the sociological exploration of the question has been associated with identifying and untangling various paradoxes, "most often in the sense that for a secret to be realized, someone must not only conceal something but someone else must know or suspect this concealment."[10] Or, more straightforwardly, "it is the very nature of secrets that they get told," as Beryl L. Bellman puts it.[11]

This dissertation places this "paradox" in a particular historical and media context: China's age of print. Whereas Simmel's classical theory concerns the paradox of secrecy in everyday and verbal communications in relatively circumscribed societies — "people's ceaseless problems in trying to master their affairs (problems that remain ultimately insoluble) and […] their underlying though vain hopes that they may one day entirely succeed," as T.O. Beidelman summarizes it — this dissertation's context necessitates the consideration of more variables: now, it is not a circumscribed social group, but a large civilization with an enormous population of readers; not about a documentable verbal communication between individuals, but about the collective imagination of a reading public mediated by the print culture. In such a new context, does the paradox of secrecy still stand?

Before I answer this question explicitly, it is necessary to make a more nuanced distinction between the secrecy of occult knowledge (the subject of this study) and what Michael Taussig calls "public secrecy," i.e., sensitive (and usually political) information that is "generally known, but cannot be articulated."[12] This distinction is necessary because both "secrecies" are intrinsic to large societies and new media forms — or modernity, as one might say — and they are easily confused as one. Indeed, living in an epoch of Wikileaks and endless political scandals, "public secrecy" is too relevant to our everyday life to not shape how we understand "secrecy." Yet, as I will point out below, this mode of thinking has missed the sophistication of the problem

[10] T.O. Beidelman, *Secrecy and Society: The Paradox of Knowing and the Knowing of Paradox* (Evanston, IL: Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, no. 5, 1993), pp. 6–7. For Georg Simmel's essay, which was published originally in English, see Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies." *American Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 4 (1906): 441–98.
[11] Beryl L. Bellman, "The Paradox of Secrecy." *Human Studies* 4, no. 1 (1981): 1.
[12] Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 5.

as Simmel approaches it. In other words, a public secrecy, despite the intrinsic tension between the two antonyms in the compound, does not come with a paradox. Why?

We need to further differentiate "secrecy" — the quality of being secret — in two different senses. First, secrecy could be understood in an ontological sense. In this sense, secrecy is an ontological state of being in which a secret is perfectly kept from being revealed. An example that comes in handy here is the algorithm of Nazi Germany's Enigma machine. The moment when the algorithm was deciphered by the Allies was also when the secrecy of the machine collapsed. The so-called "public secrecy" stands in this sense, i.e., although everybody knows about it, none is allowed to articulate, to shape it in discourse, to word it. The force of restriction is the very thing that makes it a secret. Think of it in this way: there are a number of historical incidents that are commonly considered as public secrets in contemporary China. If one day the restriction is lifted and everyone is allowed to talk about them freely, will anybody still consider them as public secrets? This is why Margaret Hillenbrand in a recent study chooses to approach these incidents and their secrecy through "photo-forms" instead of any readable text, because a "public secret, as a felt but elusive force, leaves its most visible traces not in historical archives, fieldward data, or government legislation, but in aesthetic forms — and in one category of representational objects, in particular."[13]

This is why I say that studies of public secrecy actually inherit little from Simmel's sophisticated approach to the problem of secrecy. Although he is often acclaimed as "the sage of secrecy studies," Gary T. Marx and Glenn W. Muschert observe that Simmel's legacy with respect to secrecy is in "bits and pieces, and such a legacy is often difficult to track," so that they have to invoke Simmel's contributions on other topics (mostly on money and exchange) to justify Simmel's significance in secrecy studies (because for them, secrecy is about the control of the exchange of information).[14] To some extent, the problem of "public secrecy" is less concerned with "secrecy" than on the tension and asymmetry between "the public" and "the private" as two different sites of information exchange. This is why Beryl L. Bellman tries very hard to make a conceptual distinction between "privacy and secrecy," treating the former as what ought to be kept hidden but the latter as "a kind of communicative event."[15]

Secrecy as "a communicative event" is closer to Simmel's wisdom and is what I call "secrecy in an epistemological sense" (opposed to the ontological sense as discussed above). In this sense, secrecy describes a cognitive state in which a human subject recognizes a particular thing or piece of information as being secret. This dissertation's subject, the secrecy of occult knowledge, should be understood in this sense. It matters little whether the "occult knowledge" itself is secret or not (because there is nothing that is essentially "more secret" than another thing). Instead, it seeks to understand a reciprocal process through which some forms of knowledge were recognized as being secret by numerous readers and were made available as objects of consumption in the form of secret scrolls in the book market, which in turn further fostered the collective recognition (and imagination) of the secrecy of the occult knowledge.

This distinction paves the way to answering the central question I have discoursed on several times: how is it possible that a printed and mass-consumed secret scroll bears any secrecy?

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[13] Margaret Hillenbrand, *Negative Exposures: Knowing What Not to Know in Contemporary China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), pp. 4.

[14] Gary T. Marx and Glenn W. Muschert, "Simmel on Secrecy: A Legacy and Inheritance for the Sociology of Information," in *Soziologie als Möglichkeit: 100 Jahre Georg Simmels Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, ed. Cécile Rol and Christian Papilloud (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009): pp. 217–33. For the particular quotation, see page 218.

[15] Beryl L. Bellman, "The Paradox of Secrecy." *Human Studies* no. 4 (1981): 20.

This chapter argues that print culture only radicalizes — instead of challenges — the paradox of secrecy. "It is the very nature of secrets that they get told." Similarly, the secrecy of a secret scroll was established precisely because it was published, multiplied, and revealed to the public in an age of print. Because "secrecy" is not about the contents of secret scrolls; instead, it is about how the "secret scroll" as a media form mediated the "communicative" process between numerous individual readers and an imagined collective, a collective that could be named a reading public, and which has proven to be the basis for almost everything that is associated with the modern world: scientism, nationalism, Protestantism, capitalism, and so on.[16] It is no coincidence that the late Ming, the beginning of the "age of print" in my periodization, is also seen as the beginning of Chinese modernity by many scholars. Seen from this perspective, the "secret scroll" is a modern product, because the birth of "secrecy" is dialectically predicated upon the birth of the public.

Reassembling the Cultural

To approach secrecy in an epistemological sense and to treat it as a productive process (instead of an essentially "secret" being) is a conscious choice of the current dissertation which defines itself as "cultural history." Indeed, we have thus far invoked the term "culture" (or "the cultural") many times. I said that the term "secret scroll" should be treated as a "cultural" trope, that the occult knowledge (I could have also called it "the occult culture," given that "knowledge" and "culture" are often interchangeable) they claim to transmit should be understood in particular "cultural" contexts, and that the most important context is the print "culture." When scattered in the narrative, these somewhat bookish expressions do not look showy. But as I draft them together as above, the question becomes compelling and imperative: what exactly does "the cultural" mean? Since the words associated with it are quite heterogeneous ("history," "trope," "context," and "print"), are these "cultural" referring to the same entity or totally different things?

One has good reasons to condemn that to ask such a question is like to be a hair-splitter. It is as rude as interrupting a speaker who is talking about "the social problems of our time" and asking, "what exactly does the 'the social' mean in your speech?" However, as hair-splitting as it might look, this "rude" question has already been asked by Bruno Latour. In his 2005 work *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Latour more than explicitly asks: "What is a society? What does the word 'social' mean?"[17] The answer provided by today's sociology, which Latour identifies as "the sociology of the social" coming from a Durkheimian tradition, is that the social is "a special domain, a specific realm, or a particular sort of thing,"[18] which has already been assembled just like other domains ("psychology, law, economics, etc.") and is ready to be deployed "as a specific type of causality to account for the residual aspects that other domains cannot completely deal with."[19] Falling into this trap, Latour argues, our lazy thinking mode has lost the ability of understanding what are the molecules of the entity and how they are associated together. "This problem has a social explanation" — discourses like this come in handy and they sound so convincing. But wait, what exactly is that social explanation?

[16] Literature on this is numerous. For a classical example, see Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).
[17] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 3.
[18] Ibid, 7.
[19] Ibid, 4.

It is against this tendency that Latour proposes to "reassemble the social" by way of rediscovering an alternative (and forgotten) tradition which he names "the sociology of associations." Instead of invoking "the social" as a ready (but empty) explanation to what the other domains cannot deal with, this tradition coming from Gabriel Tarde sees "social aggregates as what should be explained by the specific associations provided by [the other domains such as] economics, linguistics, psychology, law, management, etc." "[The] social does not designate a thing among other things, like a black sheep among other white sheep, but *a type of connection* between things that are not themselves social,"[20] and "a very peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling."[21] A sociologist's responsibility, in this light, is redefined as "the tracing of associations."[22] This work of "tracing" is taken by Latour as the core of what is usually known as the ANT, or "actor-network-theory," which, according to Latour himself, is less a "theory" than a "method."[23]

It is very curious why Latour does not mention "the cultural" at all. However, if we simply replace every word "social" in the whole book with "cultural," we will find the whole argumentation stands as intriguing and productive. If "the social" indeed bears all the problems that Latour has suggested, then the same problems are also appliable to "the cultural." In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that in today's English "the social" and "the cultural" are virtually interchangeable. To take Latour's home discipline anthropology as an example, what are the differences between "social anthropology," "cultural anthropology," and "socio-cultural anthropology"? The standard answer is there is no difference. On most occasions, "the cultural" works in exactly the same way as "the social": it is an already assembled entity, a thing, a realm, a "black sheep among other white sheep." Interestingly, just like that "the social" in this sense comes from Émile Durkheim, the "cultural" as we usually use it today can also be traced back to a giant of the nineteenth century, Edward Burnett Tylor, who coincidently also died in 1917 as Durkheim did. Tylor contributed arguably the thus far most famous and widely cited definition of "culture," which "is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."[24] Apparently, for Tylor a culture is an already assembled "complex whole." Whereas he was at least meticulously trying to name the molecules making up this "whole": "knowledge, belief, art, law, etc.," today we've gone so far that won't even bother that. We are so well trained to quickly invoke a "cultural explanation" to all problems. Let me summarize my earlier statement about the dissertation in this way: this dissertation is a *cultural* history of "secret scroll" as a *cultural* trope and the occult *culture* it creates which should be studied in the *cultural* context of the print *culture*. This is apparently ridiculous, but in a fashion that sounds as if quite academically sensible. Where is the way out?

Following Latour, and with regard to this dissertation's study of the "cultural history" of secret scroll, I experiment with a simple and honest practice: to reassemble the cultural by *tracing the associations*. The associations are to be discovered in each and all domains, including not only those of things that are apparently not themselves "cultural" (the "actors" empowered by the ANT theory): books, technologies, papers, inks, woodblocks, "stone plates," movable

[20] Ibid, 5.
[21] Ibid, 7.
[22] Ibid, 5.
[23] Ibid, 142.
[24] Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom*. 2nd ed, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1873): 1.1.

types, but also — right, I am not mechanically following a Latourian model — domains of human subjects (publishers, authors, readers, book sellers, etc.) as well as signs and meanings (words, jargons, discourses, places, motifs, etc.). Applying this *method* (instead of "theory," in Latour's own word), I see all these as "actors" with their own agencies and try to map out — to the extent possible — the "network" (the cultural reassembled) consisting of the associations. As Latour has acknowledged, "the tracing of association" is not his invention, but a neglected undercurrent springing from Gabriel Tarde. Coincidently, "reassembling the cultural" might also has its nineteenth century precursor, although he has never been recognized in this way. Let us review another famous definition of "culture" contributed by Clifford Geertz:

> Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun […] I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning.[25]

Writing in 1973, Geertz has traced his interpretation of culture to one more nineteenth century giant, Max Weber. The "webs" are literally a network, and the action "in search of" is not unlike "to trace." These similarities being acknowledged, however, "reassembling the cultural" is different from Geertz's "interpretation of cultures." For Geertz, the webs are made of meanings. "The concept of culture I espouse […] is essentially a semiotic one," as he puts it.[26] Meanings have no agency (at least in the Geertzian sense), and their very existence is subject to the interpretation of the anthropologist, who is the only "actor" on the webs. This network of webs is thus a static one, one that remains unchanged after it is "spun" by "man" the spider. But for me, the network that is called the cultural is made of anything and everything (including also human subjects, signs and meanings — not only the "things" on Latour's term), each with its own agency. They are to be recognized as actors; not to be interpreted as significance. This network is therefore in eternal reconfiguration: new associations form, new directions grow, new meanings proliferate, and new actors join in. Accordingly, to trace associations in this network is also doomed to be endless. Is this a nihilist statement that the tracing work is like Sisyphus pushing upward a stone? No, because men and women who set out to this tracing work also have agencies. At least, they can choose where to start.

The Travels of Lao Can and the Network of the Chapters

The tracing work in this dissertation starts from and revolves around a particular book, *The Travels of Lao Can* 老殘遊記 (hereafter *The Travels*) authored by Liu E 劉鶚 (1857–1909), arguably the most acclaimed novel produced in China's late Qing period. How does it happen that a dissertation about secret scrolls centers around a novel? First of all, this dissertation reveals that *The Travels* was indeed received as a secret scroll of prophecy in its own historical time — a forgotten (or secret) history that will soon be revealed in depth in Chapter 1. A book of the late Qing period, this "secret scroll" occupies a strategic historical position. In existing scholarship, it is either considered the very last classical Chinese novel, or one of the very first modern novels. Both claims are based on solid argumentation, which makes the book particularly suitable as the entrance point to China's "age of print," an unconventional periodization aiming at reconciling the dichotomy between "premodern" and "modern."

But more fundamentally, this dissertation starts its tracing work with *The Travels* because it holds that the book in and of itself is a theory of occult knowledge production, teaching us how

[25] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 5.
[26] Ibid.

to trace associations across a fluid and ever-changing network.[27] The traveler Lao Can is depicted as someone who "wandered about by rivers and lakes for twenty years." "Rivers and lakes" as a spatial metaphor is itself a very important domain of occult knowledge produced in the age of print, which will be further explored in Chapter 4. But even without this specific occult allusion, the juxtaposition of these two hydrological entities quite aptly visualizes the network that is called the cultural as we have described above — a network that is fluid, boundaryless, and full of unexpected confluences and bifurcations. This is no accident. As the ensuing chapters will make it clear, *The Travels* self-consciously and repetitively employs and emplots hydrological metaphors — from the Baotu Spring to the Daming Lake, from the Yellow River to the Pacific Ocean — as it concatenates different forms of occult knowledge.

This is not, however, to say that the whole dissertation is only a study of *The Travels* — though it certainly sheds new light on the studies of *The Travels* as a literary canon. It is, instead, an exploration of the culture (read "network") of various secret scrolls produced in China's age of print, an exploration that both follows the fluid veins underlying the text and is guided by the theory of occult knowledge production hidden in the book. Chapter 1, "*The Travels of Lao Can* as Book of Prophecy," argues that although this book is read as a novel with high prestige in the Chinese literary canon, in its own historical time it was popularly perceived as a mysterious book of prophecy telling the future fate of China. In fact, the bestselling edition of *The Travels* in that time was a "fake" edition assembled by a small and unknown publisher, which presented and marketed the book explicitly in this fashion, and even added a forged sequel to the original book in order to maximize its "prophetic" efficacy. It was only in the later period, when elite intellectuals were infuriated by these "superstitious nonsense," that the "fake" edition was deliberately effaced from historical narratives and *The Travels* purified and canonized as a literary masterpiece. This surprising association not only reveals an unknown history of the novel, but also leads us to other secret scrolls transmitting occult knowledge about the future — a "future" which was often the only outlet for the historical readers who were stranded in chaotic historical times.

The publisher had good reasons to market *The Travels* as a secret scroll, because the author Liu E indeed planted some mysterious discourses in the story. (Although from today's perspective we can easily interpret them as fictional devices instead of intentional prophecies.) Why did Liu E do that? Did Liu E really engage with some sort of occult tradition? Chapter 2, "Restoring the Taigu Genealogy" traces the associations between *The Travels* and the unknown history of the so-called "Taigu school," an esoteric and "heretical" teaching originating from the eighteenth century. Existing scholarship holds that Liu E used the novel to deliver the secret teaching he had learned from the Taigu school. Dissecting how the historical genealogy of the Taigu school was gradually constructed and surveying how the so-called "lost scrolls of the Taigu school" were revealed piece by piece to the public and finally published in the printed form, this chapter argues that the relationship should be reversed: it was not the case that a "Taigu school" actually existed and allowed Liu E to reveal its secrets in a novel. Quite the contrary: it was the publication of the novel that called on a public passion for discovering the hidden secrets, tracing the esoteric genealogy, publicizing the "lost scrolls," and by way of all these actions, finally inventing the "Taigu school" as we know of it today. This story thus most effectively manifests the paradox of secrecy: it is precisely through the revealing of the secret that its secrecy is established.

[27] Andrew F. Jones, email message to author, August 10, 2021.

From Chapter 3 to Chapter 5, I depart from small details in the text of *The Travels* and explore how these details connect *The Travels* to the larger network of secret scrolls. In the novel, Lao Can relates to a certain kung fu skill that was originated from the Shaolin Monastery in the medieval period and passed down to date through a line of secret transmissions. This narrative strikingly resembles that of the *Yijin jing* 易筋經, or *Sinew Transformation Classic*, which is arguably the best known kung fu secret scroll in today's popular culture. Chapter 3, "Transforming the Body, Transforming the Book," thus studies the transformations of the *Yijin jing*: how the actual manuscript of the book emerged during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, how different prefaces and postfaces together fabricated a smooth "history" of transmission spanning from the medieval period to the late Ming, how the literary works from the Qing dynasty downward continuously exaggerated and mystified the efficacies of the book, and how its contents, presentation and materiality were transformed as it went through from manuscript copying to woodblock carving, to lithographic reproduction, to moveable type arranging and even photographic printing. The dozens of different editions that the chapter has examined makes it clear that the *Yijin jing* is not one book, but a network of editions, technologies, copy makers, publishers, readers, interpreters, etc., a network in consistent making, remaking, and configurating. This observation of the *Yijin jing*, of course, is also appliable to any other secret scrolls.

Chapter 4, "Rivers and Lakes" makes it clear what it means to say that Lao Can was someone who "wandered about by rivers and lakes for twenty years." "Rivers and lakes," or in its Chinese characters: *jianghu* 江湖, is an ancient spatial trope with changing connotations, but in today's Chinese it is most often invoked by the martial arts popular culture to name a mysterious world beyond the everyday experience. How does a juxtaposition of two hydrological entities (rivers and lakes) end up becoming a world of mysteries? This chapter traces the transformations of the concept in a long durée of the Chinese textual tradition but focuses on the late imperial and modern periods. In the late imperial period, *jianghu* started to be associated with secret societies and *jianghu* secret scrolls also started to emerge, revealing the inside knowledge of the societies. The publication of *jianghu* secret scrolls continued into and flourished in the modern era, in which the print industry discovered the "*jianghu*" as a profitable marketing label. Exploiting this label, the modern print industry ushered in the birth of a new literary genre known as "martial arts fiction." With a case study of Yao Min'ai, one of the founding heroes of this new genre, as well as his writings that were marketed as "the secrets of the *jianghu*," this chapter shows how the so-called "martial arts fiction" assembled itself using the ready parts from a network of *jianghu* secret scrolls and finalized the alienation of the *jianghu* as a world of mysteries.

Chapter 5, "The Spiritual and the Global" extends from rivers and lakes to oceans around the globe. At both the beginning and the end of *The Travels*, the author Liu E invokes a sleeping-awakening dichotomy with some subtle thoughts about the tension between China and the foreign. This chapter contextualize this dichotomy in the *cuimianshu* (mesmerism and/or hypnotism) and *lingxue* (spiritualism and/or mentalism) studies in the late Qing and Republican period. These forms of Western occult knowledge were introduced into China at the turn of the century as the most cutting-edge science promising a great synthesis of materialism and spiritual dimensions. *Cuimianshu* and *lingxue* organizations mushroomed in the Republican period, and they produced numerous how-to books to promote this science (or just to make money, as being condemned by many). This chapter focuses on one such organization, Chinese Institute of Mentalism, and explores how it established a global network of correspondence education,

through which its *lingxue* secret scrolls were disseminated to dozens of thousands of students scattered in every continent of the world. This chapter argues that the correspondence education network and the *lingxue* secret scrolls (especially those about the "clairvoyance" promising to send the hypnotics to spiritual transnational trips) helped make an "imagined global community." Being a member of this community, one was not only granted with the access to the spiritual world, but also invited to imagine his/her position in the modern global order in a new way.

A network of secret scrolls centered around *The Travels* has revealed some of its subterranean veins. These chapters, however, do not make up a complete picture, because what we call "the cultural" is not a jigsaw puzzle with a certain number of pieces that could be perfectly embedded into each other. Now, we must let *The Travels* the book retreat from the "center" (but we will stay equipped with the reading strategy that *The Travels* has taught us) and start seeing other ways, orders, directions, and agents that tie these chapters together as an inter-associated network. For example, each chapter could be seen as having a focus on a particular aspect about the production of a secret scroll. (Although each chapter often addresses many aspects at the same time.) Chapter 1's investigation on the Baixin Company's forgery of the "fake" edition of the *Travels* reveals the important role of publishers in the making of secret scrolls: why did they do that? How did they justify their deeds of forgery (since so many "secret scrolls" were apocrypha)? What were the strategies they used to market secret scrolls and how did secret scrolls help their business? Of course, we can throw the same questions to the many other publishers in the other chapters. The dispute between Liu E's son Liu Dashen and the conservative Taigu school members as discussed in Chapter 2 raises a critical question about the tension between manuscript culture and print culture. Liu Dashen thought the "lost scrolls" should be printed and widely circulated, whereas the conservative members condemned that and chose to preserve the books in their own way. Chapter 3, as said above, studies not one *Yijin jing* but dozens of *Yijin jing* editions which each appears with different contents and materiality. This case study makes it clear that in an age of print no secret scroll is one singular book; a secret scroll is itself of network of numerous actors. Chapter 4 gives particular attention to the relationship between secret scroll and literature. Yao Min'ai's writings on "the secrets of the *jianghu*" shows it could be very hard to differentiate a secret scroll from a "martial arts fiction," and the latter's production clearly exploited the former's market appeal. Chapter 5, with its delineation of the Chinese's Institute of Mentalism's global network of correspondence education, can be read as one not about the production, but about the dissemination of secret scrolls.

This is but one way of tracing new associations in the current network of chapters. We can also easily switch the focus from secret scrolls to what they transmit, and then there emerges a network of different sorts of occult knowledge. In a temporal dimension, many chapters have something to do with the occult knowledge about time. More specifically, Chapter 1 (prophecy) is about the future, Chapter 2 (the Taigu genealogy) and Chapter 3 (the origin story of the *Yijin jing*) tell something about the past, whist the "clairvoyance" in Chapter 5 can see both the past and the future. In a spatial dimension, Chapter 4 reveals a mysterious *jianghu* world, whereas Chapter 5 allows one to travel around the globe in the hypnotic state. Chapter 5 and Chapter 3 are apparently also associated, for they both tell the occult knowledge about human body, except that one is from the Chinese tradition while the other is from the Western occultism. But the line between the "Chinese" and the "Western" should not been drawn too quickly. At a time, the hypnotic effect of a person's body suspending like a bridge (we will see this effect in Chapter 5) was described as a *Yijin jing* kung fu.

Are these all? How many new associations can be traced and how many new ways are there to look at the network of these chapters? How will these associations and perspectives change our understanding of secrecy, print culture, knowledge production, history of books, occultism and modernity, and other grander problems? The answers are hidden in the ensuing pages. Remember, this dissertation is itself titled “Secret Scroll,” and its secrecy won’t appear until it is read.

Chapter 1: *The Travels of Lao Can* as Book of Prophecy

> 聞人說洞天石室，有錄文金簡天書，凡夫讀之不能解釋，不能信從。
> 此卷書凡夫讀之，亦不能解釋，不能信從。
> I've heard that in the stone studios of celestial mountains there hide heavenly scrolls with green incantations inscribed on golden slips.
> Mortals read it, but cannot understand it or follow it.
> This book is the same.
> Mortals read it, but cannot understand it or follow it.
> — Liu E's auto-commentary to the eleventh chapter of *The Travels of Lao Can*

The first secret scroll we are going to examine in this study is *The Travels of Lao Can* 老殘遊記 (hereafter *The Travels*) authored by Liu E 劉鶚 (1857–1909), which is arguably the most well-known and beloved late Qing novel in the literary historiography of this period. In a century-long process of canonization, scholars have acknowledged many contributions of the novel to Chinese literary history: its exploitation of the capacities of the vernacular language, its experiments with first-person narrative, its innovative adoption of various genres (exposé, political novel, martial arts fiction, and the detective story), its sophisticated gesture toward national allegory, the unusual design of its plot structure (though for some this is a flaw), its subtle balance between the traditional Chinese *xiaoshuo* tradition and the new Western literary techniques — to name but the most often mentioned.[1] Despite the existence of many different reading strategies and approaches to this text, *The Travels* is with no doubt a novel, a piece of fiction, and a literary masterpiece of the first order. Therefore, to say that *The Travels* is a "secret scroll" would inevitably surprise and even upset many. However, this statement is neither attention-seeking nonsense nor some form of metaphorical word play. It is a simple statement of historical fact — a fact that has been deliberately repressed and forgotten over the course of the novel's canonization. A careful excavation of material and discursive traces left by the late Qing and early Republican periods reveals that there exists a huge gap between how we perceive *The Travels* today and how it was read and circulated in the immediate decades after its publication. For a considerable proportion of the readers of that period, *The Travels* was not a literary work, but a secret scroll. More specifically, it was a book of prophecy, a mythical repository of riddles, ciphers and secret knowledge, and a revelation of a form of occult wisdom that might explicate everything from the past to the future. It is this perception, instead of its merits as a literary work, which accounted for its high popularity in the late Qing and early Republican book market. This

[1] For vernacular language, see Hu Shih 胡適, "*Laocan youji* xu" 老殘遊記序, in *Laocan youji* (Shanghai: Yadong Library, 1925), pp. 1–39. A contemporary reprint is available in *Liu E ji Laocan youji ziliao* 劉鶚及老殘遊記資料 [hereafter the *ZL*], ed. Liu Delong 劉德隆 et al. (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1985), pp. 366–89. For first person narrative, political novel and detective fiction, see C.T. Hsia, "*The Travels of Lao Ts'an*: An Exploration of Its Art and Meaning," *Tsinghua Journal of Chinese Studies* 7, 2 (1969): 40–65. For exposé, see Lu Xun 魯迅, "Qingmo qianze xiaoshuo yu *Laocan youji*" 清末譴責小說與《老殘遊記》, in *ZL*, pp. 351–2. For martial arts fiction, see David Der-Wei Wang, *Fin de Siecle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849–1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 145–55. For national allegory, see Donald Holoch, "The Travels of Laocan: Allegorical Narrative," in *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century*, ed. Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 129–49. For plot structure, see Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova, "Typology of Plot Structures in Late Qing Novels," in *The Chinese Novel*, 38–56. For classical *xiaoshuo*, see Lin, Shuen-fu, "The Last Classic Chinese Novel: Vision and Design in *The Travels of Lao Can*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121, 4 (Oct/Dec 2001): 549–64.

popular perception invoked strong discomfort from social elites, including Liu E's own descendants, who were upset by the "downgrading" of the book, and by others who saw great potential in *The Travels* as a materialization of their advocacy for the "new literature." They therefore made efforts to collate the text and valorize the interpretation of the book as a resolutely literary text. Gradually, a new perception of the book was established, while the old one went dead. In the end, the status of *The Travels* in the pantheon of the Chinese literary canon was secured, yet its potential to mediate the complexity of that chaotic historical period was also unfortunately attenuated.

This chapter explores this historical process in detail and restores what has been repressed in *The Travels*' reception history. Yet, the purpose of this chapter is not to argue that reading *The Travels* as a secret scroll is a more correct or righteous approach; nor am I interested in questioning the literary merits that scholars have insightfully pointed out. *The Travels* is no doubt a great literary masterpiece. Liu E died before his book attained its widest circulation, but it is hard to imagine that he would enjoy a reputation as a prophet or a secret scroll maker. Clearly, to read *The Travels* as a secret scroll and to believe in its occult power was a misreading of an otherwise far richer and more sophisticated work. But instead of repressing the mistake (or glorifying it), this chapter holds that it is more productive to acknowledge its existence and to see what we can learn from it. I therefore ask these questions: What qualities of the book made people take it as a prophecy? What was Liu E's purpose in incorporating such qualities into his text? If the prophetic power of *The Travels* was simply a myth, then who and what kind of mechanisms were involved in the making of the myth, and why did general readers embrace it? And ultimately, in light of the major concern of the dissertation, how does *The Travels*, or more precisely, the reception history of *The Travels* tell us about the paradoxical process of making secrecy in an age of print?

We begin these explorations with a quick review of the textual history of *The Travels*. Liu E started serializing the work in the fiction journal *Xiuxiang xiaoshuo* 繡像小說 (*Illustrated Fiction*), published by the Commercial Press 商務印書館 in 1903 under the alias Hongdu bailiansheng 洪都百煉生. The serialization was interrupted in 1904 by a dispute between the author's side and the publisher having to do with censorship.[2] After two years' suspension, the complete work of twenty chapters (what the scholar Timothy Wong calls the "Text Proper") was serialized in the *Tianjin Daily News* 天津日日新聞 in 1906. In 1907, Liu E embarked on a short-lived serialization of the *Erji* 二集 (the "Sequel" in Wong's terms), and may have started preparing the manuscript of a totally different Lao Can story (the "Fragment" in Wong's term), but both had very limited influence.[3] As a result, the title *The Travels of Lao Can* usually refers

[2] For details of this incident, see note 17.

[3] The textual history of *The Travels* has long been a complicated issue. The *Xiuxiang xiaoshuo* was a very popular publication and today there are still many copies available for reference. But the *Tianjin Daily News* as a local newspaper was poorly preserved. For a long period scholars mainly consulted the reminiscences of insiders about the book, which have been proved to be not always accurate in their details. Liu E's fourth son Liu Dashen 劉大紳 recollected that the serialization of the Sequel continued until the fourteenth chapter, although he had no copies preserved. In 1935, Liu E's nephew Liu Dajun 劉大鈞 (Liu E's elder brother's fourth son) and his grandson Liu Tiesun 劉鐵孫 (the first son of Liu E's third son Liu Dajin 劉大縉) reported that they had discovered copies of six chapters of the Sequel in 1929, and these chapters were for the first time juxtaposed with the Text Proper in a new book edition published by the Shanghai Liangyou Books 良友圖書公司 under Lin Yutang's 林語堂 editorship. In 1975, Tarumoto Teruo 樽本照雄 discovered the original *Tianjin Daily News* edition of the Sequel in Japan, which contains nine chapters. The manuscript of the Fragment was also discovered in 1929, though it was not made

to the Text Proper unless otherwise noted. The Text Proper proved to be a phenomenal success. Within the first decade after its initial publication, at least nine publishers sold their own editions, although none of them had even figured out to whom the alias Hongdu bailiansheng really referred.[4]

In 1925, *The Travels* received a well-collated and punctuated new edition from the Yadong Library 亞東圖書館 — one that proved to be an authoritative version and the master copy for many later editions. Hu Shih (1891–1962) wrote a long preface to this edition, which contributed the first biographical study of the author Liu E as well as the first comprehensive literary critique of the novel (aside from Lu Xun's well-known but brief mention in his *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* 中國小說史略 that was completed a little bit earlier but officially published in the same year). Hu Shih's preface was a milestone in the canonization of the book and had a longlasting influence. It is still widely cited today. Toward the end of this preface, Hu Shih curiously diverged from the book itself and started harshly satirizing a "fake edition" he had seen in the market. This edition, Hu Shih reported, was "published in 1919" and it claimed to be a "complete edition" consisting of two volumes: volume one of the usual *The Travels* in twenty chapters, and volume two, a "fake sequel" of the same number of chapters. Citing at length from the "fake sequel" a description of scenery that was written in a hackneyed and formulaic classical Chinese, this most radical advocate of vernacular literature furiously ended his preface:

> My dear readers, have you ever seen any scenery description from the first twenty chapters of *The Travels* that is as ugly as this? Aren't these impudent fraudsters overtly insulting Mr. Liu E? Aren't they overtly insulting the readers of our society?[5]

The way Hu Shih ends his essay leads us to ponder a number of quandaries. What was that "fake edition" like? Who produced it and for what purpose? And most curiously, why was Hu Shih so furious about it? The making of fake sequels is nothing new in the Chinese fictional tradition. For a popular text like *The Travels*, and in a period of a flourishing print industry not yet encumbered by any notion of the sanctity of intellectual property, to encounter one or more forged sequels was only natural. Serious scholars and writers were well aware of these kinds of cheap commercial tricks, and they would normally not even bother to direct a glance in their direction. It is thus hard to imagine why Hu Shih, with his well-known reputation of being a modest gentleman, would overreact in this manner. The answer to these questions would thus depend on locating this edition, reading it, and investigating its own textual history. As the

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available in the printed form until 1962. In English Timothy Wong has contributed the most up-to-date and accurate summary of the textual history of *The Travels*. See Timothy Wong, "Notes on the Textual History of the *Lao Ts'an Yu-Chi*," *T'oung Pao* 69, 1–3 (1983): 23–32. Here I follow his nomenclature for the three texts: the Text Proper, the Sequel and the Fragment. For Tarumoto's discovery of the original Sequel, see Tarumoto Teruo, "*Tenshin nichinichi shimbun* ban *Rōzan yūki* nishū ni tsui te" 天津日日新聞版『老残遊記二集』について, *Yasō* 野草 18 (April, 1976): 95–104. A Chinese summary of this Japanese article was made by Cao Ping 草平 in 1982. See Cao Ping, "*Laocan youji Tianjin riri xinwen* ban chuji, erji kanxing kao" 《老殘遊記》（天津日日新聞版）初集、二集刊行考, in *ZL*, pp. 412–5. Wong's article did not investigate when the Fragment was written. Tarumoto suggested 1907, see Tarumoto Teruo, "Guanyu *Laocan youji* waibian cangao de xiezuo niandai: yu Shi Meng xiansheng shangque" 關於《老殘遊記》外編殘稿的寫作年代：與時萌先生商榷, in *Qingmo xiaoshuo yanjiu jigao* 清末小說研究集稿, trans. Chen Wei 陳薇 et al. (Jinan: Qilu sheshe, 2006), pp. 35–8.

[4] For an incomplete list of *The Travels*' editions, see Liu Delong et al, "*Laocan youji* banben mulu" 老殘遊記版本目錄, in *ZL*, 536–45. The list was based on Terumoto's 1977 research.

[5] Hu Shih, "Preface," 38. Reprinted in *ZL*, 388–9.

investigations below will show, this mysterious "fake edition" played a surprisingly important role in the early reception history of *The Travels*, and its significance in revealing the complexity of the text can hardly be exaggerated.

The "Fake Sequel"

What is the "fake edition" like? There is no straightforward answer that we might hope to find out in today's historiography of Chinese literature. In fact, we probably would not have known of the existence of this edition were it not for Hu Shih's authoritative and enduringly influential essay. This mechanism is of course quite ironic: the censorship has provided the very clue through which we can detect the existence of that which has been censored. Hu Shih might himself have sensed this risk, so he revealed in his essay very little bibliographical information about the "fake edition." He only mentioned that it was published in 1919 (which is incorrect, as will be shown) and that it had forty chapters. No publisher's name was given. Besides this, he briefly mentioned the names of two authors of prefatory material to the texts, "Qian Qiyou" 錢啟猷 and "Fu Youpu from Jiaozhou" 膠州傅幼圃, but only in a parenthetical note in a different portion of the essay on the philosophy of *The Travels*. Neither of the names leads to any celebrities that might be easily identified. The story of this "fake sequel" might thus have led to a dead end, but for the testimony of Liu E's fourth son Liu Dashen fourteen years later. This testimony would solve the mystery, and reveal the incredible "secret" behind the making of this "fake edition."

In 1939, Liu Dashen published a memoir "About *The Travels of Lao Can*" (Guanyu *Laocan youji* 關於老殘遊記" (hereafter "About *The Travels*") that he drafted in 1936 in the inaugural issue of *Wenyuan* 文苑, a journal of the Fu Jen Catholic University.[6] Previously, other descendants of Liu E had spoken in public about what they knew about Liu E and *The Travels*, but this memoir from Liu Dashen, who had spent much time with his father and had witnessed many incidents, would prove to be the most useful and detailed of the insider reports.[7] In this

[6] See Liu Dajun, "About *The Travels of Lao Can*," *Wenyuan* 1 (1939): 9–29. In 1940, it was reprinted in five consecutive issues of *Yuzhoufeng* 宇宙風, which had a much wider readership than *Wenyuan*. See *Yuzhoufeng* 20 (1940): 18–21, 21 (1940): 103–6, 22 (1940): 198–201, 23 (1940): 262–6, and 24 (1940): 340–3. In 1962, it was reprinted with an updated family tree and new endnotes by Liu Houze 劉厚澤 (Liu Dashen's second son). See *Laocan youji ziliao* 老殘遊記資料, ed. Wei Shaochang 魏紹昌(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), pp. 54–104. In 1985, the memoir was again reprinted in *ZL* (pp. 390–412), which is the most authoritative and the most frequently cited source book for the contemporary studies of *The Travels*. However, this reprint has three major problems: First, it deleted the family tree and the related paragraph on it. Second, it put Liu Dashen's signature date as 1931 (*ershi nian* 二十年), which was a big mistake; the correct date should be 1936 (*ershiwu nian* 二十五年). Apparently the character "*wu* 五" was missing in the type setting process. Third, and most seriously, it deleted most of Liu Dashen's original footnotes, which were in fact as valuable and significant as the contents of the text proper. I will introduce some of these footnotes later.

[7] In 1933, Liu Dajun (Liu E's older brother's fourth son) upon his friend Lin Yutang's request became the first from Liu E's family who shared in public these insider memories. His recollections were published in *Lunyu* 論語 edited by Lin Yutang. See Liu Dajun, "*Laocan youji* zuozhe Liu Tieyun xiansheng de yishi" 老殘遊記作者劉鐵云先生的軼事," *Lunyu* 25 (1933): 25–6. Another short memoir was published in 1934 in *Banyuetan* 半月談, another journal under Lin Yutang's editorship. See Liu Dajun, "Liu Tieyun xiansheng yishi" 劉鐵云先生軼事, *Banyuetan* 4 (1934):14. This memoir was then included in the 1935 Liangyou edition of the Sequel. For this Sequel, Liu Dajun and Liu Tiesun (Liu E's grandson; the son of Liu E's third son Liu Dajin) also wrote short postscripts respectively. In 1936, another magazine edited by Lin Yutang's *Yuzhoufeng* published a memoir made by a certain "Liu Dajie 劉

memoir, Liu Dashen recollected five different kinds of "counterfeit editions" (*fangzuo* 仿作) he had heard of or witnessed in different places (which is also circumstantial evidence for *The Travel*'s national popularity): one in Hankou, two in Tianjin, and two in Shanghai. He had no interest in making further comments about them, because "they were all absurd and sordid in their wording. Anyone seeing them would immediately know they are fake and it would be worthless to denounce them."[8] But he made an exception for a Baixin Company 百新公司 edition produced in Shanghai and spent several paragraphs detailing the story behind the making of it. The story is so interesting and significant that it is worthy of being cited at length:

> A publisher in Shanghai also made an "counterfeit edition" that was entitled *A Sequel to The Travels of Lao Can*. They had posted advertisements for pre-sale before the book was published. I saw the ads and inquired about it. It turned out that they had no idea about the existence of the authentic Sequel, and I was also surprised to know that the book they were advertising was but a fan fiction. Because of my inquiry, the manager visited me to explain everything and also stated the difficulties they were facing. He said that they had already accepted many pre-orders. The cost of advertisements was huge and they would not be able to afford the loss if the project was now terminated. If this really happened, the stockholders of the company would be accusing him, and he the manager would have no way out. He apologized many times, and suggested that they would love to pay rich rewards if I could give them the real sequel for publication. I replied that I couldn't make the decision alone without asking others in the family. However, considering that it is not reasonable to forbid others from making a sequel, and that it was indeed a difficult situation for them, I then reached several agreements with him: their book could not be published in the name of Hongdu bailiansheng; they could not use words like "sequel (*erbian* 二編)" or "the continuation (*erji* 二集)" in the title; the manuscript needed to be reviewed by me when it was ready, and I would give my consent only if it did not harm my father's reputation. The manager agreed to all these terms. Later he visited me again, saying that they had invited the notable Mr. Fu from Jiaozhou to serve as the chief editor. After many discussions, Mr. Fu still thought that it would be better if he could borrow the authentic sequel to read, so that the new edition would not diverge too much. I answered that this would not happen, but I could share with them the brief life history of my late father. Later this manager visited me for the third time, asking to borrow the original *Tianjin Daily News* edition of the first twenty chapters for the purpose of text emendation. I agreed because it was indeed the case that the existing editions in the market all had too many errors and mistakes. The book came out, and at that time my late second older brother Dafu 大黼 (style name Yizhong 宸仲) happened to

大傑." See Liu Dajie, "Liu Tieyun yishi" 劉鐵云軼事, *Yuzhoufeng* 11 (1936): 537–8. The author actually did not present himself as related to Liu E; instead, he admitted that he was only reporting something he had heard from a friend. However, the name Liu Dajie (be it true or an alias) was very misleading as it readily led people to believe that he was one of Liu E's sons. In the end of Liu Dashen's 1939 memoir, he presented a family tree and explained that the reason for doing this was that "in the recent years I sometimes hear people pretending to be members of our family; what's more outrageous, some of them even published under such an assumed identity." ("About *The Travels*," 25) One wonders whether Liu Dashen was referring to this "Liu Dajie." All these memoirs are also included in the 1962 source book edited by Wei Shaochang, see *Laocan youji ziliao*, 105–26. But note: Liu Huisun 劉蕙孫 (Liu Houzi 劉厚滋, 1909–1996, Liu Dashen's oldest son) noted in this book that Liu Dajun's 1934 essay was published in the third issue of *Banyuetan*. That is a mistake. It is in the forth issue.

[8] Liu Dashen, "About *The Travels*," 19.

be visiting from Suzhou. He heard about it and went to question them. They told him the whole story. He came back to confirm the story with me, and I also explained what had happened. He then accepted it. After several days, they sent us twenty copies of the newly printed original *The Travels* and twenty copies of their sequel. They also suggested making recompense. We kept the books but refused the money. My brother later brought these books to Suzhou. In the sequel authored by Mr. Fu, there are episodes like touring the Doulao Palace of Mt. Tai, debating the principles of the three teachings, going to Beiping and Xi'an, and founding the textile factory. The manager had heard about my father's general life history from me, but without many details. Therefore, these episodes somehow allude to my father's experiences, but the allusions were very vague. After several years, I was working in the Beijing-Tianjin area. I saw an essay by Mr. Fu published in the *Xinyu fukan* (新語副刊 *Supplement to Xinyu*) of Qingdao, which confessed the making of the sequel, and made apologies to the original work. Because of this, my brother and I came to admire Mr. Fu's honesty and integrity.[9]

This testimony explains everything. Apparently, the "Mr. Fu from Jiaozhou" in this memoir is the same person as "Fu Youpu from Jiaozhou" in Hu Shih's preface, and this Baixin Company edition is precisely the "fake edition" that Hu Shih condemned. The story is telling in all these regards, and we shall revisit it again and again in the rest of this exploratory journey. But before we continue, the "fake edition" that has been kept in suspense deserves a formal and direct presentation. Indeed, no narrative could be more telling than seeing an actual copy of the book. And thanks to Liu Dashen's revelation, we have been able to excavate it from the dusty corners of the repertory of Chinese books.[10] (Figure 1.1)

Figure 1.1: Images of the Baixin Edition of *The Travels of Laocan*, 1916.
Left: the cover of the first volume (the Text Proper);
Middle: the cover of the second volume (the "fake sequel");
Right: the colophon.
Source: China Academic Digital Associative Library (cadal.zju.edu.cn).

[9] Liu Dashen, "About *The Travels*," 18–9.
[10] Digital copies are available at the "China Academic Digital Associative Library." (Volume One: https://www.cadal.cn/cardpage/bookCardPage?ssno=07017204. Volume Two: https://www.cadal.cn/cardpage/bookCardPage?ssno=07017205) last accessed 10 November 2019.

The "fake edition," which I will term the Baixin edition hereafter, was published in 1916 by the Shanghai Baixin Company. (Apparently, Hu Shih misremembered the date, or what he saw was a 1919 reprint.) It came in two volumes, and both cover pages have the title, the name of the publisher and its address presented. Besides, on the right side of the first volume's cover a line of characters reads: "Carefully collated based on the original edition; no missing parts; with commentaries and notes." 原本精校無漏增批加注 On the left side the characters in smaller size read: "Different from the lithographic copies; buyers and readers please take note." 與翻刊本不同；購閱者注意 This highlighted information is no commercial gimmick. As Liu Dashen had attested to in the memoir, they indeed had the original *Tianjin Daily News* edition as the master copy, which allowed them to differentiate this moveable-typed new edition from the existing "lithographic copies" that — in Liu Dashen's words — "had too many errors and mistakes." This information is replaced with a new highlight on the cover of the second volume, which reads "You cannot afford not reading it should you want to know what is going to happen in the future." This is appropriate for a sequel that tells the "future" of the original story. But as will be discussed soon, this expression can also be interpreted as revealing an emphasis on the prophetic power of the book. The colophon page gives the most critical information with which we contextualize the book: "August of 1916. First edition. First print. Price: eighty cents. Author: Hongdu bailiansheng. Commentator: Fu Youpu of Jiaozhou. Proofreader: Xu Heling of Chengjiang 澄江徐鶴齡." Apparently, the Baixin manager did not stand by the agreement he made with Liu Dashen. Liu Dashen made it clear that they could not print the sequel under the name of Hongdu Bailiansheng, yet the book as we see it here was clearly presenting Hongdu Bailiansheng as the author for both volumes, and the real author of the sequel, Fu Youpu, was only presented as a "commentator." Following the colophon is a lithographic copy of Liu E's handwritten manuscript of the original preface to *The Travels*. They probably also obtained this copy from Liu Dashen, which further strengthened the "authenticity" of the edition. Besides, there are also two prefaces: "Thoughts after reading *The Travels of Lao Can*" 讀老殘遊記感言 by Qian Qiyou of Chengjiang 澄江錢啟猷 in the first volume and "Preface to the Second Volume" 下編序 by Fu Youpu, both lithographic copies of handwritten texts. Where the novel proper begins, the printing switches from lithography to moveable type — a technology that was more expensive but more desirable in that period.

As is typical with the layout of most traditional Chinese novels, on each page there is a designated header for commentaries obviously made by Fu Youpu. At the end of the first seventeen chapters, there are also chapter commentaries attached. These commentaries were actually made by Liu E himself. They were included in the original *Tianjin Daily News* serialization, but were omitted in most of the later book editions because people did not know they were also written by Liu E.[11] This proves that the Baixin Company people had indeed rigorously studied the original edition that they borrowed from Liu Dashen. The chapter commentaries resume in the second volume, and these were obviously written by Fu Youpu. He left the last three chapters of the first volume blank instead of filling the gap with his brush pen,

[11] See Liu Dashen, "About *The Travels*," 11. All the commentaries to the first seventeen chapters were separately reprinted and included in the 1962 source book *Laocan youji ziliao*, 6–12. The commentaries are also studied by Timothy Wong, see "The Facts of Fiction: Liu E's Commentary to the *Travels of Lao Can*," in Excursions in Chinese Culture: Festscrift in Honor of William R. Schultz, ed. Marie Chan et al. (HK: Chinese University of HK, 2002), pp. 159–72.

which was probably his way of showing some respect for Liu E, although paradoxically, his forgery of the entire second volume seems not to consider this issue at all.

Surveying the basics of the Baixin edition leads us to an unexpected conclusion: if we leave the "fake sequel" aside and just consider the first volume, it was actually a very high quality production. It was well collated and punctuated based on the best available source text. It restored the chapter commentaries that were missing in the other circulated editions. It had newly added header commentaries that required extra investment. For the novel it used moveable type printing that was neater and more expensive, but for the preliminaries it used lithograph so as to retain the aura of the authors' own handwriting. Considering these facts, this edition, when it first came out in 1916, was probably the best edition on the market.

The high quality of this meticulously produced edition leads to another surprising yet ultimately quite understandable fact: it sold very well in the market and garnered a very wide circulation. As a result, this edition to a great extent shaped popular perceptions of what *The Travels* should be like and might have even overshadowed the true twenty-chapter editions. To precisely quantify the popularity of this edition is not easy, not only because we lack necessary statistics for the general book market, but also because of the deliberate censorship from elites such as Hu Shih. However, various clues about the circulation of the Baixin edition may still be traced and when put together they give us a quite clear picture of its popularity.

The first evidence comes precisely from the 1925 Yadong Library edition that Hu Shih prefaced. In the "Notes on the Collation" 校讀後記, the text collator responsible for punctuation and formatting Wang Yuanfang 汪原放 (1897–1980) introduced the existing versions he had studied in order to make this fine edition. He wrote:

> It is indeed very hard to find a good edition of *The Travels of Lao Can*, although it is a recent work. Very few of the editions have fewer errors and are reliable. There are two kinds of commonly seen editions. One is the twenty-chapter edition, and the other the forty-chapter edition. Hu Shih in his preface has showed the evidence proving that the forty-chapter edition is a forgery. Thus what I relied on to do the punctuation is of course the twenty-chapter edition.[12]

This highly technical and routine introduction is very easily overlooked. Yet it is precisely in this paragraph that there hides the clue we are looking for. According to Wang Yuanfang, the forty-chapter edition (now we know it was the Baixin edition) was highly visible in the market by 1925 as one of the "two kinds of commonly seen editions." What is more, it seems that nobody – including the renowned editor Wang Yuanfang — had ever doubted the authenticity of this edition until Hu Shih pointed it out.

The second evidence is somewhat circumstantial. According to the 1985 "*Laocan youji* banben mulu" (老殘遊記版本目錄, Bibliography of the Historical Editions of *The Travels of Lao Can*; hereafter the 'banben mulu'"), eight different publishers, including the Commercial Press and the *Tianjin Daily News* produced their own book editions of *The Travels* between 1907 and 1915, which reflects the highly competitive conditions in the market. But ever since the launch of the Baixin edition in 1916, the number of the competitors dramatically dropped. In the ten years between 1916 and 1925 (in which year the Yadong Library launched their authoritative edition), only two publishers produced new editions (Shanghai Taidong Books 上海泰東書局 in

[12] Wang Yuanfang, "Jiaodu houji," in *The Travels of Lao Can* (Shanghai, Yadong Library, 1925), not paginated.

1922 and Jingzhi Books 競智書局 in 1924). Although other factors might have been at play, it seems very plausible that the Baixin edition had marketed itself so well that the other publishers thought it was not worthwhile to jump into the market, and that in 1925 a serious scholar like Hu Shih would have felt it urgent to promote an authentic edition to eliminate the ill effects of the fake one.[13]

But the most convincing evidence comes from the lasting proliferation of the Baixin edition itself. According to the 1985 "Banben mulu", the first Baixin edition of 1916 had arrived at its nineteenth reprint by 1923. In 1924, two derivative editions were released to fulfill the needs of different readerships. The A edition with commentaries (*jiazhong pizhu* 甲種批註) was designed for the readers nostalgic for the traditional book format. In comparison, the B edition with new style punctuation (*yizhong xinshi biaodian* 乙種新式標點) , prefaced and punctuated by Xu Xiaotian 許嘯天, aimed to please the younger generation who had a preference for modern book layouts. The B edition had its third reprint in 1925. In 1928, a C edition in four volumes was also produced.[14] From other sources, I have also come across several surviving Baixin copies: a 1931 B edition (the tenth reprint), a 1934 A edition (the twenty-sixth reprint), and a 1937 A edition (the twenty-ninth reprint).[15] This is stunning, because no other edition of *The Travels* to our knowledge has been reprinted more than ten times (in fact, most of them only had one or two reprints). This shows just how popular the Baixin edition was. Even after Hu Shih's imprecations of 1925, the Baixin edition continued to thrive in the market.

In this light, we finally understand why Hu Shih was so furious in 1925. He was not making a fuss about some cheap commercial gimmickry. Quite the opposite, he was battling against arguably the most popular and influential edition of *The Travels*, one that had greatly shaped what kind of book *The Travels* was understood to be. We need then to ask what *The Travels* had become as represented by the Baixin edition? How did it violate Hu Shih's understanding of what the book should be like? To be sure, the formulaic description of scenery in the classical language was what Hu Shih disliked. But as they appeared in Hu Shih's preface they mainly served as the evidence for forgery because they did not match the style in the first twenty chapters. What really upset Hu Shih was something far more fundamental: the fact that the edition amplified and valorized a long-standing interpretation of *The Travels* as prophecy. We will read the actual contents of the Baixin edition soon, but before that, we need to review where the "prophecy" was from and what exactly it prophesized.

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[13] This bibliography, included in the *ZL* (536–45), was compiled by the editors based on their own knowledge and Tarumoto' research. It is not complete, though reflecting the best efforts from the most authoritative scholars. For this reason I say this evidence is circumstantial.

[14] The information as released in the "Banben mulu" has some problems. First, it named all the Baixin editions "*Liu shi yuanben Laocan youji*" (劉氏原本老殘遊記 The original edition of Liu E's *The Travels of Lao Can*). However, as we see from Figure 1, the 1916 edition was simply entitled as "*The Travels of Lao Can*" without Liu E's name, because by that time Hongdu bailiansheng's real identity remained a mystery. It is not clear starting from which reprint had they changed the title. Second, the "Banben mulu" reports that the A edition was an lithographic edition. But what I saw (the twenty-sixth reprint in 1934 and the twenty-ninth reprint in 1937) were both in moveable-type. Third, the "Banben mulu" did not explain the differences between the A, B and C editions. I figured out the meanings of the A and B editions (as translated above) from other sources, but I have not seen any C edition. Fourth, the "Banben mulu" also mentioned a separate edition without prefaces and commentaries that was reprinted in 1935. But the description was rather vague and it is not easy to confirm whether it represents a separate edition.

[15] I obtained the photographs of these copies from https://www.kongfz.com, a Chinese website for the trade of used books and antique books. These copies were listed together with other early editions of *The Travels*, and it does not seem that any of the sellers know that they were selling a "fake edition."

The Prophecy

Ever since its initial serialization, *The Travels* was read by many as a mysterious prophecy that materialized the superior wisdom of the Chinese occult tradition. Indeed, to a certain extent, this mysterious ambience often emerges throughout the text. But that could be viewed as just a common feature of the traditional Chinese narrative tradition. What had most effectively attested to its occult power was the *sanyuan jia-zi* (三元甲子), which could be roughly translated as "the three fatal points of the sexagesimal circles," a theory that was revealed by the mysterious sage figure Yellow Dragon (Huang Longzi 黃龍子) to the young man Shen Ziping 申子平 in the famous Peach Blossom Mountain episode (chapter 8–11). Uttered in vague terms and alluding to the Chinese numerological and astrologic traditions, Yellow Dragon explained that the year 1864 (a *jia-zi* 甲子 year by the traditional Chinese calendric reckoning of Heavenly Stem and Earthly Branches) was the "first fatal point" (*shangyuan jia-zi* 上元甲子, also called the "pivotal point," *zhuanguan jia-zi* 轉關甲子) that marked the beginning of a new and chaotic sixty-year circle. All the major political incidents to date (sometime between 1895 and 1898 in the story's setting), according to Yellow Dragon, were all predetermined in light of this theory, including the death of the Tongzhi emperor (1874, the *jia-xu* 甲戌 year), the Sino-French War (1883–1885, around the *jia-shen* 甲申 year 1884) and the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895, which broke out in the *jia-wu* 甲午 year 1894). Responding to Shen Ziping's question about the future, Yellow Dragon revealed what the rest of this pivotal circle would be like:

> They will be just as I have said: Boxers in the north, revolution in the south (*beiquan nan'ge* 北拳南革). Preparations for the Boxer outbreak in the north began in *wu-zi* (戊子, 1888) and were already mature by *jia-wu* (甲午, 1894). In *geng-zi* (庚子 1900) *zi* (子 rat) and *wu* (午 horse) will clash with a great explosion. Their rise will be sudden, their fall equally abrupt. They are "the political force in the north." […] Preparations for the southern revolution, begun in *wu-xu* (戊戌 1898), will mature by *jia-chen* (甲辰 1904). In *geng-xu* (庚戌 1910), *chen* (辰 dragon) and *xu* (戌 dog) will clash with a great explosion. Their rise will be gradual, their decline equally unnoticed. They are "the political force in the south." […] These two rebellious parties will both brew disaster, but together they will open up a new era. The Boxers in the north will gradually make inevitable the political changes of *jia-chen* (甲辰 1904); the southern revolution will gradually make inevitable the political changes of *jia-yin* (甲寅 1914). After *jia-yin* there will be great cultural developments.

Yellow Dragon persisted in elaborating a series of complicated causative relations that looked impossible to be understood by our worldly minds, and then he cast a rather optimistic end of this pivotal sixty-year circle that this complex dynamics would ultimately lead to:

> After *jia-yin* will be a time of cultural florescence, but although brilliant to look upon, still it will not equal the development of other counties. *Jia-zi* (甲子 1924) will be a time of a real independent cultural harvest. After that the introduction of new culture from Europe will revivify our ancient culture of the Three Rulers and Five Emperors, and very

> rapidly we shall achieve a universal culture. But these things are still far off, not less than thirty or fifty years.[16]

This prophecy is indeed stunning, because the two nearest "futures" foretold by Yellow Dragon, "Boxers in the north and revolution in the south," would be almost perfectly "fulfilled" by the actual historical process: the Boxer Rebellion indeed happened in the north in 1899 and reached its climax in 1900 (the *geng-zi* year), and the Xinhai Revolution broke out in in the south in 1911 — only one year later than the prediction. Liu Dashen observed that this "fulfillment" of prophecy led to a rapid increase in the number of the unauthorized copies of *The Travels* in market in the wake of the 1911 revolution,[17] and this observation is also well supported by the history of editions we have reviewed above. The otherwise obscure expression "*beiquan nan'ge*" had thereafter become a well-known marketing slogan and the reason accounting for the book's lasting popularity. Now even the Commercial Press, who in 1904 had censored the Peach Blossom Mountain episode for its "superstitious content," was using this slogan to advertise their book edition in 1919.[18] Readers today with knowledge of the book's textual history would easily realize the little chronological sleight of hand that Liu E was playing: the book was written between 1903 and 1907, when the Boxer Rebellion had already ended and a series of minor revolutionary revolts had been going on in the southern provinces. Why Liu E played this trick does not sound like a very necessary question for today's readers, for we have been trained to believe that fiction has no responsibility to faithfully report the facts. We can go further to argue — should we have to give an answer — that this little trick reflects Liu E's painstaking effort to bring hope to his fellow citizens in a chaotic era: if the Boxer Rebellion as "foretold" had come true, so would the bright future of a "universal culture" by the end of the sixty-year circle. Yet, readers in that period apparently had different perceptions of this episode. Progressive intellectuals condemned it as superstition. For example, Qian Xuantong 錢玄同 (1887–1939) in 1917 wrote in *La Jeunesse* 新青年 that those predictions were "opinions from a muddled head of an 'old new fellow'" and that "Yellow Dragon's words on '*beiquan nan'ge*' were nonsense that only makes one burst into laughter."[19] Qian Xuantong in 1917 already knew the author's real identity (and probably also the textual history of the book), which was a rare knowledge among elite circles.[20] However, for the general readers who had no access to such knowledge, this

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[16] Shadick's 1952 translation, with the Romanization changed to *pinyin*. See Harold Shadick, *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1952), pp. 119–20.

[17] Liu Dashen, 1939, page 9 + note 1 (page 9–10)

[18] The Commercial Press' 1904 censorship was the reason why the serialization stopped. They found the Peach Blossom Mountain episode absurd so they took the liberty to delete much of the content and also represented the episode as a dream. They stated the reason "Now it is the period of banishing superstitions. People in our society ought not to talk about absurdities anymore." This censorship infuriated the author's side and led to the termination of the contract. For details, see Liu Dashen, "About *The Travels*," 11 (note 7 to the second section). The Commercial Press' 1919 book advertisement reads: "*The Travels of Lao Can* was written before 1900, but it foresaw the *beiquan nan'ge* that would not happen until ten years later. This prevision is especially marvelous." See *Shishi xinbao* 時事新報 4 (5 July 1919): 3.

[19] See "Correspondences: Letter from Qian Xuantong (dated on February 25)," in *La Jeunesse* 3, 1 (1917): 25.

[20] Qian Xuantong's mention of Liu Tieyun 劉鐵云 as the author of *The Travels* in *La Jeunesse* is probably the earliest documented revelation of the true identity of Hongdu bailiansheng that we can locate. Liu Dashen recollected: "In the beginning of the Republican era, some Peking University professors including Cai Jiemin 蔡孑民 (Cai Yuanpei, 1868–1940) and Hu Shih had heard something [about the author of *The Travels*] because they knew my younger cousin Dajun 大鈞." This explains Qian Xuantong's source of this knowledge because he was also a professor at Peking University at that time. See Liu Dashen, 1939, page 9.

mesmerizing "*sanyuan jia-zi*" theory and its "success" in "foreseeing" the *beiquan nan'ge* were undeniable evidence attesting to the efficaciousness of *The Travels* as a book of prophecy. The renowned conservative scholar Hu Huaichen 胡懷琛 (1886–1938) wrote: "The book was not very well-known in the beginning. But its pronouncements on '*beiquan nan'ge*' were taken as prophecies by many in the wake of the Republican era. […] For this reason people scrambled for it and it became very widely circulated."[21]

Two anecdotes reported by Liu Dashen in a note to his 1939 memoir are especially telling in this light. These anecdotes had been removed from records in the new era, which was apparently a result of censorship aiming at repressing the "superstitious" memories of the book. It is worthwhile to restore this note below in its complete form.

> Seventy or eighty percent of the general readers have some occult ideas in their minds, and for that reason bizarre and uncanny discourses are everywhere. Below is what I have personally experienced. In the winter of 1913, I was travelling from Suzhou to Huai'an. In the cabin of a small ferry on the southern canal, I met a traveller Mr. Zhang who was reading *The Travels of Lao Can*. He asked me whether I had read it, and then talked to the people around us: "The person who wrote this book is indeed extraordinary. He knew the world would become catastrophic in the future, so he got one wife, had some children and bought some properties in each of the eighteen provinces of China in order to allow his descendants to survive after the catastrophe. I once paid a visit to him through the offices of someone's introduction. I begged to become his disciple but was refused." Et cetera. Another experience: in May of 1917, I took a train ride from Shanghai to Zhangde on the Ping-Han line. There was an old man Mr. Yu on the same train and we started chatting. He talked about himself: "I have been learning the Way in Mt. Emei 峨眉. My master is a monk named Zhiyuan 智元. Now I am ordered by my master to leave the mountain and to help the world. Many years ago my fellow disciple Lao Can had left the mountain for the same reason. He could tell the past and the future. He is still traveling everywhere, and he has written a book called *The Travels of Lao Can*." Et cetera. Those two people did not know that my father had passed away for many years, nor did they know who I was. But as I heard this kind of ridiculous language and their thoughts about my father's work, I really did not know whether to laugh or to cry. To be sure I could not agree with them any less, but I also had no idea how to refute them. Besides these two persons, many others — even those who were comparatively better educated — also spoke or wrote similar absurdities. They were just not as outrageous as these two.[22]

It takes a lot of imagination to fill the gaps between *The Travels* as we know it and the "eighteen wives" and the "master Zhiyuan of Mt. Emei." We have to stay humble in the face of the possibilities of popular discourses: how they deviate, intermediate, transform and proliferate. As Liu Dashen hopelessly stated in the end, absurd words about *The Travels* were just as common even among the "educated" people whom he knew. Then how about the "uneducated"?

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[21] See Hu Huaichen, "*Laocan youji* zhuzhe xiaoshi" 老殘遊記著者小史, *Wenxin* 文心 2.10 (1940): 54. The piece was a part of Hu's posthumous work *Notes from the Latter Decade* 後十年筆記 that was serialized in the journal. It was not dated. However, the note started with the claim that "very few people know of the author and his biography." This fact suggests that the note must have been recorded in the early Republican period when the authorship of *The Travels* had not been widely revealed.

[22] Liu Dashen, "About *The Travels*," 10, n.3.

How about the masses that Liu Dashen did not know? How "absurd and ridiculous" could Lao Can's story have become among them? We can only leave this question to the imagination for lack of any further reliable documentation. What we do have, though, is the Baixin edition. Our reading of the actual contents of this edition below shows it played a significant role in the valorization of *The Travel*'s early perception as a prophecy. Its success came from its manipulation of existing discourses about the efficaciousness of the book. In turn, its high quality and wide circulation reinforced the mystique of the book.

Reading the Baixin Edition

The Baixin edition unequivocally marketed *The Travels* as a book of prophecy. Earlier we had a taste of the high quality of its design and presentation. What about its contents? The Baixin Company added three kinds of new contents in order to distinguish it from any existing editions: prefaces by Qian Qiyou and Fu Youpu, header commentaries to the first twenty chapters, and an entire "fake sequel" (which also included its own header commentaries and chapter commentaries). All of them explicitly (if not exclusively) highlighted the prophetic power of the book.

The preface entitled "Thoughts on Reading *The Travels of Laocan*" is placed at the beginning of the first volume. It was dated 1916 and signed by a certain "Study Committee Member Qian Qiyou from Chengjiang 學務委員澄江錢啟猷." What exactly the "Study Committee" meant is not clear, but the lack of a modifier might easily lead one to believe it was nationally significant. But in fact, as we learn from the preface, that committee belonged to a local school in Chengjiang of the Yunnan Province and this Qian Qiyou had just came to Shanghai during the summer break to buy books for the school. Hearing that the Baixin Company had recently published an annotated edition of *The Travels* in two volumes, he eagerly purchased it and found out that this edition was different in many ways from *The Travels* he had read before. Disappointed, he blamed the company for the mistakes they had made. The manager Mr. Xu came out and explained: "This is but a misunderstanding. We did not make the mistakes." Mr. Xu then presented his collections of the older editions of *The Travels* and said: "For the same book, there are always some differences between editions produced by different publishers." He also presented the manuscripts of both the first volume and the second volume, saying, "These are the original handwritten manuscripts of Hongdu bailiansheng. I spent years looking for them. Finally I obtained them from the author's descendants, and I persuaded them to give me consent to publish the manuscripts, so that they will perpetually exist in the world." Accepting this edition as authentic, Qian Qiyou then started commenting on the contribution of the Baixin edition to revealing the full efficacy of *The Travels* that was otherwise incomplete:

> *The Travels of Lao Can* is so popular in China and abroad because it concerns the timing of prosperity and catastrophe and it foresees the alternations of rise and downfall. It grasps the historiographical sophistication, which is also accompanied by the divinatory power of the graphs from the *Yi Jing* (易經 *The Book of Changes*). Once the book is split [like it was before the Baixin edition], the meanings of the words become obscure and tasteless.[23]

[23] Qian Qiyou, "Thoughts on Reading *The Travels of Lao Can*," in *Laocan youji shangbian* 老殘遊記上編 (Shanghai: Baixin Company, 1916), not paginated.

Qian Qiyou's preface explicitly related *The Travels* to the Chinese occult tradition within which *The Book of Changes* was the defining classic, and when this statement was made, the sequel was assumed as a necessary part of *The Travels* without which the book would only became "obscure and tasteless." Qian Qiyou was certainly a participant in this hoax, despite his innocent tone in the narrative. The sticking point is the timing. This preface appeared in the first edition of 1916. There was no earlier edition for him to purchase and to feel disappointed about before he wrote the preface. Apparently, a good way to dispel people's doubt about the authenticity of the book was to give testimony from a suspicious reader who was not only convinced after viewing the original manuscripts but also enlightened by the full efficacy of the complete book, and hence the story in the preface. This also explains why we found it hard to identify who exactly Qian Qiyou was. it was strange that the publisher did not invite a celebrity to preface such a meticulously prepared book. The manager Mr. Xu was very likely the "proofreader Xu Heling from Chengjiang" as listed on the colophon page. In such a case, Qian Qiyou must have been a friend from the manager's hometown (they were both from Chengjiang) who was asked to help effect the hoax — if this person indeed actually existed.

In the beginning of the second volume we see the other preface by the "commentator Fu Youpu," who we now know was actually the real author of this volume. I cite the preface below in full, not only because it much more dramatically advertised the occult power of *The Travels*, but also because its revelation of the volume's unusual textual history (which we now know is false) makes for an interesting conflict with Liu Dashen's recollection of the same matter that we have read earlier.

> *The Travels of Lao Can* authored by Hongdu bailiansheng was initially revealed and serialized in the *Tianjin Daily News*. Readers have enthusiastically circulated it ever since its publication and the book accordingly became very desired in the marketplace. What a pleasure that this marvelous writing has been appreciated by many, and that some have praised it in their own writings. In these years, its popularity has been spreading widely and has even reached overseas. A special merit of this book, aside from its literary strength that entertains the true connoisseurs, is that it helps people penetrate into history and reality. I used to have an unworthy career in Tianjin, and by chance I got the first volume of the book. Carefully studying it, I realized that hidden in the story's narratives is its exquisite power of making divinations and prophesies, which were even more precise and efficacious than the numerological books such as the *Tuibeitu* (推背圖 *Back Pushing Diagrams*) and the *Shaobingge* (燒餅歌 *Baked Bun Rhymes*). I could not help but slap the reading desk in amazement. I then carefully wrote commentaries to the book in my spare time, but I always regretted not having seen the book in its complete form. In 1912 I was visiting Shanghai and got to make friends with the Baixin Company manager Mr. Xu. In our conversation I mentioned this book and my regret that I had not seen the complete work. Mr. Xu said in laughter: "My company has obtained the original manuscripts in two volumes. The first volume has already circulated widely in China and abroad. As to the second volume, we had been planning to publish it. However, it happened to be during the period of war between the north and the south. I was afraid that those in power would consult this book for their own political interests, so I did not dare to hastily give the manuscripts to the hands of the typesetters." I requested the manuscript and read it through. The records in it were elaborate and the divinatory methods were

> appropriate, which would serve future readers well for checking [when the prophesies had been fulfilled]. Appreciating each chapter, one cannot bear to move on to the next. Commenting on each section, one tastes a special flavor. Out of this enchanting pleasure of reading I again made commentaries to this volume, and I urged Mr. Xu to publish it for the sake of all the book lovers. This piece humbly serves as the preface.
>
> Fu Youpu from Jiaozhou in his temporary Shanghai residence,
> on the fifteenth day of the Jiaping month, 1912.[24]

This preface was curiously "dated" to Feb 2, 1912 (converted to the Gregorian calendar), leaving quite a big four-year gap between it and the final release of the book from the publisher. The purpose of this subterfuge is not easily discerned from the preface itself, but a reasonable explanation might be deduced from the "prophecies" made in the "fake sequel." As we will soon learn, the "fake sequel" correctly "prophesized" many events after 1912, including Yuan Shikai's (1859–1916) revival of the monarchy in 1915. Expecting that people might question the credibility of the prophecies (since they were published after the events had happened), dating the preface before those prophesized incidents was obviously a good way of forestalling any such doubts. In this regard, the intentional mention of the manager Mr. Xu's postponing of the publication was also a brilliant move. It not only highlighted the power of the book in actual political life, but also set up in advance a convenient excuse for the four-year gap: if Mr. Xu had been postponing the publication of the manuscripts up to 1912 in order to prevent it from being appropriated by "those in power," then he may well have chosen to postpone it for another four years for the same reason.

As clever as the trick was, it still left one (and probably the only one) internal blemish that sold out the credibility of the preface (as opposed to the external evidence that is Liu Dashen's testimony). To nail down the prophetic nature of *The Travels*, Fu Youpu wrote it was "even more precise and efficacious than the numerological books such as the *Tuibeitu* and the *Shaobingge*." At first sight this is another brilliant marketing strategy. While Qian Qiyou related *The Travels* to the defining classic *The Book of Changes* in the occult tradition, Fu Youpu made the connection to the less authoritative but much user-friendlier texts that were associated with this tradition. Both the *Tuibeitu* and the *Shaobingge* were believed to be the ancient prophecies that had correctly foretold the future from hundreds of years ahead. Diverging from the *Book of Changes*' famous obscurity and opacity, the prophecies in these two books were both framed in stories and lowbrow rhymes. The *Tuibeitu* was reputedly the work of the Tang dynasty occultists Li Chunfeng 李淳風 and Yuan Tiangang 袁天罡. It contains some sixty (varying from edition to edition) groups of diagrams, illustrations and poems that hide its secret divinatory messages. Similarly, the *Shaobingge* was alleged to come from a conversation between the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328–1398) and his trusty counselor Liu Ji 劉基 (1311–1375), who in this conversation used a series of ciphered rhymes to satisfy Zhu Yuanzhang's curiosity about the future.

However, to assume that these lowbrow texts had also been "popular" texts would be an anachronistic mistake. Fu Youpu's mention of these two books in his "1912" preface implied that they were easily accessible and widely circulated. But as a matter of fact, this statement would not become true until 1915. Despite their alleged ancient origins, the actual textual history

[24] Fu Youpu, "Xiaobian xu" 下編序, in *Laocan youji xiabian* 老殘遊記下編 (Shanghai: Baixin Company, 1916), not paginated.

of these two books was full of uncertainties and obscurities. Throughout the Qing dynasty, they were circulated to a limited degree in manuscript (the pseudo-Ming editions) mainly because of the Qing government's rigorous censorship against books of divination and occultism.[25] The first printed "pseudo-Ming edition" of the *Tuibeitu* was not published until 1912. The text was less manipulated so as to have "relevance" to the contemporary political world.[26] What greatly embodied the book's magic prophetic power was a "Jin Shengtan 金聖歎 (1608–1661) annotated edition" that was suddenly brought to market in 1915. Alleged to be a revelation from the former secret collections in the imperial Forbidden City, this edition correctly "foretold" many late Qing political events, including the Taiping Rebellion. It was published as a part of the book *Chinese Prophecies from Two Millenia Ago* (中國二千年前之預言, hereafter *Chinese Prophecies*) that contained seven different kinds of "ancient" prophetic texts, including also the *Shaobingge*. The book turned out to be a huge success, in both sales volume as well as for the promotion and valorization of these "ancient" prophetic texts and their "efficacy."[27] Apparently, Fu Youpu would not have invoked the *Tuibeitu* and the *Shaobingge* as ready references if he really wrote the preface in 1912. He must have written the preface after 1915 when the release of *Chinese Prophecies* had already aroused public passion for the ancient prophetic texts and had established the practice of bundling the *Tuibeitu* and the *Shaobingge* together as birds of a textual feather. To detect this anachronistic mistake thus not only helps authenticate the dating of the preface, but also reveals that the making of the Baixin edition was not an isolated or accidental case. It was instead a timely response to a larger social undercurrent, that is, collective anxiety about the future of the country and a public craze for a prophecy that truthfully reveals the future.[28]

We proceed from these preliminaries to the contents that Fu Youpu had painstakingly fabricated. As expected, Fu Youpu in the header commentaries to the first volume singled out the two most well-known "prophecies" in Liu E's original text and interpreted the secret messages they transmitted (the "Silver Rat Riddle" 銀鼠諺 in Chapter Ten that "foretold" the fate of the notorious cruel official and xenophobist Yuxian 毓賢 (1842–1901) as well as the *Sanyuan jiazi*

[25] See Xu Ming 許明 and Tian Ye 田野, "Huaxia you qitu, canghai xian yizhu: *Tuibeitu* Litimotai yingyiben de faxian yu kaozheng" 華夏有奇圖，滄海現遺珠：《推背圖》李提摩太英譯本的發現與考證, *Waiyu jiaoxue lilun yu shijian* 外語教學理論與實踐 4 (2018): 84–91. According to this article, the *Tuibeitu* was strictly banned throughout the Qing dynasty. Making or circulating books like this could lead to death penalty. According to the same article (84–5), so far the discovered manuscripts all share similar contents and they claim to be produced in the Ming dynasty. Bernhard Fuehrer has informally termed them "pseudo-Ming editions" for they could well be forgeries of the Qing.

[26] Xu Ming and Tian Ye's article says the book was published by some Shanghai Yihai Book Store 上海藝海書店, with no further information provided. I have not seen this book in person. See Ibid., 90.

[27] Xu Ming and Tian Ye's article says the book was entitled *Chinese Prophecies* 中國預言 and it was published by Shanghai Wenming books 文明書局. See Ibid., 89. However, according to worldcat.org, the correct title should be *Chinese Prophecies from Two Millenaries Ago* and two publishers, Wenming Books and Zhonghua Books Company 中華書局, were both responsible for it. This book was very widely circulated. My survey found out that it was reprinted many times by many different publishers, from the immediately years after 1915 down to the second half of the twentieth century. The titles are sometimes different, such as *Chinese Prophecies in Two Millenaries* 中國二千年之預言 and *Seven Chinese Prophecies Commentated by Jin Shengtan* 聖嘆手批中國預言七種. But the contents and layouts are all the same.

[28] Interestingly, the Baixin Company later also became one of the many publishers that reprinted the *Chinese Prophecies*. The colophon page of an extant Baixin copy dated in 1928 shows that it was the fourth reprint. It is not clear when the Baixin Compnay made the first reprint.

theory in Chapter Eleven that we have introduced earlier). His interpretation was short and concise, but that was not because he lacked interest in this enterprise. As we will read below, Fu Youpu apparently needed more room than the header could provide and he found the venue for his talent in the second volume, which was completely his own creation. In this sequel, the protagonist Lao Can continues his adventures and even travels to Japan and Korea. To be fair, the literary quality of the sequel was not as poor as in Hu Shih's assessment. In some regards it even improves upon the original work, such as in the consistency of the storyline. But for our purpose of understanding how the Baixin edition valorizes *The Travels*' divinatory nature, we need only focus on the most exemplary places where Fu Youpu shows off his talent for fabricating prophecies.

As in the original *Travels*, Fu Youpu conveys his primary prophecies in a series of philological conversations that take place in an isolated mountainous place (this time on top of Mt. Tai). The conversations are between Lao Can, his friend Qingxu 清虛, the monk Puhui 普惠, and the Taoist Yunhe 雲鶴: a narrative set-up that responds to the spiritually syncretic inclinations expressed in the original work. The four continue their somewhat pedantic discussions about multiple issues across three chapters (29–31), but the main theme centers around the "heavenly way" 天道 — a universal force that determines everything — and how it will smash "human efforts"人力 to change what has already been predetermined. The monk Puhui is a figure of unfathomable wisdom. Although declaring several times that "the heavenly secrets cannot be revealed" — a hackneyed saying (and often a tantalizing trick) in Chinese divinatory practice, he still harangues the others throughout Chapter 31 to answer questions about the secrets of the future. The *beiquan nan'ge* prophecy and the *sanyuan jiazi* theory are again put under the spotlight here, only this time they are given full play with more details and supported by mesmerizing reasoning. It is only at this point that we realize how patiently Fu Youpu had been waiting for this moment to prove how considerate a maker of forgeries he was: this topic was first introduced in the beginning of the eleventh chapter in the original work. Fu Youpu appropriately resumes the conversation in the eleventh chapter of the sequel:

> Yunhe smiled: "Could you, my respectable master, just elucidate to us the result of the '*beiquan nan'ge*' and the transitions to take place in the future new world." Puhui said: "The destinies can be calculated, but as heavenly secrets they cannot be revealed in advance. Since you (addressing Lao Can) were talking about the alternation of prosperity and turbulence, let me just humbly discuss the way of the changes."[29]

The monk Puhui continues his preaching about the correspondence between the heavenly way and actual political life. The theoretical sources he draws upon are multiple. Besides the mysterious *sanyuan jiazi*, he also invokes *yin-yang* dualism, five-elements dynamics, the graphic readings of trigrams in *The Book of Changes*, and the Confucianist human-heaven induction theory 天人感應 invented by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (A.D. 192–104). Powered by these old systems of wisdom, Puhui extends his comments on the "current" political tension between the Guangxu Emperor (1871–1908) and the Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908) to a series of "future" incidents, including the Hundred Days' Reform (1898), the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901) (the *beiquan*), and the revolutionary revolts in the south (the *nan'ge*). To be sure, these events were already "predicted" in Liu E's original work, but Fu Youpu's version is much richer

[29] *Laocan youji xiabian* 老殘遊記下編 (Shanghai: Baixin Company, 1916), Chapter 31, page 1.

in its provision of details. Moreover, making these "prophecies" a decade later than Liu E himself did allows him to tell what would have happened after the revolutions with a greater degree of accuracy. Drawing on some complicated calculations in the *sanyuan jiazi* framework, the monk Puhui reveals, "After that the power of this country will belong to the people, and the titles of all the nobles and officials will be completely changed."[30] Responding to Lao Can's optimism that the country would then become a "democratic state" and that the people would get "equal rights and freedom," Puhui applies graphic divinations from *The Book of Changes* and asserts that there will be no one-off revolution that changes the "four-thousands years of autocracy" for good. Instead, the first leader of the new country will be a "demon hidden in the human world 混世魔王" who rules as a dictator (apparently referring to Yuan Shikai). The real catastrophe will then begin:

> [He] will incite several revolts from the revolutionaries against his dictatorship. With power in hand, this leader will certainly suppress these revolts with military force. Being defeated, the revolutionaries will have no better option than to plan assassinations and terrorist actions. Without considering the country's greater good, they will look for chances day after day and even draw support from the foreigners to harm their own country. In this awkward situation the leader will simply decide to change the new regime back to the old and claim the restored throne by himself, in hopes of passing down the power to his descendants instead of the revolutionaries. This deed will again give rise to many armed revolts. To be sure, the incident is the result of the leader's selfish considerations, but it was also predetermined by heavenly calculation. He does not realize that he could finish the Qing regime because he was both blessed by the heaven and supported by the people. Now that he wants to take the country as his private belonging, who will allow that to happen? Not long after the new monarch is established will the revolutionaries throughout the country be united to fight him. The people will again go through the disaster of warfare. When the demon vanishes the world will be reformed. But after the destruction everything will go downhill. A weakened country will be doomed to suffer from foreign insults. Although those in power try very hard, it is worrisome that they are not competent in shouldering such responsibilities. In addition, the demons around the power center will be consistently instigating and causing more troubles. Military conflicts will become regular and give the people no peace. At the same time, some conservatives will rise in rebellion in the name of restoring the Qing regime. […] It will be not until a new pivotal *jia-zi* that a renewed peace can be expected."[31]

This pretended "prophecy," if divested of its future perfect tense, would become a faithful narration of the political world of the early Republican era. Its extraordinary accuracy would shock any reader who believed that the book was written in the last century. It successfully "foresaw" the founding of the Republic (1912), the Second Revolution (1913), Yuan Shikai's notorious restoration (1915), and the warlords' dogfights after Yuan Shikai's death. To be sure, this accuracy came from the fact that the sequel was written in 1916 when all these incidents had already happened. However, in a surprising way, this paragraph indeed prophesized something that had yet to happen: its words concerning the conservatives' rebellion

[30] Ibid., 9.
[31] Ibid., 5.

in the name of restoring the Qing and China's suffering from foreign insults arguably foresaw the Zhang Xun 張勛 Restoration (1917) and China's failure in the Paris Peace Conference (1919), although the temporal order of these events was reversed. This amazing efficacy could perhaps be explained with Hu Shih's rationale regarding Liu E's prediction of a great revolution of 1910, which was almost fulfilled by the Xinhai Revolution in 1911. Hu Shih asserted that what Liu E had done was reasonable speculation based on the contemporary political atmosphere instead of any kind of mysterious prophecy.[32] Similarly, for Fu Youpu, or for any intellectual knowing well the current political world, it was also not hard to make speculations concerning potential reactions from the Qing conservatives and China's awkward situation in international relations.

This rationale, however, was probably too elitist for the general readers, who had used their collective purchase power to prove their endorsement of the Baixin edition. One could easily imagine how amazed the readers were when in 1919 these last two prophecies were fulfilled, and this fulfillment would drive away any suspicion that one might have had about the authenticity of the book. And hence the ironic but undisputable fact: the Baixin edition as a forgery became the most popular and influential edition of *The Travels* in the early Republican period. The manager Xu Heling and the writer Fu Youpu had proved their rare talent in manipulating the existing text and transforming it into great commercial success. To be sure, the prophecy was only a very small part in the original novel, and Xu and Fu were also not the first to notice this aspect. But as our above reading has demonstrated, they had seized this most inviting aspect, magnified it, mystified it, and finally established a sense of what the book should be like and how it should be read. In the rest of the Republican period (and even after Hu Shih's 1925 denunciation), the Baixin edition continued proliferating its prints. As we will see in the next section, it was something that one could not take a detour around in order to approach *The Travels*, no matter whether the purpose was to decipher the secret message from the future or to repress such "superstitions."

The Aftermath

The Baixin edition had a long-lasting influence. The influence was not in the form of standardizing the text of the book, as is usually observed in the studies of textual histories. In fact, the sequel made up by Fu Youpu remained a distinguishing feature of the Baixin edition and it was not incorporated into any later editions. The reasons are not hard to discern: in the beginning it was probably because of the Baixin Company's strong claim over the copyright as we can see from the colophon page, and as time went on (especially after Hu Shih's 1925 preface) it was because the other publishers were assured that the sequel was a forgery. The Baixin edition's influence on *The Travels* took the form of shaping how people perceived and remembered the book. It created a certain discourse about the prophetic nature of *The Travels*, and this discourse kept reverberating in the Republican period.

In 1924, World Books 世界書局, one of the biggest presses in China, decided to dip into the market by presenting *The Illustrated Travels of Laocan* 繪圖老殘遊記, which was obviously a tactical move to respond to the Baixin edition's dominance in the market. Probably inspired by the Baixin edition, the World Books edition also published a sequel: *The Illustrated New Travels of Lao Can* 繪圖老殘新遊記. The difference was that World Books made it very clear that the

[32] Hu Shih, "*Laocan youji* xu," in the *ZL*, 24.

sequel was a fan fiction authored by the popular writer Yang Chenyin 楊塵因 (1889–1961), even though the layouts and formats were almost identical.[33] (Figure 1.2) A brief synopsis in the beginning of *The Illustrated Travels* reads:

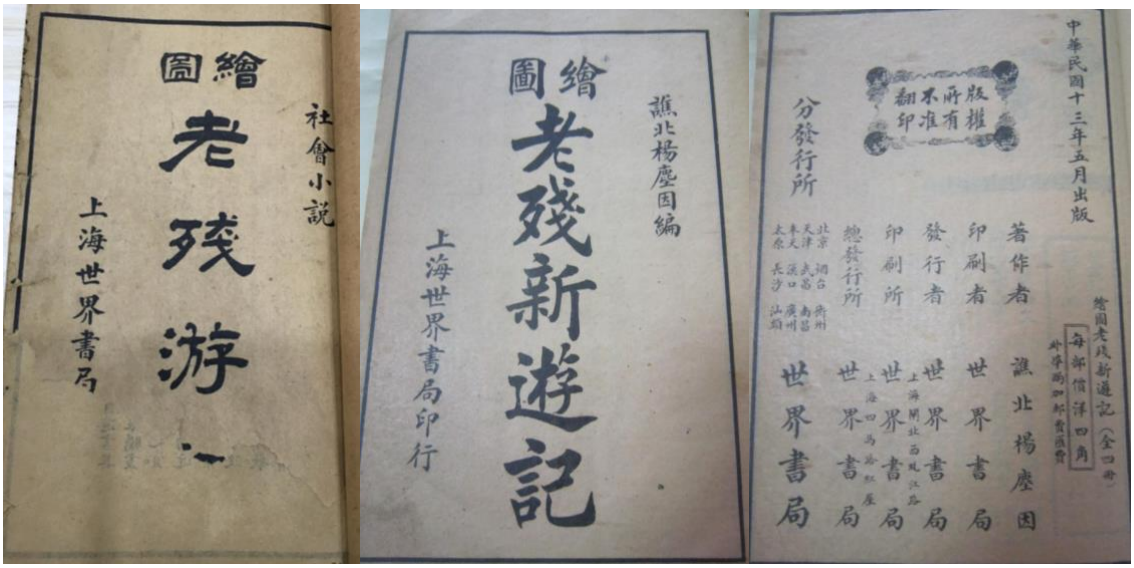

Figure 1.2: Images of the World Books Editions. Source: kongfz.com
Left: Title page of *Illustrated Travels of Laocan*;
Middle: Title page of *Illustrated New Travels of Laocan*;
Right: Colophon page of *Illustrated New Travels of Laocan*.

> […] This is the number one marvelous book of modern times. What is especially strange is the fact that the book was published in the mid Guangxu period (1875–1908), but it prophesied the Boxer Rebellion in the north and the revolutions in the south, as well as all the relevant political incidents thereafter. All prophecies were perfectly fulfilled with no exception. It does not become inferior even when compared with the *Shaobingge* and the *Tuibeitu*. For this reason, my dear readers, you should not resist reading it immediately and verifying the prophecies with regard to the actual politics.[34]

The World Books edition did not make any explicit allusion to the Baixin edition, yet the influence from the latter was obvious. The crucial words in this "Synopsis" were the two book titles the *Shaobingge* and the *Tuibeitu*. This bundling of these two books and *The Travels*, as we have read above, was Fu Youpu's invention in his preface to the Baixin edition.

The World Books edition was not an exceptional case. In 1934, the *Fusheng Newspaper* 福生報 reprinted some chapters of *The Travels*. An accompanying introduction to the author Liu

[33] I found the images of both books from kongfz.com. *The New Travels* has the complete colophon page preserved from which we know it was published in 1924. A copy of it is preserved in the Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangzhou Province, and the library catalogue also confirms this information. See http://opac.zslib.com.cn:8991/F/?func=find-b&find_code=WRD&find_base=KJSK&request=绘图老残新游记 For a brief introduction to this sequel, also see Zhang Chun 張純, "Laocan youji zhi xuzuo" 老殘遊記之續作. *Suzhou daxue xuebao* 蘇州大學學報 no. 2 (1987): 63. I have not been able to locate *The Illustrated Travels of Laocan* in any library catalogues, and its colophon page is missing. But the layouts and formats of the two books were almost identical, suggesting that they must have been produced in the same process.

[34] "Synopsis," *Illustrated Travels of Laocan* (Shanghai: World Books, 1924).

E read: "The scholarship of Tieyun (鐵云, Liu E's style name) was profound and extensive. He made the prophecies of '*beiquan nan'ge*' before the *geng-zi* year. After the Boxer Rebellion and the Xinhai Revolution really happened, people in the world all took him as a reincarnation of Li Chunfeng."[35] Li Chufeng, as we have introduced, was the Tang dynasty occultist who was believed to be one of the authors of the *Tuibeitu*. To compare Liu E with Li Chunfeng was thus another way of reinforcing the bundling of the *Tuibeitu-Shaobingge-The Travels*. And if we believe the credibility of this statement, then we know this bundling not only expressed the newspaper's standpoint, but also reflected the general opinion of the "people in the world." Indeed, this introduction to Liu E written in 1934 was still full of mistakes, suggesting that the editor of the newspaper had not cared to consult any recent studies on Liu E from elite literary circles and only wrote the introduction based on popular (but incorrect) discourses.

No matter how anachronistic and *ex parte* this bundling was, its efficiency was high in nailing down the status of *The Travels* in the pantheon of the Chinese occult tradition. It almost became a set phrase and thus we see this bundling again in Hu Shih's 1925 preface, even though his purpose was to disassemble it. What Hu Shih must have regretted later was that his high profile certainly helped to spread this "set phrase". Toward the end of the Republican period, the scholar Jiang Yixue 蔣逸雪 (1902–1985) was still writing, in a fashion of apparently appraising Hu Shih's legacy: "There have been two main readings of *The Travels of Lao Can*. Some people took it as a book comparable to the *Tuibeitu* and the *Shaobingge*, because some of the incidents predicted in the book were fulfilled. Some others praised it for its literary merits and said it could be a model text for literary students to learn from."[36]

These two bifurcated perceptions of *The Travels* were both devastated for good in the new Socialist era. Literary cadres under the new regime were much more efficient than Hu Shih in exterminating any "feudalistic superstitions" such as a prophecy. More dramatically, whatever Hu Shih had praised also became a target for condemnation during the Socialist era. Amidst a larger campaign in the 1950s' to criticize Hu Shih's "bourgeois thought," *The Travels* was depicted as a "reactionary" book written by a "traitor of the national interest," and its popularity was understood to have resulted from Hu Shih' puffery. "Any excepts from *The Travels* or any articles about it should be removed from all textbooks, and all the wrongful narratives on the book and its author should be corrected," recalls Liu Houze 劉厚澤, one of Liu E's grandsons.[37] Although some scholars tried to resist such extremism, these efforts soon became meaningless with the coming of an even more extremist era in 1966.[38] A reevaluation of *The Travels* was not brought up until the new era in the 1980s, but now the task was only to rescue *The Travels* from the political vortex and to reestablish its place in the literary canon. Nobody seemed to want to bother with "superstitions" anymore, not to mention to give the Baixin edition its due attention. Now, in the reprinted version of Liu Dashen's 1939 memoir, the inappropriate original footnotes have been removed, and thus the anecdotes that we have restored above telling how *The Travels*

[35] "Laocan youji," *Fusheng bao* 福生報 1.1 (1934): 5.

[36] See Jiang Yixue, "*Laocan youji* yiji kaozheng" 《老殘遊記》一集考證, *Wenshi zazhi* 文史雜誌 4.1/2 (1944): 55–74. The same article was also published in *Dongfang zazhi* 東方雜誌 40.1 (1944): 59–75.

[37] See Liu Houze 劉厚澤, "Liu E yu *Laocan youji*" 劉鶚與老殘遊記, in the *ZL*, 41.

[38] For more detailed bibliographic information on the debates about *The Travels* in the 1950s and the early 1960s, see Li Yan 李延, "*Laocan youji* de bashinian" 老殘遊記的八十年, Shanghai shifan daxue xuebao 上海師範大學學報 4 (1987): 21–5. Also see Liu Delong et al., "Jianguo yilai yanjiu Liu E ji *Laocan youji* lunzhu mulu" 建國以來研究劉鶚及《老殘遊記》論著目錄, in the *ZL*, 546–58.

was hailed as a prophecy have gone missing. What was also gone is the pardon Liu Dashen issues to the "forgery maker" Fu Youpu. In one of the removed footnotes he writes:

> Mr. Fu's work also has considerable value. Besides our respect for Mr. Fu's honesty and integrity, we brothers also hope that the publisher would restore Mr. Fu's name and include his confessional essay in the sequel when they reprint it. Mr. Fu's talent would then be acknowledged, and this literary encounter between he and my father would also become a good story for people to tell.[39]

I close the chapter by restoring Liu Dashen's message of forgiveness. This simple and unassuming note describes quite aptly and affectively what this chapter wants to achieve most. Ture, this chapter aims at shedding new light on the history of reception of the canonical novel *The Travels*; it explores why and how *The Travels* was read as a secret scroll of prophecy; and with this case study, it sets sail to the exploration of the network of secret scrolls and occult knowledge production. But before all these, this chapter simply tries to get closer to that "good story" that has been forgotten. I hope I have told that story well.

[39] Liu Dashen, "About *The Travels*," 19.

Chapter 2: Restoring the Taigu Genealogy

The previous chapter offers a history of the reception of *The Travels of Lao Can* in the Republican era. It argues that the novel was received by many as a book of prophecy that told the future of China based on traditional Chinese occult wisdom. These prophecies, as I have outlined, are uttered by the hermit figure Yellow Dragon in the Peach Blossom Mountain episode. This episode has consistently bothered yet at the same time charmed readers and scholars on account of its many distinctive features that seem incompatible with the rest of the novel. The protagonist suddenly shifts from Lao Can to a young man named Shen Ziping, who never appears again after this episode. The ambience in this episode is enigmatic and even mystical (even to the extent that the Commercial Press found it "superstitious") while the rest of the novel is mundane and secular. The plotting of this episode is simple, structured around dense and long-winded conversations, while the rest of the novel consists of vivid and fast-paced stories (including even a detective story). Scholars have long tried to make sense of this apparent incoherence. Leo Lee, for example, has eloquently argued that this seemingly discordant episode is in fact a thoughtful and self-consciously wrought manifestation of Liu E's philosophical and spiritual world:

> As one reads through the first half of the book, it gradually becomes clear that Liu E establishes Lao Can's itinerary in a series of ascending lyrical tableaux, from the first level of natural scenery through the second-level world of politics and society to the third plateau of the Peach Blossom Mountain, where the philosophic wisdom Liu E has assimilated from the Taigu school is revealed with esoteric and atmospheric brilliance. The middle section of the book (chapter 8–11), which contains the highest level of the journey, can be seen as the heart of the narrative and of Liu E's own preoccupations.[1]

Lee's point that the Peach Blossom Mountain episode is a revelation of the so-called "Taigu school" teaching is consistently repeated and has almost become a standard narrative in the scholarly works on Liu E and *The Travels*. Harold Shadick was the first to bring this narrative to the English readers. In the introduction to his 1952 translation of *The Travels*, he briefly showcases a "Taigu sect" (a more religious rendering of the "Taigu school"), highlights its influence on Liu E's life trajectory, and explicitly reveals the hidden allusions in the Peach Blossom Mountain episode, which, according to this narrative, point us toward some actual figures in the "sect":

> He [Liu E] studied with Li Longchuan, the chief teacher at that time of the Taigu sect, an esoteric religious society with a syncretic creed, embodying elements from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. […] The set of highly metaphorical poems in chapter ix of the novel commemorates his teacher, Li Longchuan, while the whimsical hermit philosopher, Huang Longzi (Yellow Dragon), in chapters x and xi, is a portrait of his friend, Huang Xipeng, who was a fellow disciple. His other great friend, Jiang Wentian (*hao* Longxi) was also a follower of Li Longchuan.[2]

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[1] Leo Ou-fan Lee, "The Solitary Traveler," in *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*, ed. Robert E. Hegel and Richard C. Hessney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 284–5. Transliteration has been changed from Wade-Giles to *pinyin*.

[2] Harold Shadick, "Translator's Introduction," in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, trans. Harold Shadick (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1952), pp. x–xi.

What exactly does the word "Taigu" mean? Is it a religious "sect" or an academic "school?" What is its "philosophy" (or "creed") like? Is it really the source of the arcane and novel ideas expressed in the Peach Blossom Mountain episode? If so, how do scholars know about this "esoteric" source since Liu E has never uttered a single word about "Taigu" in his writings, be it in the novel itself or elsewhere? Unfortunately, Shadick does not go any deeper than the quotation above, and the subsequent English scholarship on *The Travels* also tends to elide these questions, save for repeating a similar narrative as if it were some form of sheer fact.[3] On the other hand, within Chinese academia, the study of the "Taigu school" has experienced something of a boom since the last decade of the twentieth century, resulting in numerous scholarly projects, articles, monographs, and conferences, to the extent that the "Taigu school studies" has established itself as a self-sufficient and continuously expanding academic subfield.[4] As such, we have more than enough sources to appropriate for the sake of quenching the English readers' curiosity about this mysterious and esoteric "Taigu school."

Yet, this is not the purpose of the current chapter. I have no intention to contribute an English language introduction to the Taigu school, nor to disclose how Liu E has sneakily implanted the Taigu teachings into his novel.[5] Instead, this chapter places these narratives about the Taigu school and its relationship to *The Travels* under critical scrutiny. The relationship as it will unfold in this chapter is complicated, but it all starts with a simple yet often ignored fact, that is, that the "Taigu school" as a label was not invented until 1927 — about twenty years after the publication of *The Travels*. The term was proposed at that time in order to recall a little known "academic stream" that had faded out and had only left vague and intermittent traces in hearsay and textual records. The label, moreover, remained largely unheeded after its invention, until Liu E's descendants endorsed it, used it to elucidate *The Travels*, and made efforts to bring

[3] For other similar narratives, see C.T. Hsia, "*The Travels of Lao Ts'an*: An Exploration of Its Art and Meaning (1969)," in *C.T. Hsia on Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 263, 264. Timothy C. Wong, "The Name 'Lao Ts'an' in Liu E's Fiction," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, 1 (Jan/Mar 1989): 104. Timothy C. Wong, "Liu E in the Fang-shih Tradition," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112, 2 (Apr/Jun 1992): 302, 304 and 305. Lin Shuen-fu, "The Last Classic Chinese Novel," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121, 4 (Oct/Dec 2001): 551, 559 and 560. The lengthiest introduction is found in Luke S. K. Kwong, "Self and Society in Modern China: Liu E (1857–1909) and *Laocan youji*," *T'oung Pao* LXXXVII, 4–5 (2001): 380–382. But similar to the other examples, Kwong's sources are singular, outdated and with mistakes here and there.

[4] For the most comprehensive literature review on the Taigu school studies in Chinese, see Zhou Xinguo 周新國 et al., *Taigu xuepai shigao* 太谷學派史稿 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2014), pp. 3–30. Note that many new research has also been published since 2014.

[5] For the former, introductions to the Taigu school for its own sake (instead of quickly mentioning it by way of taking about *The Travels*) are not completely non-existent in the English scholarship. There are two articles available for reference. See Elizabeth J. Perry and Tom Chang, "The Mystery of Yellow Cliff: A Controversial 'Rebellion' in the Late Qing," *Modern China* 6.2 (Apr. 1980), 123–160. And Hans Kuehner, "Plurality and Confucian Orthodoxy: The Views of a Neglected Qing School of Thought," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 26.1 (1999): 49–88. Perry and Chang's article focuses on a political incident dubbed the "Yellow Cliff Massacre" and a introduction to the Taigu school is appended to trace the intellectual sources of Zhang Jizhong, the protagonist of this story of political oppression. The introduction is based on out-dated sources and the narrative is problematic in many ways. Kuehner's article is an exploration of the Taigu school philosophy and it does not say much about its history. For the latter, a 2003 PhD dissertation has made such an effort. Based on the then available secondary sources in Chinese, the author meticulously enumerates the could-be Taigu allusions hidden in *The Travels*. Many of the allusions, however, seem to be based on somewhat forced connections. See Daniel Yu-ming Hou, *Between Revelation and Concealment: An Exploration of Liu E's Self-Representation in the Travels of Lao Ts'an* (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2003), pp. 158–212.

the secret scrolls of this esoteric tradition to the public. These secret scrolls, now known as the *Taigu yishu* 太谷遺書, or "the lost scrolls of the Taigu school" (hereafter the "Taigu scrolls"), finally became available in printed form toward the end of the twentieth century. They have since that time provided rich and presumably authentic sources for continuous discoveries about and re-articulations of the past of the Taigu school, a past that dates back at least to the founding patriarch Zhou Taigu 周太谷 who lived at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although these scrolls only took form in the modern period after a long and complicated process consisting of numerous oral transmissions, textual emendations, and material adaptations. A quite counterintuitive argument then becomes inevitable and imperative: it is not the case that the "Taigu school" as we know it today existed and allowed Liu E to write a novel in order to reveal its secret teachings. Quite the opposite is true. The very popularity of Liu E's novel in modern China has triggered an enduring passion for deciphering the secrets that lie hidden in the novel, and this passion has led to the excavation and publication of the Taigu scrolls, and ultimately to the construction of the history of the Taigu school as we know it today. In other words, while the existing historiography holds that the Taigu school bred *The Travels*, this chapter argues that it is the other way around: *The Travels* resulted in the invention of the Taigu school.

In the following pages, I will revisit a series of historical moments that are critical in the construction of the history of the Taigu school in the twentieth century. Starting from 1927 when the label "Taigu school" was coined and the genealogy of this esoteric tradition was revealed in printed form for the first time, I generally proceed in a chronological manner. I hope to emphasize that the "Taigu school" is the result of a gradual process of knowledge production, conditioned by different material milieus, media infrastructures, and intellectual situations in different time periods, instead of a crystallization of sheer historical facts. This is not to say that I intend to make up another version of the "periodization" of the "development" of the Taigu school studies, which is already quite familiar in Chinese academia.[6] Instead, my choice of these historical moments focuses on the variegated roles that "secret scrolls" have played in the production of this knowledge, and here "secret scrolls" refer to both the novel *The Travels of Lao Can*, which has long been viewed as a revelation of the Taigu school teaching, as well as the "Taigu scrolls," a body of texts which took a long and dramatic path into publication. Zooming in to each "moment," I also jump back and forth among them, drawing materials from other temporal spheres, in order to ensure that each of these "moments" are contextualized in the bigger picture of Chinese history in the recent centuries. Lastly, after this twentieth-century story of how the Taigu genealogy has been "restored" is completely told, I will examine how the historical subjects involved in this "school" themselves remembered their past, since their own "chronicle" in two versions is now available in the published Taigu scrolls. Of course, this is not to assume that the past told by the figures involved is necessarily more authentic or reliable — as a matter of fact, we will read just how divergent their minds were regarding this matter — but their detachment from the modern media infrastructure and intellectual labor will help us rethink the particularity of the twentieth century in an ongoing history of secret knowledge production.

[6] In addition to the literature review mentioned in note 4, two articles published in Taiwan are also often cited regarding this "development." See Yau-Woon Ma 馬幼垣, "Qingji Taigu xuepai shishi shuyao," 清季太谷學派史事述要, *Dalu zazhi* 大陸雜誌 28.1 (1964). A reprint can be found in *Dalu zazhi shixueshu, series 2, volume 5: Jindaishi yanjiu lunji* 大陸雜誌史學叢書第二輯第五冊：近代史研究論集 (Dalu zazhishe, 1970): 187–92. Wang Fan-sen 王汎森, "Dao-Xian nianjian minjianxing rujia xuepai: Taigu xuepai yanjiu de huigu" 道咸年間民間性儒家學派：太谷學派研究的回顧, *New History* 新史學 5.4 (1994): 141–62.

July 25, 1927: The Invention of a Label

On July 25, 1927, the prestigious general interest journal *The Eastern Miscellany* (*Dongfang zazhi* 東方雜誌) published an article called "The Genealogy and Thought of the Taigu School: Notes on the Exploration of A Neglected Aspect of Qing Dynasty Scholarship" (太谷學派之沿革及其思想——清學旁搜記, hereafter "The Genealogy"). The author Lu Jiye 盧冀野 (1905–1951, aka Lu Qian 盧前), who would become well-known for his studies of classical literature, was at that time just a recent graduate from Southeastern University. In this article, the young scholar boldly invented the term "Taigu school" and used it to tell a rarely (or only distortedly) known "scholarly genealogy" that had maintained its secret transmission from the late eighteenth century to the 1920s.[7] To what extent this article made a difference in its own historical world is a different question that we will address later, but from a retrospective point of view, this article is now widely accepted as having marked the beginning of a century-long enterprise of "Taigu school studies," an academic subfield that is today firmly established and vibrantly expanding in Chinese academia. The narrative in this article is sketchy, as is later scholars sometimes complained, but its unprecedented integrity in mapping out the trajectory of the genealogy and its demystification of some of the long-lasting and unaccountable hearsay are also highly praised. We hence can let this article guide us to initiate the two-way itinerary of this chapter. We will presently go forward to see how the article started the construction of the Taigu school narratives in the twentieth century, but before that, we follow the article backward into the history of an esoteric tradition that had never been properly told.[8]

According to Lu, the Taigu school had a distant ancestor in the Ming dynasty, Lin Zhao'en 林兆恩 (1517–1598), who founded the widespread yet somewhat heterodox religious sect of "Three-in-One Teachings" (*Sanyi jiao* 三一教), syncretizing Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism.[9] But a genealogy proper to the Taigu school started only with Zhou Gu 周穀 (c. 1762–c. 1832), also known by the style names Zhou Xingyuan 周星垣, Zhou Taigu, and the alias Kongtongzi 空同子 (sometimes written as 崆峒子). He was born in Shidai 石埭, Anhui province, but he travelled and preached in the lower Yangtze area and made his name in Yangzhou, where his teachings were favored by people of all classes. Lu's introduction to Zhou Taigu is very brief, because his sources were limited and second-hand, since the Taigu scrolls in which we can find lengthy accounts of Zhou Taigu's life history would not become available to the public until the end of the century. But Lu documented a description of Zhou Taigu's

[7] Technically, the first appearance of the term "Taigu school" in printed form is in a newspaper article published on May 15, 1927, also authored by Lu Jiye. But that article was for all intents and purposes Lu's "advertisement" for "The Genealogy" that was forthcoming. For this reason we still use "The Genealogy" as the starting point. In fact, "The Genealogy" was drafted in the winter of 1926, but it took half a year for it to be published. See note 19 for a detailed introduction to the context from which "The Genealogy" came out.

[8] I try to stick to Lu Jiye's narrative in order to seize the aura of that particular historical moment, but updates will be added to some of the details based on the most recent scholarship for the convenience of further discussion. The major source I consult for this purpose is Zhou Xinguo 周新國 et al., *Taigu xuepai shigao* 太谷學派史稿 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2014), unless otherwise noted.

[9] Lu Jiye has misspelled Lin Zhao'en as Li Zhao'en 李兆恩. See Lu Jiye, "The Genealogy," *Dongfang zazhi* 24.14 (1927): 74. Today's scholars have in general denied the existence of any direct relationship between the two, except their shared inclination toward syncretism. But this narrative was repeated for quite a period. For example, see Elizabeth J. Perry and Tom Chang, "The Mystery of Yellow Cliff,"129. Also consult the same source for an introduction to Lin Zhao'en and his teaching.

marvelous abilities that could also be observed in other scattered late Qing sources, although his own mentor Zhong Tai 鐘泰 (1888–1979) warned him that these "were probably only distorted and unreliable hearsay."[10] The documentation reads:

> Taigu was most adept at the study of music and phonology. Some people say that he practiced Daoist cultivation of the *qi* and of breatharianism. He mastered various arts, including the *yin-yang*, the *qigai* occult medicine, talismans, incantations, exorcism and invisibility. He also touched upon the Daoist sexual practices transmitted by the immortal Rongcheng.
> 太谷最邃音律學，或說能練氣辟穀，於陰陽奇賅符圖罡咒役鬼隱形，無不精明，兼及元牝容成術。[11]

Yet, somehow such an omnipotent master was still no match for law enforcement — Zhou Taigu died in prison because his teachings had incited the suspicions of the local authorities, reported Lu. We will learn a different story in later scholarship, one that asserts that Zhou Taigu indeed escaped from prison — or was resurrected after his death in prison — and kept a low profile for the rest of his life until 1832, although his true whereabouts seem as unknowable as all the other aspects of this legendary figure.[12]

Zhou Taigu had many disciples, but his orthodox teachings were inherited by two locals from Yizheng 儀征 (a town next to Yangzhou), Zhang Jizhong 張積中 and Li Guangxin 李光炘, who respectively founded what Lu called "the northern faction" (*beipai* 北派) and "the southern faction" (*nanpai* 南派), which are in today's scholarship more commonly termed as "the northern branch" (*beizong* 北宗) and "the southern branch" (*nanzong* 南宗). Zhang Jizhong (c. 1805–1866, aka Zhang Shiqin 張石琴 and Qi Xiansheng 七先生, among many other aliases) became the incarnation of all the mysteries associated with the Taigu teaching. In fact, if any public records could be said to have revealed something about the Taigu history before Lu's article, they were all about Zhang Jizhong and what was known as the "Yellow Cliff Massacre" (*Huangya jiaoan* 黃崖教案), a bloody incident that caused the death of Zhang and thousands of his followers. In 1856, after travelling and preaching in various places, Zhang settled his family at Yellow Cliff, a remote and peaceful mountain in Shandong province, in order to keep safely away from the various rebel militia in that time, such as the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the Nian armies. Attracted by Zhang's reputation as a charismatic leader and Yellow Cliff as a safe harbor, many people moved to the mountain, in search of either enlightenment or asylum, and gradually a self-defended and semi-independent community took shape. Led by Zhang, they not only built shelters, cultivated farmland, and operated markets, but also developed a quasi-military system consisting of fortresses, armed defenders and even an intelligence network in the

[10] See Lu Jiye, "Taizhou xuepai yuanliu shulue" 泰州學派源流述略, *Dongnan lunheng* 1.7 (1926): 16. "The Genealogy" is an extended and updated version of this article.
[11] Lu Jiye, "The Genealogy," 75.
[12] Chen Liao 陳遼 was the first who estimated of the dates of Zhou Taigu's birth and death based on the Taigu scrolls that were not yet published by that time. See Chen Lao, *Zhou Taigu pingzhuan* 周太谷評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing chubanshe, 1992): 3. However, not all scholars are convinced by this version of Zhou Taigu's death. Some suspect that the Taigu followers made up this version because they needed a better ending for Zhou Taigu than dying in imprisonment. See Zhou Xinguo et at., *Taigu xuepai shigao*, 67–68. But in other places of the same book, the narrative is based on the first version of the story; see, for example, ibid, 53–54. This discrepancy suggests a general lack of critical consciousness regarding the constructed nature of the Taigu history.

guise of shops that were located in neighboring areas. The community, as Lu described it based on his possession of various oral sources and late Qing documents, had a strongly religious character. The residents maintained a quasi-communist and quasi-ascetic lifestyle by giving up personal property and sexual life. Most notably, they practiced rituals that looked uncanny and mysterious to outsiders:

> The most rigorous [among all the activities in the Yellow Cliff] was its ritualistic assemblies. They took place at scheduled dates of the year. Followers wore ancient hats and clothes to worship the gods, and the procedures involved were trivial and tedious. The rituals were usually held late at night […] Flags were raised, candles were lit, and the smoke of incense pervaded the sky. When lights were seen from tens of miles away, people in the area all knew that it was Sage Zhang performing his obeisance.[13]

The community thus raised the suspicion of the local authorities. After some failed attempts to communicate with the community, Yan Jingming 閻敬銘 (1817–1892), then governor of Shandong province, declared the Yellow Cliff residents treasonable rebels and sent armies to suppress them. Zhang, whether voluntarily or coerced by the crowd that he had lost control over, chose to fight to the bitter end and ultimately committed self-immolation in the burning worship hall. Thousands died, either from suicide or from the mass slaughter of the government army.

The course of this incident was recorded at length in a document titled "The Yellow Cliff Cult Rebels" (*Huangya jiaofei* 黃崖教匪) that Yan Jingming's staff had likely compiled based on Yan's reports to the higher authorities.[14] Not surprisingly, a document of this nature is full of prejudices against Yellow Cliff and is hardly reliable in many regards. Yet, as the only complete and accessible document on this matter, it to a great extent shaped how this tragedy was narrated in the various texts that came later. As much as Lu disliked associating the Taigu school with anything to do with "religion," his narrative of the ritual life in the Yellow Cliff also clearly derived from Yan Jingming's accusatory portrayal of the community as an "evil cult." Nevertheless, beginning from the late Qing on, dissenting voices were not absent, asserting that the Yellow Cliff tragedy had rendered an unjust verdict because of Yan's poor judgment and even his selfish desire for military exploits. Solid evidence attesting to any rebellious activities before the suppression had never been convincingly presented.[15]

The news of the Yellow Cliff Massacre traveled south and precipitated serious anxiety on the part of Zhang's fellow disciple Li Guangxin (1808–1885, also known as Li Qingfeng 李晴峰, Li Pingshan 李平山 and Longchuan xiansheng 龍川先生, among many other aliases). Awed by what had happened to the "northern faction," this leader of the "southern faction" decided to keep a low profile and pass down the Taigu teaching in an esoteric way, reported Lu, although no record to our knowledge has indicated the existence of any political persecution targeting him. Like the other two masters, Li also had many disciples, and those known to Lu included Huang Baonian 黃葆年 (1845–1924, also known as Huang Xipeng 黃隰朋), Jiang Wentian 蔣文田

[13] Lu Jiye, "The Genealogy," 75.

[14] See "Huangya jiaofei," in Pan Yu 潘遹, *Sandong junxing jilüe* 山東軍興紀略, 22 *juan* in 2 vols. (Taipei: Huawen shuju, 1968), j. 21, pp. 835–846. Excerpts of the document with an introduction are also included in *Shandong jindaishi ziliao (diyi fence)* 山東近代史資料(第一分冊), ed. Zhongguoshi xuehui ji'nan fenhui 中國史學會濟南分會 (Ji'nan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 1957), pp. 173–180.

[15] The first modern scholarship that aims at amending this injustice is Liu Houzi's 1936 article, as will be introduced below. For a study of this incident in English, see Elizabeth J. Perry and Tom Chang, "The Mystery of Yellow Cliff."

(1843–1909, also known as Jiang Ziming 蔣子明) and the renowned official-scholar Mao Qingfan 毛慶蕃 (1849–1927, also known as Mao Shijun 毛實君). Huang Baonian seemed to have inherited the Taigu orthodoxy, according to Lu's narrative, and his followers in Suzhou were well known as the "Huang school" (*Huangmen* 黃門). After Huang Baonian's death, the orthodoxy, as Lu learned from hearsay, passed to Li Guangxin's grandson, whose name (Li Taijie 李泰階 1871–c. 1927) was not even known to him. But apparently, Lu was trying to suggest a scholarly genealogy that was different from the blood-based one. He wrote: "The Huang school has two major disciples, and they are my mentors Wang Xie 王灄 (style name Bohang 伯沆, 1871–1944) and Zhong Tai (style name Zhongshan 鐘山, 1888–1979)."[16] Following this narrative, there is little doubt that Lu considered himself a part of the Taigu genealogy, and his efforts in writing this article was a part of the enterprise of "glorifying the Taigu teaching and influencing Chinese intellectual history" as he proposed toward the end of the article.[17] A different narrative of the third and fourth generations of the Taigu genealogy would take shape later, in which our own protagonist Liu E would have a prominent position.

Lu's article is to be sure not the first textual manifestation of the Taigu school history. As aforementioned, sources about the "Yellow Cliff Massacre," although very few, were already circulating in the late Qing and early Republican textual world.[18] In fact, in the year before the publication of "The Genealogy," Lu had already started publishing a history of this tradition and had even triggered a minor dispute with Zhang Shizhao 章士釗 (1881–1973) about whether this tradition was "religious" or "academic," though he had not yet invented the label "Taigu school" and instead used the term "Taizhou school" (*Taizhou xuepai* 泰州學派), a form of nomenclature based on the geographic origin of many of the masters.[19] However, the label matters, as it for the first time in history integrated subjects and stories that had previously been treated separately into a continuous genealogy and a coherent narrative. This genealogy and the narrative would be amended by latecomers, but the label has lasted to date and has stipulated certain presumptions

[16] Lu Jiye, "The Genealogy," 74.
[17] Ibid., 75.
[18] For an enumeration of these sources, see Zhou Xinguo et al., *Taigu xuepai shigao*, 3–7. Here I add one title that is missing from this review: Li Dingyi 李定夷, "Huangya liuxue ji" 黃崖流血記, *Xiaoshuo xinbao* 2.1 (1916): 1–5.
[19] See Lu Jiye, "Taizhou xuepai yuanliu shulüe" 泰州學派源流述略, *Dongnan lunheng* 1.7 (1926): 15–16. Later this year, Lu Jiye published in the same venue a letter he had written to a friend in which he criticised Zhang Shizhao's wrong characterization of the Taigu followers as "Taigu religion" (太谷教) in an newspaper article. See Lu Jiye, "Zailun Taizhou xuepai" 再論泰州學派, *Dongnan Lunheng* 1.24 (1926): 16. Turning to 1927, Zhang Shizhao admitted in the journal *Jiayin* 甲寅 under his own editorship that his judgement on the religious nature of the Taigu followers was not careful and he proposed to consult a specialist of this matter, the renowned scholar Jin Tianhe 金天翮 (1874–1947). See Zhang Shizhao, "Gutong zaji" 孤桐雜記, *Jiayin* 1.39 (1927): 24–26. A brief response from Jin Tianhe was soon presented to the readers. See Zhang Shizhao, "Taizhou xuean" 泰州學案, *Jiayin* 1.44 (1927): 18. Shortly another reader also published his opinion on this matter and argued the Taigu followers were indeed religious. See Ding Qiaming 丁洽明, "Taizhou jiao" 泰州教, *Jiayin* 1.45 (1927): 15. After reading these articles, Lu Jiye published another work to address them, and revealed that he had finished writing "The Genealogy" to fully deploy his argument. See Lu Jiye, "Lun Taigu xuepai yu zongjiao da Zhang Xingyan" 論太谷學派與宗教答章行嚴, *Guowen zhoubao* 4.18 (1927): 1–2. "The Genealogy" appeared shortly after this, and in the published version Lu Jiye added a short introduction to address the context in which he wrote the article. He also explained that he heard from a friend Mei Cyicai 梅逸才 commenting that "Taizhou school" easily misled people to Wang Taizhou 王泰州 (1481–1541, aka Wang Gen 王艮, Wang Xinzhai 王心齋) and his followers in the Ming dynasty, and thus he decided to use the new term "Taigu school."

about the Taigu school, many of which are not unproblematic, as will gradually be explored in this chapter.

That being said, the label did not make an immediate difference. There is little indication that the article by the recently graduated Lu stimulated any scholarly follow-up, not to mention attention from the general public. In 1936 and 1937, two young Peking University trained historians, Xie Xingyao 謝興堯 (1906–2006) and Liu Houzi 劉厚滋 (1909–1996, also known as Liu Huisun 劉蕙孫) respectively, published their own research on the Yellow Cliff Massacre, yet neither of them seemed to have noticed the existence of Lu's article and the label "Taigu school."[20] The label was not rediscovered until 1940, when the narrative of the Taigu genealogy would become closely entangled with that of Liu E and his *The Travels of Lao Can*.

April 15, 1939: Revelations from *The Travels of Lao Can*

The label "Taigu school" matters, but its significance for modern Chinese intellectual history was not realized until it was associated with Liu E and his phenomenally successful novel, *The Travels of Lao Can*. As we have discussed in the previous chapter, the novel's successful "forecasting" of many of the major political incidents in modern China won itself the reputation "book of prophecy" and triggered a long-lasting enthusiasm among the general public to decipher the secret knowledge hidden in the book. On April 15, 1939, in response to the public curiosity that had led to various kinds of "absurdities" (as already introduced in the previous chapter), Liu E's fourth son Liu Dashen released a memoir titled "About *The Travels of Lao Can*" (關於老殘遊記, hereafter "About *The Travels*"), one that later became an authoritative and frequently cited source for subsequent studies of *The Travels*.[21] While suggesting that it would be the best to appreciate *The Travels* as a purely literary work, Liu Dashen also revealed the true "intellectual source" of the novel, a revelation that only served to further mystify the novel rather than the opposite. He wrote:

> In order to understand the true revelations of the novel, one must know about my father's intellectual sources. Even before that, one must know about the Taizhou school and my father's personality and deeds [that were influenced by it].[22]

Liu Dashen further elaborated that this "Taizhou school" (泰州學派) was the same entity as had been termed as "Great Achievement Sect" (大成教), "Great Learning Sect" (大學教), "Sage Sect" (聖人教) and "Yellow Cliff Sect" (黃崖教) in various unconfirmed reports, but that none of these was accepted by the "insiders of our teaching." The term "Taizhou school" was also only an expedient nomenclature because "our teaching" did have some connection to Wang Gen's "Taizhou school" of the Ming dynasty. It is at this point that we realize that this "Taizhou school" is the same entity as the "Taigu school" that Lu had named some ten years ago. Apparently, Liu Dashen himself was not aware of the existence of Lu's work at all. His essay

[20] See Xie Xingyao, "Dao-Xian shidai beifang de Huangya jiao" 道咸時代北方的黃崖教, *Yijing* 3(1936): 9–13. Liu Houzi, "Tongzhi wunian Huangya jiaofeian zhiyi" 同治五年黃崖教匪案質疑, *Shixue jikan* 2 (1936): 195–207. Liu Houzi, "Huangya jiaoan zhiyibu" 黃崖教案質疑補, *Shixue jikan* 3 (1937): 329–334.

[21] See Liu Dashen, "Guanyu *Lao Can youji*," *Wenyuan* 1 (1939): 9–29. For a detailed textual history of this memoire, see note 5 in Chapter One.

[22] Liu Dashen, "Guanyu *Lao Can youji*," 14.

continues on to provide a narrative of the genealogy of the school. In accord with Lu's version, Liu Dashen asserts that Zhou Taigu was the founding master, and Zhang Jizhong and Li Guangxin were the northern and southern leaders respectively. But when it came to the third-generation masters, Liu's narrative becomes slightly different. According to Liu Dashen, his father Liu E had a deep yet unknown involvement in the school. Along with Huang Baonian, he was even entrusted by Li with the responsibilities of inheriting its orthodoxy and passing down the true teaching.

Becoming Li's disciple, in this narrative, was a turning point in Liu E's life history. Before that, he was "unruly and wayward." Only after studying with Li did Liu E's learning start to turn "peaceful and purified," and he spent the rest of his life thereafter in cultivating his unrestrained spirit with what he had learned from his master. Liu E today is well known as an active reformer engaged with all sorts of social networks, and thus it is surprising for us to learn that "my father had associates all over the world but only Huang Baonian and Jiang Wentian, who were his fellow disciples, truly understood him."[23] Behind all kinds of commitments in Liu E's life — flood control, railway development, mining industry, commerce, philanthropy, oracle bone collecting, novel publishing, etc. — there was the one fundamental mission that was never known to the outsiders until now: "When Longchuan (Li Guangxin) died he left the will that 'the two snakes would pass down the true teaching' (二巳傳道). That meant master Huang Baonian and my late father."[24] This was because Huang was born in the *yi-si* 乙巳 year (1845), and Liu E was born in the *ding-si* 丁巳 year (1857), which were both "Years of the Snake," explained Liu Dashen.

The revelation of Liu E's secret identity thus cast new light on reading *The Travels*. Yellow Dragon, the most mysterious hermit in the Peach Blossom Mountain episode, was in fact an incarnation of Huang Baonian, wrote Liu Dashen, because "Huang" meant "Yellow," and "snake" and "dragon" fell into the same category in Chinese cosmology. Following a similar logic, Blue Dragon (青龍子) appearing in chapter 20 alluded to Jiang Wentian, and Liu E created the characters Red Dragon (赤龍子) for himself in his *Sequel to The Travels of Lao Can*. In this sequel, he also made up the character Zhou Er 周耳 to speak for Zhou Taigu.[25] Liu Dashen did not proceed to unmask whether Yellow Dragon's prophecies of the future in the novel reflected the contents of the Taigu teaching — in fact, he did not say anything about what their "teaching" was like, except ambiguously writing that "the teaching is extensive and profound; not anything that the ordinary beings could imagine."[26] Yet, with these allusions disclosed to the readers, the conclusion became inevitable that the Peach Blossom Mountain episode looked so idiosyncratic because it was Liu E's elaborately designed magic box wherein the true teaching from Zhou Taigu down to Huang Baonian was concealed. In other words, Liu Dashen, by writing this article had indeed (though not necessary intentionally) confirmed the long-lasting reputation of *The Travels* as a secret scroll, except that now the source of the secrecy had been specified. And since the nature of the Taigu teachings remained withheld elsewhere, the words uttered by Yellow Dragon in the novel were naturally taken as a sample of its doctrine.

[23] Ibid., 14.
[24] Ibid., 14.
[25] Ibid., 13 and 14. Liu Dashen says Blue Dragon is created for the *Sequel*. But in fact this character firstly appears in chapter 20 of *The Travels*.
[26] Ibid., 15.

One year later, Liu Dashen's oldest son Liu Houzi extended his father's brief notes into a lengthy and comprehensive narrative in the article "Zhang Shiqin and the Taigu School" (張石琴與太谷學派).[27] Liu Houzi was a promising young historian working with some of the most prestigious scholars in that period. In two articles published earlier in 1936 and 1937, he had used some newly found sources to redress historical misunderstandings of Zhang Jizhong's (Shiqin) name, and arguing that the Yellow Cliff Massacre was an unjust persecution.[28] Yet these early articles discuss the massacre as an independent political incident. There was no indication that he was aware of Lu's "Taigu school" narrative or that he had attempted to conceptualize the Yellow Cliff teaching within its framework. Apparently, his father's 1939 article became the direct incitement for him to tell a far more comprehensive history of "our teaching." He wrote:

> My late grandfather Tieyun [Liu E] used to receive teaching from Taigu's outstanding disciple Li Longchuan [Guangxin]. My father also studied with Huang Guiqun (Baonian). They have both closely interacted with the masters of the school. I was born late and did not have the chance to hear my grandfather's words. I hereby humbly record what I've heard from my father about the school's academic thought, anecdotes and histories, accompanied by some of the quotations and literary writings left by Zhou Taigu and Li Longchuan.[29]

In this sense, we can reasonably treat this article as a continuation of Liu Dashen's 1939 memoir, except that now the young historian has endorsed Lu Jiye's label "Taigu school," acknowledging it as the most appropriate term for this genealogy.[30] A new piece of information (besides all the newly augmented detail) about this genealogy added in the article was an account of the reunification of the northern and southern branches in 1902. According to this article, Li Guangxin in his late years reappointed his own disciple Jiang Wentian to act as a disciple of the late Zhang Jizhong in order to carry on the terminated Yellow Cliff genealogy, which was since then called the "northern branch," while Li and his followers called themselves the "southern branch." After Li passed away (in 1885), Jiang remained preaching in the north while the southern branch went without a leader. It was then that Liu E began to play a vital role in the revival of the genealogy:

> In 1902, Huang Baonian ended his official appointment in Shandong and returned [to the south]. Mao Shijun (Qingfan) had at that time just started directing the General Bureau of Machine Manufacture of Jiangnan located in Shanghai. My late grandfather then invited Huang Baonian and Jiang Wentian to lecture in Suzhou, with both serving as the leading masters of the school. He also invited three fellow disciples […] whose families were comparatively wealthy to contribute stipends for the students, and he provided any outstanding funds all by himself. The fellow disciples and the incoming students then started residing in the area close to the lecture hall, forming a community of more than one hundred households. Besides, there were also as many as ten thousand

[27] Liu Houzi, "Zhang Shiqin yu Taigu xuepai," *Fu Jen Xuezhi* 9.1 (1940): 84–127.
[28] See note 20.
[29] Liu Houzi, "Zhang Shiqin yu Taigu xuepai," 82–83.
[30] Ibid., 87.

> correspondence students living in other regions or overseas, many of whom were contemporary celebrities.[31]

This Suzhou "lecture hall" here refers to the Guiqun Studio 歸群草堂, from which Huang Baonian got one of his aliases Huang Guiqun, and the flourishing scene described in the quotation (regardless whether or to what extent it was exaggerated) is what is termed as "The Reunification of the Southern and Northern Branches" (南北合宗) in today's scholarship, an event that is deemed highly significant for it has marked the "revival of the Taigu school in the modern period."[32] The role that Liu E played in this revival, according to this narrative, was decisive. He might not be a primary master in the sense of transmitting the Taigu teaching, but he was the one who made the transmission possible by putting things in order and securing its financial basis.

This contribution, from Liu Houzi's perspective, was not only logistical. Much more than that, it reflected a key value of the Taigu teaching, namely "to nurture those under heaven" (養天下). In the section in which he summarizes ten major elements of the thought of the Taigu school (which is also the first systematic survey on this topic), Liu Houzi introduced the ninth, "on the relationship between teaching and nurturing," by presenting a letter that Liu E wrote in reply to Huang Baonian in 1902, the year when the Guiqun Studio was established. Liu E wrote:

> To look at what I have done, I am indeed the opposite of you in almost all regards. But to think about the reason why I did those things, then I humbly believe we are exactly the same. […] You and I have the same ambitions, and the difference lies merely between the emphases on "teaching" and "nurturing." […] The sages' deeds have many aspects, but they are either about "teaching" or "raising." You take "teaching those under heaven" as your mission, while I take "nurturing those under heaven" as my mission.[33]

Reading these words in the context of Liu Houzi's article, it is hard to resist the impression that Huang and Liu E were indeed the two "snakes," each being destined to carry on one aspect of the essence of the Taigu teaching. Liu E's lifelong commitment to practical matters — flood control, commerce, industry and philanthropy — can also be easily subsumed by his devotion to the Taigu teachings, since these matters are all about "nurturing those under heaven." In Liu Houzi's particular historical context, he even used this "teaching-nurturing" dualism to characterize the "political thought of the Taigu school," which to him was quite "revolutionary."[34]

In this way, Liu Dashen and Liu Houzi together established a Liu E-centered narrative of the Taigu school genealogy and a paradigm for reading *The Travels* as a manifestation of the thought of the Taigu school. These initiating narratives have had an enduring influence on later scholarship. For example, Harold Shadick's 1952 reading of the Taigu school allusions in *The Travels* that we cited in the beginning of the chapter was directly borrowed from Liu Houzi's and especially Liu Dashen's articles.[35] Through a long chain of circular reasoning in the twentieth

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[31] Ibid., 89–90.
[32] See Zhou Xinguo et al., *Taigu xuepai shigao,* 202–227.
[33] Liu Houzi, "Zhang Shiqin yu Taigu xuepai," 114.
[34] Ibid., 116–117.
[35] As a matter of fact, the direct reason that Liu Dashen wrote and published "About *The Travels*" was that Harold Shadick who was translating *The Travels* contacted him through the good offices of Liu Houzi and his colleague. See Liu Dashen, "About *The Travels*," 9.

century, the relationship between Taigu school, Liu E and *The Travels* have become a kind of taken-for-granted knowledge. However, as I have outlined above, how this "knowledge" was initially revealed in these two articles raises many questions and may — against Liu Dashen and Liu E's intentions — lead us to a very different picture. For example, while in Liu Dashen's memoir the implication of Li Guangxin's prophetic message ("the two snakes would pass down the true teachings) seems unambiguous, in Liu E's letter to Huang Baonian (as cited in Liu Houzi's article) the same story finds itself a more open-ended reading. Liu E wrote:

> I still remember it was when our master [Li] was in his Yunxi residency. He sat in the inner chamber of the salon and announced the message from the God of Wind [during a quasi-planchette ritual]: "In the future world, the two snakes would pass down the true teachings." Among the disciples who were present, there were four born in the Year of Snake: you, Yunxi's wife, Xiaobin, and me. At that time, I was so bold and in my mind I believed I must be one of the snakes. Down to today, I feel even more obligated to shoulder that responsibility.[36]

If we take the letter as a more reliable source than Liu Dashen's reminiscence made several decades later, it becomes clear that Li had never used that vague message to designate Liu E as one of the two orthodox inheritors. It was throughout Liu E's own interpretation and his own initiative to shoulder that responsibility, which may or may not have been appreciated by his fellow disciples. In fact, if we try to comprehend the subtext of the letter instead of taking every word literally, it also seems clear that Liu E was taking a defensive position when proposing the "teaching-nurturing" division. Apparently, what Liu E characterized as "nurturing" was something of which Huang had disapproved of, to the extent that the best response Liu E could expect was "forgiveness" (諒之) and "not compelling me to be like you" (不以強同苦我).[37] The "teaching-nurturing" division in this light was Liu E's self-defense against such criticisms, and an argument that he was still loyal to his master's teaching in his own way, even though the others did not think so. It is not my purpose here to judge whether Liu E's stand was closer to the true "Taigu teaching," unless we want to take the risk of essentializing the "Taigu teaching." But in either case, it is problematic to take the "teaching-nurturing" division literally as a key component of the "Taigu teaching," as Liu Houzi does in his article.

If such a discrepancy of views was indeed present, how do we reconsider the relationship between Liu E and the Taigu school? In fact, with more sources (and especially the "Taigu scrolls") emerging toward the end of the twentieth century, a few scholars have gradually started questioning Liu Dashen and Liu Houzi's narratives, suggesting that Liu E's position in the Taigu school genealogy was only secondary if not marginal.[38] The master-disciple relationship between

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[36] Liu Houzi, "Zhang Shiqin yu Taigu xuepai," 115.

[37] Ibid., 114.

[38] Wang Xuejun 王學鈞 is the first to reconsider the relationship between Liu E and the Taigu school. A series of articles he published in the 1990s are refreshing, though other scholars following up on his work are sparse. See Wang Xuejun, "Liu E 'Ti Yuyuan yaji tu fuben hou bing xu: Liu E yu Taigu xuepai zhi guanxi" 劉鶚題愚園雅集圖撫本後並序考辯：劉鶚與太谷學派之關係, *Wenxian* 3 (1990): 109–120. Wang Xuejun, "'Ersi chuandao' kaobian: Liu E yu Taigu xuepai guanxi lunkao zhiyi" 二巳傳道考辯：劉鶚與太谷學派關係論考之一, *Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* Z1 (1990): 304–318. Zhu Xi 朱禧, "Ye tan 'Ersi chuandao': Wei Wang Xuejun tongzhi buzheng" 也談"二巳傳道"：為王學鈞同志補正, *Journal of Nanjing University of Science and Technology* 8.3-4 (1995): 55–56. Wang Xuejun, "*Lao Can youji* de Taigu xuepai guan" 老殘遊記的太谷學派觀, *Jiangsu shehui kexue* 4 (1993): 98–104.

Li Guangxin and Liu E was by and large nominal. Liu E only paid several brief visits to Li and never stayed with him to study. He had no idea about his teacher's whereabouts after an 1884 group gathering in Shanghai, nor did he attend the teacher's funeral the next year. Liu E did have a special tie to Huang Baonian. His oldest daughter was married to Huang's second son Huang Shoupeng 黃壽彭 (? – 1953, also known as Zhongsu 仲素). However, as we have already divined above, Huang's attitude toward Liu E was hardly appreciative. In fact, in a letter addressed to Liu E, Huang almost ruthlessly criticized Liu E's lifestyle, contending that the claim of "nurturing those under heaven" was simply a self-serving excuse for pursuing his personal desires.[39]

To introduce this counterargument, however, is not to suggest that it is truer than Liu Dashen and Liu Houzi's narrative. To be sure, this counterargument is more accurate regarding certain details. But that does not mean that Liu E and his descendants were deliberately misrepresenting the truth. Liu E indeed strongly identified with Li and the fellow disciples, as we can clearly sense from his 1902 letter. His impulse to shoulder the responsibility of "passing down the true teaching" as one of the two "snakes" was sincere. As to why this bold yet unpretentious confession of his secret ambition was somehow received by Liu Dashen as a sacred mission designated by Li Guangxin, it is not hard to comprehend if we consider how many decades elapsed before Liu E's words were written down by his son and grandson's pens. But most fundamentally, I suggest that to dispute over Liu E's position in the Taigu school is itself an anachronistic mistake. Liu E never thought in terms of something referred to as the "Taigu school." For him, Li was a venerated master who awed him with his immeasurable wisdom, but not "the second-generation inheritor of the orthodoxy." Huang was his relative and a friend who would give him forthright advice, but not "the third-generation inheritor of the orthodoxy." The Guiqun Studio was a place he sponsored where students could get proper education, but not a monument of "the renaissance of the Taigu school in the modern period." For him, the "true teaching" in the message conveyed by the "God of Wind" probably meant the universal Way that had been worshiped and pursued by all intellectuals from ancient times. After all, which man of letters, no matter whether he was or was not a member of the "Taigu school," did not take "passing down the true teaching" as his ultimate mission? Yet in later narratives (either that of Liu's descendants' or in the counterargument to their assertions), these platitudes were particularized to the "Taigu school" teaching, as if they meant something essentially different from the "true Way" in the Chinese cosmology. In other words, while Liu E was addressing particular matters here and there in his life without being conscious of his place in this general narrative, his descendants in light of discovering his "intellectual sources" had no other recourse than to place these particular matters in a generalized framework, namely the "Taigu school" genealogy. A narrative produced in this context is doomed to be Liu E-centered (just like the "Taigu school" genealogy told in Lu Jiye's article is doomed to have Lu's two

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Wang Xuejun, "Liu E 'Sanye Longchuan' kao" 劉鶚三謁龍川考, *Journal of Nanjing University of Science and Technology* 12.4 (1999): 23–28. A recent summary and development of this argument is seen: Lu Nannan 陸楠楠, "Liu E yu Taigu xuepai guanxi zai kaobian" 劉鶚與太谷學派關係再考辨, *Jinan Journal* 6 (2016): 114–122.

[39] The letter was revealed by Liu Delong 劉德隆 (Liu E's great-grandson; Liu Houzi's nephew) in 1993. See Liu Delong, "Yifeng Huang Baonian gei Liu E de xin" 一封黃葆年給劉鶚的信, *Wenxian* 1 (1993): 286–287. This letter is not clearly dated, making it hard to determine whether it and Liu E's 1902 letter belonged to the same thread of communications. But the possibility is high since they both concern the same topic, namely how to appraise Liu E's lifestyle.

mentors occupy the spotlight), and it takes time for the latecomers to fill out the complex contours of this narrative such that they realize Liu E does not have to be at its center.

Only if we stop essentializing the "Taigu school" and instead to treat it as a retrospective narrative that was gradually established over the long course of the twentieth century, would Liu E's relationship with the Taigu school become sensible and approachable. If we adhere to this awareness, there is no reason to decipher the secret "Taigu school teaching" that is supposedly hidden in the novel (though it does not hurt to contextualize the novel with the writings produced by that social circle), nor is it necessary to contend how "significant" Liu E's position was in that genealogy. He is unsurpassably "significant," but not in the way he would have imagined in his lifetime. It may have been an accident, but it turns out that his novel itself was the contingency that brought the label "Taigu school" to the public, and that his descendants spent their lifelong time collecting and publicizing the "Taigu scrolls" that would otherwise have vanished. These "scrolls" would ultimately rescue the "Taigu school" from the realm of hearsay and conjecture, conferring upon this designation a solid ground of cross-referenced documentation. But as we will see in the rest of the chapter, that path was long and full of vicissitudes.

July 2, 1957: The Secret Scrolls Emerge

The narratives of the Taigu school thus far have mainly been based on conjecture and jaundiced external sources. Lu Jiye wrote in his 1927 article: "[the Taigu school] transmits its teachings by mouth and ear but not by writings."[40] Liu Houzi's 1940 article mentions a couple of vague titles that seemed to be internal documents, but his major sources were still family legends and external documents concerning the Yellow Cliff Massacre.[41] Could it be that the Taigu school masters did indeed keep textual documentations of their teachings and history, given they were apparently all men of letters?

The answer to this mystery does not emerge until the socialist era. Liu Houzi is again the one who makes the revelation. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Liu Houzi became a professor at the Fujian Normal College (today's Fujian Normal University) located in the city of Fuzhou. On July 2, 1957, seventeen years after his revelation of the history and thought of the Taigu school histories in the 1940 article, his new article "The Lost Scrolls of the Taigu School" (from a manuscript dated on March 18, 1957) appeared in the official academic journal of Fujian Normal College.[42] Redressing people's impression that the Taigu school had no surviving writings, Liu Houzi wrote: "the scrolls of the Taigu school actually exist, and in their entirety. It is just that outsiders have never seen them."[43]

In fact, as the story in the article unfolds, we come to learn that even the "insiders" Liu Dashen and Liu Houzi themselves did not see many "Taigu scrolls" until very late. "When I was

[40] Lu Jiye, "The Genealogy," 74.

[41] The titles of the documentations that Liu Houzi mentioned in this article were *Longchuan shichao* 龍川詩鈔 and *Zhoushi yishu* 周氏遺書. He used quotations here and there from the two sources to exemplify the Taigu school thoughts, but did not say much about the sources themselves. He also mentioned *Huangya xiansheng shiwenji* 黃崖先生詩文集 and *Longchuan xiansheng nianpu* 龍川先生年譜 that he had heard of but did not see. See Liu Houzi, "Zhang Shiqin yu Taigu xuepai," 83, 84, 87 and 94. We will know more about these sources in the pages below.

[42] See Liu Houzi (Huisun), "Taigu xuepai de yishu" 太谷學派的遺書, *Fujian shifan xueyuan xuebao* 福建師範學院學報 2 (1957): 2–18. It should be noted that Liu's post-1949 works are all published under a new name "Liu Huisun." But I this chapter I use "Liu Houzi" throughout to avoid any unnecessary confusion.

[43] Ibid., 1.

a child, I only saw *Poems of Master Li Longchuan* (*Longchuan shichao*). As I grew older, I heard that there was a *The Lost Scroll of Master Zhou* (*Zhoushi yishu*) that had twelve handwritten copies, each in the possession of a fellow disciple. But we never saw any of them."[44] Liu Dashen and Liu Houzi only came to know of the existence of a bounty of "Taigu scrolls" through a dramatic incident that happened in 1933. At that time they were living in Tianjin. They had a neighbor named Pan Xiaoru 潘孝儒 (also known as Baozhen 葆真), who was Liu Dashen's cousin and had studied with Huang Baonian. Pan wanted to get a copy of *Poems of Master Li Longchuan* from the Guiqun Lecture Hall, but was told they did not have that book. Knowing this, Liu Dashen suggested that he would love to publish the handwritten copy in his collection so that the fellow disciples like Pan could read it. Liu and Pan then raised money and had three hundred copies printed on the very high-quality Lianshi 連史 paper. Besides the book itself, they also bound it with *The Lost Scroll of Master Li* (*Lishi yishu*), as well as another of Li's works, *A Plain Telling of the Hidden* (*Suyinshu* 素隱述) that was lithographed by Liu E when he was alive, which suggests that Liu E was probably the first who chose to print the "Taigu scrolls." Liu and Pan sent some dozens of copies to the Guiqun Studio in Suzhou, asking them to distribute the copies to those who were interested. What they did not expect was that this goodwill only brought them condemnation.

A letter came from Suzhou, collectedly signed by Huang Zhongsu (Huang Baonian's second son and Liu E's son-in-law) and more than ten other fellow disciples. The letter castigated the printing of Li's works as an "unforgivable sin of revealing heavenly secrets." The only way to redeem the sin was to tear *The Lost Scroll of Master Li* from its binding, burn it to ashes, bring the ashes to Yangzhou (where Li preached) and sink them in the middle of the Yangtze River. As to *Poems of Master Li Longchuan*, all the copies should be rebound and sent to the Longchuan Studio (Li's residency when preaching in Yangzhou). Anybody who wanted to read it needed to write to the Suzhou Guiqun Studio first, and a copy would be granted only after the collective approval of Huang Zhongsu and the fellow disciples. Liu Dashen and Pan were astonished to read this letter. Pan suggested just ignoring it, but Liu proposed to debate with them. He then wrote a long response of several thousand words, arguing that it was understandable for the older masters to keep their writings in secret because of the trauma of the Yellow Cliff Massacre, but in today's world how would that be necessary? "Our masters' writings" were not unlike the analects left by the ancient Confucian masters or the Buddhist and Daoist canons. These texts had been widely printed and circulated, then why not the scrolls of "our own masters?"

The Suzhou group responded with silence and the incident thus ended inconclusively, because, Liu Houzi speculated, "they did not really have the power to control what my father would do."[45] But to Liu Dashen's surprise, he later received a personal letter from Zhang Deguang 張德廣, whose name was among the signatures in the original accusatory letter. Zhang said he had been convinced by Liu's letter. The old masters' writings needed to be seen, he agreed, and as a matter of fact, he had been devoting himself to this enterprise for almost ten years, though not in the form of printing.

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[44] In his preface to the *Taigu xuepai yishu* 太谷學派遺書 that was finally published toward the end of the century, Liu Houzi recalls again how he came to see the "Taigu scrolls." The story in this version is basically the same as the 1957 version, but each is richer than the other in some particular details. My narrative in this chapter consults both versions. For this particular quotation, see Liu Houzi (Huisun), "Preface," in *Taigu xuepai yishu, series 1, volume 1*, ed. Fang Baochuan 方寶川 (Yangzhou: Jiangsu guangling guji keyinshe, 1997), p. 6.

[45] Liu Houzi (Huisun), "Preface," 8.

Zhang Deguang (c. 1885–c. 1937), also known as Zhang Lingyi 張令貽, was from Tongshan 銅山 of the northern Jiangsu province.[46] In 1910, he paid a respectful visit to Huang Baonian through the good offices of his Suzhou cousins. In the winter of 1914, his family moved to Suzhou, and on Feb 19, 1915, he became a formal disciple of Huang Baonian's. Huang died in 1924. Out of grief, and also considering that Huang and the other old masters' writings were difficult to access and might easily vanish, it became Zhang's aspiration to compile and preserve them. He then started the project of making what he would call "The Guiqun precious scrolls" 歸群寶笈, a project that would turn out to stretch over ten years. In the decade that followed, Zhang persuaded his fellow disciples to organize and collate the existing writings in the Guiqun Studio, and he hired the students who needed stipends to make handwritten copies, using the same papers and following the standardized layout. Sometimes there were as many as twenty or thirty students working for him at the same time. To keep the project funded, he even sold some of the farmland in his hometown, and for that his relatives and friends called him "Zhang the Crazy" (張三瘋子). By early 1934, the project had produced a collection of sixty titles in 243 volumes, for which Zhang wrote the *Bibliography of the Guiqun Precious Scrolls* 歸群寶笈目錄 (hereafter *Guiqun Bibliography*, preface dated on Feb 3, 1934).[47] Even before the conclusion of the current project, Zhang had realized that there were still many unedited fragments of the old master's words that were scattered in the hands of the Guiqun students, many of whom were not living in Suzhou. Therefore, in the spring of 1932 Zhang had initiated a supplementary project of collecting and compiling such fragments. The second project, according to Zhang's report, involved much more collective effort. Under the leadership of the senior teachers in the studio, dozens of students were assigned to contact their fellow disciples everywhere in the country, each being responsible for one particular region. By the late autumn of 1934, they had compiled a second collection of thirty titles in 64 volumes, for which Zhang again wrote *The Bibliography of the Extended Guiqun Precious Scrolls* 歸群寶笈續編目錄 (hereafter *Extended Guiqun Bibliography*). In the preface dated at the turn of 1934 and 1935, Zhang revealed that the two projects had cost three thousand silver dollars. His family contributed seven hundred and fifty, and the rest came from his personal funds. Altogether, ninety titles in 307 volumes were preserved. Zhang still envisioned extending the collection, but he died soon after, sometime around the Japanese invasion in 1937.

[46] Liu Houzi's reminiscence of Zhang's story in both the 1957 article and the 1997 preface are sketchy. My narrative below mainly relies on the two prefaces Zhang writes to the *Bibliography of the Guiqun Precious Scrolls* and the *Bibliography of the Extended Guiqun Precious Scrolls* (detailed below). See Zhang Deguang, "Guiqun baoji mulu bianyan" 歸群寶笈目錄弁言, in *Taigu xuepai yishu, series 1, volume 5*, 3–8. Zhang Deguang, "Guiqun baoji xubian mulu bianyan" 歸群寶笈續編目錄弁言, in *Taigu xuepai yishu, series 1, volume 5*, 47–52. I also consult three secondary sources. They are: Fang Baochuan, "Xianwei renzhi de Taigu xuepai yishu *Guiqun cicong*" 鮮為人知的太谷學派遺書歸群詞叢, *Wenxian* 文獻 4 (1989): 97–98. Fang Baochuan, "*Guiqun baoji mulu* ji qita" 歸群寶笈目錄及其他, in *Taigu xuepai yishu, series 1, volume 5*, 1–4. Chen Liao, "Suojian Taigu xuepai yishu" 所見太谷學派遺書, *Wenxian* 文獻 1 (1992): 220. Note, Fang and Chen both write Zhang's birth year as 1884, apparently based on his confession "I am fifty *sui*" made in early 1934. Considering how *sui* is calculated, he was also likely born in 1885. I then go with "c. 1885." As to his death year, I go with Liu Houzi's memory in the 1957 article. As to his place of birth, Liu Houzi recalled it as "northern Anhui." Fang Baochuan's article in the 1997 series has corrected it to be "Tongshan of northern Jiangsu."

[47] Fang Baochuan notes the project was finished in the winter of 1933. If we go with the date of the preface, then it should be February 1934, though it was indeed still during the wintertime that began in 1933.

When Zhang reached out to Liu Dashen in 1933, his projects were close to conclusion. Motivated by Liu Dashen's precedent, he said he would love to see these "precious scrolls" published in printed form too. Zhang and Liu Dashen then kept up a thread of pleasant epistolary communications. He sent Liu Dashen the two bibliographies when the projects were finished, which for the first time let the Liu family realize the existence of the abundant titles that they had never heard of. Zhang's goodwill notwithstanding, to publish the "precious scrolls" was apparently an unrealistic proposal, considering how the conservative manner in which his fellow disciples in Suzhou had been behaving. After Zhang's death, the "precious scrolls" became the property of the Guiqun Studio that was under the Huang family's supervision. Their attitude toward the secrecy of the scrolls remained stubborn. Although they "did not really have the power to control" Liu Dashen, the "redemptive" measures they ordered for the "sin of revealing the heavenly secrets" were indeed practiced when they were capable of it. In the winter of 1951, a Guiqun Studio student with the family name Zhan 詹 somehow revealed a handwritten copy of *The Lost Scroll of Master Zhou* to outsiders. A group of Guiqun Studio teachers then hired a boat to sail to the middle of the river, coerced Zhan to surrender all the scrolls he had, and burned them to ashes right on the boat.[48]

For Liu Dashen and Liu Houzi, who had been fascinated with Liu E's secret affiliation but had never closely interacted with the group in Suzhou, the two "precious scroll" bibliographies sent by Zhang Deguang became a secret treasure map (so to speak) for them to visualize and concretize the "Taigu school," which they were about to conceptualize in the 1939 and 1940 articles. This guided their (especially Liu Houzi's) later lifelong endeavors of publicizing these materials. In 1936, Liu Dashen and Liu Houzi obtained a handwritten copy of the analects of the "founding patriarch", *The Lost Scroll of Master Zhou*, which they had often heard of as the "sacred classic" (*shengjing* 聖經).[49] This work, together with *Poems of Master Li Longchuan*, which Liu Dashen had printed, were the two major sources for Liu Houzi to discuss "the thought of the Taigu school" in his 1940 article. Between 1937 and 1949 they lived in Beijing, where they met another one of Huang Baonian's students, Wang Zhongfang 汪中方, from whom they hand copied several further scrolls. Based on these materials, and together with a lithographed book containing some of the old masters' poems that Liu Houzi discovered from an old bookstore, in 1947 Liu Dashen took his second move of "revealing the heavenly secrets" by publishing a text entitled *The Heart Transmissions of the Confucian Masters* (*Rongzong xinfa* 儒宗心法) in several hundred printed copies. In 1950, Liu Dashen returned to Suzhou. He managed to make some handwritten copies from the collection in the Guiqun Studio. But before long, the landlord of the studio sold the property in 1951, and the "precious scrolls" were then moved to the house of Huang Zhongsu's eldest son Huang Huanong 黃花農, who henceforth

[48] This story is told by Li Guangxin's descendant Li Xingfu 李兴甫 and reported by Sun Qingfei 孫慶飛, who served the Yizheng Bureau of Culture and published several articles on the Taigu school in the 1990s. The story is cited in Liu Dashen's 1997 preface, page 9.

[49] As to when exactly they got this copy, Liu Huisun's reminiscences are self-contradictory in different places. In the 1957 article, he starts with saying (on page 1) that "our family did not see the *The Posthumous Scroll of Master Zhou* until 1940." But later (on page 9) he says that the copy was brought to Tianjin by Liu E's concubine Lady Zheng 鄭 during 1932 and 1933. In the 1997 preface, he recalls that Lady Zheng came to his Tianjin home with the copy in 1936 (page 6). It looks like the year 1936 is more plausible, because if Liu Dashen had obtained this book in 1932 or 1933, why did not he print it instead of Li Guangxin's works, given that Zhou as the founding master was apparently more important than Li in the genealogy. In 1940, Liu Dashen and Liu Houzi had moved to Beijing so Lady Zheng could not possibly visit them in Tianjin.

stopped showing the scrolls to anyone else. In 1957 when Liu Houzi published the article and renamed the "precious scrolls" as the "Taigu scrolls," they were still in Huang's possession.

In light of this history, Liu Houzi's 1957 article was again a continuation of his father Liu Dashen's unfulfilled mission, namely, to rescue the scrolls from the hands of the "stubborn" Suzhou group and to put them into general circulation. In this article, Liu Houzi revealed a list of ninety-eight titles and provided synopses for twenty-one of them. In addition to the titles from Zhang Deguang's two bibliographies, Liu Houzi also added eleven titles, mostly Liu E and Liu Dashen's unpublished works.[50] Based on the authors of these scrolls, Liu Houzi drew a genealogical tree of the Taigu school (Figure 2.1). Compared to the genealogy narrated in his 1940 article, this genealogical tree was not only much richer in details, but also presumably crafted with great authenticity, given that these names were all supported by the tangible "precious scrolls" that they each had written, not by unverifiable hearsay or family lore. Yet, we still need to be reminded that Liu E and Liu Dashen's works were not in Zhang Deguang's "Guiqun precious scrolls" bibliographies, but were instead added by Liu Houzi to his newly conceptualized "Taigu scrolls." The difference is clear: Liu E would not have found his name in the genealogical tree (not to mention a prominent position) had it been based on the original "precious scrolls."

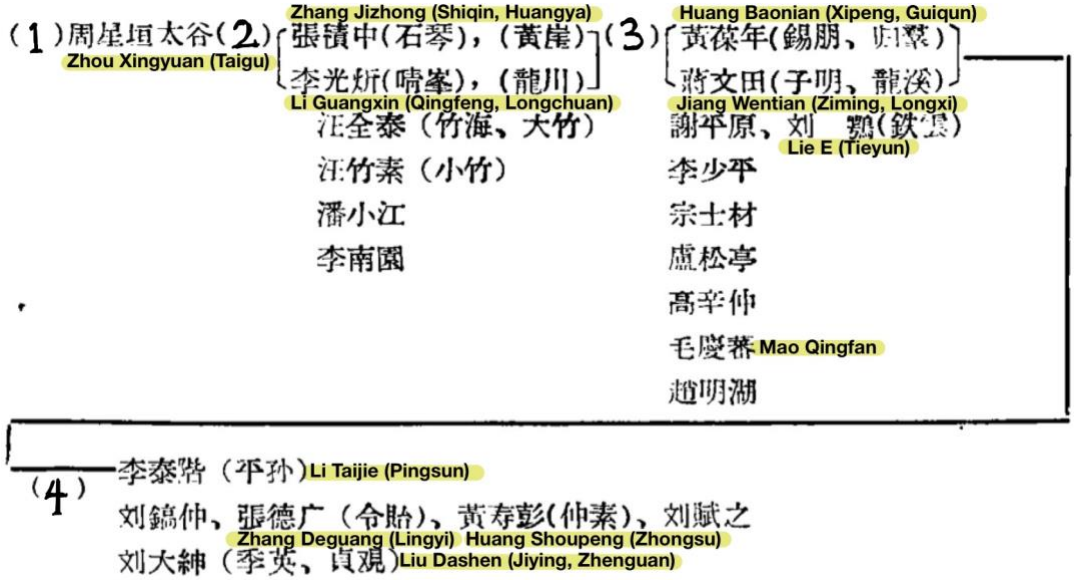

Figure 2.1: The Taigu School Genealogy Tree Based on the "Taigu Scroll" Authors.
Source: Liu Houzi (Huisun), "Taigu xuepai de yishu," 9. Romanization is provided to names that have appeared in this chapter.

The "Taigu scrolls," as both a bibliographic label and a collection of hundreds of manuscript volumes, hence emerges into the public view, as does the unknown history of their making in the first half of the twentieth century. The timing of the revelation in 1957 was no accident. Liu Houzi wrote: "Nowadays the cultural policy 'Let a hundred flowers bloom; let a hundred schools of thought contend' 百花齊放, 百家爭鳴 has been clearly proposed. I sincerely hope that those who are keeping these scrolls [clearly speaking to the stubborn Huang family]

[50] Liu Houzi says he has added twelve titles. See Liu Houzi (Huisun), "Taigu xuepai de yishu," 9. But according to the list, the number should be eleven.

would contribute them to the country, allowing them to come under the custody of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, so that everybody could fairly use them."[51] The manuscript of the article was dated March 18, 1957, when the "Hundred Flowers Campaign" was still proceeding. However, starting from May, Mao Zedong's attitude toward this campaign (which he had started himself) began to change, and by June he abruptly ended it, replacing it with the radical Anti-Rightist Campaign. Liu Houzi's article still came out on July 2nd, probably because it was too late for the editors of the journal to stop the production that had already been typeset at the printing house. But as a matter of fact, the "Hundred Flowers Campaign" that motivated Liu Houzi to write this article was no longer ongoing. What was to come was a long period of political turbulence. Liu E in this period was accused as a traitor to the national interest. Who, then, would have any interest in studying a traitor's "intellectual sources," not to mention that these sources themselves looked like a perfect target for the Red Guards' campaign to eliminate "the Four Olds" (破四舊)?

Jan 29, 1996: The Secret Scrolls Go to Print

It is probably not entirely fair to speak of the keepers of the "precious scrolls" — the Huang family in Suzhou — solely based on Liu Houzi's reminiscence. But they never (at least to our knowledge) spoke in public about this collection, and as a matter of fact, no trace of this collection was found in the 1980s when Liu Houzi and other scholars tried to locate them in Suzhou after several decades of political chaos. But in an unexpected (yet somehow fated) place, Taizhou, a small collection of such scrolls survived. It cannot be verified whether or not these scrolls are exactly the copies made in the course of Zheng Deguang's compilation project, but they definitely originated from that source, and their movement to Taizhou must have some form of connection to the Huang family. Cadres working for the Taizhou Bureau of Culture reported in 1992:

> In 1962, Taizhou Ancient Bookstore (泰州古舊書店) purchased a batch of thirty kinds of "Taigu scrolls" [note this is an anachronistic term, and the number is also hardly reliable] from a house located in Nanxiao Street of the Chen Bridge (陳家橋南小街), where there lived a descendant of a "Huang school" disciple.[52]

The "Huang school," as I have explained earlier, was what Huang Baonian's students had referred to themselves before the label "Taigu school" received wide recognition. Huang Baonian was from Taizhou (though he held office in Shandong and then lectured in Suzhou until his death), and his son Huang Zhongsu went back to their hometown after the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese war in 1937. Therefore, it is only natural that "Huang school" students were to be found in Taizhou with the "precious scrolls" in hand. In fact, the reminiscence of an elder educated Taizhou local in the 1990s gives just one vivid example (among many other possibilities) of how the "precious scrolls" could have immigrated to Taizhou:

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[51] Liu Houzi (Huisun), "Taigu xuepai de yishu," 17.

[52] Zhang Qiushou 張秋收 and Zhu Zuren 諸祖仁, "Taizhou tushuguan shoucang, rucang Taigu xuepai yishu qingkuang jianjie" 泰州圖書館收藏、入藏太谷學派遺書情況簡介, *Journal of Nanjing University of Science and Technology (Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 南京理工大學學報（哲學社會科學版） 9.1 (1996): 35. Note the manuscript of the report is dated in 1992, though it is published in this journal in 1996.

> I read Mr. Chen Liao's work *The Commentated Biography of Zhou Taigu* […] which recorded one hundred and twenty names of Huang Baonian's students. I found my name among them. This is surprising, because, if we do the numbers: I was only seven years old when Huang Baonian died in 1924. Therefore I couldn't have been his student. But I also recall: I was born in a poor family but I liked calligraphy since childhood. In 1930, a Mr. Zhang from afar reached out to me, asking me to make handwritten copies of "Guiqun Precious Scrolls" and other books. He also gave me some bamboo-paper to practice my calligraphy. Maybe that is why I was listed as Huang Baonian's student?[53]

Besides the report from the Taizhou Bureau of Culture, there are other accounts of how these scrolls ended up surviving the political turbulence of those years and entering the custody of the Taizhou Library. One version says the scrolls were rescued from the campaign to destroy the "Four Olds" in 1966.[54] Another version adds even more vivid details: "A great pile of old books was transported to the yard where the 'red revolutionary government' was, waiting to be sent to the paper factory [to be destroyed and reused as raw materials]. A cadre who had already lost power saw these scrolls, and said to the one in charge: 'there is some values to these books. How about sending them to the library?'"[55]

In any case, a miracle happened and these manuscript scrolls ended up gaining shelter in the Taizhou Library. The library, however, did not realize what they could do with these old papers, until a Taizhou local Xiao Qi 蕭齊 (c. 1910–?) discovered them in the 1980s. Xiao Qi's father was a Guiqun Studio student and kept a handwritten copy of *The Lost Scroll of Master Zhou*, which was confiscated during the Cultural Revolution. In 1984, the damaged copy was returned to Xiao under the new policies of the post-Cultural Revolution era.[56] It was probably in the course of looking for materials to amend the damaged copy that Xiao discovered these scrolls. As the son of a former Guiqun Studio student — in which sense he was just like Liu Houzi — he surely recognized the value of these materials and the urgency of properly preserving them. Zhang Deguang's two *Guiqun Bibliographies* were among these scrolls, which gave Xiao a precise sense as to how many titles there should be. Given that "there were only twenty some volumes of handwritten copies in the library," he then made inquiries among the descendants of the former Guiqun students who were in Taizhou, but only found several more volumes.[57] In 1985, at the age of seventy-five, Xiao finished organizing the thirty-one titles in seventy-eight volumes and rebound them as fifty-three fascicules preserved in three bookcases.

It seemed that Xiao Qi was already aware of the "Taigu school" narratives, as he mentioned it in his notes, but he apparently did not favor this label. Instead, he termed the

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[53] Zhang Zidun 章子敦, narrates, Hu Xiwen 胡曦雯 and Li Qiu 李秋 record, "Huang Baonian de xuesheng xiaokao" 黃葆年的學生小考, *Taixian wenshi ziliao* 泰縣文史資料 7 (1992): 128.

[54] Chen Liao, "Suojian Taigu xuepai yishu," 210. Chen Liao surveyed the scrolls in the Taizhou Library in person, so he might have heard this version from someone working for the library.

[55] Xu Yunming 徐允明, "Taigu xuepai yishu fangwenji" 太谷學派遺書訪問記, *Jiangsu shelian tongxun* 江蘇社聯通訊 Z2 (1988): 29. Xu was working for the Institute of Literature (under the Jiangsu Academy of Social Science) that was then directed by Chen Liao. Chen Liao came to know the existence of the "Taigu scrolls" in the course of doing Liu E studies, and he sent his associate Xu Yunming to look for these scrolls in Fuzhou (where Liu Houzi was) and Taizhou. Therefore, Xu Yunming's version of the story also should have come from the Taizhou Library.

[56] See Fang Baochuan, "Zhou Taigu jiqi Zhoushi yishu" 周太谷及其周氏遺書, in *Taigu xuepai yishu, series 1, volume 1*, 13.

[57] For the quote, see Xiao Qi, "Xin Taizhou xuepai ziliao jihouzhi" 新泰州學派資料輯後識, in *Taigu xuepai yishu, series 1, volume 5*, 77–79. The narrative in this paragraph is by and large based on this source.

collection "Materials for A New Account of the Taizhou Academics" 新泰州學案資料, nomenclature that was clearly inspired by one of the scrolls in the collection, *A New Account of the Taizhou Academics* 新泰州學案. This work, in the very traditional "*xue'an*" genre (學案, or account of the academics) was authored by Liu Yizheng 柳貽徵 (1880–1956) in the early twentieth century but remained an unpublished manuscript. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, in the dispute between Zhang Shizhao and Lu Jiye in the late 1920s, both men had called for the publication of this work but the plans had never come to fruition. The library acquired a handwritten copy of this work in 1957, and it ended up giving Xiao Qi a sense how these materials should be most appropriately conceptualized. In 1986, Xiao Qi persuaded the Taizhou Library and the Xinhua Bookstore to collaborate on the project of multiplying these materials. A group of elderly men of letters were then assembled in the Xinhua Bookstore to make handwritten copies. They advertised this collection to the academic institutions they could reach out to, and the funding of the project relied on orders they received from any interested institutions. By 1992, more than ten orders had been processed, reported the Taizhou Bureau of Culture.[58]

One of the orders was made in around 1988, from Fujian Normal University, where Liu Houzi had been a professor for decades. We can easily imagine how excited Liu Houzi was to know about these materials, even though the number of titles surviving in this collection was not even half of that in the "Guiqun precious scrolls" bibliographies. What equally excited him was that period was also when Liu E's name was being redressed and *The Travels of Lao Can* was rediscovered and recanonized.[59] Liu Dashen's 1939 proposal, that "in order to understand the true revelations of the novel, one must know about my father's intellectual sources," was echoed half a century later, but this time with great reverberation and amplification. Liu Houzi recalls: "In 1988, Huai'an 淮安 in Jiangsu province recognized Liu E's former residence as a historical site and held the Academic Conference on the Studies of *The Travels of Lao Can* and in Honour of Liu E's 130th Birthday. In the conference, all the scholars reached the consensus that to study *The Travels*, one has to study the Taigu school first."[60]

In this context, the publication of the "Taigu scrolls" — a mission that the three generations of the Liu family have been carrying on for a century (Liu E included, considering his earliest lithography of Li Guangxin's *Suyinshu*) — finally became visible. In 1995, Liu Houzi's student and colleague in the Fujian Normal University, Fang Baochuan, proposed to put together the Liu family collection and the Taizhou Library collection and to publish a comprehensive series of *The Lost Scrolls of the Taigu School*. The proposal was enthusiastically received by all parties and the project proceeded on the fastest track. On Jan 29, 1996, Liu Houzi, now at the age of eighty-seven, dated the preface that he just finished for this project. It looked as if all had been predestined. Ten days later, he suffered a sudden intracerebral hemorrhage and

[58] For the above narrative, I relay on the report from cadres of the Taizhou Bureau of Culture (see note 51), but I also consult several other sources. See Chen Liao, "Suojian Taigu xuepai yishu," 210. (Note that Chen Liao says more than twenty orders were processed.) Liu Houzi (Huisun), "Preface," in *Taigu xuepai de yishu, series 1, volume 1*, 10. Fun fact: in the Taizhou Bureau of Culture's report, the Zhang Deguang-edited *Bibliography of the Guiqun Precious Scrolls* is (mistakenly) called *Bibliography of the Guiqun Secret Scrolls*.

[59] See the discussions in Chapter One of this dissertation.

[60] Liu Houzi writes: "In 1988, Jiangsu Huai'an 淮安 recognized Liu E's former residence as a historical site and held the Academic Conference on the Studies of *The Travels of Lao Can* and in Honour of Liu E's 130th Birthday. In the conference, all scholars reached the consensus that to study *The Travels*, one has to study the Taigu school first." See Liu Houzi (Huisun), "Preface to Taigu xuepai yishu (1)," 10.

fell into a coma. Not able to speak a word, he died on March 20.[61] The following March, the first series of *The Lost Scrolls of the Taigu School* in five volumes came out from a publishing house located in Yangzhou, the place where Liu Dashen in 1933 was supposed to have burnt the scrolls that he had printed into ashes.[62] It would therefore be more accurate to use the date "March 1997" to time the moment that I call "The Secret Scrolls Go to Print." Yet I still put the date "Jan 29, 1996" in the title. This is to pay tribute to Liu Houzi, of course. But this also signifies my hope — no matter how impossible it is — to empathize with what Liu Houzi might have been thinking when he dated that preface — the last words he had written in his life.

Back to the Beginning: A Chronicle in Two Versions

Between 1997 and 2001, three series of Taigu scrolls in seventeen volumes were successively published. Some of the texts were typeset, but most appeared as photocopies of manuscripts, allowing us to read each stroke of the characters and feel the labor behind them. Naturally, a wave of new scholarship powered by the Taigu scrolls emerged since the beginning of the new century and continued to flourish, establishing Taigu school studies as a solid academic subfield with both inexhaustible primary sources and multi-dimensional secondary research.[63] My narrative in this chapter has thus looped back to the beginning, where I started asking the question about the relationship between Liu E and the Taigu school. I hope the answer has made itself clearly visible in the course of tracing how the narrative of the Taigu school genealogy was gradually established in the twentieth century. Instead of assuming that Liu E wrote the novel *The Travels of Lao Can* to reveal the secret knowledge of the Taigu school, it makes more sense to say that the publication of the novel and its (somehow accidental) success in modern print culture lit up public curiosity regarding the secrets "hidden" in the novel and ultimately lead to the invention of the Taigu school and the restoration of its past, which would otherwise have been buried in the ashes of history. If the "Taigu school" is the secret — so to speak, then its secrecy is established precisely through the (assumed) revelation of it in *The Travels*, a revelation that places the secret in the uncanny liminal space between the knowable and unknowable.

While we have arrived at some sort of conclusion about causality, we have not, however, read any of the Taigu scrolls. This is a justifiable choice since the purpose of the chapter is to

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[61] Fang Baochuan, "Fuji" 附記, attached to the end of Liu Houzi (Huisun), "Preface to Taigu xuepai yishu," 15.

[62] The first series of *The Posthumous Scrolls of the Taigu School* was published by the Jiangsu Guangling guji keyinshe 江蘇廣陵古籍刻印社 (located in Yangzhou) in 1997. The same publisher produced the second series in seven volumes in 1998. The third series in five volumes was published by Jiangsu guji chubanshe 江蘇古籍出版社 in 2001.

[63] Aside from the scholarship I have cited in the previous notes, here I mention but several lengthy works that exemplify the scope and depth of the recent Taigu school studies. For the Yellow Cliff Massacre, see Zhu Jikang, *Huangyashan shijian yu Taigu xuepai yanjiu* 黃崖山事件與太谷學派研究 (Soochow University PhD dissertation, 2007). For the Taigu school philosophy, see Jiang Feng 江峰, *Taigu xuepai shengming zhexue yanjiu* 太谷學派生命哲學研究 (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2007). For Zhang Jizhong, see Zhu Jikang, Liu Honghui 劉弘逵, *Zhang Jizhong nianpu* 張積中年譜 (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2009). For Li Guangxin, see Zhang Jin 張進, Li Guangxin yu Taigu xuepai nanzong yanjiu 李光炘與太谷學派南宗研究 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2012). For the religious aspect, see Zhu Jikang, *Jindai Huadong minjian mimi huzhu tuanti Taigu xuepai de shengcun yu xinyang yanjiu* 近代華東民間秘密互助團體太谷學派的生存與信仰研究 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2014). For Huang Baonian, see Han Rongjun 韓榮鈞, *Huang Baonian yu Taigu xuepai yanjiu* 黃葆年與太谷學派研究 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2017).

critically understand how the "Taigu school" as a historical narrative is constructed, instead of joining the ongoing academic enterprise that attempts to pin down what essentially the Taigu school was. It is only in this epilogue, at a point where this twentieth-century story about open secrets has been completely told, that I find it proper to give a brief reading to two of the Taigu scrolls: *The Chronicle of Master Longchuan* 龍川夫子年譜 (hereafter *The Chronicle*) by Li's disciple Xie Fengyuan 謝逢源, and the shortened version of the same text that was edited by Huang Baonian and retitled as *The Chronicle of Master Li Pingshan* 李平山先生年譜 (hereafter *The Shortened Chronicle*). This is not just to quench the curiosity that we naturally might have about what the Taigu scrolls tell, for which I recommend more specialized academic work.[64] I read these two because they are both narratives of the Taigu school's genealogy written by the historical subjects themselves in the pre-twentieth-century era. They thus make a great reference point for us to reflect on the twentieth-century narratives we have reviewed in this chapter.

Xie Fengyuan, also known as Xie Pingyuan 謝平原, is a name we have barely heard in this chapter. It is only through the resurgence of *The Chronicle* that we know he was not only the disciple who had followed and served Li for the longest time, but also the one who recorded the Taigu school's past in greatest detail. Xie became Li's disciple in 1856. Except for the ten years between 1866 and 1876 when Li was ceaselessly changing his place of residency (probably in response to news of the Yellow Cliff Massacre from the north), Xie attended upon Li until the master's death in 1885. In 1889, Xie finished *The Chronicle*, which was nearly twenty thousand characters. As the title suggests, the subject of this chronicle is Li Guangxin, meaning the whole text proceeds from an account of Li's life history. But as new personages show up in Li's life, the author stops the timeline and retrospectively introduces the histories of these new personages as well. While in most cases the introduction is only sketchy, it is extended from time to time, and for Li's own master Zhou Taigu, the narrative goes exhaustive, taking up around a quarter of the space in the whole document. Therefore, while it is named after Li, *The Chronicle* is actually a comprehensive history of the "Taigu school," with more than one hundred names mentioned and its master-disciple network clearly portrayed.[65]

Such a chronicle naturally becomes the most valued source for scholars to reconstruct the Taigu school history upon its resurgence as one of the Taigu scrolls in the end of the twentieth century.[66] Yet, as we read the document line by line, it becomes confusing as to what extent we can count on this document for an understanding the past. In the guise of an annalistic "chronicle," or *nianpu* 年譜, the traditional genre to convey the biography of a scholar, this document is fleshed out with origin myths, prophecies, miracles, the fantastic, and promises of salvation and transcendence. We recall the intellectuals in the twentieth century from Lu Jiye to

[64] Aside from the Chinese scholarship reviewed in the previous note, the only work in English that discusses the Taigu school by reading the Taigu scrolls is Hans Kuehner, "Plurality and Confucian Orthodoxy." This Germany-based scholar visited China many times and had close interactions with Liu Houzi and other scholars in that circle. His reading of the Taigu scrolls confirms the Chinese scholars' longstanding conceptualization of the Taigu school: it is primary Confucian but not religiously syncretic.

[65] It does have a missing piece, namely the Yellow Cliff Massacre, which is only implied via euphemisms, apparently out of the consideration of the incident's political sensibility. But those in the south did not keep close contacts with Zhang Jizhong's followers in the north anyway, so what Xie Fengyuan could have said is probably also limited.

[66] For example, one of the major reasons that scholars start to question Liu E's role in the genealogy is that they realize Liu E's name appears only twice in *The Chronicle*, each being a very brief mention together with some others fellow disciples. See Xie Fengyuan, "Longchuan fuzi nianpu," in *Taigu xuepai yishu*, series 1, volume 3, 78 and 80.

Liu Houzi were making every effort to deny the religious aspect of the Taigu school and attribute the popular "cult" narrative to external or politicized slander, but the internal sources seem to render the picture far more complicated, if not completely reversed.

According to *The Chronicle*, in 1831, the twenty-three year old Li Guangxin, accompanied by his cousin Zhang Jizhong, met Zhou Taigu and started traveling with him. The paragraphs that follow then fan out into an elaborate description of an uncanny cosmology and cosmography:

> The heavenly plate (*tianpan* 天盤) flying through the zodiac (*shiergong* 十二宮) once is called a *hui* 會. Each *hui* has twelve *eras* (*shi* 時), and each *era* is fifteen thousand years and more. [A *hui* then takes] a hundred and eighty thousand years or more. When one *hui* is finished, a new *hui* starts and there is no end. The sky forms at the *era of zi* (子, or rat), the earth takes place at the *era of chou* (醜, or cow), and humans are born at the *era of yin* (寅, or tiger). From the *era of yin* to the *era of you* (酉, or chicken), these eight *eras* altogether take a hundred and twenty thousand years and more. […] The *era of xu* (戌, or dog) stores fire, and it is one of catastrophe (*jiehui* 劫會). When the catastrophe comes, the ocean dries, the rocks rot, the sky and the earth fall apart, and all the creatures die. The fire will burn for fifteen thousand years, until the water of the *era of hai* (亥, or pig) brings about rains to put out the fire. The rains last for another fifteen thousand years, and then the sky and earth take shape again and the humans resurge. […] Every *era* has three fatal points (*yuan* 元), each spanning five thousand years and more. At this point, we are in the *hui* [*era*] of *shen* (申, or monkey). […] From Taihao 太昊 (one of the earliest sage-kings in the Chinese mythology) to the *gui-hai* (癸亥) year of the Tongzhi Emperor (1863), it is the middle fatal point (*zhongyuan* 中元). In every fatal point, the five elements take turns to rise and fall. […] Baoxi 包羲 (aka Fuxi 伏羲, one of the earliest sage-kings in the Chinese mythology) as the heavenly ruler is the water-sage. King Wen of Zhou 周文王 (1112 – 1050 BC) as a noble is the fire-sage. Duke of Zhou 周公 (11th Century BC) as a minister is the wood-sage. Confucius (551 – 479 BC) as a secondary minister is the metal-sage. […] It is not until the advent of Zhou Taigu that the earth-sage as a commoner emerges, who, with his thirteen essays, reveals what has never been revealed, illuminates what has never been illuminated, continues the lineage of the previous four sages, and at the same time incorporates the Buddhist and Daoist wisdoms. […][67]

The details in this narrative are somewhat tedious and sometimes confusing, but the general layout is clear: The universe is an endless circle of alternations between catastrophe and human prosperity. Each *era* of human prosperity is completed by the succession of the sages of the five elements. Our current history is but one example of human prosperity, and in our history, Zhou Taigu's advent marks the arrival of the last stage of prosperity, which, although not explicitly stated, will probably be followed by a new *era* of "fifteen thousand years." The religious dimension here is apparent, and the idea of the cataclysmic cycle is clearly reminiscent of (if not

[67] Ibid., 7–8.

influenced by) the many millenarian movements in late imperial China, such as the White Lotus Teaching 白蓮教 and the Eight Trigrams Teaching 八卦教.[68]

I have no intention to therefore rush to a definite conclusion that the Taigu school is millenarian — it would be beyond the scope of the current chapter and I leave this problem to religious specialists. I highlight this narrative to show that compared to prevalent twentieth-century scholarly narratives, Zhou Taigu and his followers saw themselves as actually belonging to a much more fundamental and transcendental genealogy, one that traces back to the origin of human history and extends to the eternity of the universe. This genealogy, with its connection to an unspeakable antiquity and universality, justifies all the miraculous manifestations as recorded in *The Chronicle*. To name but a few examples: Zhou Taigu always correctly foresees what is to happen, and he fixes natural disasters as if playing with gadgets. Li Guangxin as Zhou's designated inheritor is equally good at telling the future. While he does not manifest the magic of fixing natural disasters, he easily cures diseases despite that he has never learned medicine. In fact, the whole document, although conveyed in the name of a "chronicle," is more like a collection of fantastic stories and anecdotes in the traditional *zhiguai* 志怪 genre. Xie confesses: "as to things that happened before 1859, I heard these from my mentor [Li Guangxin]."[69] In a different place, he notes that the old people in Yangzhou can still tell stories about Zhou Taigu's magical capacities.[70] Besides these sources, he also relies on the words of his fellow disciples to enrich the content of the document.[71] Therefore, no matter how impossible and unreliable the stories in *The Chronicle* might look to today's readers, they are not Xie's own inventions. Instead, *The Chronicle* shows just faithfully how his mentor and his associates were remembering their past.

Does this mean that this "faithful" past of their own completely obviates the twentieth-century scholarly narratives? No. At least one of Li Guangxin's disciples finds this past an annoyance. Huang Baonian, who was the leader of the Suzhou Guiqun Studio and is today regarded as the third-generation orthodox inheritor of the Taigu school, raised his eyebrows at *The Chronicle*. In the surviving Taigu scrolls, we see a different version of *The Chronicle*, which is still attributed to Xie Fengyuan as author but has been significantly shortened by Huang Baonian (and thus we call this version *The Shortened Chronicle*). *The Shortened Chronicle* has only a few thousand characters left. The timeline that governs the document, namely the subject matter of Li Guangxin's life course, remains the same, but most of the stories and anecdotes are gone. There are no explicit notes on the standards Huang applied when practicing his editorship, but if we compare the two documents word by word, it becomes clear that it was a deliberate piece of censorship instead of a neutral project for shortening the document for practical reasons. Many tedious details remain, suggesting it was not Huang's plan to make the narrative concise. But any uncanny or supernatural content, namely those with anything to do with prophecy, magic, worship, transcendence, salvation, are deleted. Sometimes the majority of a story remains, but several characters (for example, "he is fond of the way of the immortals") are crossed out, suggesting just how cautious Huang Baonian was when purifying the document of its religious

[68] For the various millenarian movements in late imperial China, see Susan Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). Susan Naquin, *Shantung Rebellion: The Wang Lun Uprising of 1774* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). B. J. ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (Brill, 1992).
[69] Xie Fengyuan, "Longchuan fuzi nianpu," 110.
[70] Ibid., 26.
[71] Ibid., 110.

character. As a result, *The Shortened Chronicle* becomes a much more concise (though somewhat boring) reading. The grand elaboration of cosmology and cosmography as cited above is obliterated, leaving Zhou Taigu to appear as at most an idiosyncratic intellectual but nothing more than that. The same thing is true of Li Guangxin: he becomes a somewhat cranky teacher of Confucianism, with no magic whatsoever.

A problem then arises: which version of the "chronicle" is more reliable? Xie's version looks at first blush to be incredible, but it was in fact a sincere transcription and assemblage of the ongoing and vibrant discourses that flourished among disciples of the school. Huang's individual editorship (or censorship) was inevitably jeopardized by his own blind spots and even biases against these fantastic stories and beliefs, but it was probably a canny decision if he ever wanted people to consider that teaching seriously — especially in a time period when the religious elements were characterized as superstitions. Here is the paradox, then: the authority of the Taigu scrolls is predicated on their authenticity and reliability. But as we read through them, they only lead us into a deeper abyss of uncertainty.

But that is probably just what the "secret knowledge" is: a threshold between the unknowable and the known, between what is withheld and what is revealed, and between the fictional and the factual. And it is only in the light of this liminality that we realize that Liu E, who originally nudged us to start all the explorations, is its greatest adept and practitioner. Let us again consider — now with the Taigu scrolls in hand — whether or not Liu E deliberately revealed to modern readers the Taigu school teaching in *The Travels of Lao Can*? It certainly seems so, since, for example, the terminology of the "three fatal points" (*sanyuan*) that we read about in *The Chronicle* is apparently reminiscent of the "*sanyuan jiazi*" 三元甲子 theory revealed in the Peach Blossom Mountain episode of the novel. It also looks like he may not have done any such thing, because the *sanyuan* in *The Chronicle* encompasses a universe spanning hundreds thousands of years, while in the novel it has to do with the mundane and local vicissitudes of several decades. Did he or didn't he? Liu Dashen's advice — although made in a different context and addressing a different topic — is probably the only way to set us free from the abyss: "it does not have to be true, and it does not have to be untrue."[72]

[72] Liu Dashen, "*Guanyu Lao Can youji*," 13. He makes this advice when discussing whether the tyrannical local official Yu Xian 玉賢 in the novel is the same person as Yuxian 毓賢 (1842–1901) in history.

Chapter 3: Transforming the Body, Transforming the Book

> "This man's name is Liu Renfu 劉仁甫, and he belongs to Pingyinxian 平陰縣 in this region. His present home is in the Peach Blossom Mountain, in the southwest of Pingyinxian. As a boy of fourteen or fifteen he learned boxing and quarterstaff at the Shaolin Temple on Songshan 嵩山. After he had studied there for some time, he felt that the place had an empty reputation and was in no way outstanding, so he left it and wandered by river and lake. After some ten years he met a monk on E'mei Mountain 峨眉 in Sichuan, who excelled in the art of self-defense. He forthwith made obeisance to him as his teacher and learned the Taizu 太祖 and the Shaozu 少祖 styles of boxing. He asked the monk to tell him the origin of his method. When the monk said it came from the Shaolin Temple, he was greatly surprised and said, 'Your disciple was at the Shaolin Temple for four or five years and never saw any good boxing. From whom did you learn, Master?'
>
> "The monk said, 'It is the Shaolin Temple style of boxing, but I did not learn it at the Shaolin Temple. Boxing is now a lost art there. The Taizu style that you have learned from me was handed down from Bodhidharma. The Shaozu style was taught by Shen'guang 神光. They were originally developed for the use of the monks, who practiced the art in order to develop toughness and endurance. [….] Who could have known that afterwards the Shaolin Temple art would become famous? Outsiders came in increasing numbers to learn it, and one would often hear that among those who went out masters of the art, there were bandits and seducers of men's wives and daughters. It was for this reason that the old monk who lived four or five generations before the present monk kept the genuine art of boxing hidden and would not pass it on, merely making a show of teaching some superficial and meaningless tricks. My style of boxing comes from a venerable monk of Hanzhongfu 漢中府. If a man practices it faithfully he can attain the skill of Gan Fengchi 甘鳳池."
>
> ——From Chapter 7, *The Travels of Lao Can*[1]

Thus reads Lao Can's introduction of the kung fu master Liu Renfu in the beginning of Chapter 7 when Shen Dongzao 申東造 as a newly appointed magistrate asks Lao Can for advice on maintaining local order. In deference to Liu Renfu's attainments in boxing and especially his appeal in the *jianghu* network that Lao Can has enthusiastically attested to in his narrative, Shen Dongzao prudently has his own cousin Shen Ziping visit the Peach Blossom Mountain, with the purpose of inviting Liu Renfu to take charge of local security, hence the famous "Peach Blossom Mountain" scene from Chapter 8 to 12. Lao Can's narrative cited above, despite its brevity, diverts the readers' attention to a rather mysterious history of the transmission of Shaolin kung fu. According to this history, the authenticity of the Shaolin kung fu was handed down through an esoteric and eremitic lineage, while the famous Shaolin Temple had long become relegated to a place for "superficial and meaningless tricks." This divergence, though not further developed in the novel, marks the starting point of the exploration of secret scrolls in the current chapter. While "the Taizu and the Shaozu styles of boxing" remain undocumented and might be fictional,

[1] Shadick's 1952 translation, with the Romanization changed to pinyin, and "the Dharma" changed to "Bodhidharma." See Liu T'ieh-Yün, *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, trans. Harold Shadick (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1952), 73.

the narrative of their history of transmission, as well as the key proper nouns embedded in it — Shaolin Temple, E'mei Mountain, Taizu (Bodhidharma), Shaozu (Shen'guang), and Gan Fengchi — all tellingly evoke the most famous and mysterious secret scroll that claims Shaolin origin: the *Yijin jing* 易筋經, or the *Sinew Transformation Classic.* Allegedly, Bodhidharma transmitted the *Yijin jing* and the *Xisui jing* 洗髓經, or the *Marrow Lavation Classic*, in Shaolin Temple sometime between the fifth and the sixth centuries. The *Xisui jing* was designated (in some implicit and metaphorical way) to his disciple Huike 慧可 (487–593, also known as Shen'guang), who was hence guided to the true Way. The *Yijin jing*, by contrast, became the collective legacy of the Shaolin monks, although none of them really understood the text written in Sanskrit and thus presumably developed some superficial fighting tricks. The true wisdom in the *Yijinjing* remained hidden, until sometime between the seventh and the eighth centuries when an intelligent monk took the text to E'mei Mountain and had it translated by the legendary Indian monk Pramiti. After that, the fully revealed *Yijin jing* experienced a millennium of secret transmission through the hands of many figures, some historically famous, some unidentifiable, and some even fictional, although no extant version of the text could be dated prior to the Qing dynasty. One Qing manuscript of the *Yijin jing*, among many others that have been discovered, claims its transmission from a disciple of Gan Fengchi, the eighteenth-century legendary kung fu master.[2]

Both transmission histories, the Taizu and the Shaozu styles of boxing and the *Yijin jing*, are apparently legendary, if not completely fictional. Yet, the highly similar narrative structure on display in both, that is, Shaolin Temple holds on to superficial tricks while the true art goes on to esoteric transmissions, as well as the repeated key words, suggest the existence of a formulaic narrative template consisting of elements from a shared occult culture in the late imperial and early modern period. This chapter accesses that network of occult culture through the secret scroll *Yijin jing* and the secret knowledge about the human body that it claims to transmit. Following the previous chapters on time and space, the *Yijin jing* leads us to the third dimension, namely the body, through which one's being in the world is defined. This dimension will further complicate (though far from complete) the project of reassembling of "occult culture," and will allow us to more viscerally empathize with the historical readers who were stuck between a tangible yet suspicious reality (like the fake kung fu taught in the Shaolin Temple) and the absolute yet occult truth claimed in the secret scrolls. However, while it is certain that the *Yijin jing* is primarily a secret scroll about the body, uncertainties arise when we try to specify what exactly this bodily knowledge is about. Sources from different contexts give us very different answers, and if we choose to focus on the *Yijin jing* the book itself, assuming that the primary source is the most reliable, we will be even more frustrated by its messy textual history, which includes dozens of versions, with varying texts and paratexts, in both manuscript and printed forms. It is based on this fact that I argue that the *Yijin jing* should be treated as a process instead of a thing. It does not refer to an enclosed and static text that can be authenticated; it is a textual domain in the persistent process of making, remaking and becoming, a process that not only results in diverse textual installments, but also gradually transforms the tangible domain to a cultural trope, which also has different connotations in different contexts. There is no simple answer to the question what the *Yijin jing* is. The act of answering that question is doomed to be

[2] A xerographic copy of this manuscript, retitled *Gan Fengchi Yijin jing* 甘鳳池易筋經, is included in the *Qingdai Yijin jing zhenben huiji* 清代易筋經珍本匯輯 [hereafter the *ZBHJ*], ed. Zhou Weiliang 周偉良 et al., 6 vols. (Taipei: Yiwen wushu, 2016), v. 1, pp. 409–524.

a process too. In the ensuing pages, our exploration will proceed in the vein of a series of questions: What have people believed the *Yijin jing* to be? What has the alleged history of origin and transmission claimed the *Yijin jing* to be? What is the actual text of the *Yijin jing* like? And finally, how is the *Yijin jing* materialized in different periods and through different media? Each question will lead to a specific façade of the *Yijin jing*: its representation in the cultural imaginary, its paratext (prefaces and postscripts), its text proper, and its transformation from the manuscript culture to the print culture.

The *Yijin jing* in Cultural Imaginary

The *Yijin jing* as a secret scroll is enormously famous in contemporary Chinese popular culture. This prestige, with no doubt, was established through Jin Yong (金庸 Louis Cha) and his phenomenally successful martial-arts fictions, as well as the countless film and television adaptations. The *Yijin jing* plays significant roles in two of Jin Yong major novels: *The Eight Legions* (*Tianlong babu* 天龍八部, 1963) and *The Smiling, Proud Wanderer* (*Xiaoao jianghu* 笑傲江湖, 1967).[3] In *The Eight Legions*, the *Yijin jing* is depicted as the most treasured and unapproachable kung fu scroll of the Shaolin Temple. Although within the temple access is not restricted, no known Shaolin monk in the novel has ever had the intelligence and fortune to understand the arcane text and to practice the magic that it contains. A Zhu 阿朱, the sometimes mischievous but kind-hearted maid steals it from the Shaolin Temple for her master Murong Fu 慕容復, the playboy with the unworthy reputation of mastering all kinds of kung fu under heaven. She later changes her mind and gives the book to Xiao Feng 蕭峰, the protagonist who saves her life during the theft and becomes her true love. Xiao Feng, the most upright hero, shows no interest in strengthening himself by means of a stolen object (though he definitely appreciates the good intention from A Zhu, who is also his true love until the end of their lives), and even loses it out of incaution. The resentful figure You Tanzhi 遊坦之 finds it and accidentally acquires part of the magic kung fu, which is already enough to transform him from a wimpy young man to an invincible fighter, although sadly, his resentment and a suddenly gifted power that he does not really comprehend together lead to his ultimate tragic fate. The greedy villain Jiumozhi 鳩摩智, a Tibetan monk who has been coveting the *Yijin jing* for long time, grabs the scroll from You Tanzhi but confusingly finds out the kung fu in the book somehow troubles his mind instead of strengthening his power. This enigma is not solved until the appearance of a nameless and low-ranked monk who has been sweeping the floor in the Shaolin Temple for over forty years. As a hermit who has likely mastered all the Shaolin arts (though the *Yijin jing* is not explicitly addressed in the novel), this "sweeping monk" easily vanquishes all the best fighters of the time and points out that Jiumozhi's body has been irreversibly harmed by the *Yijin jing* because of his greedy and disordered swallowing of it together with the miscellaneous kung fu he has already acquired. Jiumozhi ends up losing all his kung fu.

[3] The *Tianlong babu* is sometimes known in English as *Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils* or *Eightfold Path of the Heavenly Dragon*. I use the term "The Eight Legions" because it most accurately reflects the Buddhist origin of the Chinese title, which is a translation of the Sanskrit term "Aṣṭasenā". For the *Xiaoao jianghu*, I follow Chris Hamm's rendering in his monograph on Jin Yong. See John Christopher Hamm, *Paper Swordsmen: Jin Yong and the Modern Chinese Martial Arts Novel* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 137–167. Somewhere else he also used the translation *The Proud and Gallant Wanderer*. See John Christopher Hamm, "Martial Arts Fiction and Jin Yong," in *Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literatures*, ed. Joshua Mostow, China section, ed. Kirk A. Denton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 512.

In the other novel *The Smiling, Proud Wanderer*, the deadly injured protagonist Linghu Chong 令狐冲 is brought to the Shaolin Temple by Ren Yingying 任盈盈 in hopes of receiving treatment. Ren Yingying is wanted in the rivers and lakes as the "sacred virgin" of the notorious Sun-Moon Cult, but she still voluntarily puts her life in the hands of the Shaolin monks, because the Shaolin secret scroll *Yijin jing* is the last chance for saving Linghu Chong's life. The kind-hearted master Fangzheng 方證 promises to treat Linghu Chong, and instead of taking her life, he only asks Ren Yingying to purify her mind by learning the Buddha's teachings. Linghu Chong, waking up from the coma, refuses to study the *Yijin jing*, because he does not want to become a Shaolin disciple, although his viciously minded master Yue Buqun 岳不群 has never valued his loyalty to the Hua Mountain Clan and has already expelled him. The merciful master Fangzheng finds another way to help Linghu Chong. He arranges an occasion in which Linghu Chong is guided to the *Yinjin jing* text with the assumption that what he sees are the secrets of the kung fu of his own Hua Mountain Clan. Linghu Chong therefore not only is cured of his injuries but also acquires the internal strength of the highest excellence. He remains unaware of all this goodwill until Ren Yingying tells him the truth at the very end of the novel, when he has already become the most invincible swordsman, has had all due justice served, and is ready to start a reclusive life with his true love Ren Yingying.

In both novels, the *Yijin jing* has radically changed many of the major characters' life trajectories, and for this reason it has become extraordinarily famous in today's popular culture. Few know that unlike many other secret scrolls Jin Yong has made up in his novels (such as the *Jiuyin zhenjing* 九陰真經, or *True Classic of the Extreme Yin*), the *Yijin jing* is not Jin Yong's creation. The *Yijin jing* text itself came into being no later than the early Qing, as we will fully explore later, and its reputation as a magic kung fu scroll became visible in the *xiaoshuo* 小說 realm (including fiction and various forms of miscellaneous notes, or *biji* 筆記) no later than the eighteenth century. A prominent early example is the story of Feng Mingqi 鳳鳴岐 in the novel *The Unofficial History of the Scholars* (*Rulin waishi* 儒林外史) authored by Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓 (1701–1754).

Feng Mingqi, who is often respectfully addressed in the novel as "Feng Silaodie 鳳四老爹" or "Feng Sige 鳳四哥", appears in Chapter 49 at a banquet hosted by Qin Zhonghan 秦中翰 (or Qin Zhongshu 秦中書, Zhongshu being the title of his office). Qin Zhonghan introduces to one of his guests Wan Li 萬里 (Wan Zhongshu):

> This respectful Mr. Feng is a very chivalrous figure of our place. He really knows his stuff, and he has thoroughly mastered the contents of the *Yijin jing*. If he exerts his strength, he will feel nothing even if a rock weighing thousands of *jin* hits his head or his body. My brother has invited him over to stay with us for some days so that he can learn some arts from him.[4]

Wan Li is apparently not very impressed and only gives a brief and courteous compliment. Indeed, words like "thousands of *jin*" in that period are such hackneyed exaggerations of a fighter's strength that nobody will take it seriously. At this moment Wan Li still does not know that before the banquet ends he will get into shameful legal troubles because of his previous bribery and his fake "Zhongshu" title, and Feng Mingqi, the man he just met with, will be the

[4] Wu Jingzi, *Rulin waishi* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 2010), p. 305.

only one in the banquet who really cares about his situation and who will have the ability to get him off the hook. But before attesting to Feng Mingqi's magic *Yijin jing* kung fu, the author patiently used two chapters to present how adept he is at dealing with *jianghu* figures (the low-ranked constables and the con men) and managing *jianghu* relationships — the very ability that Lao Can values about Liu Renfu. The showcase for his kung fu comes at the end of Chapter 51 when he confronts the county magistrate in his court:

> Mr. Qi the magistrate said: "This nut is ridiculous!" He then issued an order to put Feng Mingqi to torture. With a threatening yell, the bailiffs threw the leg clamp to the court. Two of them knocked down Feng Silaoye and put his legs in the clamp. The magistrate said: "Squash him hard!" A bailiff pulled the string of the clamp hard, and with the sound "ge-cha," the clamp broke into six pieces. The magistrate said: "Isn't this nut a sorcerer!" He asked the bailiffs to put a paper of incantation with his official seal on a new clamp and do it again. But this time the clamp was broken even before the string was pulled. After the third clamp was used, there were in total eighteen broken pieces on the floor. Feng Silaoye throughout gave no single word except his smile.[5]

The magistrate is scared and goes to report to the provincial governor. Knowing of Feng Mingqi's fame, and also considering that Wan Li's case is not really critical, the governor orders the magistrate not to make it a big deal. Wan Li and Feng Mingqi are released, and the latter's showcasing continues in the next chapter. In Chapter 52 when asked by a group of fellows to show his arts, he splits a stack of eight bricks with one single palm, and lets a man with strong legs kick his testicles with no defense, only resulting in that the kicker's toes are seriously injured. Later, on a different occasion, he pulls down a wall and a pillar with one bare hand as a threat to a dishonest businessman cheating his partner.

To spend so many pages with the vivid details about a chivalrous figure in a book of "scholars" is somewhat a strange decision. A reasonable explanation is that the character Feng Mingqi is not completely fictional; like many other characters in the novel, Feng Mingqi has a prototype that was included in, or accessible to the author Wu Jingzi's actual social circle. According to a family descendant's report in 1868, the prototype of Feng Mingqi is the famous kung fu master Gan Fengchi who lived in the same place (Nanjing) and in the same time period (the first half of the eighteenth century) as Wu Jingzi.[6] While this testimony made more than a century later is not necessarily reliable, modern scholarship has confirmed the connection between Feng Mingqi and Gan Fengchi by comparing the narrative in the novel and Gan Fengchi's stories scattered in various sources.[7] Here the *Yijin jing* serves as another form of circumstantial evidence. The manuscript *Gan Fengchi Yijin jing* mentioned earlier implies that the *Yijin jing* was at least part of Gan Fengchi's kung fu repertoire, and in the novel, it is clearly stated that Feng Mingqi has "thoroughly mastered the contents of the *Yijin jing*." Although it is still not definite whether Wu Jingzi knew Gan Fengchi in person (it could be the case that Wu

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[5] Ibid, p. 315.

[6] See Jin He 金和, "*Rulin waishi* ba" 儒林外史跋, in *Rulin waishi ziliao huibian* 儒林外史資料彙編, ed. Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄 and Liu Yuchen 劉毓忱. (Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 2012), pp. 278–80. Jin He's mother is a granddaughter of Wu Jingzi's brother. In 1868, Jin He arranged the publication of a manuscript edition of the novel in his family collection (commonly known as the Qunyu zhai 群玉齋 edition) and he wrote this postscript.

[7] See He Zehan 何澤翰, *Rulin waishi renwu benshi kaolüe* 儒林外史人物本事考畧 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), pp. 101–4.

simply incorporated some hearsay into his text about Gan Fengchi thanks to his legendary profile), it is certain that Wu Jingzi mentioned the *Yijin jing* not merely as a fancy title for the sake of character portrayal; instead, the way he described Feng Mingqi's kung fu and other details suggest that the author definitely knew what the *Yijin jing* was supposed to be like and he might have read the actual text. Upon Feng Mingqi's arrival at the banquet in Chapter 49, Qin Zhongshu asks what he was exclaiming at outside, and Feng Mingqi answers:

> "That was not me; it was your brother. He asked what the origin of people's strength was, so I asked him to hold a deep inhalation and let someone hit him with a wooden club. The more he was hit, the less he felt in pain. He was thrilled and started exclaiming."[8]

As strange as it sounds, being tapped (though not hit) by a wood club is actually a major part of improving one's strength according to the *Yijin jing* text. To be sure, the text requires the tapping to be practiced under certain conditions and following specific procedures, which are all missing from Feng Mingqi's deed. But apparently the author had no obligation to transmit the "correct" kung fu in the novel. Later in Chapter 52, after Feng Mingqi demonstrates splitting bricks with a bare palm, Qin Erkuaizi 秦二侉子 (the "brother" who was hit by a wood club) brags to the fellow spectators:

> "You've seen this kung fu that our Feng Sige has mastered. You know what? His '*jing*' says: 'clench the fist and smash a tiger's head; slant the palm and cut through a cow's neck.'" 握拳能碎虎腦, 側掌能斷牛首[9]

Here Qin Erkuazi only vaguely mentions some "*jing*" without specifying the full title, which is probably Wu Jingzi's thoughtful design to imply that this half-baked student has heard something about Feng Mingqi's secret scroll but knows no more about it. But in fact, the couplet that he recites is an exact (though not complete) quotation from the *Yijin jing* text, as will be made clear when we read through it later. Qin Erkuazi then asks Feng Mingqi to show off iron-like resiliency of his testicles, and this idiosyncratic skill is also an achievement that is within realm of results of training according to the *Yijin jing* text.

There is no way for us to verify Wu Jingzi's source for these alleged *Yijin jing* effects. He may have heard about them from Gan Fengchi, may have read the text in person, or, it may be the case that the *Yijin jing*-related discourses were already popular enough in that time so that it was only a natural choice for Wu Jingzi to incorporate them into his novel. In any case, this widely read novel undisputedly helped spread the fame of the *Yijin jing* on the one hand, and on the other hand contributed to building up a distorted and over-mystified image of the *Yijin jing* as a magic kung fu scroll in the popular imagination. Whereas the novel's representation of the *Yijin jing* is not completely incorrect and can all be matched to certain parts of the actual text, this representation apparently focuses on the most eye-catching and idiosyncratic aspects: the practice of hitting (an exaggeration of the tapping practice), the couplet, and the testicles.

The way that the *Yijin jing* is represented in *The Scholars* forecasts a general trend, that is, the *Yijin jing* is gradually alienated from its actual contents and transformed into a trope for some form of magic kung fu. In the nineteenth century we see more and more *xiaoshuo* mentioning the *Yijin jing*, and this trend is obvious. In most cases it looks clear that the recorder did not know

[8] Wu Jingzi, *Rulin waishi*, 305.
[9] Ibid, 319.

(or care about) what the *Yijin jing* was about, and the title was used simply as a synonym for "secret kung fu scroll." In cases in which a narrative does address the *Yijin jing* kung fu in detail, its effects as described were diverse but rarely represent the actual *Yijin jing* text. In the early nineteenth-century *xiaoshuo* collection *Yeyu* 野語 (Wild Discourses, prefaced 1808), an author with the alias Fuhu daochang xingzhe 伏虎道場行者 records two *Yijin jing* related stories. In the first story "Bai Gong" 白公, we are simply told that a person called Bai Gong "practiced the *Yijin jing* and his arts were magical and formidable."[10] But in the second story "Min Xiansheng 閔先生," the effects of the *Yijin jing* become somewhat sorcery-like. Min Xiansheng's name is Min Tingyu 閔廷玉 and he has "obtained the secret of Bodhidharma's *Yijin jing*." He can easily walk away even when besieged by tens of strong men, and has twice defeated a fierce monk kung fu master, as is detailed elsewhere in the story. But the most mesmerizing moment comes when he is confronted with a powerful local bully in the fields. Instead of flaring up, Min Tingyu very gently holds up the arms of the bully, leads him to the roadside and then leaves. It looks like nothing serious has happened, except that in the night the family of the bully does not see him coming home. In the course of looking for him, they find him still standing by the roadside, with a dull look in his eyes and the mouth completely shut, as if he is bewitched. No doctor can figure out what has happened to the bully, and he dies after three months.[11]

In another *xiaoshuo* collection *Jianwen suibi* 見聞隨筆 (Casual Notes on What I See and Hear, preface dated 1868), Qi Xueqiu 齊學裘 (born 1803) also records three *Yijin jing* related stories. In the first story, Qi Xueqiu introduces how a certain "Zhang Er Xiansheng" 張二先生 who obtains his arts from the Shaolin Temple has cured the writer's hemoptysis and nocturnal emissions with the *Yijin jing* techniques. For the former, Zhang Er applies a forty-nine-day massage on his stomach. For the latter, he puts a small device made of lead on the writer's penis. The device pricks his penis once it is erect, so that he wakes up before the ejaculation.[12] Whereas massaging the stomach is a standard procedure described in the *Yi jinjing* text, this "device made of lead" is definitely not found in any *Yijin jing* editions to our knowledge, although it is true that strengthening the male genital organ is a prominent concern in the book. In the second story, the writer exclaims at the extraordinary suppleness of the body of his friend Yu Xingqiao 余星橋, who is a reclusive former military man and has been teaching the *Yijin jing* to his disciples.[13] However, the tricks that Yu Xingqiao shows his students are also missing from the actual *Yijin jing* text, which emphasizes bodily strength instead of suppleness. But that the *Yijin jing* is wrongfully associated with suppleness is only natural, because in popular physiological knowledge the suppleness of the body comes from the resilience of the sinews. The third story is the most marvelous, and it is recounted that it happened many years ago to the great-grandfather of the writer's friend. According to the friend's report, the great grandfather was wandering in gloom when approached by a beggar, who turned out to be the same beggar he had kindly helped three years before. Knowing the great grandfather was upset because he had just failed in collecting a debt from a greedy business partner, the beggar told the great grandfather his plan and accompanied him back to the debtor's place. When the debtor again refused to pay the debt, the beggar grabbed an ink stone to attack the debtor, who naturally raised his hands to defend

[10] Fuhu Daochang Xingzhe 伏虎道場行者, *Yeyu* 野語, 9 *juan*. (n.p.: Chanyinlu, 1845), j. 1, p. 6a.
[11] Ibid, j. 1, pp. 8a–10b.
[12] Qi Xueqiu 齊學裘, *Jianwen suibi* 見聞隨筆, 26 *juan* (1871 edition), in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書, 1800 vol. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), v. 1181, j. 10, pp. 227b–228a.
[13] Ibid, j. 11, pp. 231a–b.

himself. The ink stone then somehow bounced back and hit the head of the beggar, which killed him immediately. His face turned pale, his hands and feet became ice-cold, and blood was all over his body. Thinking that he had just committed homicide, the panicked debtor begged the great grandfather not to report to law enforcement and paid his debt and interest immediately. The great grandfather then left with the money and the beggar's corpse. After a while, the beggar came back to life. In fact, the beggar had told the great grandfather the secret when he was briefing the plan: "I have been practicing the arts of *Yijin jing*, so I can suspend my breath and make as if my body is a corpse." 我素習易筋經之術, 故能閉氣成屍耳.[14] Again, this supernatural technique is not what the *Yijin jing* text claims it can do. But in the popular imagination, it really does not take many steps to develop this "body-corpse transformation" technique from the more basic syntax of "sinew transformation."

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, we even see alleged *Yijin jing* effects that might in fact reflect some form of new foreign "trickery." In his *Sanjielu zhuitan* 三借廬贅譚 (Superfluous Talks in Sanjie Studio, prefaced 1881), the pioneering newspaperman Zou Tao 鄒弢 (1850–1931) introduces a *Yijin jing* practitioner named Chen Rongming 陳蓉酩:

> He put two tables side by side with a three-to-five-feet gap in between. His head rests on one table, and his feet on the other, making his body a bridge above the gap. He lets several people stand on his body and jump, but his body stays still.[15]

Figure 3.1: Photo Showing a Hypnotic State.
Source: Liu Yuchi 劉鈺墀, *Xin cuimianshu jiangyi* 新催眠術講義 (Tokyo: Headquarter of Association for Chinese Psychic Studies in Japan, 1917), preliminaries, not paginated.

[14] Ibid, j. 16, pp. 281b–282b.
[15] Zou Tao 鄒弢, *Sanjielu zhuitan* 三借廬贅譚, 12 *juan*, in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書, 1800 vol. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), v. 1261, j. 9, p. 717a.

It is of course not impossible to deploy one's body in this way if one fully obtains the strength that the *Yijin jing* promises, though this particular performance is not something we can look up from the *Yijin jing*. But, interestingly, the description of this performance is perfectly illustrated by a photo found in a later hypnotism guidebook. (Figure 3.1) The photo was published in 1917, but records on the importation of hypnotism into China were already observable in the late Qing, suggesting that there was indeed a chance that this particular image of the *Yijin jing* was shaped by an emergent discourse on the practice of hypnotism.

Through the examples above we see clearly that the representation of the *Yijin jing* in the premodern *xiaoshuo* tradition tends to move further and further away from the original *Yijin jing* text and to become more and more thoroughly reconfigured by other forms of cultural imagination. By the end of the nineteenth century, when martial arts-themed vernacular novels flourished as part of a new modern print culture, the *Yijin jing* had finalized its transformation from a specific text to a general trope, something ready to be invoked without concern as to its original text and context. For example, it appears in Chapter 9 of the novel *Yongqing shengping* 永慶升平 (Celebrating This Peaceful World Forever, prefaced 1891, printed 1892) as one of the types of kung fu that Gu Huanzhang 顧煥章 has learned from his master Ouyang Shanzhen 歐陽山真:

> He practiced *yingzhao li* 鷹爪力 (falcon-talon strength), *chongshou fa* 重手法 (multi-hands way), *yili hunyuan qi* 一力混元氣 (the pneuma of all-encompassing strength), Bodhidharma's *Yijin jing*, *fenjin cuogu fa* 分筋挫骨法 (the method of sinew splitting and bone smashing), and *dianxue* 點穴 (invasive acupuncture).[16]

In a different novel, the *Penggong'an* 彭公案 (Judge Peng's legal cases, prefaced 1892), a group of similar but abbreviated methods are introduced as Ouyang De's 歐陽德 kung fu repertoire:

> Ouyang De has mastered *yingzhao li* 鷹爪力 (falcon-talon strength), *chongshou fa* 重手法 (multi-hands way), *yili hunyuan qi* 一力混元氣 (the all-encompassing strength), and Bodhidharma's *Yijin jing*. These kung fu moves have made his bones as flexible as cotton, and his body immune to either coldness or hotness.[17]

Later in Chapter 51, the same phrases are repeated with some variation when Ouyang De is introduced again:

> The strength-oriented and flexibility-oriented kung fu that he has mastered include: *yingzhao shou* 鷹爪手 (falcon-talon hands), *chongshou fa*, and Bodhidharma's *Yijin jing*. He is good at eluding weaponry attacks, and his bones are as flexible as cotton.[18]

The *Yongqing shengping* is attributed to one Guo Guangrui 郭廣瑞, who acknowledges in the 1891 preface that the stories in the novel had been performed by the professional storyteller

[16] Guo Guangrui 郭廣瑞 and Tanmeng daoren 貪夢道人, *Yongqing shengping quanzhuan* 永慶升平全傳 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993), p. 38.
[17] Tanmeng daoren 貪夢道人, *Penggong'an* 彭公案 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005), p. 161.
[18] Ibid, p. 182.

Jiang Zhenming 姜振名 in the Xianfeng 咸豐 (1851–1861) period, and that he put these stories together in the form of a novel after listening them many times from another storyteller Ha Fuyuan 哈輔源.[19] The *Penggong'an* is attributed to one Tanmeng daoren 貪夢道人 (the "Dream-Indulgent Daoist"), who in 1893 had also contributed a sequel to the *Yongqing shengping*. These intertextual connections make clear that these martial arts-themed novels had a close relationship to the late-Qing storytelling performance that strongly relied on formulaic language and set-pieces. The repetitive citation of kung fu repertoire cited above is an example of such formulas as inherited from the oral tradition. As an element in this formula, the *Yijin jing*, like the other fancy but vague kung fu names, becomes an empty signifier that can be freely dropped or replaced by whatever sounds fancier.

In the Republican era, the trope of the *Yijin jing* kept being appropriated and reconfigured by fictional writings. The most famous example is found in Xiang Kairan's 向愷然 novel *Chivalric Heroes of Modern Times* (*Jindai xiayi yingxiong zhuan* 近代俠義英雄傳, serialized between 1923 and 1933), a work which epitomizes the crystallization of the *wuxia xiaoshuo* (martial arts fiction) as a thematic genre.[20] The *Yijin jing* is the central topic in Chapter 55 featuring the meeting between the protagonist Huo Yuanjia 霍元甲 and another master, Cheng Youming 程友銘. Before they meet each other, the marvelous magic of Cheng Youming's *Yijin jing* kung fu is introduced through the mouth of the famous physician Qin Heqi 秦鶴岐:

> "[H]is kung fu did not start with regular body training. He got the secret transmission of the *Yijin jing* and has been practicing it constantly for more than twenty years. Now his arms contain strength as much as thousands of *jin*, and he can control the move of every single inch of his skin." Huo Yuanjia said: "Can the *Yijin jing* kung fu really achieve such a realm?" Qin Heqi said: "More than that. According to Cheng Youming himself, if he continues the practice, ultimately, he will enter the realm in which he does not feel hungry after ten-day's fast, and also does not feel full after eating a thousand sheep."[21]

Later in the meeting, Cheng Youming does perform the art, and Huo Yuanjia sees that "inside the muscles of his upper body it was as if numerous worms were crawling, and they even reached the skin around the face and the ears." Qin Heqi makes a small paper ball and puts it on Cheng Youming's shoulder. Immediately, the ball is bounced to the air by more than a foot's height.[22] But the crescendo of the chapter actually comes earlier when Huo Yuanjia witnesses Cheng Youming giving a second life to a dying man. The man has had the shards of a broken china bowl left deeply in his head during a fight. Both foreign doctors in the major Shanghai hospitals and Qin Heqi the renowned Chinese physician have no way to remove the shards, so Cheng Youming becomes his last hope. With his *Yijin jing* kung fu activated, Cheng Youming rotates his hands in the air around the man's head, as if he were turning something very hard. This magic movement gradually stirs the *qi*, or pneuma, in the man's head, and finally the shards

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[19] Gu Liangchen 顧良辰, "Foreword," in Guo Guangrui 郭廣瑞 and Tanmeng daoren 貪夢道人, *Yongqing shengping quanzhuan* 永慶升平全傳 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993), p. 1.
[20] For the serialization, see John Christopher Hamm, *The Unworthy Scholar from Pingjiang: Republican-era Martial Arts Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019): p. 115. For the argument about martial arts fiction as a thematic genre, see ibid, p. 95. For a close reading of this particular novel, see ibid, chapter 6.
[21] Pingjiang buxiaosheng 平江不肖生 (Xiang Kairan 向愷然), *Jindai xiayi yingxiong zhuan* 近代俠義英雄傳 (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2017), pp. 474–5.
[22] Ibid, p. 479.

are removed from his head through the flow of the *qi*. In this scene, Xiang Kairan, the writer famous for his enthusiastic excavation of the traditional martial arts and his promotion of them as "national arts" (*guoji* 國技), has pushed the mystification of the *Yijin jing* to such an extent that it not only "transforms" the practitioner's own "sinews" (reads "body" here), but also transforms that of the others. As in the previous cases we have examined, this telekinesis-like effect is also not found in the *Yijin jing* text and is no doubt Xiang Kairan's invention (which might have been influenced by the telekinesis in the western occult discourses circulating in the Republican-era popular culture), but unlike them, *Chivalric Heroes of Modern Times*, as a product of the modern print culture and one of the defining titles in the emerging *wuxia* (martial arts) fad, had a much greater readership and cast a persistent influence on the twentieth-century Chinese popular culture. Shortly after the closure of this book's serialization, two other famous martial arts fiction writers, Yao Min'ai 姚民哀 (1893–1938) and Zhao Huanting 趙煥亭 (1877–1951), also carried out this legacy by including the *Yijin jing* in their own novels in the 1930s.[23] At this point, there were only three decades before Jin Yong would write the two novels that finalized the status of the *Yijin jing* as arguably the most famous secret kung fu scroll in the contemporary Chinese cultural imagination.

From Wu Jingzi of the early eighteenth century to Jin Yong, the pages above have sketched how the *Yijin jing* was imagined, appropriated and represented in the Chinese *xiaoshuo* tradition across three centuries, including in classical *biji* notes, vernacular novels, and modern martial arts fiction. A general trend is clear: the *Yijin jing* entered the *xiaoshuo* realm as an actual text with specific contents, but gradually, its alleged effects became more and more diversified and mystified, and finally it was alienated from its original form and contents and was transformed into a cultural trope open to appropriation and manipulation. While it is the purpose of this section to point out this general trend, which foregrounds the urgency of the ensuing agenda of examining the actual *Yijin jing* text and its history of transmissions, I do not hope this generalization will blanket the subtle complexities modulated by different contexts in different time periods. One example is that the three Republican-era martial arts fiction writers (Xiang Kairan, Yao Min'ai and Zhao Huanting) all paid more attention to the medium of the *Yijin jing*, namely the form of the book, and this gesture was apparently influenced by the fact that the late Qing and early Republican periods witnessed the burgeoning of printed *Yijin jing* editions in the book market, and of these materials, some were closer to the original manuscript versions while some were radically modernized as picture-oriented manuals of gymnastics, naturally raised the question how to deal with the gap between the *Yijin jing* trope passed along in the tradition and the *Yijin jing* books widely available in the market. We will return to this question in the end of the chapter after having a close look at the actual *Yijin jing* paratexts and texts in the next two sections.

[23] The *Yijin jing* is the major topic in Chapter 38, "Briefly Discussing the *Yijin jing* in the Forest of Elms and Jujube Trees; Initially Meeting the Eight-fingered Monk in the Yoga Temple" 榆棗林略談易筋經, 瑜伽寺初會八指僧, in Yao Min'ai's novel the *Shuanglong fuhu ji* 雙龍伏虎記 (*Two Dragons Defeating the Tiger*) that is serialized in the newspaper *Shanghai bao* 上海報. This particular chapter is serialized in 1935. It is also an important plot-driven device in Chapter 8, "Zhen Yungu Elaborates the *Yijin jing*; Zhang Fuchen Encounters the Cloth Seller" 甄雲姑解示易筋經, 張輔臣邂逅販布客, in Zhao Huanting's novel the *Jiandi yingsheng* 劍底鶯聲 (*The Nightingale's Singing under the Sword*) that is serialized in the newspaper *Jin'gangzuan* 金剛鑽. This particular chapter is also serialized in 1935. The *Yijin jing* is also mentioned in his novel *Xiagu danxin* 俠骨丹心 (*The Chivalric Bones and the Loyal Heart*) that is serialized in the newspaper *Tiebao* 鐵報 in 1937.

The Secret Origin and Transmissions: The *Yijin jing* Prefaces

In the beginning of the chapter we had a quick sketch of the alleged origin of the *Yijin jing*. While this origin is missing in most of the *xiaoshuo* narratives discussed above, suggesting that the *Yijin jing* tended to work as a decontextualized trope, the two most eye-catching keywords "Shaolin Temple" and "Bodhidharma" still stick to the title quite often. Did the *Yijin jing* really originate from the Shaolin Temple and Bodhidharma? Where is this narrative from and to what extent is it reliable? If this was indeed the case, then how was the *Yijin jing* transmitted in the one thousand years before it finally made the documentable presence in the early Qing dynasty? If not, then who was the real author (or forgery maker) of the *Yijin jing*? In order to answer these questions, we must read through the *Yijin jing* prefaces that have been telling and retelling stories of the *Yijin jing*'s origin and transmissions.

The textual history of the *Yijin jing*, as we will detail in the next two sections, is extremely messy and involves dozens of editions, each featuring variations to various extents. But there is a cluster of paratexts that are comparatively stable and are found in most of the editions, including three prefaces attributed respectively to Li Jing 李靖 (571–649) of the Tang dynasty, Niu Gao 牛皋 (1087–1147) of the Song dynasty, a certain Haidai youren 海岱遊人 ("Wanderer among seas and mountains") of the early Qing (in the earlier editions) or the Yuan dynasty (in the later editions), and a postscript attributed to one Zining daoren 紫凝道人 ("Daoist Initiate of the Purple Essence") of the early Qing (in earlier editions) or the late Ming (in later editions). While the Zining Daoren postscript is mostly an appraisal of the merits of the *Yijin jing* and lacks substantive information, the three prefaces together make a fascinating "history" of origin and transmissions of the *Yijin jing* across a thousand years. The stories are telling and the narratives are concise, making them worthy of being presented in full translation before the analysis follows.[24]

The Li Jing Preface[25]

During the Taihe 太和 reign (477–499) of the Xiaoming 孝明 Emperor (ruled 510–528) of the Later Wei dynasty (386–534), master Bodhidharma went from Liang 梁 to Wei and meditated facing a wall in Shaolin Temple. He said to his disciples: "Why don't you tell what you know, and I will know what you will achieve." The disciples then all stated their studies. The master said, some will get his skin, some his bones, some his flesh, some his marrow, and so on. Later people attempted to make sense of this, thinking the master was metaphorizing the different levels that the disciples could reach in their studies. They did not know that the master was not figuring and he did mean what he said. After nine years the master transcended since his

[24] The translations in this section are based on the Shen Yutian 沈玉田 collated manuscript, which was likely copied in the first half of the Kangxi 康熙 reign (1662-1722), and is now a collection of National Archives of Japan (kokuritsu kōbunshokan 国立公文書館, call number: 303–0047). A xerographic copy is available in the *ZBHJ*, v. 1, pp. 35–90. I choose this version because it might be the earliest *Yijin jing* manuscript that has been discovered, and it contains all the tree prefaces. For a detailed introduction to this manuscript, see Zhang Zhibin 張志斌, "*Yijin jing* zuizao chuanben: Riben cang 'Shen jiao ben' kaoding" 易筋經最早傳本——日本藏"沈校本"考訂, *Zhongyi zazhi* 中醫雜誌 54.20 (2013): 1722–6. Meir Shahar has previously translated the Li Jing preface, the Niu Gao preface and a paragraph of the Zining Daoren postscript. See Meir Shahar, *The Shaolin Monastery: History, Religion, and the Chinese Martial Arts* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), pp. 165–7, 168–70, and 174.

[25] This preface is usually titled "*Yijin jing* xu" 易筋經序 or "*Yijin jingyi* xu" 易筋經義序, though in some versions it can have a different title.

cultivation was complete. His worldly body was buried in the Bear-ear Mountain, but he in fact returned to where he belonged with one of his shoes left.

Later, the wall facing which the master had meditated broke apart in the wind and rain. The Shaolin monks found an iron case from inside the broken wall as they repaired it. Nobody could open the case until Huike's epiphany. He said: "This must have been sealed by things like glue or lacquer, and fire will help." The case opened, and they found two scrolls of classics in it. One was called the *Marrow Lavation Classic*, and the other the *Sinew Transformation Classic*. The *Marrow Lavation Classic* taught that humans feel love and desire when they are born, but the body as it appears in the world is but waste and filth. If he wants to study the teachings from Buddha and pursue the ultimate truth, he must have his organs, entrails, limbs, and every part of the body laved and cleansed. Until the purified emptiness of body appears he cannot set out toward Buddha's realm of wisdom. The cultivation would become groundless were it not going through this classic. Reading this, the monks realized that what Bodhidharma had said about "getting my marrow" was not a metaphor. The *Sinew Transformation Classic* taught that sinew is everywhere above the bones and marrows and under the skin and flesh. It channels the body and transports the flow of *qi* and blood. The presence of the body can be transformed after its birth. This transformation is justified unless the purpose of it is not to pursue the ultimate truth, in which case the body will collapse immediately. Reading this, the monks realized that what Bodhidharma had said about "getting my skin, flesh and bones" were also not figurations.

Huike got the *Marrow Lavation Classic*, which was rarely seen thereafter. The *Sinew Transformation Classic* was kept and treasured in Shaolin Temple. In reading the classic, the words were all Sanskrit and no Shaolin monk could fully translate it. From time to time, some monk rendered some parts, and he then practiced based on his own understanding, while the next monk would go with a different understanding. [Gradually] the classic declined, becoming a text about martial arts and losing its real use as a means to the ultimate truth. Today the Shaolin monks are only good at fighting and wrestling, and that is because they only saw a tip of the iceberg. Among those monks there was one who had superior insights. He thought how could it be that master Bodhidharma left this classic only for such trivial arts? We may not be able to translate it, but someone can. He then traveled everywhere with this classic. One day he arrived in E'mei Mountain of Shu 蜀, and got to meet the sacred Indian monk Pramiti. After hearing about this classic Pramiti said: "Buddha's true transmission is based on this." He then meticulously translated and interpreted the classic. He also let the monk stay in the mountain and guided his practice. After one hundred days the monk's *qi* and blood were solidified. After another one hundred days his body was fully channeled. After the third one hundred days he became fully achieved. He entered what was called the Vajrapani's realm of power, and through there he entered Buddha's realm of wisdom. That was because his cultivation had this solid basis. It was not known where the monk went after his achievement.

Xu Hongke 徐洪客 obtained this secret classic from overseas. He transmitted it to Qiuranke 虯髯客 the curly-bearded traveler, and Qiuranke transmitted it to me. I used to make some attempts at studying, and the payoffs were always immediate and amazing. That was when I was convinced that Buddha says no empty words. It is regrettable that I have not obtained the secrets about the "marrow lavation" so I cannot fully admire the Buddha's realm. It is also regrettable that my will was not as steady as that monk who could completely transcend the worldly affairs. I only achieved "six-flower deployment" the trivial art of warcraft, which won me some military exploits for my unworthy life. For this I feel eternally apologetic. However, the transcendental contents of this classic have yet to be revealed to the world, and thus I am humbly

recording its history in this preface so that people will understand the difference between the fundamental and the trivial. It is my hope that those who follow this classic will look forward to the Buddha's realm, instead of being restricted to worldly affairs like me.

Prefaced by Li Jing, the third day of the third month, the late spring, the second year of the Zhen'guan reign (628) of the Tang dynasty.

The Niu Gao Preface[26]

I am a military man. I cannot read a single word. I just like playing with long spears and heavy swords, and I am fond of hunting with bow and arrows on horseback. It was at the time when the central plains fell into the barbarian hands that the Huizong Emperor 徽宗 (1082–1135) and the Qinzong Emperor 钦宗 (1100–1161) were taken to the barbarian north. The Gaozong Emperor (1107–1187), who was then the Prince Kang 康王, miraculously crossed the Yellow River on the back of a blessed mud horse, and restored our dynasty in the south. In that time when the country required service, I responded to the call from the honorable Shaobao 少保 Yue Fei 岳飛 (1103–1142) and was recruited as a subordinate officer. After achieving many military exploits I was promoted to be a major general.

I remember in that year I was returning to the capital with my army after an expedition ordered by the Shaobao. A traveling monk, whose appearance was as rare and venerable as an Arhat, came to my camp with an envelope in his hands, and asked me to send it to the Shaobao. I humbly inquired after the reason, and the monk said: "My general, do you know that the Shaobao has magic strength?" I said I don't know, but I've seen the Shaobao operating a mighty bow that required imponderable strength to pull the string. The monk asked: "Is his magic strength gifted?" I said: "I suppose so?" The monk said: "No. It was from my transmission. The Shaobao used to study with me. After he achieved the magic strength I asked him to follow me toward the true way, but he did not take my words and went after the worldly exploits. Now his name has been established, but who could have expected that some misfortune is awaiting him? Isn't this destiny? Isn't this fate? Alas! There is not much we can do! Send him this letter quickly, so that he might be able to think through it and avert the misfortune." Hearing this I was shocked and terrified. I begged for his name, and he did not answer. I begged for where he was going, and he said he was going after the way of master Bodhidharma. Awed by his mightiness I did not dare to make him stay, and he then left with no trace behind.

The Shaobao received the letter. Tears came out from his eyes before he could finish reading it. He said: "That sacred monk was indeed my master. Now he has left without waiting for me. The end is coming!" He then took a scroll from under his clothes and handed it to me. He enjoined: "Transmit this to the right person. Don't let the path to the true way be cut off and fail my master."

After several months, the Shaobao was really framed by the treacherous minister. It broke my heart that justice was after all not served, and for that I came to see the worldly exploits as so much dirt and dust. I would have left the world with no hesitation, were it not for the task that the Shaobao gave me. I did not want to fail the Shaobao, but it was a shame that people all lacked wise insight and did not have aspirations for the path toward immortality and becoming Buddha. It is hard to find the one, but it is meaningless to transmit it to just anyone. Now I am hiding the scroll inside the cliff of Song Mountain 嵩山. I will let the one who is blessed by the true way to

[26] In this specific manuscript it is simply titled "*Yijin jing* xu" 易筋經序. In other versions it is most frequently titled "*Yijin jing* neiwai shenyong xu" 易筋經內外神勇序.

find it by himself, and the scroll will guide him to the gate toward the true way. By doing this, I hope I will avert the sin of transmitting it to the wrong one, and I hope the Shaobao's soul in heaven will also rest in peace.

Prefaced by Niu Gao from Tangyin 湯陰 with the style name Hejiu 鶴九, the Hongyi General 弘毅將軍 under the command of Yue Fei, the Zhen'e Grand Marshall 鎮鄂大元帥 and the Shaobao, in the twelfth year of the Shaoxing 紹興 reign (1142) of the Song dynasty.

The Haidai Youren Preface[27]

In the *xin-chou* 辛丑 year of the Shunzhi 順治 reign (1661), all places under heaven were in order and everywhere within the seas were in peace. Travelling was easy and safe, and I was able to wander among the seas and the mountains. One day I arrived in the Changbai 長白 Mountains. My friends and I brought cups and wine pots to the hillside, and we drank while sitting on grass and appreciating the view of the nature. Not far away there was a creek, and an aged forest had its red leaves reflected in the water.

At that moment a western barbarian man 西羌人 going toward the east stopped and rested near us. I saw that his appearance was decent, elegant and amiable, so I invited him to join us for drinking. I asked where he was going, and he said he was going to Lao Mountain of Shandong province 膠嶗 to see his master's master. I then asked of what his studies consisted, and he answered: "Magic strength." Everyone was curious, and he continued: "I can parallel my fingers and pierce a cow's stomach, slant my palm and cut through a cow's neck, clench my fist and smash a tiger's head. You can try to hurt my stomach if you don't believe it." We then let those who were strong use wood sticks, stones and iron hammers to hit his stomach, and it was as if he did not feel anything. He also tied his testicles with a piece of rope. The other end of the rope was tied to a wheel of an oxcart with a gigantic rock loaded. He ran with the wheel dragging after him and nobody could catch up him. Then, he tied the rope to his feet. He let three or four strongmen pull the rope, but he just stood still with no waggling. We were all amazed and asked: "Are we really seeing what we see? Is this an innate gift or achieved with practice?" He answered: "It is practice, not an endowment." We inquired after what the strength could be used for, and he said: "First, averting sickness. Second, never getting sick. Third, being forever strong. Fourth, not suffering from hunger or chill. Fifth, having more offspring. Sixth, thriving in bed. Seventh, seizing the pearl from mud and water. Eighth, defeating invasions with no fear. Ninth, the strength lasts forever. However, all these are only minor uses. The real aspiration is becoming Buddha." We asked where he learned this. He said: "My master is a monk. My master's master is a sacred monk. The transmission was passed down one master after another." He then presented a book. We read it together and learned that the origin of the magic strength is that sinews can be transformed and the strength comes from the accumulation of the *qi*. After the drink, the barbarian man was about to leave. I tried but could not make him stay. He said: "If you really have the aspiration, I am willing to give the book to you. I have decided to find the sacred monk and hopefully I can follow him to the Buddha's realm, so I have no time to stay here."

I keep pondering upon this experience. I have been studying the classics left by the sages for more than fifty years. I never stopped learning from them, but only ended up with becoming a pedantic scholar, who on every minor matter meticulously considers whether reason exists, without knowing that beyond the reasons there is a totally different world. That is a world that

[27] In this specific manuscript it is titled "*Yijin jing* xu" 易筋經序. In other versions the alias is also recorded as "Nanzhou haidai youren" 南洲海岱遊人 or "Nanzhou baiyi haidai youren" 南洲白衣海岱遊人.

cannot be explored by pedantic scholars. In the beginning of the book it is Yaoshi's 藥師 (Li Jing) preface. How is it possible that Yaoshi would say absurd words? I then think about men with strength in the central land from ancient times: Wu Huo 烏獲, Meng Ben 孟賁, Xia Yu 夏育, Beigong You 北宮黝, Wu Zixu 伍子胥, Zhu Hai 朱亥, Xiang Yu 項羽, and Donghai yongshi 東海勇士. They were all known for their strength. Their strength was gifted, but was also because of their postnatal cultivation. [This cultivation should also be recorded] in the books from the ancient times, but they might have been lost after the book burning of the Qin dynasty (221–206 BC). But as to the aspiration of becoming Buddha, that is what makes the western barbarian man transcend people of our central land. Alas! How I wish I could resurrect Duke Wei (Li Jing) and Wumu 武穆 (Yue Fei) from the nether world, and with them together go to visit the sacred monk in the transcendental land!

Noted by Haidai youren, or the wanderer among seas and mountains.

Zhang Zongdao 張宗道, as a person of the early Hongwu 洪武 reign (1368–1398) of the Ming dynasty, is now about three hundred and fifty or sixty years old. He resides in the Wuchang 武昌 prefecture, and he is a follower of the Way.

Coming back from the fantastic history of transmissions told in the three prefaces, the most urgent question for us is about credibility. Is this history true? Did Li Jing and Niu Gao the two real historical figures really write the first two prefaces? Who is this Haidai youren and is the story about the "western barbarian man" reliable? For the first two prefaces the answer is very clear: they are both made up and they can in no way be related to the historical Li Jing and Niu Gao. In fact, Ling Tingkan 凌廷堪 (1757–1809) and Zhou Zhongfu 周中孚 (1768–1831) in the High Qing era had already declared the false nature of the two prefaces in their own bibliographical notes.[28] In the Republican-era enterprise of writing the premodern history of sports and martial arts, scholars Xu Zhedong 徐哲東 (1898–1967) and Tang Hao 唐豪 (1896–1959) also convincingly reinforced this argument in their respective works.[29] Today this conclusion is commonly shared among scholars, although it is still ignored in most non-academic readings, leaving the slogan "the *Yijin jing* by Bodhidharma" everywhere in mass culture.[30]

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[28] For Ling Tingkan's comments, see Ling Tingkan 凌廷堪, "Yu Cheng Lizhong shu" 與程麗仲書, in *Jiaolitang wenji* 校礼堂文集, 36 *juan* (1813 edition), in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書, 1800 vol. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), v. 1480, j. 25, pp. 284a–b. For Zhou Zhongfu's comments, see Zhou Zhongfu 周中孚, *Zhengtang dushuji* 鄭堂讀書記, 71 *juan* (prefaced 1869), in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書, 1800 vol. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), v. 925, j. 67, p. 176b.

[29] For Xu Zhedong's work, see Xu Zhedong 徐哲東, *Guoji lunlue* 國技論略 (Taiyuan: Shanxi kexue jishu chubanshe, 2003 [orig. 1928]), pp. 13–7. For Tang Hao's work, see Tang Hao 唐豪, *Shaolin Wudang kao* 少林武當考 (Shanghai: Wenming shuju, 1930), pp. 13–32. Also see Tang Hao, Xingjianzhai suibi 行健齋隨筆 (Shanghai: Zhongguo wushu xuehui, 1937), pp. 22–4, and 60–3. Also see Tang Hao, "Jiu Zhongguo tiyushi shang fuhui de damo" 舊中國體育史上附會的達摩, in *Zhongguo tiyushi cankao ziliao disiji* 中國體育史參考資料第四輯, ed. Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui yundong jishu weiyuanhui 中華人民共和國體育運動委員會運動技術委員會 (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1958), pp. 23–31.

[30] For the most comprehensive review on this issue in contemporary scholarship, see Zhou Weiliang 周偉良, "*Yijin jing* de zuozhe, zhuyao banben jiqi neirong liubian" 易筋經的作者、主要版本及其內容流變, *Journal of Capital Institute of Physical Education* 首都體育學院學報 21.2 (2009): 138–50. The same article is also included in Zhou Weiliang, *Yijin jing sizhenben jiaoshi* 易筋經四珍本校釋 (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 2011), pp. 1–40. Also see Zhou Weiliang et al., "*Yijin jing* de zuozhe, chengshu niandai jiqi zhuyao neirong" 易筋經的作者、成書年代及其主要內容, in the *ZBHJ*, pp. 5-34. Gong Pengcheng 龔鵬程 in his article contributed to this issue from more

Among many anachronistic mistakes that these scholars have pointed out, the most noticeable ones are: first, the "Taihe reign (477–499)" in the beginning of the Li Jing preface belonged to the Xiaowen 孝文 Emperor (ruled 467–499), not the Xiaoming Emperor in the text; second, that Bodhidharma had meditated facing a wall in Shaolin Temple for nine years is a groundless legend that was not invented until the Song dynasty; third, Qiuranke, or the curly-bearded traveler, is a widely known fictional figure who was not made up until the end of the dynasty by Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933); fourth, the way that the Li Jing preface was dated was never used in history; fifth, Niu Gao's office, style name and hometown were all wrong in the preface that was attributed to him; sixth, Niu Gao died in 1147 when the last emperor of the Northern Song was still alive and the "Qinzong" title was not yet granted to him until he died in 1161; seventh, "Niu Gao" claimed in the preface that he was going to hide the secret scroll in Song Mountain, but in that time that area was already the territory of the Jin 金 dynasty (1115–1234).[31]

Unlike the first two prefaces, the Haidai Youren preface has received little academic attention. One reason is that although it is commonly included together with the other two prefaces in the early manuscripts (most of which were only recently discovered), somehow it is often missing from the editions after the eighteenth century. For example, Ling Tingkan and Zhou Zhongfu did not mention this preface at all in their bibliographical notes, suggesting it was not included in the copies they saw. It was indeed preserved in the 1823 Shiyinzhai 市隱齋 woodblock edition, which could be the earliest printed edition of the book, but it was not a part of the Laizhangshi 來章氏 edition engraved in the same period.[32] Another reason is that unlike the famous names Li Jing and Niu Gao, the alias Haidai Youren is vague and the text also does not involve any identifiable historical figure, making it pointless to appraise the authenticity of the narrative, which in fact presents itself with a strong *xiaoshuo* style that deliberately blurs the boundary between historicity and fictionality in the first place. But I suggest that this mysterious "Haidai Youren" might actually be connected to some real historical figure, though the connection is again based on forgery. In the Shen Yutian manuscript based on which we did the translation, the extra line at the end of the preface about the person "Zhang Zongdao" is very curious. According to the "fact" that he was present in the early Ming and that he was a "follower of the Way", it should point to Zhang Gen 張亙, with the style name Zongdao 宗道, who lived in the intersectional periods of the Yuan and the Ming dynasties. Zhang Zongdao was a well-known specialist in *fengshui* or geomancy, one of the major fields of the premodern Chinese occult knowledge. Although little is known about his life history and his other works, his book *Dili quanshu* 地理全書 (*The Complete Book on the Principles of Landscape*) was quite

perspectives. See Gong Pengcheng, "Damo Yijin jing lunkao" 達摩易筋經論考, *Pumen xuebao* 普門學報 5 (2001): 1–18. The same article is also included in Gong Pengcheng, *Wuyi congtan* 武藝叢談 (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2015), pp. 1–30.

[31] A useful summary of these points can be found in Zhou Weiliang's 2009 article, except the fourth point, which was made by Gong Pengcheng in his 2001 article. See note 27. For readers who do not read Chinese, an English summary of most of these points is available in Meir Shahar, *The Shaolin Monastery*, 167–71.

[32] A xerographic copy of the Shiyinzhai edition is available in the *ZBHJ*, v. 3, pp. 129–238. A copy of the Laizhangshi edition is available in the *ZBHJ*, v. 3, pp. 239–399. An annotated transcription with an introduction is available in Zhou Weiliang, *Yijin jing sizhenben jiaoshi* 易筋經四珍本校釋 (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 2011), pp. 217–320. These two editions will be more thoroughly discussed in the fourth section.

a renowned title in that particular specialty and was still repeatedly printed in the Qing dynasty.[33] For this reason, there is nothing strange that he is mentioned in an early Qing text, but the curiosity is why in such an odd context? The name abruptly shows up after the signature, which as a convention has by its presence declared the closure of the preface, and in this way it appears as something suspended — neither within nor without the preface. One can easily leave it aside as some form of editorial mistake because this line appears in no other editions except this one. However, another way to make sense of it is to take it as a note made by the transcriber explaining the identity of the alias Haidai Youren. This conjecture is supported by the fact that in several other places the transcriber of the manuscript has also inserted in-text notes such as "elsewhere it is written as […]," suggesting that the transcriber was consulting at least one extra edition (say, the X edition) in order to collate the master copy based on which he did the transcription. If this was the case, what happened could well be like this: the master copy simply ended with the ambiguous Haidai Youren signature, but from the X edition (or other sources) the transcriber figured out that Haidai Youren's name was Zhang Zongdao, and he felt the necessity of adding this information after the alias. There are two other kinds of circumstantial evidence for this claim. First, there are two manuscript versions of the preface that clearly reveal the name of "Haidai Youren" as one Zhang Yuefeng 張月峰, and they are both also dated in 1661.[34] This name does not lead to any documentable historical figure, and to be sure there is no reason to assume a definite relationship between it and "Zhang Zongdao," but the shared family name and especially the fact that they share the same date definitely increases the possibility. Second, the date of the preface (1661) in most later editions (including the Shiyinzhai woodblock edition) is curiously replaced by a much earlier date: "the first year of the Zhongtong 中统 reign (1260) of the Yuan dynasty." There must be a reason to choose this date for whoever had made this alternation, and the Zhang Zongdao conjecture can again fill the gap. Since it is apparently absurd that Zhang Zongdao had written this preface in 1661 when he was "three hundred and fifty or sixty years old," then why not let him "write" it earlier in his actual lifetime, namely, sometime in the Yuan dynasty? To be sure, 1260 is still several decades earlier than Zhang Zongdao's lifetime, but it is close enough for our muddleheaded textual manipulator, apparently

[33] Zhang Zongdao and his works are mentioned in several Ming dynasty bibliographical books. For example, the *Qianqingtang shumu* 千頃堂書目 by Huang Yuji 黃虞稷 (1626–1692) recorded his title *Ji gu Dian shuoji* 紀古滇說集 and identified him as a Yuan dynasty author. See Huang Yuji, *Qianqingtang shumu*, 32 *juan* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), j. 8, p. 232. However, Wu Guoshi 吳國仕, the author of the Ming book *Zaoming zong jing ji* 造命宗鏡集, claimed that he studied with Zhang Zongdao in some period around 1390 and 1392, which confirms that Zhang Zongdao lived across the late Yuan and the early Ming. See Wu Guoshi, "Dong Dezhang *Tianji sushu* lun" 董德彰天機素書論, in *Zaoming zong jing ji* 造命宗鏡集, 12 *juan* (n.p.: Wushi Souxuanzhai, 1630), j. 3, pp. 11b. Yao Nai 姚鼐 (1732–1815) in the High Qing has prefaced an annotation of Zhang Zongdao's *Dili quanshu* authored by some Zhang Huaishu 章淮樹, and he highly appraised Zhang Zongdao's original book. See Yao Nai, "*Zhang Zongdao Dili quanshu jie* xu" 張宗道地理全書解序, in *Xibaoxuan shiwen ji* 惜抱軒詩文集, 26 *juan* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), *wenji* j. 4, pp. 52–3. Now various Qing woodblock editions of the *Dili quanshu* are still available in many libraries and in the antique market.

[34] One version is found in the *Huitu Yijin jing chuanben* 繪圖易筋經傳本 edition that was copied in 1875. See the full text in the *ZBHJ*, v. 2, pp. 321–401. The other one used to be preserved in the Commercial Press' Hanfenlou 涵芬樓 library in the Republican era. In 1932, the manuscript was destroyed by the bombs from the Japanese air raid together with most of Commercial Press collections. However, part of the preface from this particular manuscript was transcribed and included in a 1919 moveable type edition titled *Zhenben Yijin jing* 真本易筋經 (the authentic *Yijin jing*). See *Zhenben Yijin jing*, ed. Zhonghua tushu jicheng bianjisuo 中華圖書集成編輯所 (Shanghai: Zhonghua tushu jicheng bianjisuo, 1919), pp. 45–56.

possessed of less than perfect knowledge about history. In fact, the expression "the first year of the Zhongtong reign of the Yuan dynasty" itself is an anachronistic mistake. While it is true that the "Zhongtong" reign belonged to Kublai Khan, in the first year of it (1260) he was still the Khan of the Mongol Empire and he would not have conceived "Yuan" as the name of his dynasty until 1271.

Thus our complete conjecture assumes that in the early Qing period, there was a theory (expressed in version X or somewhere else) that Zhang Zongdao wrote this preface when he was three hundred and fifty or sixty years old in the persona of Haidai Youren. The transcriber of the Shen Yutian manuscript knew this theory and felt the obligation of recording it in his collation, yet he was not completely convinced by it, because it was absurd that one could live that long and also because that would conflict with another statement in the preface that Haidai Youren had been "studying the classics left by the sages" for only some fifty years. As a compromise, the cautious transcriber chose to record the line at the end of the preface and create an odd suspension, so that he would neither violate the preface by adding unreliable information nor risk obliterating a useful source because of his personal judgment. At a later point, a different transcriber facing the same problem made a different choice: he took the liberty of changing the date of the story from 1661 to 1260. For him this was one stone and two birds: it not only fixed the absurdity of Haidai Youren's age, but also strengthened the credibility of the story by following an important principle in the occult tradition: the older, the more authentic. Our conjectural case can also make sense of the alternation of dates we see in the Zining Daoren postscript. In most of the early manuscripts the Zining Daoren postscript is not dated, except for one that is dated in 1669, or the *yi-you* 乙酉 year of the Kangxi 康熙 reign.[35] But in the 1825 Zhu Wenlan 祝文瀾 manuscript, which was the master copy of at least two later printed editions, this date is replaced by 1624, or "the fourth year of the Tianqi 天啟 reign."[36] There is no way to tell where this new date was from, but the advantage of using it is clear: the postscript would therefore be able to claim an older origin in the previous Ming dynasty.

A conjecture is a conjecture. It is just one possible way to make sense of the messy texts we have inherited. However, the purpose of proposing this conjecture is not to declare its certainty, because for materials like this, we will probably never be able to figure out what really happened across numerous instances of textual transmission and transformation. The purpose is to allow conjecture to exemplify the probable dynamics we can identify in the fabulation of legends (and now we can feel confident to replace the word "history" with legend) of the origin and transmission of the *Yijin jing*, a process that consisted of both intentional forgeries and unintentional incidents. Several tendencies are observable in this process of becoming.

The first tendency is that by the time the *Yijin jing* text was comparatively stabilized and circulated in the printed form, its legends of transmissions had formed a diachronic chain consisting of time points from all the four major dynasties prior to the Qing: the Li Jing preface dated in the Tang, the Niu Gao preface dated in the Song, the date of the Haidai Youren stabilized in the Yuan, and the date of the Zining Daoren postscript stabilized in the Ming. This smooth temporal flow was apparently not one single author's agenda. We cannot know whether these texts shared the same author, but even though they did, this author was also not responsible

[35] This manuscript is preserved in the Sichuan University Library. For an introduction see the *ZBHJ*, v. 6, pp. 497–500.

[36] A xerographic copy of this manuscript is included in the *ZBHJ*, v. 3, pp. 5–127. This manuscript is also the source of 1884 Shaoye shanfang woodblock edition, which is available in the *ZBHJ*, v. 3, pp. 513–608, and the 1918 lithography edition of the *Shaolin quanshu jingyi* (Shanghai: Dasheng tushuju).

for the Yuan dynasty date in the Haidai Youren preface and the Ming dynasty date in the Zining Daoren postscript, both did not appear until very late. However, it is also hard to say that this smooth temporal flow was an accident, because it did perfectly fulfill people's expectation of what a secret transmission should look like: it not only needed an older origin to assure its antiquity, but also needed to be emerge into the light from time to time to assure its transmission into the present.

The second tendency is that along with the smooth Tang-Song-Yuan-Ming temporal flow, the alleged preface/postscript writers changed from real and famous historical figures to unidentifiable commoners, and their engagement with the transmission of the *Yijin jing* became less and less direct. The Tang dynasty Li Jing was able to relate a clear proprietary lineage from Bodhidharma to himself, and he had a very close engagement with the arts transmitted in the book, based on which he developed his own "six-flower deployment" warcraft. Niu Gao of the Song dynasty, by contrast, did not practice the *Yijin jing* kung fu himself. However, he as a witness to the secret tie between Yue Fei and his mysterious monk master and as the one who shouldered the responsibility of finding the right person deserving the book still played a significant role in maintaining the transmission. When it comes to the "Yuan-dynasty" Haidai Youren, his identity had become very vague and his encounter with the *Yijin jing* was purely accidental. There seemed to be an esoteric lineage stretching from the "sacred monk" on Lao Mountain to the western barbarian man's monk master and to the barbarian man himself, but Haidai Youren was an outsider and he could tell us nothing about that lineage. Finally, the "Ming-dynasty" Zining Daoren was absolutely unidentifiable and his postscript was simply a reader's tribute to an old and mysterious book. He did not appear as an indispensable agent in the esoteric linear transmission; he was just like any common reader, who happened to be faced with an arcane text but had never experienced the epiphany of the promised magic. However, this detachment was precisely what was critical in taking in the common readers. Identifying with this Zining Daoren, anyone was granted an access to the transmission and was promised a chance of getting closer and closer to the ultimate truth by reducing their detachment from its secret core step by step.

The third tendency is that the alleged affordances of the *Yijin jing* became more and more diverse. For Li Jing, the *Yijin jing* granted him the art of warcraft. For Yue Fei, the *Yijin jing* gave him both the magic strength and the ability to foresee his tragic fate. When it comes to Haidai Youren, he names a long list of nine kinds of magic affordances in one breath, portraying the *Yijin jing* as omnipotent. This trend is similar to what we have observed in the previous section, and this similarity circumstantially proves the legendary nature of these prefaces. But these paratexts share one thing in common, that is, the persistent belittling of these wordily affordances and the glorifying of the ultimate promise in the *Yijin jing*: *zuofo* 作佛, or "becoming Buddha". They therefore create an interesting dualist structure between this-worldly affordances and "becoming Buddha", with the former continuously depreciated and the latter eulogized, but paradoxically, it is the less-than-spiritual tricks that always occupy the spotlight in the stories, while "becoming Buddha" is throughout an abortive mission eliciting only apologies and regrets. This paradox is not hard to understand: the worldly affordances are apparently more appealing to the readers and hence they keep proliferating, but neither can "becoming Buddha" afford to be de-emphasized, not only because the Buddhist origin of the text assures the antiquity and authenticity of the book, but also because the transcendental "Buddha's realm" is the very engine that draws forth the proliferation of the worldly affordances: not matter how unbelievable and

counterintuitive a trick looks, its plausibility derives from the understanding that nothing is impossible in the "Buddha's realm".

These paratexts then work together to perfectly exemplifies the key qualities that a secret scroll should have: an antique and sacred origin, an esoteric and successive transmission, an approachable access and great promise for the common readers, and finally, a delicate unification of worldly benefits and the transcendental realm.[37] Since we have made it clear that Bodhidharma did not transmit this scroll and that its entire transmission history was apocryphal, then who made up this text, when did they do it, and how did they thoughtfully design its appeal as a secret scroll? Did the text really teach its readers a series of magic tricks for bodily cultivation and how to "become Buddha"? And if so, how did this great course in self-strengthening unfold and proceed? We hence move on to the next section.

The Text of the *Yijin jing*

Unfortunately, the problems of the authorship and the exact dating of the *Yijin jing* will remain a mystery until new sources appear. After having convincingly synthesized the evidence proving that Bodhidharma was not the author, Tang Hao in 1958 proposed that "attributing the [traditional Chinese] gymnastics to Bodhidharma started with the *Yijin jing* that was forged by Zining Daoren of Tiantai Mountain 天台紫凝道人 in 1624."[38] Tang Hao did not specify his evidence, but he must have been consulting the Zhu Wenlan manuscript (prefaced 1815 and copied 1825) that also appeared in the article, because in this manuscript the Zining Daoren postscript was not only dated in 1624, but also the only dated version among the *Yijin jing* editions that Tang Hao had seen. Given the materials he had, Tang Hao's argument bore some plausibility, and was widely accepted in academia ever since.[39] However, with new sources discovered in recent years, the forgery of this date has become clear. In the much earlier Sichuan University manuscript (dating from the early eighteenth century), this postscript is dated in 1669. In another earlier edition, the Wu Yong Postscript manuscript that is roughly dated as belonging to the Yongzheng 雍正 period (1723–1735), the Zining Daoren postscript itself is not dated, but the year 1730 is provided, as the date when the postscript was transcribed.[40] These two new sources have convincingly invalidated the credibility of the year 1624, which, as I have conjectured in the previous section, was probably made up by the Zhu Wenlan edition in order to construct a smooth temporal flow for the transmission from the Tang to the late Ming. Based on these new materials, and also considering the circumstantial evidence that the Shaolin Temple had not earned a name as a martial arts center until the mid-Ming, Zhou Weiliang in 2016 has updated his previous argument that the *Yijin jing* is a late-Ming work and has suggested that we

[37] In fact, Meir Shahar has pointed out that the tendency of syncretism of the religious dimensions and the martial arts was an important feature of the late-imperial kung fu manuals. See Meir Shahar, *The Shaolin Monastery*, 147.
[38] See Tang Hao, "Jiu Zhongguo tiyushi shang fuhui de damo" 舊中國體育史上附會的達摩, in *Zhongguo tiyushi cankao ziliao disiji* 中國體育史參考資料第四輯, ed. Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui yundong jishu weiyuanhui 中華人民共和國體育運動委員會運動技術委員會 (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1958), p. 24.
[39] For example, Meir Shahar has elaborated this theory (though with some suspect) by analyzing how the Zining Daoren's possible identity confirms with the syncretic contents of the book. See Meir Shahar, *The Shaolin Monastery*, 160-174. However, as Zhou Weiliang has pointed out, it is still not a careful move to assume that the postscript writer must be the author. See Zhou Weiliang, "*Yijin jing* de zuozhe, zhuyao banben jiqi neirong liubian", 140.
[40] A xerographic copy of this edition is available in the *ZBHJ*, v. 1, pp. 91–133.

reconsider the *Yijin jing* as a text formed in the period no earlier than the mid-Ming but no later than 1669 (the date of the Zining Daoren postscript in the Sichuan University manuscript).[41]

This is a prudent and reasonable estimate. However, after having discovered dozens of historical *Yijin jing* editions, with not a single one of them (either as actual copy or as bibliographic record) traceable to the Ming, it may suggest that most likely the *Yijin jing* is an early-Qing product. The earliest extant copy, as we have read in the previous section, is most likely the Shen Yutian manuscript.

We will thus continue to read the text proper of the *Yijin jing*, using the Shen Yutian manuscript as the main reference but calling on other editions for significant textual variations. The text proper consists of twenty-four short and titled treatises, and they can be grouped into three categories based on their contents: theories explaining the fundamentals of the *Yijin jing* kung fu, the primary methods that apply to all stages in the practice, and detailed practical instructions guiding one to master the kung fu through a course of four hundred days that are divided into four stages. The treatises unfold generally following this order, except for two primary methodological notes (No. 19 and No. 20) that are placed between the third and the fourth stages. The coded titles are organized in Table 3.1.

<table>
<tr><td>Theories</td><td colspan="2">1. Overview 總論. 2. On Membranes 膜論. 3. On Internal Strength 內壯論.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Methods</td><td colspan="2">4. Massage 揉法. 5. The Essence of the Sun and the Moon 日精月華.
6. Medication 服藥法. 7. The Recipe of the Internal Strength Pill 內壯丸藥方.
8. Recipe of the washing liquid 盪洗藥方.
19. On Yin-Yang Harmonization 陰陽配合論. 20. Prohibited Actions 行功禁忌.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Practices</td><td rowspan="2">The First
One Hundred Days

Objective: the qi fills the front body.</td><td>9. The First Month Procedures 初月行功訣.
10. The Second Month Procedures 二月行功訣.
11. The Third Month Procedures 三月行功訣.
12. The Fourth Month Procedures 四月行功訣.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Notes one the first stage:
13. Gentle and Rough Practice 行功輕重.
14. Surface and Deep Practice 用功淺深.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">The Second
One Hundred Days

Objective: the qi channels the ren meridian.</td><td>17. Procedures for the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Months 五六七八月功夫訣.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Notes on the second stage:
15. Division between the Internal and External Kung fu 兩筋分內外功夫.
16. The Shape of the Stone Bag 石袋式.</td></tr>
<tr><td>The Third</td><td>18. Procedures for the Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh and</td></tr>
</table>

[41] For the updated argument, see the *ZBHJ*, v. 1, p. 23. Previously, Zhou Weiliang considered the Xidi 西諦 manuscript as having been appreciated and sealed by the late-Ming and early-Qing artist Liang Qingbiao 梁清標 (1620–1691), which gives a good chance to date this manuscript to the Ming. See Zhou Weiliang, "Guojia tushuguan cang *Yijin jingyi* chaoben de jieshao yu pingshu" 國家圖書館藏易筋經義抄本的介紹與評述, Xi'an tiyu xueyuan xuebao 西安體育學院學報 25.6 (2008): 1–5, 53. However, Zhang Zhibin has pointed out that this edition cannot be earlier than the Qianlong period (1736–1795) because of its lipogrammatic characters. See Zhang Zhibin, "*Yijin jing* zuizao chuanben: Riben cang 'Shen jiao ben' kaoding", 1725. For a xerographic copy of the Xidi manuscript, see the *ZBHJ*, v. 1, pp. 239–312.

	One Hundred Days Objective: the *qi* channels the du meridian.	Twelfth Months 九十十一十二月行功訣.
	The Fourth One Hundred Days and Beyond Objective: achieve the external strength.	21. Externalization of the Internal Strength 內壯神勇. 22. Kung fu on the Hands 鍊手餘功. 23. Eight Pieces of Brocades of the External Strength 外壯神力八段錦. 24. Maintaining the Magic Strength 神勇餘功.

Table 3.1: Contents of the Shen Yutian Manuscript *Yijin jing*

The initial "Overview" begins with a narrative gesture that reinforces the legendary Buddhist origin of the text as told in the Li Jing preface:

> Pramiti translates the teachings of Buddha: There are two bases for the study of Buddha's Way. One is called purified emptiness, and the other proactive vigorousness. The former removes obstacles on the Way, and the latter prevents indolence. Entering the true Way will be in vain without understanding these two in the first place. What is purified emptiness? It is about laving the marrow. What is proactive vigorousness? It is about transforming the sinew […].[42]

Mediated by two vague philosophical terms, Bohdidharma's curious pairing of the *Xisui jing* and the *Yijin jing* in his mysterious iron case is explained in lucid terms, which also justifies the persistent obsession with "becoming Buddha" in the transmission legends: the two texts together open the way to the Buddha's realm. The bringing up of the *Xisui jing* is a brilliant move. Although its text has never been revealed since it redounded to Huike's personal collection, its "present absence" kills two birds with one stone. On the one hand, it makes up a great counterexample to foreground the uniqueness of the *Yijin jing*. On the other hand, it also works as a ready-to-use excuse to respond to any failed attempts at "becoming Buddha" after studying the *Yijin jing*: the failure cannot be attributed to a lack of efficacy of the *Yijin jing*; what is to blame is the lack of the other "basis," namely the *Xisui jing*. Following this, the text gives a concise definition of the mysterious verb-object construction "transforming the sinew": "transforming" is about change, and "sinew" is about strength. Echoing the Li Jing preface, it specifies that sinew is situated everywhere above the bones and the marrow, under skin and flesh, and throughout our arms and legs. Because of its ubiquity, transforming the sinew brings about the transformation of the body as a whole. After giving a series of examples detailing different kinds of sinew transformations and the corresponding bodily transformations, an eye-catching slogan is offered up: "My life is up to me" 我命在我. This is a famous Daoist dictum, which in its complete form reads "my life is up to me, not to heaven" 我命在我不在天, and it can be dated back to the fourth-century Daoist cannon *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 authored by Ge Hong 葛洪

[42] See the *ZBHJ*, v. 1, p. 49.

(284–364).[43] Originally, this dictum pertained to the magic powers of the external alchemy that might extend human's normal lifetime to immortality. But as the Daoist focus on alchemy transited from the external to the internal, the saying also shifted its focus to the efficacy of meditation, respiration and other bodily and spiritual forms of cultivation. The abrupt appearance of this Daoist dictum, as well as the actual exercises later taught in the book that considerately resemble the internal alchemy, strongly suggest a connection between the *Yijin jing* and Daoist culture, although strangely, the text presents itself as a Buddhist classic.[44] This, in turn, implies that the author of the text was a faithful follower of neither Daoist nor Buddhist doctrines, but someone who believed indiscriminately in the sacred power of both. By this token, the *Yijin jing* text was more likely a product of the late-imperial interest in syncretic occultism.[45] Section No. 2 "On Membranes" introduces paired counterpart to sinew. "Sinew is everywhere, and so is membrane. Membrane is softer than sinew, but harder than flesh." It is thus more difficult to strengthen membranes, but it has to be achieved in order to allow the flow of the *qi* to thoroughly fill the body and to give the sinews adequate support. Section No. 3, "On Internal Strength," proposes a fundamental dichotomy: internal strength versus external strength. The book clearly favors the former over the latter: "The internal strength is about the true Way, while the external strength is merely about courage and bravery. The true Way is sacred, while courage and bravery are worldly."[46] This dichotomy, repeatedly emphasized and detailed throughout the book, both reflects and further spreads the trend of an increasing emphasis on the interiority in the Chinese martial-arts theory and practice since the Ming dynasty.[47]

A number of methodological notes are introduced for the pursuit of the internal strength and ultimately the Buddha's realm. The most important method throughout is massage (No. 4), which is mostly practiced on the front body, kneading from the area of the liver toward the stomach. The massager must be young and gender matters according to the *yin-yang* harmonization: those with strong *yin* and weak *yang* should choose female masseuses, and those with the opposite physiological condition should choose male masseurs (No. 19). At the same time, one has to climb somewhere high in the morning in the beginning of every month in order to take in the *qi* that contains the essence of the sun, and in the evening in the middle of the month for the same thing bred by the moon (No. 5).[48] While massage works on the surface, medication works inside. An "internal strength pill" with a special recipe (No. 7) is taken before the massage every three days (No. 6), and a kind of "washing liquid" is used to wash the massaged places once or twice a day (No. 8). Sex is not encouraged. In the first one hundred days it is strictly prohibited, but once or twice is acceptable during the breaks between the rest courses (No. 20).

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[43] For an introduction to this slogan and its historical trajectory in the Daoist canons, see Cai Linbo 蔡林波, "Daojiao 'wo ming zai wo' mingti de shuangchong yiyun jiqi yanhua" 道家'我命在我'命題的雙重意蘊及其演化, *Guangxi shehui kexue* 廣西社會科學 5 (2003): 46–8.

[44] Tang Hao was the first who pointed out the possible Daoist origin of the *Yijin jing*. See Tang Hao, *Xingjianzhai suibi* 行健齋隨筆 (Shanghai: Zhongguo wushu xuehui, 1937), pp. 60–3.

[45] Meir Sharhar has convincingly elaborated this religious syncretism in the *Yijin jing* text. See Meir Sharhar, *The Shaolin Monastery*, 147.

[46] For a translation of this treatise, see ibid, 163–164.

[47] For a comprehensive study on this issue, and especially the role that the *Yijin jing* has played in this trend, see Pei-San Ng, *Strength From Within: the Chinese Internal Martial Arts as Discourse, Aesthetics, and Cultural Trope (1850–1940)* (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2016).

[48] For a translation of this treatise, see ibid, 164. Meir Sharhar uses this treatise to exemplify the Daoist elements in the *Yijin jing*.

Then the text begins step-by-step instructions. The first stage spreads from the first to the fourth month. After taking the "internal strength pill," one lies down and let a young masseuse/ masseur knead frontally below the heart and above the belly button. At the same time, one needs to meditate, and falling asleep would be the best. The massage continues for about two hours, and it repeats three times a day, in the morning, the noon and the evening respectively (No. 9). After an entire month's massage, the sinew around the stomach becomes as hard as wood and stone when *qi* is deployed. However, the membrane is still soft, because it is beneath the sinew and cannot be reached by the bare-hand massage. So in the second month, besides extending the hand massage areas, a wooden mallet is used to pestle the underlying softness, and by the end of the month, the membrane becomes as solid as the sinew (No. 10). Starting from the third month a new tool — a wooden club — is used to beat the strengthened sinew and membrane while the hand-massage and pestling are still applied to more soft areas (No. 11). After the first one hundred days, the *qi* is filled, the sinew becomes resilient, and the membrane can be felt from the skin. These changes mark the success of the first stage (No. 12). There are two general principles to follow in this stage: it is gentle in the beginning but gradually becomes more and more intensive (No. 13), and it starts with the surface of the body and gradually goes deeper and deeper inside it (No. 14).

The transition from the first stage to the second is the most critical in the whole practice. Since the *qi* has filled the body, it might easily flow to the four limbs, resulting in a one-sided external strength at the expense of losing the internal strength. Therefore, the practice after the first one hundred days has to be very careful. Old styles of massage, pestling and beating should be avoided, which all easily cause the unguided flow of the *qi* (No. 15). Instead, a cloth bag filled with small and smooth stones appears as the new tool (No. 16). From the fifth to the eighth month, the stone bag is used to tap the body, following the path from the heart to the head, and from the ribs to the shoulders, while massage, pestling and beating all become auxiliary. By the end of the second stage, the *qi* will fully channelize the *ren* meridian 任脈 (No. 17). The third stage, spreading from the ninth to the twelfth month, continues in a similar fashion, except that the tapping goes on the back side of the body. After another one hundred days, the *qi* will fully channelize the *du* meridian 督脈 (No. 18).

At this point, the major objective of the *Yijin jing*, namely internal strength, has been achieved. However, external strength, although secondarily rated, should not be left out, and that will be the objective of the fourth one hundred days (No. 21). In this stage, the stone bag tapping follows the path from the shoulders to the fingertips, which is accompanied by massage, liquid washing, and a novel form of practice: repeatedly inserting the hands into a container full of beans. Gradually, the *qi* is guided to the upper limbs, and strength grows within the bones. The arms, wrists, fingers and palms all become as hard as iron and stone when the *qi* is deployed. Here we read of the magic that is mentioned in both the novel *The Scholars* and the Haidai Youren preface: "parallel the fingers and pierce a cow's stomach, slant the palm and cut through a cow's neck, clench the fist and smash a tiger's head." But the author does not forget to remind the readers: "these are just minor uses and trivial techniques," suggesting that the truly worthwhile pursuit is still "becoming Buddha" (No. 22). A series of new practices are introduced here in order to fully transform internal strength into practical power, which are figuratively called "eight pieces of brocade of the external strength." (No. 23) After this, the magic strength, consisting of both the internal and the external, is finally achieved. The rest is about how to maintain this strength, and the recommended method is to often hit trees in the woods and huge rocks in the mountains (No. 24).

This then is a summary of the Shen Yutian manuscript of the *Yijin jing* text. Apparently, the early *Yijin jing* text has much to do with the Daoist internal alchemy tradition. While the self-beating method does sound somewhat idiosyncratic compared to more common Daoist practices, the fact that the lion's share of the labor goes to the young masseuses/masseurs and the beneficiary does not really do anything except lying down and meditating makes it more like a passive and enjoyable therapy, instead of an aggressive and self-defensing cultivation that is often associated with the martial arts practice. Although the promises pertaining to cows and tigers are indeed magical, they are still limited to the realm of physical power and far from the various sorcery-like efficacies we've read about in the *xiaoshuo* representations. I choose to focus on the Shen Yutian manuscript here simply because it is likely the earliest known copy, which gives us a natural reference point to examine the later variations, but it by no means can be treated as a standard or more "authentic" text, because as I have argued earlier, the *Yijin jing* is a process, not a static thing. In this process of becoming, consisting of many manuscript and printed editions, transformations flowed in several different directions, which in aggregate resulted in the messiness of the textual history of the *Yijin jing*.

First, new content is added into the existing framework. While textual variations are found in almost every later edition, two kinds are most noticeable for their high visibility among the early manuscripts and for the fact that they were stabilized in the printed editions. The first kind is a group of three titled treatises that extend internal strength to questions of sexual practice: "Procedures for the Lower Part" 下部行功法, "Recipe for the Lower Part Washing Liquid" 下部洗藥方, and "Actual Combat" 用戰 (or "The Trivial Technique" 餘技 in some editions). Together they instruct readers on an extra one-hundred-day stage in which one drives the flow of the *qi* to the male genital organs so that the internal strength is actualized in sexual intercourse, for which "actual combat" is a figurative expression. This group of treatises continues embodying the Daoist influence. The second kind is a new section with the title "Method of Transacting Strength" 賈力法 (or "Method of Transporting the Strength" 運力勢法 and "Method of Transacting and Transporting the Strength" 賈力運力勢法 in some editions) that is usually placed at the very end of the text. Different from the other practices that are mostly passive, this treatise details how one should actively move the body, following a series of complicated motions. The discordance of this treatise is no surprise at all, because it is entirely copied from the late-Ming book *Dijing jingwulue* 帝京景物略 and inserted here. This textual appropriation actually plays a surprisingly important role in the later transformations of the *Yijin jing* from text to image, which I will detail in the next section.

The second direction of the *Yijin jing*'s textual transformation is the bundling of it with new contents that are totally different from the existing framework. This also takes complicated forms. The most commonly observed case is the bundling of the *Yijin jing* and the *Xisui jing*, as is exemplified in the *Yijin Xisui erjing* 易筋洗髓二經 manuscript, the Shiyinzhai woodblock edition and the Laizhangshi woodblock edition.[49] In fact, the juxtaposition of the two texts in the later editions is so common that the *Xisui jing* could be treated as a standard supplement to the *Yijin jing*. The *Xisui jing* is apparently a later forgery in order to match the *Yijin jing*'s narrative about the *Marrow Lavation Classic* that went to Huike's secret transmission. To introduce its contents would entail a different chapter, but in short, it has its own myths of origin as told in a preface attributed to Huike, and its text proper takes the form of five-syllable rhymes that deliver semi-Buddhist and semi-Daoist preachments. The bundling also takes other forms. The *Gan*

[49] For a xerographic copy of the *Yijin xisui erjing* manuscript, see the *ZBHJ*, v. 1, pp. 313–407.

Fengchi Yijin jing manuscript is a juxtaposition of the *Yijin jing* and other kung fu instructions alleged to have been transmitted by a Gan Fengchi's disciple. In 1884 the Shanghai-based lithography workshop Saoye shanfang 掃葉山房 published the early nineteenth-century Zhu Wenlan 祝文瀾 manuscript (prefaced in 1815) of the *Yijin jing* together with another kung fu book *Fuqi tushuo* 服氣圖說, and this textual combination was presented to the marketplace by Shanghai Dasheng tushuju 大聲圖書局 in 1918 as one book entitled *Shaolin quanshu jingyi* 少林拳術精義 — the secret scroll we read about in the very beginning of the dissertation. The most tedious and miscellaneous extension of the *Yijin jing* is probably the *Zengyan Yijin Xisui Neigong tushuo* 增演易筋洗髓內功圖說 compiled by Zhou Shuguan 周述官 in 1895. He immoderately put together all the sources that he thought were relevant to the *Yijin jing*, and when his disciple published a lithographic edition in 1930, the product was a fat volume consisting of almost six hundred pages.[50]

The third direction of the *Yijin jing*'s transformation is not about the text, but about pictures. Illustrations were occasionally visible but far from common in the early manuscripts. However, they became a standard part of the printed *Yijin jing* starting from the 1823 Shiyinzhai woodblock edition, in which a group of pictures illustrating twelve different body motions showed up for the first time and occupied the spotlight. They were later famously known as "The Twelve Pictures of the *Yijin jing*" and redefined what kind of book the *Yijin jing* was. This shift of emphasis from text to image was clearly driven by the medial transition of the *Yijin jing* from manuscript to printed form. We continue the exploration in the next section.

From Text to Image

> Huo Yuanjia spoke first: "Mr. Cheng, I heard from Qin Heqin that what your specialty is the *Yijin jing* kung fu. I wonder is there any difference between your *Yijin jing* and the *Yijin jing* printed and sold by the commercial publishers of nowadays?" Cheng Youming said: "I learned mine from oral transmission. There are no big differences between the motions I learned and those in the book. But the real important things are all missing from the book, and its motions also have mistakes here and there. That being said, if someone does follow the book and practice perseveringly, he will still get quite some benefits."[51]

Earlier we have witnessed Cheng Youming's magic *Yijin jing* kung fu in Xiang Kairan's novel *Chivalric Heroes of Modern Times.* Like us, Huo Yuanjia is also amazed, and then he asks the question cited above. Cheng Youming answers the question directly, without asking for further clarification about the publisher or edition of "the *Yijin jing* in the marketplace," suggesting that he knows exactly what book Huo Yuanjia was talking about. This "common sense" shared by Huo Yuanjia and Cheng Youming reveals to us an important message: there was a certain edition of the *Yijin jing* that was widely circulated, so widely that it had become a common reference with no need of being specified. Which edition, then, were they talking about?

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[50] A xerographic copy of this book is available in the *ZBHJ*, v. 5, pp. 5–590. Also see the Shanxi chuban chuanmei jituan 山西出版傳媒集團's 2018 reproduction in three volumes for both the full xerography and the full transcription.

[51] Pingjiang buxiaosheng (Xiang Kairan), *Jindai xiayi yingxiong zhuan* (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2017), p. 478.

To be sure, this conversation is by nature fictional, and thus the real question is actually which edition was in the author Xiang Kairan's mind. Albeit the fact that multiple editions of the *Yijin jing* were circulating in the marketplace in Xiang Kairan's time, the answer to this question is almost certain: Xiang Kairan must be thinking of a pair of books edited by Wang Huaiqi 王懷琪 (1892–1963) and published by the Commercial Press in 1917. They were titled *Illustrated Exposition of the Twelve Motions of the Yijin jing* (*Yijin jing shi'er shi tushuo* 易筋經十二勢圖說, hereafter *Twelve Motions*) and *Illustrated Exposition of the Twenty-four Motions of the Yijin jing* (*Yijin jing niansi shi tushuo* 易筋經廿四勢圖說, hereafter *Twenty-four Motions*) respectively.[52] This is not arbitrary speculation, for three reasons. First, Wang Huaiqi's works were no doubt the most conspicuous manifestation of the *Yijin jing* in the Republican-era book market. This can be easily discerned from the repeated reprints of the books, the adaptation of the books' pictures on hanging posters, the highly visible advertisements in the newspapers, and the fact that Wang Huaiqi's *Yijin jing* were not simply consumed as material for silent reading; instead, they were integrated into some of the Shanghai elementary schools curricula and were frequently performed by the young students in public.[53] As a famous writer working closely with the Shanghai publishers, Xiang Kairan would surely know what edition was the best-seller. Second, Wang Huaiqi had a high profile as an advocate of reviving traditional Chinese sports and integrating them in the modern physical education, and so did Xiang Kairan.[54] Although I have not yet found records of their personal contact, the chance they knew each other in person is very high. Third, Wang Huaiqi's *Yijin jing* books also most accurately fit Cheng Youming's description that "the *Yijin jing* on the market" taught "motions" but missed "the real important things." Both Wang Huaiqi's books featured his own photographs, in a very modern and gymnastic way, illustrating the "twelve motions" and the "twenty-four motions," but did not have any text alluding to the *Yijin jing* contents that we have read in the previous section — the text that was likely the "real important things" in Cheng Youming's mind. Curiosity hence arises: where were the "motions" and the images from? Where did the text go? Did Wang Huaiqi impudently invent these "motions" and embezzle the famous *Yijin jing* title in order to sell his books? If that was the case, how come that Cheng Youming, who presumably mastered the authentic *Yijin jing*, endorsed the "motions" as generally correct and useful? To answer these questions, we need to suspend our look at the contents of Wang Huaiqi's books for now, go back to the historical editions of the *Yijin jing*, and observe an interesting trajectory through which image gradually eclipsed text as the *Yijin jing* transformed from manuscripts to the printed books.

The early *Yijin jing* manuscripts that have been discovered all had no images, except one suspicious candidate, the *Yijin Xisui erjing* 易筋洗髓二經 manuscript, that might have been

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[52] Wang Huaiqi, *Yijin jing niansi shi tushuo* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1917). Wang Huaiqi, *Yijin jing shi'er shi tushuo* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1917).

[53] The advertisements for these two books repeatedly appeared in the newspaper *Shishi xinbao* 時事新報 between 1918 and 1928. According to an ad posted on August 9, 1928, the *Twelve Gestures* being sold was its ninth reprint. Advertisements are also found for hanging posters called "Yijin jing shi'er shi guatu" 易筋經十二勢掛圖 and "Yijin jing niansi' shi guatu" 易筋經廿四勢掛圖 distributed by the Shanghai Dadong shuju 大東書局. News on the performances of Wang Huaiqi's "Twelve Gestures" and "Twenty-four Gestures" are found in the *Shun Pao* 申報, on April 20, 1918, page 10, and on November 4, 1928, page 13. They are also found in the *Shishi xinbao* on April 14, 1919, and on November 4, 1928 (the same as the *Shun Pao*).

[54] For an introduction to Wang Huaiqi's life history, see Ma Chenjun 麻晨俊 and Gao Liang 高亮, "Minguo gaochan tiyujia Wang Huaiqi sixiang zhi yanjiu" 民國高產體育家王懷琪思想之研究, conference proceedings of the 11th National Annual Meeting on the Science of Physical Education, Nanjing, China, November 1, 2019.

produced in the early eighteenth century.[55] It had fourteen images. Six of them were to illustrate the massage method, the shape of the wood mallet, the shape of the wood club, the shape of the stone bag, the method of tapping, and the method of alternating masseuses and masseurs, respectively. A group of eight images were intended for the treatise No. 23, "Eight Pieces of Brocade of External Strength," which briefly mentions eight motions with the hands:

> There are eight methods of practicing the external strength. They are: lift, raise, push, pull, seize, press, grab, and drop. Diligently practice them in sequence and repeat for two hours as a section, and do three sections a day, then gradually the kung fu will be achieved. […][56]

Although brief, this treatise has a special function in the *Yijin jing* text. As we have read in the Shen Yutian manuscript, the *Yijin jing* text teaches a practice that is mostly passive and static. In the first three hundred days during which period the fundamental "internal strength" is cultivated, the practitioner does not really need to do anything except mediating and being beaten, and thus no special "motion" is ever specified except lying down. It is only in the fourth one hundred days (the fifth one hundred days in most later editions, in which the fourth stage is about the practice of the genital organs), when the practitioner directs the already fulfilled flow of the *qi* from inside toward the hands for the sake of achieving the secondarily rated "external strength," that a group of eight active exercises are introduced. As the quoted text shows, the instruction is very brief and it lacks any details except enumerating eight verbs. This fact accounts for the necessity of the eight hand drawn images. Each foregrounding one particular hand-arm movement and with that specific verb included in the title, the images were explicitly trying to make up for the brevity and vagueness of the text. Here I avoid further interpretation of them because their influence on the later transmission of the *Yijin jing* is insignificant (in fact they might have been produced very late, see note 41). Nevertheless, they still give us a very important reminder as to reading images in the *Yijin jing*: images are useful for the "external strength" practice because of its requirements for active bodily movement, but not necessary for the "internal strength" practice that is mostly passive and static. This reminder turns out to be the key for us to discovering the mysterious origin of the famous "Pictures of the Twelve Motions of the *Yijin jing*" that consistently appeared in the printed *Yijin jing* editions and even redefined the nature of the book in the nineteenth century.

The 1823 Shiyinzhai woodblock edition is to our knowledge the earliest dated *Yijin jing* in the printed from.[57] It came with fifteen pages of pictures: one illustrated the shapes of the

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[55] See the *ZBHJ*, v. 1, pp. 313-407. Zhou Weiliang dated this manuscript in the *ZBHJ* according to the lipogrammatic characters, which is indeed the standard method of dating materials without explicit time markers. But to be cautious, I hope to humbly note there is a chance that this manuscript was in fact copied in the late Qing, and was probably modeled after the 1843 Zhuyou shanfang 竹友山房 woodblock edition. First, the contents of this manuscript seem too diverse and expanded to be an early one. Second, the images in it and in the 1843 edition are apparently isogenous, suggesting it might be that the former were drawn based on the latter, not the opposite, because otherwise why cannot we find similar images from any materials in the two centuries in between? However, both evidences are circumstantial, and I only note it here for future inquiries. In either case, though, the date of this manuscript won't affect the general argument of this section. Also note that the *Gan Fengchi Yijin jing* manuscript also had images, but those images were for the kung fu manual transmitted by Gan Fengchi's disciple, not for the *Yijin jing*. They just happened to be bound together.

[56] The *ZBHJ*, v. 1, p. 73.

[57] I say "the earliest dated" because the other early woodblock edition, the Laizhangshi edition, was not dated, so that practically it is impossible for us to tell which edition was the first. Tang Hao in 1958 declared that the

wood mallet and the wood club, two showed the *ren* and the *du* meridians respectively, and the remaining twelve visualized a series of body motions inviting the readers to imitate them. Each was accompanied by a verb-centered title and a brief expository narrative, and together they constituted a rather appealing and independent section of the book. (See Figure 2 below for four examples.) The same number of pictures appeared in another early woodblock edition, the Laizhangshi edition, with only minor differences in the details. After the last picture, the Laizhangshi edition also added a full page of text introducing the "Buddhist origin" of the illustrated kung fu and giving further instructions for practice, which even more explicitly presented the twelve pictures as a new section independent of the previous text. These two editions not only marked a significant medial transition for the *Yijin jing* from the manuscript to the printed form, but also began a century-long process in which the "Pictures of the Twelve Motions" eclipsed the text and become a new equivalent to the phrase "Yijin jing". The simultaneity of this change is of course not a coincidence. As Pei-San Ng has correctly argued, it had become a general trend since the Ming that images became an important part in the "nourishing life" literature (to which the *Yijin jing* could be considered to belong) in order to accommodate less educated readers, and "with the explosion of the printing industry, the visual appeal of images also made including *tu* [圖] a commercial decision in order to increase sales of books."[58]

However, it remains a mystery where these twelve pictures were from, and what they were doing in the book. The later editions commonly attributed these twelve illustrated motions to Bodhidharma, as if they were as old as the text, which is apparently wrong. Tang Hao in 1958 criticized this fallacy. Recognizing the extra narrative exposition in the Laizhangshi edition starting with "this kung fu originated from the Buddhist monks," he concluded that they were "a kind of gymnastics developed by nameless monks for the purpose of exercise."[59] By making this conclusion, Tang Hao was also suggesting that these twelve pictures were themselves an independent section that was somehow arbitrarily inserted into the *Yijin jing* because of their (alleged) common Buddhist origin. Meir Shahar amended this argument by pointing out the

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Shiyinzhai edition was the earliest, and this declaration has been accepted and repeated by the most renowned *Yijin jing* scholar Zhou Weiliang in many places. However, Tang Hao's conclusion was based on a big mistake. He claimed that the Shiyinzhai edition did not have image, and the Laizhangshi edition did, so the former must be earlier than the latter. However, the fact is both editions had the "twelve gestures" images. It is strange that Tang Hao made this mistake, because the Shiyinzhai edition was his personal collection (he referred to it as the "Fu Jinquan" 傅金銓 edition by the name of a postscript writer in this edition), and he even gave a photo of the cover page in his 1930 work *Shaolin wudang kao*. It was probably the case that he had lost this collection by 1958 when he wrote the new article, and he had to rely on his memory that somewhat went wrong. See Tang Hao, "Jiu Zhongguo tiyushi shang fuhui de damo" 舊中國體育史上附會的達摩, in *Zhongguo tiyushi cankao ziliao disiji* 中國體育史參考資料第四輯, ed. Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui yundong jishu weiyuanhui 中華人民共和國體育運動委員會運動技術委員會 (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1958), p. 30. And Tang Hao, *Shaolin Wudang kao* 少林武當考 (Shanghai: Wenming shuju, 1930), p. 17. Zhou Weiliang did not see the Shiyinzhai edition when he wrote his earlier articles, but he has updated the information about the images in the Shiyinzhai edition in the *ZBHJ*, which includes a full copy of this edition. But it seems he still thinks the Laizhangshi edition is later than the Shiyinzhai edition.

[58] See Pei-San Ng, *Strength From Within*, 29.

[59] See Tang Hao, "Jiu Zhongguo tiyushi shang fuhui de damo" 舊中國體育史上附會的達摩, in *Zhongguo tiyushi cankao ziliao disiji* 中國體育史參考資料第四輯, ed. Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui yundong jishu weiyuanhui 中華人民共和國體育運動委員會運動技術委員會 (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1958), p. 31.

connection between these pictures and the Daoist gymnastic tradition.[60] From a different perspective, Pei-san Ng takes these images as a vernacularization of the notion of "internal strength," which promises the practitioners the achievement of this strength in a more "reader-friendly" way.[61] While their theories are insightful in different ways, they all fail to notice the particular (yet indeed inconspicuous) relationship between the pictures and the existing *Yijin jing* text: the "twelve motions" pictures were neither a self-sufficient section independent of the *Yijin jing* (Tang Hao's theory), nor a visualization of the *Yijin jing* as a whole (Meir Sharhar and Pei-san Ng's implication). Similar to the eight hand-drawn images in the *Yijin Xisui erjing* manuscript, the "twelve motions" pictures were intended to illustrate the practice of the "external strength" which was seen as secondary in the *Yijin jing* system.

Revisiting the Shen Yutian manuscript, only treatises from No. 21 to No. 24 are about the cultivation of the "external strength," among which only treatises No. 22 "Kung fu on the Hands" and No. 23 "Eight Pieces of Brocades of the External Strength" contain specific instructions. The methods introduced in No. 22 are straightforward (applying washing liquid and rubbing hands into beans). By contrast, the so-called "Eight Pieces of Brocades" in No. 23 are apparently too vague, and hence the eight expository images as they appear in the *Yijin Xisui erjing* manuscript. Were the pictures of the "twelve motions" also intended to illustrate the "Eight Pieces of Brocade"? A statement like this might sound bold, but definitely not groundless. In fact, we can discern the connection between the two from two perspectives. First, to apply a surface reading, the "Eight Pieces of Brocade" as introduced in the text simply refers to a group of eight hand motions: lift, raise, push, pull, seize, press, grab, and drop. By contrast, the "twelve motions" pictures seem to motivate the whole body. However, if we read the titles of the pictures, it turns out that except for the last two, they each features a hand-related verb:

> First Motion: Wei-tuo Presents the Staff.
> Second Motion: Wei-tuo Presents the Staff
> Third Motion: Wei-tuo Presents the Staff
> Fourth Motion: Plucking a Star and Switching to the Dipper
> Fifth Motion: Extending Talons as a Hawk with Flapping Wings
> Sixth Motion: Dragging Backwards the Tails of the Nine Oxen
> Seventh Motion: Nine Demons Drawing a Dagger
> Eighth Motion: Three Dishes Dropping to the Ground
> Ninth Motion: The Azure Dragon Riches Out Its Claws
> Tenth Motion: The Crouching Tiger Pounces on Prey
> Eleventh Motion: To Bend the Bow
> Twelfth Motion: Wagging the Tail[62]

More interestingly, since the first three images together illustrate one motion and they share one verb, we in fact also get a group of eight verbs (as highlighted), which to a great extent overlap with the eight verbs in the text. Is this simply a coincidence? Couldn't be the case that when the pictures were drawn, they were intentionally trying to give a more stylish interpretation of the eight plain and charmless verbs?

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[60] See Meir Sharhar, *The Shaolin Monastery*, 160–1.
[61] See Pei-San Ng, *Strength From Within*, 40.
[62] Here I borrow the translation done by Pei-San Ng, with minor adjustments. See Pei-San Ng, *Strength From Within*, 131–4.

Second, we can also approach this problem with a more contextualized reading, and then offer a few words on the phrase *baduan jin*, or "eight lengths of brocade" become necessary. As strange as the phrase looks, *baduan jin* is actually a familiar term to those who might be attracted by the *Yijin jing*, which features a syncretic mixture of both Buddhist and Daoist elements. The *baduan jin* is a Daoist term that can be dated back to *Biographies of the Deities and Immortals* 神仙傳, another work of the Daoist Ge Hong, whose famous quotation "my life is up to me" has appeared in the beginning of the *Yijin jing* text. In Ge Hong's book the phrase "*baduan jin*" clearly refers to some form of physical and respiratory cultivation, although the details are not provided.[63] By the Song dynasty, precise documentation of the *baduan jin* as a systematic Daoist internal alchemy practice had appeared in many sources. In the late-imperial period the *baduan jin* remains a popular practice in the internal alchemy repertoire and there had emerged many variations, such as the division between "sitting style" and "standing style," and the extension of the "eight pieces" to "twelve pieces" and "sixteen pieces."[64] In other words, the *baduan jin* was also a process instead of a static thing, and it was open to multiple ways of appropriations and manipulations. This explains the seeming mismatch between the *baduan jin* and the eight hand motions in the *Yijin jing* text: since the writer was familiar with the Daoist exercises in general and Ge Hong's works in particular, it was not surprising at all that he chose to appropriate the famous *baduan jin* label to title the eight hand motions that he wanted to promote. Indeed, he had thoughtfully added a modifier "of external strength" to distinguish his *baduan jin* and the common versions derived from the "internal alchemy" tradition. However, this thoughtful distinction would not necessarily be discerned by one who was planning to illustrate the text, and he would naturally consult the existing *baduan jin* versions to draw the pictures. In fact, the eight images in the *Yijin Xisui erjing* manuscript greatly resemble the sitting style of the *baduan jin*, and the "Pictures of the Twelve Motions" have several apparent overlaps with the standing style of the *baduan jin*.

To wrap up these two approaches to the problem: the "Pictures of the Twelve Motions" have an apparent emphasis on the upper limbs and especially the hands, which corresponds with the text of treatise No. 22. Furthermore, the twelve pictures have many in common with the long circulated *baduan jin* motions, which again directly connects to the (misused) title of treatise No. 22. With these clues outlined, the argument that the twelve pictures were in fact created to illustrate the text in treatise No. 22 does not seem bold anymore. However, before we draw an absolute conclusion, we might want to stay patient and also examine the treatise just prior to the pictures.

Different from the Shen Yutian manuscript, most early manuscripts of the *Yijin jing* featured a new last treatise titled "Method of Transacting the Strength" 賈力法, and it was stabilized in the printed editions under slightly different titles. This long treatise tediously gave instructions on how one should motivate the limbs and complete a series of complicated motions, and for a real practitioner this was helpful because it would make up for the brevity and lack of detail of the "eight pieces of brocade". But for a reader who was sensitive to literary nuances, this treatise was impudently discordant with the rest of the *Yijin jing* in all respects: the narrative style, the emphasis on details, the abrupt appearance of novel elements, the shift from passive to

[63] Ge Qian 葛洪, "Luanba" 欒巴, in *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳, 10 *juan*, in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, j. 5, pp. 10b–11b.
[64] For a brief history of the *baduan jin*, see Bai Yanrong 白彥榮 and Li Jinlong 李金龍, "Baduan jin lishi yuanliu de yanjiu" 八段錦歷史源流的研究, *Minzu chuantong tiyu* 民族傳統體育 4.36 (2014): 208–11. This article has missed the Ge Hong reference, which is introduced in Yang Hongguang 楊紅光, *Baduan jin yuanliu jiqi wenhua neihan tanxi* 八段錦源流及其文化內涵探析 (MA thesis, Zhengzhou University, 2011), p. 13.

active motions, and even the length. Needless to say, this treatise did not belong to the original *Yijin jing*. The renowned late-Qing scholar Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821–1907) made a note on some "method of transacting the strength" as recorded in the late-Ming book *Dijing jingwu lue* 帝京景物略 and suspected "today's *Yijin jing* might have originated from this kind of witchcraft 今所傳易筋經豈即出於此邪?"[65] Yu Yue apparently did not bother to verify his speculation (probably because those things were worthless "witchcraft" for him), otherwise he would have immediately noticed the discordance of the "transacting the strength" treatise and have avoided using it to date the historical origin of the *Yijin jing* as a whole. However, his intuition was absolutely correct in that comparing the two books it turns out that the last treatise in the *Yijin jing* was literally and entirely copied from the *Dijing jingwu lue*.[66] The myth of the dissonance of this treatise is therefore solved: at some point, someone became dissatisfied with the *Yijin jing* text for its overall emphasis on the internal strength and overlook of the external strength, on which there were only two brief treatises. This person then took the liberty and transcribed the paragraph on "the method of transacting the strength" that he saw in the *Dijing jingwu lue* (or a different source) at the end of his manuscript, probably because he found it a useful exercise to develop the "external strength" and thus it deserved to be kept for further reference. The intentional or unintentional alteration was somehow kept in many later manuscripts, and was finally stabilized in the printed form.

This "fake" treatise, however, turns out to have even more intimate connections with the "Pictures of the Twelve Motions," though the connections are indeed obscured by the tedious and opaque text. To exemplify this point, I translate four sentences (coded from A to D) from "Methods of Transacting the Strength" and compare them with four pictures (coded from a to d in Figure 3.2):

A. Stand still and keep the body straight from the head to the heels, with no piece of bone relaxed. Fold the arms, and slightly bend the palms and the fingers. Keep a gap of several inches between the two feet.
B. Lower the left hand to reach the left ankle, and create a strong tension between the hand and the ankle. Use the right hand to work on a plant and make it move toward the left. [To do so,] the head looks back and the hand drags.
C. Extend the arms as if they were lifting something heavy that was falling down. Try to raise the "thing", and pull the arms inward the body when exhausted.
D. Lie down and fold the arms like when one is standing. Then exert the spine and try to sit up.[67]

[65] Yu Yue 俞樾, *Chaxiangshi congchao* 茶香室叢鈔, 102 *juan*. (n.p.: Chunzaitang, 1899), *Sanchao* 三鈔, j. 6, p. 9a–b.
[66] For the original text, see Liu Dong 劉侗 and Yu Yizheng 于奕正, *Dijing jingwu lue* 帝京景物略, 8 *juan*. (1635 edition), j. 2, p. 79a–81a.
[67] Ibid. I use the text in the *Dijing jingwu lue* instead of the Shiyinzhai edition of the *Yijin jing*, because the latter is full of editorial mistakes and is hard to make sense, as will be detailed below.

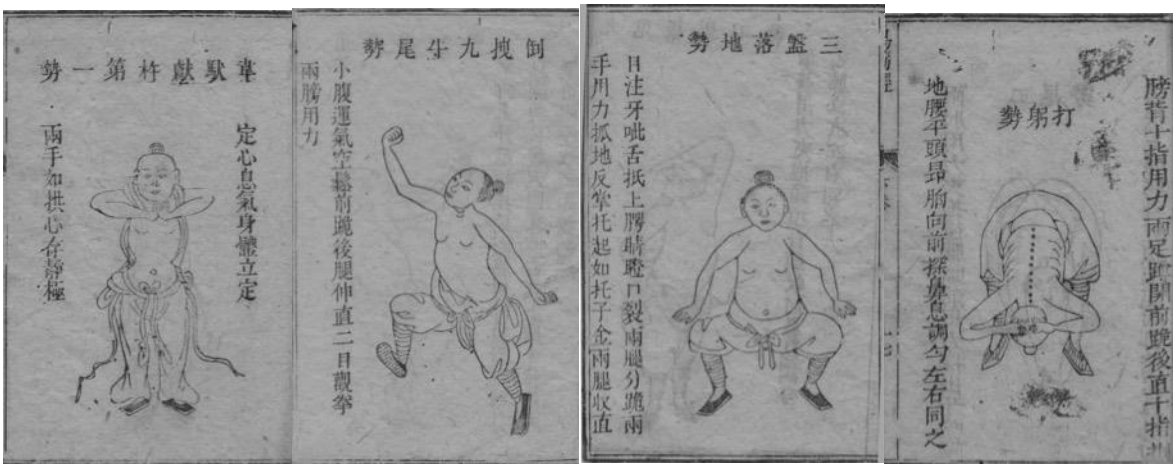

Figure 3.2: Selected "Pictures of the Twelve Motions". The *Yijin jing*, Shiyingzhai edition.
From left to right: **a.** "Wei-tuo Presents the Staff, the First". **b.** "Dragging Backwards the Tails of the Nine Oxen". **c.** "Three Dishes Dropping to the Ground". **d.** "To Bend the Bow".

In these four cases, the accordance between the text (ABCD) and the pictures (abcd) is more than obvious and it cannot be a coincidence.[68] It seems clear that whoever drew these pictures was not making groundless inventions without being aware of the text. Instead, it was very likely that the drawer was explicitly illustrating the text. To be sure, from the existing materials it is very hard to establish a neat and perfect one-to-one correspondence between the motions described in the text and the twelve pictures, and three reasons are accounting for the difficulty. First, the text itself is rather vague and some of the alleged motions are hard to be comprehended. In fact I chose the four fragments (ABCD) as examples partly because they are more easily translated. Second, there is a fundamental incompatibility between text and image as two distinct kinds of media: they carry different temporalities. The text always describes a dynamic motion consisting of a series of gestures that occupies a certain time period. But when it comes to an image, it only shows a static moment, which makes it hard to tell what happens before and after. Therefore, I also tried to choose pictures that are easier for us to guess the whole motion from one static gesture. But if we ignore this fact and simply hunt for correspondence, then all the gestures in the twelve pictures can find a match (or at least a rough match) from some fragment in the text. Third, and most importantly, the pictures have variations in different editions (for example, the orders are different in the Shiyinzhai and the Laizhangshi editions, not to mention the details), suggesting they also might have experienced complicated transitions, in which process the matching relationship could have been destructed.

So far we have detected inconspicuous but definite correspondences between "Pictures of the Twelve Motions of the *Yijin jing*" and text of treatises No. 21 and No. 22. I therefore argue that the seemingly abrupt appearance of the twelve pictures was neither accidental nor pointless. They had a particular purpose, which was to facilitate the practice of the "external strength" in general and the comprehension of the vague and tedious text of "Methods of Transacting the Strength" in particular, which itself was a newly added treatise in order to expand the brief "eight pieces of brocade". However, it seems that the commercial publishers did not really understand

[68] To be sure, imperfect details exist. For example, in the B-b case the head does not look back in the image. In the D-d case the image could have perfectly illustrated the text, if the side note on the image did not say that the man should be standing and bowing instead of sitting up. However, it is more likely the case that whoever noted the image had misread it.

the function of these images. The Laizhangshi editor added a separate narrative after the pictures to instruct the practice, which clearly suggested his ignorance of the existing text-image correspondences. As to the Shiyinzhai edition, the proof is the messy text of the "Methods of Transacting the Strength." Comparing it with the text in the *Dijing jingwu lue*, typos and errors are so profuse that it is hardly comprehensible, not to mention creating images based on it. For example, the character *gong* 肱 (arm) becomes *gu* 股 (leg) in many places, which makes it impossible to match the text to the images with the man's arms foregrounded. This suggests images (not necessarily twelve and not necessarily in the current shape) were already created and circulated before the printed editions, probably in some undiscovered manuscripts. To use one static image to illustrate a series of motions was apparently not ideal, but this compromise seemed worthwhile since the text was indeed too vague. This also explains why the images were designated as *shi* 勢 (tendency) instead of *shi* 式 (pose), because the illustrator was probably trying to remind the readers that an picture connoted a dynamic movement instead of a static pose. However, this thoughtful consideration did not necessarily get passed along in the later transmissions. Like the text, the pictures too had experienced appropriations and manipulations in transmission, which were clearly influenced by the *baduan jin* exercises that had a much older origin and higher popularity. Ultimately, a group of twelve pictures came into the current shape, and their connections with the text had become obscure and inconspicuous over the course of transmission. Now, in the Shiyinzhai and the Laizhangshi printed editions, they had realized full independence, with their own titles, side notes, and a collective identity as "Pictures of the Twelve Motions."

This became a vital moment in the historical transformation of the *Yijin jing* from text to image. Apparently, the pictures were more eye-catching, appealing and practical for the general readers (the printed editions were now on the market as a commodities) than the text, and it was only natural that the pictures soon were isolated from the text and became a new iconic equivalent to the *Yijin jing*. Thirty-five years later (1858), a Suzhou local named Pan Wei 潘霨 (style name Weiru 偉如) published a woodblock collection of miscellaneous exercise manuals titled *Essential Techniques of Guarding Life* (*Weisheng yaoshu* 衛生要術, hereafter *Essential Techniques*). Expository texts were present here and there, but the book in general featured abundant images illustrating body motions. As Pan Wei noted in the preface, the contents came from Xu Mingfeng's 徐鳴峰 1771 book *Shoushi chuanzhen* 壽世傳真 (*Authentic Transmissions on Longevity*) and "various medical books" with his own emendations. The Shiyinzhai edition of the *Yijin jing* was among these "medical books", because these "essential techniques" included a section of "Twelve Pictures of the *Yijin jing*," which were obviously modeled after the pictures in the Shiyinzhai edition, except that Pan Wei had rephrased the side notes in a more elegant way.[69] All the other contents of the Shiyinzhai edition, however, were completely missing after Pan Wei's emendation. Clearly, for Pan Wei the pictures were the quintessence of the *Yijin jing*, and they alone were sufficient to claim the name of the book. This practice of isolating the images from their context had a great influence on the later perception of the *Yijin jing* thanks to

[69] Tang Hao has traced out the sources based on which the *Essential Techniques* was compiled. See Tang Hao, "Songshan Shaolin chuanxi de he huiji de ticao", 26–33. He says that these *Yijin jing* images were taken from the Laizhangshi edition, and this conclusion has been widely accepted and repeated. However, as noted earlier, Tang Hao somehow missed the images in the Shiyinzhai edition. If he could compare the Shiyinzhai edition, the Laizhangshi edition and *Essential Techniques*, he would have noticed that *Essential Techniques* was clearly modeling after the Shiyinzhai edition.

the wide circulation of *Essential Techniques*, which itself had at least four different editions.[70] In 1881, the then magistrate of the Chengdu prefecture Wang Zuyuan 王祖源 (1822–1886) reproduced this book with a new title *Illustrated Exposition of the Internal Strength* (*Neigong Tushuo* 內功圖說) in his personal woodblock series *Tianrang ge congshu* 天壤閣叢書.[71] Only four years later (1885) this new title again received a new woodblock printing in Chongqing, which was arranged by Wang's friend Tang Chuanyou 唐傳猷 (1824–1900) in order to supply his acquaintances who had been looking after the book.[72] However, Pan Wei might not be the first who used the twelve pictures to represent the *Yijin jing*. In the preface to *Internal Strength*, Wang Zuyuan recollected his childhood experience of learning the *Yijin jing* kung fu with some Zhou Jiafu 周嘉福 in Jiangxi in 1834. Although he did not specify what that kung fu was like, it should be based on the motions illustrated in the twelve pictures rather than the massage and beating techniques introduced in the text, otherwise he should have pointed out that the *Yijin jing* in the *Essential Techniques* (now with his nomenclature the *Internal Strength*) was different from what he had learned as a child.[73] If this is true, then the practice of following the twelve pictures and ignoring the *Yijin jing* text should have happened much earlier than Pan Wei's book, which suggests that Pan Wei's emendation was also not an invention, but a reflection of a common practice that had been going on since at least 1834. After roughly a century's circulation of the twelve images, they finally found their modern showcase in Wang Huaiqi's 1917 book *Twelve Motions*. Although the book mostly consisted of Wang Huaiqi's athletic photographs illustrating his modernization of the twelve motions in the form of gymnastics, the old line-graphs from the Shiyinzhai-*Essential Techniques* lineage and the extra instructional paragraph from the Laizhangshi edition were faithfully placed before his photos, probably as evidence to attest to the antiquity and authenticity of the art that he was promoting. Wang Huaiqi humbly noted: "[…] The 'Twelve Pictures of the *Yijin jing*' was transmitted by Bodhidharma. […] I do not dare to change a single word, for fear that might obstruct the authenticity of the transmission."[74] What he did not know, though, is the fact that such an "authenticity" had never existed. Bodhidharma had never transmitted the *Yijin jing*, and even if he did, its quintessence was about the internal strength, not the shabby twelve pictures that at best helped one obtain some trivial external strength.

Then, how about the *Twenty-four Motions*? What is the relationship between it and the *Twelve Motions*? Did Wang Huaiqi make up it simply to double the number? As a matter of fact, the "twenty-four motions" also had its historical origin, and this history is even more telling about the fickle nature of the *Yijin jing*. The story began in 1841, when a literatus Wang Shouming 王壽名 decided to publicize a kind of "external alchemy" exercise manual that he had obtained from someone named Tanfu 坦夫 (also named Zixin 自新), because his health had benefited a lot from following these practices. We do not know anything else about this Wang Shouming, but he was definitely a great painter. He painted a series of twenty-two pictures with colors, each featuring a muscular man posing a particular gesture. These pictures were divided

[70] For the copies of these editions and their short introductions, see the *ZBHJ*, v. 4, pp. 5–332.
[71] For an Introduction to Wang Zuyuan's biography and his Tianrang ge project, see Wang Hengzhu 王恆柱, "Wang Zuyuan yu Tianrang ge congshu" 王祖源與天壤閣叢書, *Shandong tushuguan jikan* 山東圖書館季刊 1 (1995): 50–3.
[72] For copies of these two editions of the *Neigong tushuo*, see the *ZBHJ*, v. 4, pp. 333-520. For Tang Chuanyou's preface explaining the reason for his new woodblock, see pp. 433–6.
[73] For Wang Zuyuan's preface, see ibid, pp. 337–9.
[74] Wang Huaiqi, *Yijin jing shi'er shi tushuo* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1917), p. 2.

into three sections (twelve, five and five poses in each section), and they were together titled *Pictures of Nursing Pneuma and Practicing External Alchemy* (調氣煉外丹圖, hereafter *External Alchemy*). These pictures had nothing to do with the *Yijin jing* pictures, except that a certain Xiangqianshi 香蒨氏 in the preface offered praise that they were so great that "books like the *Yijin jing* and the *Danyuanzi* 丹元子 could be put in reserve and not consulted anymore."[75] However, probably because they looked similar in that they both used pictures to instruct body practices, The *Yijin jing* pictures and the *External Alchemy* pictures were often confused with one another by the end of the century. In a 1884 manuscript of the *External Alchemy*, the transcriber Fang Xiaohou 方孝侯 let on that he had previously seen the woodblock *Yijin jing* images carved by one Mr. Tan Zhenhan 譚珍涵. In 1884, he saw a manuscript copy of the *External Alchemy* from a friend in Guangdong. Thinking that these pictures were richer than the *Yijin jing*, he had his wife trace the pictures and made his own manuscript copy.[76] From this narrative we know that for this Fang Xiaohou the *Yijin jing* and the *External Alchemy Pictures* were still two different things, but they belonged to the same category with the same function, and it did not seem he would mind replacing the *Yijin jing* with the *External Alchemy* pictures for the latter's richer contents. By the end of the century, it had become common for the publishers to sell the *External Alchemy* in the name of the *Yijin jing*, probably because the latter had a higher profile and a longer history. For example, in an 1899 lithographic book, the contents were exactly the same as the *External Alchemy*, but the title was presented as the *Yijin jing*. The publisher had thoughtfully added three (apparently fake) prefaces, dated 1669, 1807 and 1850 respectively, in order to establish an old and successive transmission history for the book. He probably sensed that the book might be challenged for its divergence from the regular *Yijin jing*, so the prefaces were basically trying to establish the current volume as a "xiao (little) *Yijin jing*" 小易筋經, which carried Bodhidharma's true transmission while the common *Yijin jing* was full of forgeries.[77] By contrast to this publisher's thoughtful construction of a new transmission history, other publishers went straightforwardly taking the *Yijin jing* title to sell the *External Alchemy*. For example, in 1911 a collector Liang Shixian 梁士賢 (ca. 1877–1931) published a woodblock edition of the twenty-two *External Alchemy* pictures under the title *Quantu Yijin jing* 全圖易筋經 (*Complete Pictures of the Yijin jing*), and in the preface he did not hesitate to attribute these pictures to Bodhidharma.[78] A little bit earlier than this, the Shanghai based lithography press Tongwen shuju 同文書局 (operating between 1882–1908) also launched an lithographic edition edited by Liang Shichang 梁世昌 with the title *Yijin jing waijing tushuo* 易筋經外經圖說.[79] Interestingly, this edition only selected the first twelve pictures in the *External Alchemy*, probably because the number "twelve" had been famously associated with the *Yijin*

[75] The pictures are now in the collection of Museum of Medical History of China. Partial reprints with a short introduction are included in *Zhongguo chuantong jianshen yangsheng tushuo* 中國傳統健身養生圖說, ed. Li Jingwei 李經緯 et al. (Beijing: Zhongguo zhongyiyao chubanshe, 2012), pp. 23–34. This book introduces that the painter's name is Wang Shou. However, according to the signature after the postscript it is clearly Wang Shouming. The Xiangqianshi preface is not included in this reprint.

[76] For a copy of this manuscript, see the *ZBHJ*, v. 6, pp. 201–38. For Fang's preface, see pp. 205–6.

[77] For a copy of this book, see the *ZBHJ*, v. 6, pp. 315–56. Somehow the editors of the *ZBHJ* introduce the book as a manuscript, but it is apparently a product of lithography.

[78] For a copy of this book, see the *ZBHJ*, v. 6, pp. 387–470.

[79] For the information of the Tongwen shuju, see Yang Liying 楊麗瑩, *Qingmo Minchu de shiyinshu yu shiyinben yanjiu: yi Shanghai diqu wei zhongxin* 清末民初的石印術與石印本研究：以上海地區為中心 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2018), p. 191.

jing. As some form of supplement, a group of eight *Baduan jin* pictures were added after.[80] At some point Wang Huaiqi found a copy of this book from a used-book booth, and in 1915 he published his modernized *Baduan jin* motions based on the *Baduan jin* pictures appended to this book, which witnessed the beginning of Wang Huaiqi's enterprise of modernizing the traditional exercises, including the *Yijin jing*, in the form of gymnastics.[81] The selected twelve *External Alchemy* pictures had apparently also contributed to Wang Huaiqi's 1917 *Twenty-four Motions*, though he must have also consulted another source, because his version not only contained the complete twenty-two pictures, but also added two extra pictures in the end, making the total number twenty-four. Wang Huaiqi did not reveal too much information about this source, but according to his short introductory note, it was called "Yijin jing Baduan jin" 易筋經八段錦. He then named his version "twenty-four motions of the *Yijin jing*" in order to distinguish it from the regular *Baduan jin* that he had promoted in 1915.

Finally, we are assured that the most popular *Yijin jing* editions in the Republican era, Wang Huaiqi's *Twelve Motions* and *Twenty-four Motions*, both had their historical origins. This explains why Xiang Kairan (in the voice of the fictional Cheng Youming) acknowledged that the motions taught in these books were not too different from the authentic transmission. As an advocate of modernizing the traditional "national treasures," he seemed to be supportive of Wang Huaiqi's enterprise, and hence endorsed that "if someone does follow the book and practice perseveringly, he will still get quite some benefits." But the endorsement was apparently expressed in a tone of regret and compromise, because "the real important things are all missing" from the commercial editions. What are those "important things" that are "missing"? Assuming that Xiang Kairan as a traditional martial arts specialist did know the historical editions of the *Yijin jing*, he was probably talking about the wrongful shift from text to image, and as a result, the shift of focus from the "internal strength" to the "external strength," since the beginning of the commercial publication of the *Yijin jing* in the early nineteenth century. However, from a different perspective, this assumption does not need to be true. Regardless how much Xiang Kairan knew about the "authentic" *Yijin jing*, his comment betrays a common suspicion about the secret scrolls in an age of print: some "real important things" must have gone missing in the transition from the esoteric transmission (either oral or in the form of manuscript) to commercial printing. Paradoxically, this suspicion would not harm the authenticity of this secret scroll. Quite the contrary, it provides a way out that never fails to deliver whenever authenticity is at stake: it is not because the secrecy itself is not authentic; it is because this particular print does not do its job well, and the authentic transmission still rests somewhere awaiting one that deserves.

Although, at least in this particular case, we have made it clear that there was never such thing called the "authentic" *Yijin jing*. The *Twenty-four Motions* was a result of the *External Alchemy* "wrongfully" appropriating the name of the *Yijin jing*, and the *Twelve Motions* came from a long process of the subsidiary pictures "wrongfully" replacing the text. Furthermore, the major text that the pictures intended to illustrate, namely the treatise "Method of Transacting the Strength," was itself "wrongfully" grafted from the *Dijing jingwu lue*. And even if this treatise was not a forgery, it only transmitted a very minor and less important part of the *Yijin jing* kung fu, namely the "external strength," which was not supposed to be "wrongfully" emphasized. Then one shifts from the "external strength" to the "internal strength," and he is told by the prefaces that he should avoid "wrongfully" pursuit the strength because what Bodhidharma

[80] For a copy of this book, see the *ZBHJ*, v. 6, pp. 471–96.

[81] See Zhang Shunjiao 章舜嬌 and Lin Youbiao 林友標, "Minguo Wang Huaiqi baduan jin tanwei" 民國王懷琪八段錦探微, *Zhonghua wushu yanjiu* 中華武術研究 6.3 (2017): 85–8.

really wanted him to do was to "become Buddha." Finally, speaking of Bodhidharma, of course we already knew this origin is just a "wrongfully" fabricated myth. I do not hope the repeated word "wrongfully" would sound like a moral judgment. In fact, I share Xiang Kairan's standpoint: true or fake, it is good exercise.

Appendix: The Historical *Yijin jing* Editions Mentioned in the Chapter

Edition	Dating	Li Jing Preface	Niu Gao Preface	Haidai Youren Preface	Zining Daoren Postscript	Text	Pictures
Shen Yutian manuscript 沈玉田本易筋經	Mid- or late 17th century	O	O	O (dated 1661)	X	Text proper only (no sexually related part and the "transacting strength" treatise).	X
The Sichuan University manuscript 四川大學藏本易筋經義	Early 18th century	O	O	O (dated 1661)	O (dated 1669)	Text proper + miscellaneous treaties.	X
Wu Yong's postscript manuscript 吳鏞跋本易筋經義	Early 18th century	X	O	X	O (transcribed in 1730)	Text proper + Wu Yong's postscript.	X
Yijin Xisui erjing manuscript 易筋洗髓二經抄本	Early 18th century (contestable)	O	O	O	O	Text proper + the *Xisui jing.*	8 hand drawn illustrations for the "Eight Pieces of Brocades of the External Strength" + 6 illustrations for other treatises.
Xidi manuscript 西諦本易筋經義	No earlier than 1736	O	O	X	O	Text proper.	X
Gan Fengchi Yijin jing manuscript 甘鳳池易筋經	After the early 18th century	X	X	X	X	Text proper + Gan Fengchi transmitted kung fu manual.	Illustrations for the Gan Fengchi kung fu manual.
The *Yijin jing* commented by Ling Tingkan 凌廷堪過目易筋經	Late 18th and early 19th century	O	O	X	X	Text proper + the *Xisui jing.*	X
The *Yijin jingyi* commented by	Late 18th and early 19th	O	O	X	O	Text proper.	X

Zhou Zhongfu 周中孚過目易筋經義	century						
Zhu Wenlan manuscript 祝文瀾輯本易筋經義	Early 19th century	O	O	X	O (dated 1624, by Zining Daoren Zongheng 宗衡)	Text Proper + some extra treaties.	X
Shiyinzhai woodblock edition 市隱齋本易筋經洗髓經	1823	O	O	O (dated 1206)	O (not dated)	Text proper + the *Xisui jing.*	"Twelve Pictures of the *Yijin jing*"
Laizhangshi woodblock edition 來章氏輯本易筋經洗髓經	Roughly the Daoguang period (1821-1850)	O	O	X	X	Text proper + the *Xisui jing.*	"Twelve Pictures of the *Yijin jing*"
Wang Shouming *Pictures of Nursing Pneuma and Practicing External Alchemy* paintings 王壽名調氣煉外丹圖	1841	X	X	X	X	X	22 "External Alchemy" pictures.
Pan Wei *Essential Techniques of Life Guarding* woodblock editions 潘霨衛生要術	1858	X	X	X	X	X	"Twelve Pictures of the *Yijin jing*," bound with many other miscellaneous pictures.
Huitu Yijin jing chuanben manuscript 繪圖易筋經傳本	Transcribed in 1875.	O	O	O (dated 1661)	O	Text proper + many extra treaties.	33 miscellaneous hand-drawn pictures
Wang Zuyuan/Tang Chuanyou *Illustrated Exposition of the Internal Strength* woodblock editions 王祖源/唐傳猷內功圖說	1881/1885	X	X	X	X	Wang Zuyuan/Tang Chuanyou prefaces	"Twelve Pictures of the *Yijin jing*", bound with many other miscellaneous pictures.

Saoye shanfang woodblock edition 掃葉山房刻本易筋經義服氣圖說	1884	O	O	X	O (dated 1624, by Zining Daoren Zongheng)	Zhu Wenlan edition + the *Fuqi tushuo*	X
Fang Xiaohou *The Classic of Pictures of Nursing Pneuma and Practicing External Alchemy* manuscript 方孝侯調氣煉外丹圖經抄本	1884	X	X	X	X	X	22 “External Alchemy” pictures.
Zhou Shuguan *Zengyan Yijin Xisui Neigong tushuo* 周述官增演易筋洗髓內功圖說	Manuscript compiled in 1895, and lithography published in 1930.	O	O	X	X	Text proper + miscellaneous contents.	Abundant and miscellaneous pictures
Lu Shanyi (Little) *Yijin jing* lithographic edition 陸善貽(小)易筋經石印本	1899	X	X	X	O	X	22 “External Alchemy” pictures.
Liang Shixian Yijin jing waijing tushuo lithographic edition 梁世昌易筋經外經圖說	Between 1882 and 1908	X	X	X	X	X	12 “External Alchemy” pictures + *Baduan jin* pictures.
Liang Shixian *Complete Pictures of the Yijin jing* woodblock edition 梁士賢全圖易筋經刻本	1911	X	X	X	X	X	22 “External Alchemy” pictures + *Baduan jin* pictures.
Wang Huaiqi *Illustrated Exposition of the Twenty-four Motions of the Yijin jing*	September 1917, by the Commercial Press	X	X	X	X	X	22 “External Alchemy” pictures + 2 extra pictures.

王懷琪易筋經廿四勢圖說							
Wang Huaiqi *Illustrated Exposition of the Twelve Motions of the Yijin jing* 王懷琪易筋經十二勢圖說	October 1917, by the Commercial Press	X	X	X	X	X	"Twelve Pictures of the *Yijin jing*"
Shaolin quanshu jingyi lithography edition 少林拳術精義 published by Shanghai Dasheng tushuju 大聲圖書局	1918	O	O	X	O (dated 1624, by Zining Daoren Zongheng)	The Zhu Wenlan edition + the *Fuqi tushuo*	The *Fuqi tushuo* 64 pictures
Zhenben Yijin jing movable-type edition 真本易筋經 (中華圖書集成公司)	1919	O	O	O (dated 1661)	X	Text proper + miscellaneous extra treaties + the *Xisui jing*	"Twelve Pictures of the *Yijin jing*"

Chapter 4: Rivers and Lakes

> It is further told that there was once a traveler called Lao Can. […] He was a Jiangnan man. By the time he was thirty he had studied quite a lot of prose and poetry, but because he was not good at writing eight-legged essays, he had taken no degrees and therefore nobody wanted him as a tutor. He was too old to learn a business and therefore did not attempt it. His father had been an official of the third or fourth rank but was too stubbornly honest to make money for himself. […] Since Lao Can had nothing from his family and no definite occupation, he began to see cold and hunger staring him in the face. Just when he was at his wits' end, Heaven took pity on him, for along came a Taoist priest, shaking a string of bells, who said that he had been taught by a wonderful healer and could treat a hundred diseases. He said that when people met him and asked him to heal their diseases he had a hundred cures to every hundred treatments. So Lao Can made obeisance to him as his teacher, learned the patter, and from that time on went about shaking a string of bells and filling his bowl of gruel by curing diseases. Thus he wandered about by rivers and lakes for twenty years.
>
> ——Excerpt from Chapter 1, *The Travels of Lao Can*[1]

In the previous chapters we have explored *The Travel*'s history of reception and its intertwined relationship with the esoteric Taigu teaching, and in both adventures the starting points have been the Peach Blossom Mountain episode, in which the young man Shen Ziping curiously occupies the spotlight that is supposed to have belonged to Lao Can. We thus own Lao Can, the real protagonist of the novel, a proper introduction, and thus the lines above as quoted from the beginning of the novel. After spending quite some words explaining how Lao Can becomes a travelling healer when he was thirty, the age at which a man is supposed to achieve full maturity according to the Confucian view of life, the author then summarizes the rest of Lao Can's life history in only one short sentence: "Thus he wandered about by rivers and lakes for twenty years." Clearly, here the author believes there is no need to explain why Lao Can's travels are mapped out by "rivers and lakes" (not hills and maintains, for example), or what the life among the "rivers and lakes" is like. It is as if what Lao Can might have experienced in the past twenty years is self-explanatory given that it is predicated by the juxtaposition of the two hydrological entities. The two characters *jiang* (river) and *hu* (lake) when pinched together works almost like a secret code between the author and his imagined readers: I say it, and you know what I mean. What, then, does it mean? What are the secrets about the *jianghu*?

Unlike most forms of secret knowledge making, there is no mythical origin in this case. Scholars have long traced the *jianghu* back to the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, the text attributed to Zhuang Zhou 莊周 who lived in the late Warring States period (476–221 BCE). In this context, the *jianghu* simply means the actual waters in the lower Yangtze area. This straightforward signifier-signified connection, however, has long collapsed. What it invokes in today's Chinese, instead, is a mysterious world most closely associated with the martial arts popular culture, which consists of innumerate fiction, films, TV dramas, comics, video games, telling the secret tales of the knights-errant, chivalrous gallants, swordsmen and swordswomen, and, probably not as

[1] Shadick's 1952 translation, with the Romanization changed to *pinyin* and "river and lake" in the last line changed to plural. See Liu T'ieh-Yün, *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, trans. Harold Shadick (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1952), pp. 3–4.

prominently but indispensably, various vagrant figures: beggars, buskers, swindlers, and what Lao Can exemplifies: travelling healers.

The *jianghu* is where these tales take place. Actual flowing "rivers and lakes" are now at best synecdochical, invoking a much wider and complicated world with the named peoples dwelling in it. In this sense, the *jianghu* for contemporary Chinese popular culture is like the "American west" for the western film. What make the latter "west" are not specifiable geographical coordinates, but a series of iconic imageries: the wildness, the desolation, the lonely town standing in the middle of nowhere, and most importantly, the people who are supposed to be wandering in this world: the cowboys, the outlaws, and the bounty hunters. The *jianghu*, too, is made of imageries and wanderers, except that while the "west" can still be roughly sketched on an actual map (albeit its changing boundary throughout history), the *jianghu* is bemisted in much thicker fog. It does not allude to any specific places, hydrologic or otherwise. It is nowhere yet everywhere, fictional yet factual, imaginary yet tangible, secret yet outward. Its elusiveness is predicated upon its alienness: just like the "west" is the geographic alien to the civilized "eastern seaboard," the *jianghu* is the moral and jurisdictional alien to the safe zones of the everyday life.

This conceptualization of the *jianghu* based on contemporary popular culture is apparently ahistorical. How, then, does the *jianghu* as actual rivers and lakes in Zhuangzi's time transit to the elusive world as we know of it today? When did the transition (or transitions) take place and what were the historical drives that led to such transition(s)? Relating the question to Lao Can, what exactly was his *jianghu* like? When Liu E summarized Lao Can's life history by invoking the *jianghu* reference, using it almost as a secret code between him and his imagined readers, what did he assume that the readers would have (or would not have) discerned from the abstemious expression "he wandered about by rivers and lakes for twenty years"?

This chapter deciphers this secret code, or, better still, it reverses the coding process through which the watery word *jianghu* becomes a world of secrecy. It argues that the elusive *jianghu* world as we know about it today is an invention of the "age of print." True, the word has an ancient history, and it never stops renewing itself in different historical periods, as I will briefly outline below. However, it is the commercial print culture, which has produced innumerable "secret scrolls" claiming to reveal unknown knowledge about the *jianghu*, that has inaugurated the rebuilding of the *jianghu* as a secret world. This worldbuilding process parallels to the process of secret knowledge production, which assumes the same paradoxical logic that we have been exploring in this dissertation: it is precisely through the revelation of the *jianghu* secrets that the secrecy of this world is established.

This chapter dissects this double process of worldbuilding and knowledge production by looking at the role that *jianghu* secret scrolls have played. To start with, I will review the historical transitions of the *jianghu* in the long durée of the Chinese textual tradition. I argue that the *jianghu* has experienced four major transitions: the spatialization in early China, the socialization during the Tang-Song transition, the vernacularization in the late imperial period, and the alienation in the modern era. These transitions do not follow a linear progression, as if in every period the *jianghu* becomes something totally different from before. Instead, it is a process of superimposition and multiplication. In the first transition, the *jianghu* as a spatial trope is born to metaphorize a remote and empty world at the peripheries of the empire. In the second transition, this empty world is socialized as a transregional network of the newly formed meritocratic literati class, who find the rivers and lakes (the society) a new world to pursue the Confucian ideals in addition to the "shrines and courts" (the state). During the third transition, the *jianghu* permeates from the elitist culture toward the vernacular literature to make sense of

the diversifying social networks driven by a new commodity economy. In the fourth transition, the *jianghu* is appropriated by the new printing capitalism as a marketable and consumable label. Under this label, a booming body of materials are produced to reveal the secrets of the *jianghu*, and paradoxically, these very revelations will finally alienate the *jianghu* from the everyday experience and valorize it as a world of secrecy as we know of it today.

I call these materials "*jianghu* secret scrolls." Their life span coincides with "the age of print." They start to appear in the late Ming commercial printing boom, but reach a climax in the early twentieth century print capitalism, which, accordingly, becomes the primary focus of this chapter. In addition to recovering a wide spectrum of *jianghu* books that have yet received due academic treatment, I further break through the conventional generic restrictions and consider the so-called "martial arts fiction" as a part of the *jianghu* secret scroll network, for their unprecedented contributions to the *jianghu* knowledge production, the *jianghu* worldbuilding, and most effectively, the appropriation of the *jianghu* as a marketing label. In this light, the chapter turns to a case study of Yao Min'ai 姚民哀 (circa 1893/4 – 1938), who is usually credited as one of the very first "martial arts fiction" writers. Giving his *Highwaymen of Shandong* (山東響馬傳, serialized between 1923 and 1934) a new reading, I argue Yao's contribution is less in writing "martial arts fiction" as a modern genre than creating a neither-nor world that is call *jianghu* for the twentieth century Chinese popular culture.

The "Jianghu" in Transitions

To again invoke the "western film" analogy, the images of "the west" — no matter how distortedly they are represented — are rooted in the historical making of the American geography when the country expanded its territory from New England toward the Pacific Ocean. Similarly, the *jianghu* world does not come from nowhere. In its original context, too, it means literally the rivers and lakes in the natural geography. The earliest text in which "*jianghu*" is observed is the *Zhuangzi*. The word appears seven times, among which the most famous quote reads:

> When the springs dry up and the fish are left stranded on the ground, they spew each other with moisture and wet each other down with spit—but it would be much better if they could forget each other in the rivers and lakes.
> 泉涸, 魚相與處於陸. 相呴以濕, 相濡以沫, 不如相忘於江湖.[2]

Needless to say, the character "*jiang*" (referring specifically to Yangtze River in early Chinese) and the character "*hu*" (lakes) each has existed long before. Zhuangzi's juxtaposition of the two here, however, creates an impartible bundling that will be inherited by the Chinese textual realm ever after. By telling the fish that the *jianghu* is where they will find ultimate freedom, Zhuangzi has initiated what I call "the spatialization of the *jianghu*." Instead of two separate nouns signifying particular hydrological places, *jianghu* as a whole is born as a spatial trope, not only invoking the image of the boundless watery realm as the other to the civilized terrestrial lands, but also metaphorizing an ideal world freed from either political or everyday social relations.

[2] Burton Watson's translation. See Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 80. For the primary source, see Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi* 莊子今注今譯 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), p. 195.

If Zhuangzi's unique profile makes us wonder whether his narrative of the *jianghu* is too idiosyncratic to have a real influence on the later Chinese cultural tradition that is dominated by Confucianism since the Han dynasty, then the *Hanshu* (The Book of Han), a classical historiography that profoundly shapes the intellectual discursive mode of all later history, confirms the vitality of Zhuangzi's legacy in the early Chinese intellectual language, and in addition to that, provides many more nonfabular examples to show the mechanism of the spatialization of the *jianghu*. In these examples, the protagonists are not fish, but bandits and political refugees, who either are forced to or voluntarily flee from the society and find their freedom in the watery realm of the lower Yangtze area — the then undomesticated periphery of the empire.[3]

A striking *characteristic* of the *jianghu* in these early Chinese sources is its emptiness. Be it the fabular *jianghu* for the fish or the actual *jianghu* for the bandits and political refugees, it is empty of habitants and social relations. The emptiness of the *jianghu* spatial trope stays stable down to the Tang dynasty, when the great poets of this period often use the *jianghu* imagery to arouse a sense of desolation and loneness. Yet, a major transition happens at the turn of the second millennia, a transition that I call "the socialization of the *jianghu*." In the literary discourse of the new era, most obviously exemplified by the so-called "*jianghu* poets" 江湖詩人 of the Southern Song dynasty, the *jianghu* turns from a peripheral empty space isolated from the society to a highly socialized public space in which innumerable agents travel, communicate, associate, and articulate their being in this new world.

This process coincides with the great "Tang-Song transition," a thesis initiated by Naitō Konan and the Kyoto school of historiography in observation of a series of fundamental transformations in the Chinese society at the turn of the second millennia. In fact, the socialization of the *jianghu* can be seen as an embodiment of the Tang-Song transition thesis in the literary field, and the latter helps explain the deeper drives for the former. Environmentally and economically, the Tang-Song transition sees the "southernization" of the empire. The lower Yangtze area (the area of *the* river and many lakes) which was previously the periphery of the empire now becomes the economic and demographic center. If the excessively abundant water resource in the south used to invoke a sense of otherness consisting of fear, romanticism and exoticism, then in the Song dynasty, the same resource (and the canals that are a domestication of this resource) guarantees a transregional transportation network that circulates the newly fledged commodity economy. As a result, one's being among the rivers and lakes is hardly a gesture of escapism or anchoritism, but the very way of living a socialized life. Politically, the Tang-Song transition sees the destruction of the Chinese aristocracy and the birth of meritocracy. As the imperial civil examination system stabilizes, the literati class keeps growing in number. Consequently, the "localization of the elites" becomes a prominent phenomenon in the Southern Song. The intellectuals realize they cannot all find a position in the capital but they can still make a difference in the local, as their recent predecessor Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989–1052) of the Northern Song has famously acclaimed: "Being in the highness of the shrine and court I worry for the people; being in the farness of the rivers and lakes I worry for the emperor" 居廟堂之高則憂其民，處江湖之遠則憂其君. For Fan Zhongyan (and generations of literati after him), there is no essential difference between the "shrine and court" and "the rivers and lakes" in terms

[3] I have elaborated the transitions of the *jianghu* from early China to the Tang-Song transition with extensive examples elsewhere. Here I only summarise the key findings to save more space for the discussion of the *jianghu* in later periods. See Xiangjun Feng, His Fame Reverberates among Rivers and Lakes: Printing, Networking, and a New Way of Being in the World in China's Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279). UC Berkeley MA thesis, 2017.

of where an intellectual carries his social responsibility. Like the *miaotang*, the *jianghu* is not for escapism and anchoritism, but the very space to practice social integration. Technologically and epistemologically, the Tang-Song transition sees the birth of print as the dominant medium for knowledge production. This has a fundamental influence on the making of the literati class, not only in terms of facilitating their learning by providing sufficient materials, but also in the sense of fostering a new way of imaging the boundary of the world and communicating with the other agents in this world who are physically faraway. In other words, print as a new medium integrates the localized elites who spread across the empire and gives them an imagined community, which for many is called the *jianghu*.

Thus far, the *jianghu* has little to do with secrecy. If in early and medieval China the *jianghu* as a geographical and societal other arguably bears some mystery, during the Tang-Song transition it is turned inside out. In most contexts, it can be safely translated as "society" since there lacks an equivalent to this sociological concept in the Chinese language anyway. (Isn't Fan Zhongyan's dichotomy between the "shrine and court" and the "rivers and lakes" essentially a dichotomy between the state and the society?) Then, how does the *jianghu* get secret attributions, and ultimately, become a synecdoche for a secret world as we know about it today?

It is a long process, but it starts with what I call "the vernacularization of the *jianghu*" in the late imperial period. This "vernacularization" is twofold. First of all, it is about the language register in which the *jianghu* trope is articulated. The Ming dynasty sees the coming of the age of vernacular literature. The *jianghu* used to be by and large a poetic imagery, but now it is everywhere in novels, dramas, stories, and other forms of writings that deviate from the classical literary tradition. The most prominent example is *Water Margin* 水滸傳, the novel that drew various earlier sources, both oral and literal, and valorized in the early Ming. For a novel about the outlaws based in the Liangshan marshes, "rivers and lakes" seems to be an inevitable choice for the author to conceptualize the world of the one hundred and eight heroes and heroines, not only because the Liangshan marshes is literally a watery area, but also because of the old association between the *jianghu* and the bandits in the *Hanshu* of the first century. As a matter of fact, the original title for *Water Margin* might have been the *Jianghu haoke zhuan* 江湖豪客傳, or *Legends of the Jianghu Outlaws*.[4] In the novel itself, the word "*jianghu*" appears numerous times. But unlike the "*jianghu*" in the *Hanshu* that points to the lower Yangtze area where the bandits hide themselves, the word "*jianghu*" in this novel has become a more generalized trope for the whole society — a necessary consequence of the previous socialization of the *jianghu*. Indeed, most stories about these "*jianghu* outlaws" do not happen in the Liangshan marshes, but everywhere in the empire, from the imperial capital to frontier towns, from prosperous markets to lonely inns in the wildness. Again, the "*jianghu* outlaws" could be perfectly translated as "outlaws in the society." If there is any essential difference between the *jianghu* in the Song dynasty and the *jianghu* in the Ming dynasty, it is not about what the *jianghu* really means, but about the register of the language: a transportation from classical poetry to vernacular literature, from the elitist discourse to everybody's reading desk (if they read) and ears (if they attend storytelling).

Water Margin is but the most prominent example. Since the *jianghu* is now a ready synecdoche for the whole society, it is observed everywhere in the vernacular literature of the

[4] See Zhang Huiren 張惠仁, "Shitan Shuihu yuanming Jianghu Haoke Zhuan wenti: Jian yu Shuihu fei fanying nongmin qiyi shuo shangque" 試談《水滸》原名《江湖豪客傳》問題——兼與《水滸》非反映農民起義說商榷, *Hanzhong shiyuan xuebao (zhexue shehuikexue ban)* 漢中師院學報 (哲學社會科學版) 03 (1988): 75–9.

period, which has much broader interests in various aspects of the social life, a social life that is unprecedentedly driven by the commodity economy. The *jianghu* becomes the trope for a shared social space for everybody who has to travel and make a living in this economy. Christopher Rea and Bruce Rusk in a recent definition of the *jianghu* list a full spectrum of professions that are thought to be associated with the *jianghu* in the Ming dynasty:

> The Rivers and Lakes […] is a place of refuge for political exiles, outlaws, martial artists, socially marginal figures, and people hiding from the law. It is also a realm of commerce plied by merchants, petty entrepreneurs, civil service examinations candidates, officials heading to and from their posts, monks, medicine men, soothsayers, entertainers, mendicants, and swindlers. […][5]

Apparently, this list can extend endlessly until it includes every single agent in that "realm of commerce." It becomes clear that it is not so much the case that the "*jianghu*" concept has changed; it is the *society* which the word "*jianghu*" metaphorizes that has become radically diversified and fluidized with the coming of the commercial revolution of the Ming dynasty. Secrecy starts becoming a striking feature of the *jianghu* precisely in this process, not only because of the concretization of barriers between different professions and organizations which each needs to protect their own inside knowledge, but also because of the senses of unfamiliarity, uncertainty and unreliability that start haunting everybody as long as one has to take a small step out of his ancestral farmland and set foot in this fluid world of rivers and lakes.

The impulse of hiding always comes together with the impulse of revealing, especially when the latter meets the heyday of commercial printing. It is against this backdrop that we observe the vernacularization of the *jianghu* in the second sense, namely, the birth of *jianghu* secret scrolls. They treat the *jianghu* as a distinctive domain of knowledge and intent to reveal this knowledge for popular consumption. One example is the publications on the *jianghu* secret language that Yuming He has observed in the late Ming book market. Through these publications, He is convinced that the *jianghu* has emerged as a distinctive "urban counterculture" in this period.[6] But the work par excellence in this regard is the early seventeenth-century book *Marvelous Accounts of the Jianghu: A Book of Our Time that Exposes Swindles* 江湖奇聞杜騙新書 by Zhang Yingyu 張應俞 (fl. 1617).[7] Produced in the late-Ming commercial publishing center Jianyang, and intended for popular consumption, this book uses eighty-eight short stories to demonstrate all forms of swindles one might fall victim to in that time. Except in the title, the author does not use the word *jianghu* often in the stories, each of which has its particular setting:

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[5] Christopher Rea and Bruce Rusk, "Translators' Introduction," in Zhang Yingyu, *The Book of Swindles: Selections from a Late Ming Collection*, trans. Christopher Rea and Bruce Rusk (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), p. xx. Note: the authors do not specify that their definition is for the *jianghu* of the Ming dynasty. But since their subject of study is a Ming dynasty book, apparently, they come to this definition with the Ming *jianghu* in mind.
[6] Yuming He, *Home and the World: Editing the "Glorious Ming" in Woodblock-Printed Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), pp. 87–88.
[7] The book is more commonly known today as *Jianghu lilan dupian xinshu* 江湖歷覽杜騙新書 (*After Completely Experiencing the Jianghu*: *A Book of Our Time that Exposes Swindles*), which is the title of a reproduction made by the Cunren tang 存仁堂. *Jianghu qiwen* is the title of the original Juren tang 居仁堂 edition, which is now lost. See Niu Jianqiang 牛建強, "Wan Ming duanpian shiqing xiaoshuoji Dupian xinshu banben kao" 晚明短篇世情小說集《杜騙新書》版本考, *Wenxian jikan* 文獻季刊 03 (2000): 200–210. For a selected translation of the Cunren tang edition, see Zhang Yingyu, *The Book of Swindles: Selections from a Late Ming Collection*, trans. Christopher Rea and Bruce Rusk (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

market, brothel, gambling house, inn, travelling boat, etc. Yet each of these places is assumed to be a constituent part of the *jianghu*. After reading the tricks told in every story, a reader closes the book and is brought back to the cover page; staring at the title he is reminded: no matter where a story takes place, it is always about the *jianghu* — a distinctive world full of secrets of our time.

It bears pointing out, however, that unlike the first form of vernacularization that is a general linguistic tendency, the second form, namely the self-consciously complied *jianghu* secret knowledge collections, are not as great in number in the Ming-Qing period. Therefore, although the *jianghu* secret scroll is born in the late Ming, its fully fledging awaits the coming of modern era, in which we observe the fourth and last transition of this millennia old spatial trope, a transition that I call "the alienation of the *jianghu*." In this new era, the nomenclature initiated by Zhang Yingyu's 1617 book is echoed with exceptional enthusiasm in the book market. Yet unlike Zhang's book that aims at a realistic representation of the society that is called *jianghu*, the Republican era *jianghu* secret scrolls, be it a *jianghu*-lore encyclopedia or a *jianghu* narrative that we now call "martial arts fiction," are inclined to fabricating a mysterious and dangerous universe that is completely alienated from the everyday experience. To dissect this process of alienation is the objective of the rest of the chapter.

Alienation: The *Jianghu* Secret Scrolls in the Republican Era

By the "alienation of the *jianghu*," I mean the process through which the *jianghu* spatial trope is estranged from the actual society (or societies) that it used to signify and is reconstructed as an alternative world — a self-contained universe distinctive from the everyday experience. What is this universe like? How exactly is this universe different from the watery area, the literati's network, and the routes of commerce and adventures in the previous period? A shortcut to the answers is to look at the body of materials we now call "martial arts fiction" that started flourishing in the 1920s. I will guide a quick tour along this shortcut to help delineate a contour of the *jianghu* of this period, but it bears pointing out early that this shortcut also prevents us from exploring the fullness and the complexity of the actual historical geography, of which more later.

Needless to say, our understanding of the *jianghu* today is most fundamentally shaped by the "martial arts fiction," a unique and internationally acclaimed genre of the twentieth-century Chinese popular culture (here I am of course extending the definition of "fiction" to include its adaptations in other media forms such as TV and cinema). As is widely known as common sense, the *jianghu* is the most iconic feature of this genre. It is the assumed space in which any chivalric stories take place, in the same sense that the "American west" is the assumed setting for any western films. The alienation of the *jianghu* in the Republican era, in this light, is the same story as the birth of the "martial arts fiction" in the same period.

The "martial arts fiction," by its widest implication, includes any literary representation of the swordsman stories, and therefore it can be at least traced back to the knight-errant stories in the *Shiji*, or *Records of the Grand Historian*. Yet, it is commonly accepted that the 1920s sees the birth of the genre in its modern sense — the "*xinpai* 新派 (new school) martial arts fiction" on Chen Pingyuan's 陳平原 term,[8] or "the martial arts fiction as a marketable thematic subgenre"

[8] Chen Pingyuan 陳平原, *Qiangu wenren xiake meng: Wuxia xiaoshuo leixing yanjiu* 千古文人俠客夢: 武俠小說類型研究 (Bejing: Xinshijie chubanshe, 2002): p. 3. Contesting some narratives that call the Republican-era martial

that John Christopher Hamm has very accurately conceptualized in a recent study.[9] The most iconic hero in this process is Xiang Kairan 向愷然 (1889–1957), better known by his pseudonym "The Unworthy Scholar from Pingjiang" 平江不肖生. In 1922, Xiang Kairan starts serializing *Marvelous Gallants of the Rivers and Lakes* (*Jianghu qixia zhuan* 江湖奇俠傳, hereafter *Rivers and Lakes*). In the ensuing years of its serialization and especially its adaptations into a long series of films since 1928, the book not only proves to be a phenomenal commercial success, but also "help[s] confirm its titular milieu [meaning 'the rivers and lakes'] as the setting for tales of martial adventures and rivalries between various master-disciple lineages (sects or schools) as essential grist for the mill of the plot" that will be inherited by later writers.[10] With this novel and numerous other writings, most of which with the very word "*jianghu*" in the titles, Xiang Kairan is credited as the funding father of martial arts fiction, a literary "lineage" that extents from him to generations of latecomers, and all the way to Jin Yong 金庸, the author who is synonymous of the genre and is most famously known by today's readers.

To tell the history of the "martial arts fiction" in the twentieth century is of course not the purpose of the current chapter, of which one can find numerous scholarly narratives elsewhere. The point I am making here is straightforward: *it won't be incorrect* to think of the *jianghu* in the twentieth century as a product of the Republican-era "martial arts fiction." Accordingly, *it won't be incorrect* to say that the alienation of the *jianghu* in the Republican period is essentially a process in which the newly fledged "martial arts fiction" appropriates the ancient old *jianghu* trope and rebuilds it as an alternative world of fantasies. Xiang Kairan's example is particularly illuminating here. The *jianghu* in his *Rivers and Lakes* is a world of not only the swordsmen, but also the so-called "sword-immortals" (*jianxian* 劍仙) with various supernatural powers. The stories about how a "flying sword" (*feijian* 飛劍) hidden in the back side of a sword-immortal's head flashes out like lightning and kills an enemy far away has caused strong anxieties among the Republican moralists and leads to the banning of the films adapted from the novel.[11] As uncanny as this *jianghu* might look to today's readers, it is not different from Jin Yong's *jianghu* that we are more familiar with today, in which the marvelous masters showcase equally unbelievable superpower, except that Jin Yong tends to make sense of the superpower by appealing to the seemingly more secular traditional theories of the human body, whereas Xiang Kairan resonates more with the "superstitious" tradition of uncanny writings that date back at least to the Tang dynasty tales of the fantastic.

Before an impression develops that this chapter will thereafter focus on the genre of "martial arts fiction," let me reiterate that the label "martial arts fiction" here only serves as a shortcut, and a shortcut has its problems. It is like a man-made tunnel, quickly transporting us to the other side of the landscape but preventing us from actually seeing the landscape. In his recent study, John Christopher Hamm has insightfully pointed out the problem with the label "martial arts fiction", namely, the incompatibility between "fiction" the imported western genre and the premodern *xiaoshuo* tradition in which the writers like Xiang Kairan have conceived and

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arts fiction as "old school" to contrast the "new school" represented by the Taiwanese and Hong Kong writers in the 1950s, Chen argues that there is no essential difference before and after the 1950s, and he therefore sees the 1920s as the beginning of the "new school."

[9] John Christopher Hamm, *The Unworthy Scholar from Pingjiang: Republican-era Martial Arts Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), pp. 9–10, 66–95.

[10] John Christopher Hamm, *The Unworthy Scholar from Pingjiang*, p. 135.

[11] John Christopher Hamm, *The Unworthy Scholar from Pingjiang*, p. 154.

conceptualized their works.[12] The implication of this problem is at stake for our exploration of the *jianghu*: whereas *it won't be incorrect* to say the alienation of the *jianghu* is driven by the "martial arts fiction," it also prevents us from seeing the rich and diverse materials that are excluded from the domain of "fiction," whereas these materials play an equally (if not more) important role in the alienation of the Republican *jianghu*.

A few examples will make this clear. Long before the invention of the "martial arts fiction," or *wuxiao xiaoshuo* 武俠小說, as a marketing label in the 1920s, the Republican book market started observing a trend of books and periodical publications that favored the word "*jianghu*" in the titles. These materials are diverse in nature, but they all share a conscious gesture of communicative transmission: to transmit *something* about the jianghu — *something* that is more often than not alien to the everyday experience. Between 1914 and 1915, the Shanghai-based literary periodical *Qixiang* 七襄 serialized a group of classical language notebook jottings by the renowned scholar Hu Jichen 胡寄塵 under the rubric of "Biographies of Idiosyncratic Figures of the *Jianghu*" (*Jianghu yiren zhuan* 江湖異人傳) — a nomenclature that would also appear as Xiang Kairan's 1924 "martial arts fiction."[13] Hu's collection, in terms of both its style (short entries in classical language) and its contents (anecdotes of personas that are idiosyncratic in different ways), seamlessly falls into the traditional *biji xiaoshuo* 筆記小說 tradition. What makes it very different from the uncountable volumes of this genre in the previous periods, however, is the fact that the author Hu Jichen felt these personas in his *biji* could all be categorized under the "*jianghu*" label. In fact, as Hu notes himself, most of these *biji* jottings were previously published separately in different venues, and the "*jianghu*" label is conceived now as he puts them together and "wholesales" them to the new publisher. Yet, it is very hard to observe what exactly the *jianghu* means in Hu's mind, because the figures in his collection are diverse in class backgrounds (from learned scholars to beggars) and even historical periods (from the Tang dynasty to Hu's own time). It almost feels like the "*jianghu*" is chosen just because of the shared "idiosyncrasy," or in other words, its otherness.

If Hu Jichen's choice seems too personal to be representative, the projects of commercial publishers then more tellingly show the trends in the market. In the same year that Hu started his serialization, Shanghai Guoxue Books 國學書室 published *Illustrated Biographies of Idiosyncratic Figures of the Jianghu* 江湖異人傳圖咏, and one wonders to what extent the shared nomenclature was only a coincidence. In 1917, Shanghai Huiwentang 會文堂 published a thick book in four volumes entitled *Idiosyncratic Accounts of the Jianghu* 江湖異聞. The materiality of the book and the commercial advertisement inside the cover quickly reveal it is one of the numerous cheap products of Shanghai's lithographic age (Figure 4.1). The book is structured in line with the *leishu* 類書, or encyclopedia tradition — a reorganizing of previously available materials under a new rubric, which is the "*jianghu*" in this case. According to the editor(s)' preface, here the *jianghu* has a particular connotation: the world of "swordmen" 劍俠. The names of "swordsmen" work as entries, each leading to a cluster of anecdotes extracted from previous sources about the persona in question. Most of the personas here are recent semi-legendary figures who are made famous in the Qing dynasty *xiaoshuo* miscellanies about chivalry, such as Gan Fengchi 甘鳳池 and Min Xiansheng 閔先生, both of whose stories will

[12] John Christopher Hamm, *The Unworthy Scholar from Pingjiang*, pp. 1–8, 32–65.

[13] Jichen 寄塵 (Hu Jichen), "Jianghu yiren zhuan" 江湖異人傳, *Qixiang* 七襄 03 (1914): 1–3, 05 (1914): 1–2, 06 (1914): 1–3, 07 (1915): 1–2.

also be mentioned in chapter 5 on the mystification of the Kungfu secret scroll the *Yijin jing* 易筋經. But there are also real historical figures lacking a strong "swordsmanhood," yet whose stories are mystified in the *xiaoshuo* materials that are fond of hidden political scandals, such as Nian Gengyao 年羹堯, the grand general who ended up being executed by his former patron the Yongzheng emperor, and Zhang Wenxiang 張汶祥, the protagonist in the famous 1870 political incident "The Assassination of Ma Xinyi 刺馬案." (Interestingly, this incident also makes one of the most important scenarios in Xiang Kairan's *Rivers and Lakes*.) We observe such a mechanism in the making of this book: whereas all these materials are old stories stemming from the vernacularization of the *jianghu* in the late imperial period, it is Huiwentang the modern commercial publisher that has self-consciously extracted and abstracted the "*jianghu*" as a unique world of swordsman, a domain of hidden knowledge, and most pragmatically, a marketable label. Apparently, this label was welcomed by the market. As the age of lithography was being replaced by the moveable type, the publisher Huiwentang responded quickly. When we look at the third edition of the same book published in 1924, it has been transformed as a one-volume movable-type item with an attractive cover that adeptly speaks to the most up-to-date Republican book market aesthetics (Figure 4.2).

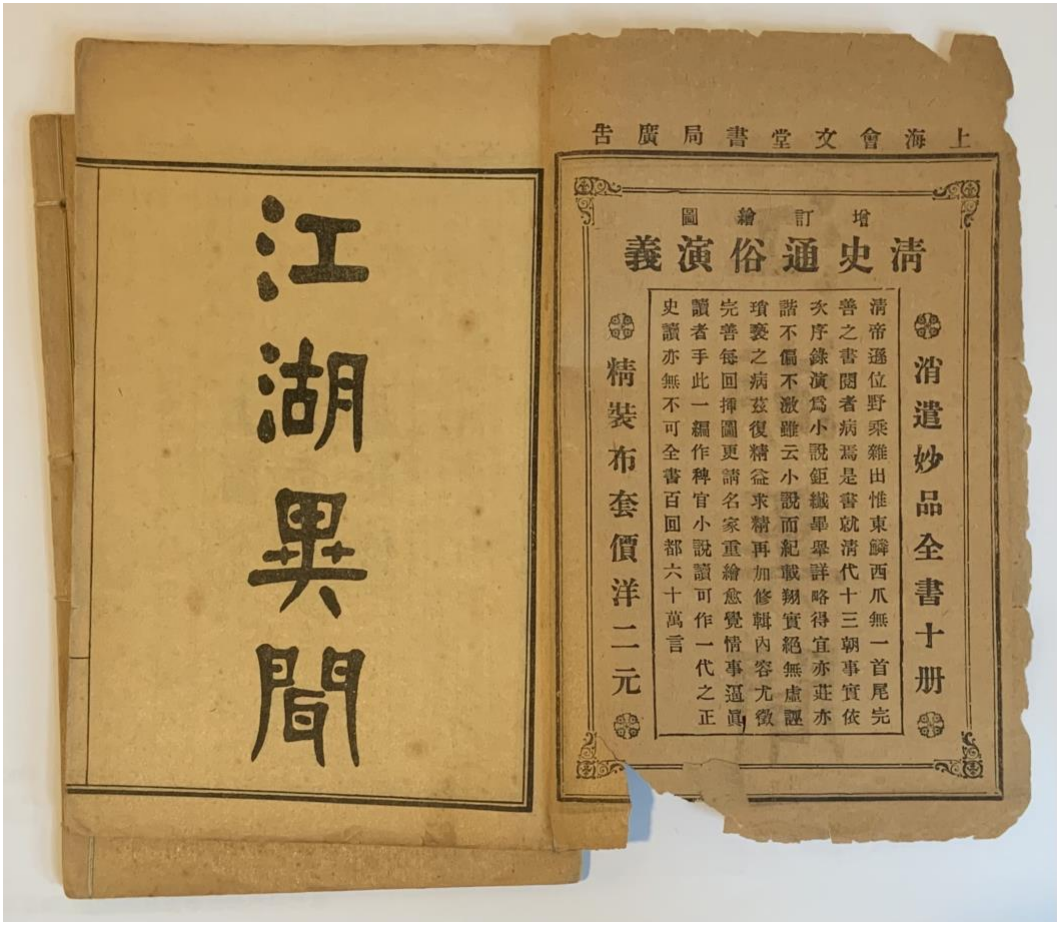

Figure 4.1: *Idiosyncratic Accounts of the Jianghu* 江湖異聞, Shanghai: Huiwentang, 1917. Source: author's personal collection.

Figure 4.2: *Idiosyncratic Accounts of the Jianghu*, the 3rd edition, Shanghai: Huiwentang, 1924. Source: www.duxiu.com.

In 1922, the same year when Xiang Kairan started serializing *Rivers and Lakes*, another Shanghai-based publisher Jingzhi Library 竞智图书馆 joined in the claiming of the "*jianghu*" label by launching *The Marvelous Accounts of the Jianghu* 江湖奇聞 edited by Laijiang zhuowu 瀨江濁物, a pseudonym literally meaning "the filthy thing from the Lai river."[14] The title of the

[14] The true identity behind this pseudonym is likely an author named Xu Kui 許夔, as is signed after the *chuanqi* 傳奇 drama *Unexpected Roman* 意外緣 published in the literary periodical *Shirixin* 十日新 in 1914 (no. 1, page 1–6). The author has also published many *xiaoshuo* works in the famous journal *Xiaoshuo xinbao* 小說新報 in the decade between 1914 and 1923. In addition to these, the author is responsible for at least two semi-reportages on contemporary politics, *The Biography of Wu Peifu* 吳佩孚正傳 and *The Complete Record on the Zhi-Wan War* 直皖

book is almost synonymous to the Huiwentang product, showing its shared marketing strategy of appropriating the *jianghu.* (It might have been an accident considering the three-century gap, but the title is also completely identical with Zhang Yingyu's 1617 book on swindles). Similarly, the book could be seen as a *leishu* of the *jianghu*, as its full title consistently tells on every page margin: *A Newly Complied and Classified Marvelous Accounts of the Jianghu* 新編分類江湖奇聞. The scope of this *jianghu* is much wider than the Huiwentang product's focus on swordsmanship. It divides the book into eight sections, each focusing on one particular "field" (in both senses as a spatial field and as a field of knowledge) that the editor considers belonging to the *jianghu*: "Medicine" 醫術, "Fortunetelling and Physiognomy" 命相, "Divination" 卜蓍, "Boxing" 拳術, "Swindles" 騙術, "Immortality"方外, "Sorcery and Magic" 術法類, and finally, "Other Miscellaneous Arts" 雜技類. The source materials are also more diverse, ranging from seasoned lines from the Song dynasty *leishu Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (a commonly cited source for strange accounts) to the author's personal encounters. As a whole, this book demonstrates a clear intention of creating the *jianghu* as a specialized domain of knowledge — a knowledge that is secret in its purported nature but consumable in practice.

I will suspend introducing new examples for the time being, but the point has become clear: before the flourishing of the "martial arts fiction" in the 1920s, there was already a trend of "*jianghu* books" in the book market. I am not talking about the "chivalric novel (*xiayi xiaoshuo* 俠義小說)" that is commonly acknowledged as a precursor to the "martial arts fiction" — as a continuation of the late-imperial "vernacularization of the jianghu" into the twentieth century, these works of course kept shaping people's imagination of the *jianghu* just as *Water Margin* did in the Ming dynasty. I am taking explicitly about books that consciously represented the *jianghu* as an alternative universe and a specialized domain of knowledge, most of which also enthusiastically exploited the word "*jianghu*" as a marketable label. Seen in this context, the phenomenal success of Xiang Kairan's *Rivers and Lakes* and the whole new genre that we call "martial arts fiction" is but the highest tide of a much more complicated and intertwined network of currents. Indeed, if we stick with the three key practices that I have been repeating (worldbuilding, knowledge production and creating a marketable label) instead of literary parameters like "genre," then there is no essential difference between Xiang Kairan's *Rivers and Lakes* and the *jianghu leishu* I have introduced above. The literal meaning of Xiang Kairan's novel title is "biographies of the marvelous *jianghu* gallants." Isn't *The Marvelous Accounts of the Jianghu* also a collection of such "biographies"? Isn't Zhang Wenxiang's 張汶祥 "biography" found in both books? The same argument could be made regarding several of his other "martial arts fiction" — *Strange Phenomena of the Jianghu* 江湖怪異傳 (1923), *Biographies of Idiosyncratic Figures of the Jianghu* 江湖異人傳 (1924), *Biographies of Junior Gallants of the Jianghu* 江湖小俠傳 (1929), as well as numerous works by other "martial arts fiction" writers, of which a case study will come soon.

We thus urgently need to reconsider the limits of the "martial arts fiction" shortcut, to break through the retrospective and often arbitrary genre doctrines, and to look at all these materials as an intertwined whole. In this light, I see a clear line connecting these materials back to the late imperial period "*jianghu* secret scrolls" that I have conceptualized earlier. I argue "*jianghu* secret scroll" is a network of books that sprouted at the beginning of China's age of

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戰爭始末記. See Duan Qirui nianpu/Wu Peifu zhengzhuan 段祺瑞年譜/吳佩孚正傳 (Zhonghua Book, 2007), p. 133.

print but fully flourished in the Republican period printing industry. They include traditional *xiaoshuo*, *leishu* encyclopedias, fiction in the modern sense, secret language corpuses, secret society manuals, etc. As diverse as their "genres" are, they are congenerous and consistent in three things: to build the *jianghu* as an alternative world, to create the *jianghu* as a domain of secret knowledge, and to exploit the "*jianghu*" as a marketable label. This network of *jianghu* secret scrolls keeps expanding throughout the Republican period. Dadong Books' 大東書局 *Jianghu Secrets for Fortune Hunters* 白手謀生江湖秘訣 (1925), Datong Books' 大通圖書社 *Secret Rules of the Jianghu, plus Jianghu Sorceries and Secret Languages* 九流三教江湖秘密規矩, 附江湖法術通用切口 (1937), the storyteller Lian Kuoru's 連闊如 (1903–1971) *Clustered Accounts of the Jianghu* 江湖叢談 (1938), and multiple versions of the secret society Tiandihui's 天地會 esoteric document *Jianghu Seabed* 江湖海底 — to name just a few miscellaneous "non-fictional" examples that are eclipsed by the "martial arts fiction" craze after the 1920s. I amend the earlier "*not incorrect*" statement about the alienation of the *jianghu* in the twentieth century: this alienation is driven by the Republican *jianghu* secret scrolls, within which network the "martial arts fiction" is but one form of the representations.

This amended statement has no intention to undermine the significance of the "martial arts fiction" in its contribution to the making of the modern *jianghu*. Needless to say, it is the genealogy of the "marital arts fiction writers" from Xiang Kairan to Jin Yong and beyond that has most fundamentally shaped the *jianghu* which is such a central trope in today's Chinese language. Nor does this statement aims at using "*jianghu* secret scroll" to replace "martial arts fiction," which, like the "*jianghu*," was invented and welcomed by the Republican market and has become a useful and productive category in today's literary practice. The intention of this statement is, rather, to suggest a new way of reading the martial arts fiction not in a self-sufficient literary kingdom, but in a much wider network of materials and a much more complicated movement of secret knowledge production. The rest of this chapter is a practice of this reading strategy. Whereas Xiang Kairan is not only the "funding father" of the modern "martial arts fiction" but also arguably the most influential promoter of the "jianghu" label, my study will focus on a different author, Yao Min'ai 姚民哀, for two reasons. First, John Christopher Hamm has recently contributed a well-rounded monograph on Xiang Kairan. Readers interested in Xiang Kairan should find Hamm's book very satisfactory, and his approach of reading the "martial arts fiction" in light of the *xiaoshuo* tradition which is fascinated with the *qi* 奇 (the strange or the marvelous) and committed to communicative transmission speaks very well with my approach of reading the same materials in light of the "secret scroll" network. (My only suggestion would be to remember that Hamm's "*xiaoshuo*" is still mostly about narrative works and it does not pay much attention to non-narrative works such as the *jianghu* encyclopedias.) Second, different from Xiang Kairan's *jianghu* writings (especially his most famous *Rivers and Lakes*) that are less ambiguous in their fictional nature, Yao Min'ai's works show a much stronger inclination that blurs the boundaries between the fictional and the purported factual, between fiction and journalism, as well as between worldbuilding and knowledge production. Yao might not be the best "martial arts fiction" writer, but his works best exemplify the generic heterogeneity of the *jianghu* secret scroll, as well as how the alienation of the *jianghu* takes place in the blurred neither-nor zones. It bears pointing out early that Yao was himself a wanderer among the rivers and lakes since childhood, and this life history is essential in understanding his literary representation of the *jianghu*. A biography of his thus comes first.

Yao Min'ai, the Storyteller Wandering among the Rivers and Lakes

At the turn of 1893 and 1894, Yao Min'ai was born in Changshu 常熟, one the famous Jiangnan water towns.[15] His grandfather and uncle were both literati with some minor success in the imperial civil examination, which was satisfactory though not particularly impressive in this area.[16] His father, however, took no interest in taking exams. He found his passion in the *pingtan* 評彈 storytelling — not as an audience but as a practitioner, and ended up making a living on it. Unlike other *pingtan* storytellers who had to rely on the traditional repertoire, he created his own "secret script" 秘本 to tell *The Western Chamber* 西廂, a classic drama that had never been adapted into the *pingtan* storytelling.[17] Nevertheless, storytelling was one of the least respectful professions of the time, a typical *jianghu* business. To save his family name from being smeared, he adopted his mother's family name and gave himself a stage name Zhu Ji'an 朱寄庵.[18]

Born to such a family, Yao Min'ai was doomed to have everything to do with the *jianghu* world and its secrets. At the age of three, he lost his sights after an eye disease. His father planned to let him be blind and learn to become a fortuneteller in the future — also a typical *jianghu* business. After a numerological divination, he was convinced that this was probably the best for the child. Fortunately, a physician (another *jianghu* profession) persuaded the father to try his secret prescription and in ten months the boy's sights were mostly recovered.[19] At the age of nine, Yao Min'ai started "experiencing the society."[20] As a child, he "was already a frequenter in the secret gatherings of those [*jianghu*] fellows and was familiarized with their unique talks and conventions."[21] At the age of fifteen, Yao Min'ai finished his elementary school education and started his career as a storyteller with the stage name Zhu Lan'an 朱蘭庵 (also known as Zhu Lai'an 朱萊庵), and hence "the *jianghu* started knowing the father-and-son partnership 'the senior Zhu and the junior Zhu 大小朱.'"[22] With his younger brother Yao Minyu 姚民愚, who joined the business as Zhu Ju'an 朱菊庵 and often performed with him on the same stage, their partnership was known as "the Zhu brothers' show" 朱雙檔.[23]

Yao Min'ai saw the *pingtan* storytelling an important "treasure" of his life. He said in 1927: "Whenever I am bored or desperate, I can always pick up my *sanxian*, bare my face, and walk onto the stage to talk nonsense. I always get a thousand or eight hundred to relief my life, and to use that money I won't need to bother my conscience like those who make money by

[15] In "My Treasures," a short autobiographical piece published in 1927, Yao notes he was born in the eleventh month of the nineteenth year of the Guangxu reign, which corresponds to the days ranging from December 8, 1893 to January 6, 1894. See Yao Min'ai, "Wozhi enwu" 我之恩物, *Hongmeigui* 紅玫瑰 3.14 (1927): 1.
[16] Xu Sinian 徐斯年, "Yanshu jianghu banghui mishi de shuoshuren: Yao Min'ai pingzhuan" 演述江湖幫會秘史的說書人——姚民哀評傳, in *Yanshu jianghu banghui mishi de shuoshuren: Yao Min'ai*. (Nanjing: Nanjing chubanshe, 1994), p. 13.
[17] Feng Ping 馮平, "Zhu Lai'an xiaozhuan" 朱萊庵小傳, in *Nanshe congxuan* 南社叢選, ed. Hu Pu'an 胡樸安 (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1966), p. 509.
[18] Xu Sinian, "Yao Min'ai pingzhuan," p. 13.
[19] Yao Min'ai, "Wozhi enwu," p. 2.
[20] Yao Min'ai, "Wozhi enwu," p. 1.
[21] Yao Min'ai, "Preface to the *Jianghu haoxia zhuan*" 江湖豪俠傳自序, cited in Xu Sinian, "Yao Min'ai pingzhuan," p. 14.
[22] Feng Ping, "Zhu Lai'an xiaozhuan," p. 509.
[23] Xu Sinian, "Yao Min'ai pingzhuan," p. 13.

flattering or cheating."[24] Yao would frequent the teahouses in Shanghai and the neighboring water towns in the rest of his life. In the mid-1930s, he was even broadcasting briefly for the Shanghai Dongfang Radio 東方電台.[25] Idle talks say that he got himself in big trouble after making fun of Chiang Kai-shek in his performance when Chiang was in custody during the 1936 Xi'an Incident, and then he swore he would never come back to the stage again.[26] Yet, it was noticed that he was still actively performing shortly before his death in 1938.[27]

Yet, the young Yao Min'ai also had another ambition: to make his name as a literary man. In the autumn of 1910, the seventeen-year old Yao Min'ai paid a respectful visit to Feng Ping 馮平 (aka. Zhuanggong 壯公 and Xinxia 心俠), a key member in the South Society 南社, the largest and most renowned literary organization of the time. Feng Ping recollected that he had a long and enjoyable conversation with Yao and also prefaced the poetry that the young man presented to him, speaking of him highly as a modern day Liu Jingting 柳敬亭 — the semi-legendary late Ming storyteller who was often tributed as the spiritual protector of all storytellers. Yao asked to become Feng's disciple and Feng excused himself from that.[28] But Feng, who was also a revolutionary, might have led Yao into the circle of the revolutionaries, a lot of whom were also famous men of letters. After the 1911 revolution, Yao become a secretory of Li Xiehe 李燮和 (1873–1927), the revolutionary military leader in Shanghai. At the same time, he joined Feng Ping's Society of Young China 中華少年社 and assisted him in many secret missions, including a failed assassination of a politician under Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916) right before Yuan took over the presidency of the new Republic. After this short involvement, Yao left the politics and picked up his *sanxian*, the instrument that accompanied his storytelling. It was not clear why Yao made this choice, but it seemed to be a hard one. Feng Ping consoled him: "Travelling around with a *sanxian* and performing storytelling seems to be ignoble. However, one can use this opportunity to awaken the world and enlighten the people. […] Whether the storytelling is noble or ignoble depends on the person who does it."[29]

Yao would not come back to the politics until two decades later, and when that day came, it would be a tragedy. As Yao continued storytelling in the 1910s, he found a new world where he could resume his literary ambition: the Shanghai world of print. In around 1914, Yao started contributing to the Shanghai periodicals, and he would remain a very productive author in the next twenty years. Before the 1920s, most of his publications were short *xiaoshuo* stories in classical language, and they were mostly found in the periodicals of the so-called "mandarin ducks and butterflies" school, for example, the *Xiaoshuo congbao* 小說叢報, *Xiaoshuo ribao* 小說日報, and *Xiaoshuo jibao* 小說季報 edited by Xu Zhenya 徐枕亞 (1889–1937), and the

[24] Yao Min'ai, "Wozhi enwu," p. 3.
[25] Sun Choucheng 孫籌成, "Dao Yushan Yao Min'ai xiansheng" 悼虞山姚民哀先生, *Shanghai bao* 上海報, February 8, 1938, page 4.
[26] Many sources tell this story. For example, see Xiangsi 香司, "Yao Min'ai jueji shutan zhi diyun" 姚民哀絕跡書壇之底蘊, *Dongfang ribao* 東方日報, February 14, 1938, page 2.
[27] See, for example, Shuiping 水萍, "Gebao aidao wanren tongxi de Yao Min'ai xiansheng weiceng yuhai: Dixiong shuangdang xianzai Tangshi tanchang Xixiangji" 各報哀悼萬人痛惜的姚民哀先生未曾遇害: 弟兄雙檔現在塘市彈唱西廂記, *Shanghai bao* 上海報, February 28, page 11.
[28] Feng Ping recollected his encounters with Yao in two pieces of his writings. See Feng Ping, "Zhu Lai'an xiaozhuan," and Feng Ping, "Preface," in Yao Min'ai, *Min'ai shuoji* 民哀說集 (Shanghai: Guohua shuju, 1921), pp. 9–10. The narrative in this paragraph is a conflation of these two items.
[29] Feng Ping, "Preface," p. 10.

Xiaoshuo xinbao 小說新報 edited by Li Dingyi 李定夷 (1890–1963). Like most "mandarin ducks and butterflies" authors, Yao wrote some stories about "*qing*" or romance, but his works were more often than not purported to report something hidden about history and society. For example, "Hero and Vicissitude" 成敗英雄 (1916) was labeled as "the unofficial history of the revolution" 革命外史, "A Letter" 一封書 (1917) was labeled as "the secret history of the Nihilists" 虛無黨秘密史, "The Silver Princess" 銀妃 (1918) and "The White Pigeon Peak" 白鴿峰 (1918) were both labeled as "lost anecdotes of the Qing dynasty" 清代軼聞. This inclination toward secrecy was of course common in the *xiaoshuo* tradition, yet Yao's particular interests in this foreboded his future great success in telling the *jianghu* secrets in the vernacular language. For now, however, Yao had not anticipated this change. Recollecting in 1927, he said his ambition in that period was to make his classical poetry as fine as Liu Yazi 柳亞子 (1887–1958), the founder of the South Society, and his classical language *xiaoshuo* and essay as fine as Ye Chuchen 葉楚傖 (1887–1946).[30] Toward the end of the 1910s, Yao started conceiving an anthology of his *xiaoshuo* stories, and *Min'ai's Xiaoshuo Collection* 民哀說集 came out in 1921, including nineteen pieces in seven thousand characters that he had penned in these years.[31] A mesmerizing list of more than thirty famous men of letters of the time wrote prefaces, tribunes and postfaces to this book: Li Dingyi, Zhou Shoujuan 周瘦鵑 (1895–1968), Xu Zhenya, Liu Yazi — to name but a few most prominent of them. However, the book had hardly made a difference in the literary world. In fact, if we read the tributes carefully, it becomes clear many of them were only out of courtesy instead of sincere admiration. The tributes tended to become more enthusiastic when commenting on Yao's unusual personality (though sometimes in a negative way) and his storytelling than his *xiaoshuo*. Xu Zhenya's preface even explicitly suggested that Yao should give up on writing.[32]

Yao did not give up on writing, but he might have sensed the necessity of making a change — to change from a miscellaneous *xiaoshuo* writer just like everybody else in the Shanghai world of tabloids to an author with a unique voice and an eye-catching trademark. He named his sense of crisis in such a way: "even though one day my poetry and *xiaoshuo* could resemble those by Liu Yazi and Ye Chuchen, so what?"[33] In 1920, after sending the manuscripts of his *xiaoshuo* anthology to the Guohua Books 國華書局, Yao Min'ai took a new position in the American company Tobacco Products Corp. (China) 美商花旗煙公司.[34] This new job required him to travel to different places, and especially the remote and enclosed areas to expand the market. Between 1921 and 1924, Yao's itinerary covered twenty different provinces, from Macharia in the north to Guangzhou in the south, from Sichuan in the south to Shandong in the east. Literally drifting among the rivers and lakes, Yao was about to break through toward what is now known as "*danghui wuxia xiaoshuo*" 黨會武俠小說 or "secret society martial arts fiction." He recollected in 1927:

[30] Yao Min'ai, "Wozhi enwu," p. 2.
[31] Most prefaces in the book were dated in 1919, from which we know in this year the book was already in preparation. Yao's own preface was dated in the winter of 1920. See Yao Min'ai, *Min'ai shuoji* (Shanghai: Guohua shuju, 1921).
[32] Xu Zhenya, "Preface," in *Min'ai shuoji*, p. 6.
[33] Yao Min'ai, "Wozhi enwu," 2.
[34] I have failed to find out the exact year when Yao joined the company in primary sources. The year "1920" is found in Xu Sinian's biography, with no primary source indicated. See Xu Sinian, "Yao Min'ai pingzhuan," p. 14.

> I gradually developed this thought: after all, not matter whether it's about writing literature or doing business, one should start with working on "sincerity" and "truth" — that's the way to gain people's trust. Since 1924, my writing and behavior both tried to go into the direction of "simplicity and unpretentiousness" 樸實無華. […] I picked up my worn brush pen to elaborate the secrets and tricks of the society that I have witnessed and heard. […] This "*huidang shuobu*" 會黨說部 is the most recent treasure of mine.[35]

By "*Huidang shuobu*," Yao was talking about his invention of the vernacular novels that were purported to report true stories about secret societies to the reading public. They were "sincere" in the sense that they were narrated in a communicative and unpretentious vernacular language, and they were "true" in the sense that they revealed the authentic secret knowledge that Yao learned in person during his travels. The first work of its sort is *Highwaymen of Shandong* 山東響馬傳 that was serialized in *The Detective World* 偵探世界 between 1923 and 1924 with a separate book edition coming out at *World Books* 世界書局 upon the completion of the serialization. Yao claimed that he learned the secrets of these bandits during the business trip to Shandong in 1921, and the same group of bandits were responsible for the internationally notorious "Lincheng Incident" of 1923. Apparently, the success of the book was predicated upon its claim of secrecy and authenticity, of which we will study closely soon. Encouraged by this success, Yao serialized *The Massacres of the Salt Smugglers* 鹽梟殘殺記 in *Scarlet Rose* 紅玫瑰 in 1925, which was alleged to be based on his inquiries in the northern Jiangsu province in 1922. By the time Yao made the above cited recollection, he had firmly established himself as one of the drivers of the 1920s "martial arts fiction" craze and was busy with serializing multiple works for different publishers at the same time. Between 1926 and 1928, Yao contributed four interconnected novellas to *Scarlet Rose*, which in 1929 came out as a whole with the new title *The Mighty Gallants of the Jianghu* 江湖豪俠傳 (World Books). Between 1926 and 1930, he serialized *The Thorny Jianghu* 荊棘江湖 for Zhou Shoujuan's *Violet* 紫羅蘭. The Zhao Tiaokuang 趙苕狂 (1892–1953) edited *Scarlet Rose* did not give this hot author a break. From 1928 to 1931, it continuously hosted three serializations of Yao's, all marketed under the label "The Secrets of the Jianghu" 江湖秘聞: *Dragons of the Four Oceans* 四海群龍記 (1929–1930), *The Mountain King in a Conical Hat* 箬帽山王 (1930–1931), and *Friends until Death* 生死朋友 (1931, unfinished). The same label also appeared in *Wenhua* 文華 in 1929 marketing a new work *Mighty Gallants of the Lakes and Oceans* 湖海豪俠傳, although it very quickly came to a premature end, probably because he was already too overwhelmed by the obligations for the more prestigious journals. But still, he managed to finish the novel *Ten Marvelous Gallants from the South to the North* 南北十大奇俠傳 in 1930, which was very enthusiastically marketed by the publisher Dadong Books 大東書局 as a panoramic revelation of the "hidden truth and *jianghu* codes" of the "secret societies in the recent three hundred years."[36]

1931 seemed to be a turning point in the author's career. On June 1, Yao started serializing a new novel *Dragons and Tigers* 雙龍伏虎記 for *Shanghai Newspaper* 上海報, which updated daily until October 27, when the serialization suddenly stopped at the end of chapter 12. Two weeks later, *Scarlet Rose*, the journal that had been hosting most of Yao's works also had to deal with the same problem. (Noticeably, Xiang Kairan also published most of

[35] Yao Min'ai, "My Treasures," 2–3.
[36] See the advertisement in *Ta Kung Pao (Tianjin)* 大公報 (天津), August 1, 1931, page 11.

his works at *Scarlet Rose* and its predecessor *Scarlet* 紅雜誌, and Xiang's downhill also happened roughly in the same years.) The editor Zhao Tiaokuang explained to the readers in the issue published in November 11 that the serialization of *Friends until Death*, the third novel under the label "The Secrets of the Jianghu," had to pause temporarily because the author Yao Min'ai was seriously sick. Zhao updated in the next issue (published on November 21) that the journal had been making further enquiries, which was followed by bad news on December 1:

> After sending four or five letters to Min'ai asking about the manuscripts, we have now received the reply from his bother Minyu, which reads: "Starting from the 16th of last month, my brother's sanity collapsed. He has attempted to commit suicide four times and has recovered from near death each time. Now he is getting better but is still in bed rest. The manuscripts should be able to resume upon his recovery," and so on. Reading this letter, I could not help but shedding tears. I believe our readers would probably understand him?

This, however, marked the end of Yao's contribution to *Scarlet Rose*. It is not clear exactly what had happened to him and his "sanity." The large amount of "literary debts" that he owned was probably one cause, but more deeply, it has to have something to do with his personality and his deep involvement in the *jianghu* world as a storyteller. Many people commented (in the prefaces to his 1921 *xiaoshuo* collection and in the articles of condolence after his death) that he had a particular personality. He was very short, with excessively small feet, poor sights, and an unpleasant facial appearance. He was proud, stubborn, and irritable. He had no family life (though he once had a wife) or children. He was presumably not poor in finance (judging from his fame as a storyteller and a writer), but he always gave people the impression of being broken and frustrated. He was fond of all sorts of extravagance: banqueting, drinking, whoring, and gambling, as he himself admitted.[37] Not only his brother, but also many others commented on his "sanity" in the 1930s. One widely circulated story was that in 1930 or 1931, he swallowed gold (in some versions it was silver coin or poison) to kill himself right on the performing stage when there was a financial dispute between him and the business owner, and one wonders whether this was one of the four "suicides" as mentioned in his brother's letter.

Yao stayed quiet for a couple of years. In 1933, he seemed to be ready to come back. He started a new series entitled *Strange Personas in the Jianghu* 江湖奇怪人 at *New Shanghai* 新上海 but disappeared again before even finishing the story of the second "strange persona." The reason, according to the editor's note to the readers, was again about his poor health.[38] On September 1, 1934, *Shanghai Newspaper* started serializing *Dragons and Tigers* again from the very first chapter — a very strange practice given that the same novel was already serialized in 1931 until its sharp stoppage at chapter 12. Those who wondered whether the newspaper had run out of contributors and had to reuse the previous materials were relieved on October 4 when a brand-new chapter 13 showed up, as if declaring the coming back of Yao Min'ai — and this time it looked true. From this date to March 31, 1938, *Shanghai Newspaper* updated the novel daily (although only a couple of paragraphs a day), all the way to the end of chapter 64. This was,

[37] Yao Min'ai, "Wozhi enwu," p. 2.

[38] The editor reports: "We have not received Yao's manuscript, so we will have to wait until the next issue. The last time we heard from him he said he was sick and had to travel to somewhere else seeking treatment, and that's probably the reason." Tianhen 天恨, "Editor's Note" 編者云, *Xin Shanghai*, 1.4 (1933): 93. In the next year, the unfinished story of the second "strange persona" was completed, but nothing followed anymore.

however, hardly a proof that Yao was active in the last few years of his life. Apparently, the newspaper was economizing what they had received by releasing a small piece a day. In addition to this ultimately unfinished novel that was stretched perilously thin by the newspaper, there was no other noticeable work of his showing up in the public. The last mystery that Yao brought to his readers was about his death. He "died" in 1938, twice, leaving a messy and somehow farcical heteroglossia in the world of tabloids, a heteroglossia of laments, suspects, speculations, eulogies, accusations, and sympathies. We will come to this mystery later, but before that, let us read some of Yao's works more closely and see how they are as much "*jianghu* secret scrolls" as "martial arts fiction."

Highwaymen of Shandong and "The Secrets of the Jianghu"

In today's historiography, Yao Min'ai was one of the a few pioneers who lit the public craze for "martial arts fiction" in the 1920s and started laying the foundation for the empire of Chinese martial arts popular culture. His prestige might not be as high as his contemporaries "the Xiang from the south and the Zhao form the north" 南向北趙 (meaning Xiang Kairan and Zhao Huanting 趙煥亭 [1877–1951]), but he was credited to have invented the unique subgenre of "secret society martial arts fiction," which has a persistent influence on the later generations of writers and even the contemporary multimedia martial arts culture.[39] Yao absolutely deserves this positioning. As we review his life history, it becomes clear how much enthusiasm he had invoked in the Republican book market. Yet, it also becomes clear that his "selling point" was less the "martial arts" than the "*jianghu*," and similarly, his contribution was less about creating "martial arts fiction" as a self-conscious literary genre than defining the "*jianghu*" as a secret world and a domain of secret knowledge.

Yao was not the first to appropriate the "*jianghu*" label. Xiang Kairan's *Rivers and Lakes* that started serializing in 1922 was the first phenomenal commercial success of the *jianghu*, not to mention the numerous pre-1920s *jianghu leishu* we have looked at earlier. In fact, it is very likely that Yao's explicit claim of the "*jianghu*" label was inspired by Xiang's success and was meant to surpass Xiang through a shortcut. In *Highwayman of Shandong* that was serialized between 1923 and 1924, the word "*jianghu*" appeared everywhere in the text but not in the title. The same thing was true about the four interconnected novellas serialized in *Scarlet Rose* between 1926 and 1928. But when they were reorganized as a whole in 1929, a new title was designated: *The Mighty Gallants of the Rivers and Lakes*, which was apparently meant to resemble Xiang Kairan's *The Marvelous Gallants of the Rivers and Lakes*. Ever since that, "*jianghu*" almost became a standard element in Yao's headings, either in the title itself or in the marketing label "The Secrets of the *Jianghu*". True, he was a latecomer (and there were many other latecomers trying to claim the "*jianghu*" after Xiang's success), but he was not an imitator. Whereas Xiang Kairan's emphasis on the *qi*-ness 奇 (marvelous) of the *jianghu* easily leads to a sense of the fantastic, Yao's posture of telling secrets arouse an affect of realism. (An "affect of realism" should not be confused with "realism.") In Yao's representation, the *jianghu* is not a world of "swords-immortals" that easily invites suspicions, but the network of secret societies that presumably shares the living space with every reader and invokes their immediate curiosities

[39] Xu Sinian, "Yao Min'ai pingzhuan," pp. 39–40. Fan Boqun 范伯群, "Shankan jianghu banghui miwen de shuoshuren: Yao Min'ai" 善侃江湖幫會秘聞的說書人——姚民哀, in *Banghui mingjia Yao Min'ai daibiaozuo* 幫會名家姚民哀代表作, ed. Fan Boqun and Fan Zijiang 范紫江 (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe), p. 5.

and fears. Wandering back and forth between the alleged authenticity of the content and the presumably fictional form, one is stuck in the classic quagmire of a secret scroll: to what extent can I trust what is told in this book?

Below we will closely read *Highwaymen of Shandong*, the first lengthy work that anchored Yao's name and also one of the very first "modern martial arts fiction" in today's historiography. The book has a particular strong claim of authenticity because of its replicable timeliness. On May 6, 1923, a troop of bandits based in the Baodugu 抱犢崮 mountains of the Lincheng 臨城 county (in today's city of Zaozhuang, Shandong province) robbed a luxury "Blue Express" train passing by the area and took about two to three hundred passengers as hostages in response to the government's military operation against them. The outrage shocked the Beiyang government and Western countries alike (because among the hostages there were more than twenty foreigners), and it immediately took over the headlines of all the newspapers of the time. On June 2, the government and the bandits reached a peace settlement. The hostages were soon released, and the troop was renamed as a government army under the commandment of their leader Sun Meiyao 孫美瑤, who was appointed as a government officer.[40] In the same month, the semimonthly periodical *Detective World* 偵探世界 was established in Shanghai, and in the sixth issue, Yao Min'ai published the first "Section" 第一節 of *Highwaymen of Shandong*. The serialization went on intermittently and finally came to a conclusion at the sixth "Section" in 1924 at the twenty-second issue, with a huge gap between the third and the fourth "Sections." Upon the conclusion, the World Books released the book edition, with the original six "Sections" rearranged as a sixteen-*hui* 回 linked-chapter novel. Whereas numerous articles talking about the Lincheng Incident continuously appeared, Yao's work distinguished itself in that it did not comment on the incident itself or Sun Meiyao the "bandit chieftain"; instead, it focused on Meiyao's older brother Sun Meizhu 孫美珠, who was the precedent chieftain before being executed by the local government, and told the unknown stories about how Meizhu transited from a descent local gentleman to a bandit leader integrating all the gangs in the Baodugu mountains into an unified whole. This secret history, alleged to be based on Yao's inquires during his business trip to the area in 1921, proved to be very pervasive, or, at least, curiosity invoking. By 1929, the book already saw the fifth edition.

The book's power of persuasion (or, better still, its power of creating confusions), however, does not solely come from (in fact, it does not primarily come from) its relationship to the historical incident. Below I will focus on three unique parameters of the book that help arouse a realistic affect, blur the boundary between the factual and the fictional, and throw the readers into a neither-nor space that is called the *jianghu*: the voice, the structure, and the intertexuality. Noticeably, these parameters are consistently observed in all of Yao's later works and they would become more and more adeptly deployed, as will be briefly accounted with further examples.

A simulated storytelling context is one of the most characteristic features of the Chinese *xiaoshuo* tradition.[41] The Republican-era *xiaoshuo* writers (for example, Xiang Kairan)

[40] For the details of the incident, I rely on *Minguo diyi an* 民國第一案, ed. Wang Zuoxian 王作賢, He Rongdi 賀榮第 and Chang Wenhan 常文涵 (Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 1990), pp. 1–60. For a brief introduction in English and related academic sources, see John Christopher Hamm, *The Unworthy Scholar from Pingjiang*, p. 253.
[41] Patrick Hanan, *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 10.

continued this tradition and were adept in creating and manipulating an author-narrator's voice.[42] However, readers are also trained to recognize this simulatedness. It is as if there were a tacit agreement between the writer and the reader that the latter should not take everything literally. Yao Min'ai, however, put the readers in uncertainty about this "agreement" because he was widely known as an *actual* storyteller, not a simulated one. He was never implicit about his own voice. Quite the opposite, he seemed to enjoy letting the readers be aware that it was him, Yao Min'ao, instead of a vague "author-narrator," that was speaking about his painstakingly conducted investigation of, and sometimes even personal involvement in the stories. (By contrast, in Xiang Kairan's *Rivers and Lakes* there is not an "I"; the story is told omnisciently.) *Highwaymen of Shangdong* begins with this Yao's voice. After "complaining" that his revelation of the secrets of the Shandong bandits in a short story published in the previous year (meaning "The Sanyi Inn of the Qi Village" 齊村三義店 appearing in the *Banyue* 半月) did not get much attention from the readers, he switched to commenting on the Lincheng Incident and articulating his intention of revealing more secrets about the Shandong bandits:

> Now the incident has come to a conclusion, but I really can't resist doing this any longer: I will just write down in black and white — for the sake of my readers' connoisseurship — what I have heard in my ears and witnessed in my eyes when I was in Shandong last the year and the year before.[43]

It bears pointing out that this opening was deleted from the book edition which reformatted the story as a linked-chapter novel, very likely because for the editor such a voice sounded too impudently personal and lacked the *xiaoshuo* aesthetics. Yao continued to reveal that in April of 1921 he was sent by the foreigners in his company to survey the tobacco market along the desolate rural roads in the areas near Lincheng. "Liu the Little Pigtail" 劉小辮子, whose name was a real thing in the *jianghu* before he quit and became the manager of the local branch of the company, introduced Yao to "Shi the Carter" 趕腳史 and asked him to "respectfully" consult Shi during the trip. Yao was initially skeptical of the necessity of showing respects to a low-class tour guide, but very quickly he came to understand that his life depended on Shi's encyclopedic *jianghu* knowledge and his wide connections in the bandits' network. One day they were stopped by a gang of highwaymen. Shi asked Yao to remain silent and started an adept exchange of "spring cannon" (春典, the *jianghu* secret language) with the headman, which bought them a safe pass. After experiencing this together, Yao finally started consulting Shi with unreserved respects and Shi also began telling Yao everything about the secret *jianghu* world of the Shandong province, including, and most lengthily, the story of how Sun Meizhu had to abandon his gentry's life and built a united Baodugu bandits' headquarters which would be responsible for the Lincheng Incident in the future.

These revelations, through Yao's voice, were also revealed to the widest possible audience of the day: the reading public. Yao's voice would directly speak to the readers from time to time, reminding them of the authenticity of the secrets being told. These frequent reminders are also indicators of the structure of the book. If we look at the book edition that has reorganized the previous serializations as a linked-chapter novel, the structure of *Highwaymen of Shandong* might look quite confusing. The first six chapters ramble back and forth about the Yao

[42] John Christopher Hamm, *The Unworthy Scholar from Pingjiang*, p. 12.
[43] Yao Min'ai, "Highwaymen of Shandong, section 1," *Zhentan shijie* 偵探世界 06 (1923): 1.

and Shi's trip as well as various random anecdotes of the *jianghu*. Then, at chapter seven there is a sharp turn switching to Sun Meizhu, the presumed protagonist of the whole book. Sun's story comes to a crescendo in chapter fifteen, when he finally assumed his status as the leader of all the gangs in the Baodugu mountains in an elaborate banquet. Surprisingly, Sun's story sharply ended here. Yao's voice jumped out hastily and reported to the readers that Sun Meizhu would soon be sold out and executed. "The chieftainship of the Baodugu mountains then came to the hands of Sun Meiyao. To revenge for his brother's death, Meiyao did the notorious kidnap in Lincheng last year. The details of that incident have been extensively reported everywhere in the newspapers. I assume my readers have known that well and I won't bother to reiterate."[44] According to the traditional linked-chapter novel conventions, the first six chapters altogether could be read as something like a "wedge" or *xiezi* 楔子, a short narrative introducing the context and the motivation of the "story proper" or *zhengzhuan* 正傳, which, in this book, seems to be Sun Meizhu's story. However, the "wedge" here is disproportionately long, whereas the "story proper" ends before it really starts. This imbalanced and incomplete structure is a major flaw criticized by contemporary literary critics.[45]

I argue that this structural "flaw" might be one with the book edition that tried to fit itself into the shoes of the linked-chapter novel (the format that was being valorized as the standard for "martial arts fiction") but not one with Yao's original serialization. If we go back to look at the six "Sections" that were intermittently published in *Detective World*, it becomes clear that Yao was not in any sense trying to present a coherent and lengthy novel. Instead, under a straightforward agenda of revealing some secrets to the readers, Yao was trying to finish the unpacking of a certain bunch of secrets once a time. Whereas the book edition linked-chapter novel has sixteen chapter titles composed in classical couplets in line with the convention, the six original "Sections" were entitled in a very different fashion:

> Section 1: The Conversation I Overheard in a Rainy Night
> Section 2: Various Things about Bandits Told by the Carter
> Section 3: The Earlier Histories of the Sun Brothers and Other Fellows
> Section 4: The Early Contacts between the Sun Brothers and the Bandits
> Section 5: The Situation in Which Sun Meizhu Made His Mind to Become a Bandit
> Section 6: Sun Meizhu Becoming a Bandit

Guided by these straightforward and conversational titles, readers would find little confusion about the "structure" of the work. The six "Sections" are each a comparatively independent narrative with its own agenda, and they are loosely connected by Yao's voice, which routinely appears at the end of each "Section" saying something like "I have finished telling these things; let me take a break and I will say more in the next Section." Unlike the simulated storyteller's voice in a traditional linked-chapter novel that has to create a small suspense to arouse the readers' anticipation, Yao's voice rarely did that. Instead, his voice was always purported as a sincere and direct communication with the readers, confessing what he knew and what he did not for sure. Therefore, although the last four "Sections" all share the same protagonist Sun Meizhu and they all concern on Sun's transition from a gentleman to a bandit, the readers would hardly find themselves reading a novel that had to give Sun the main character a thoughtfully designed

[44] Yao Min'ai, *Highwaymen of Shandong*, the fifth edition (Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1929), p. 130.
[45] Xu Sinian, "Yao Min'ai pingzhuan," p. 17.

and well-rounded treatment. They would more likely feel like attending a series of loosely organized information sessions about the Shandong bandits with Sun as a representative.

I won't claim that here Yao has ingeniously designed this structure on purpose. It is more likely the case that this structure was a necessary result of Yao's particular writing agenda: if his purpose was not to write a novel, but rather, just to tell the readers what he thought deserved telling, while at the same time he had to comply with the periodical rhythm of the printing world, then it was only natural that *Highwaymen of Shandong* would end up appearing in such a "structure": a series of semi-independent "Sections" concerning roughly the same topic that are loosely connected by Yao's personal (not a simulated) voice. This "structure" might be unconscious here. But very soon, Yao would discover its usefulness as he consciously tried to establish himself as a "martial arts fiction" writer with his own selling point. In 1930, when the first installment of *The Mountain King in a Conical Hat* appeared in *Scarlet Rose* as the second part of "The Secrets of Jianghu" series, it started with "An Important Report at the Beginning of the Book" 本書開場的重要報告. In this "Report," Yao consciously reviewed his efforts of collecting "secret materials" about the *jianghu* over the years and threw out a mesmerizing list of *jianghu* figures whose unknown stories he had well inquired about. "In addition to Sun Meiyao, 'The Four Heavenly Kings of Dongkeng' 峒坑四大天王 and Jiang Boxian 姜伯先 whom I have talked about in my previous books," Yao noted, there were still more than fifty names awaiting to be revealed. Whereas it was attempting to put all these people's stories together into a coherent narrative, "a thick novel with hundreds of chapters will only become insipid. If I were the reader, I would find it excessive and won't have the patience to read from one page to the next." To avoid this, Yao continued: "I have decided to start making the *lianhuan'ge biecai xiaoshuo* 連環格別裁小說," which literally means "interlinked unconventional novels." Yao used the relationship between the new serialization *The Mountain King in a Conical Hat* and the recently concluded *Dragons of the Four Oceans* (1929–1930) as an example to demonstrate what he meant: the two books could each be read independently, but many threads in them were loosely connected. Yao envisioned that in the future more such novels would be created until all the fifty *jianghu* figures' stories were exhausted. "The aftermath of this book will be found in another one, and an irrelevant talk here will lead to an important incident there. The readers will have considerable freedom. They can choose to keep reading [the next book], or they can just stop here as they wish."[46]

Although Yao declared the birth of the "interlinked unconventional" structure here at this moment, he had in some way started practicing it in *Highwaymen of Shandong*. In addition to the fact that the structure of *The Highwaymen of Shandong* is arguably a "beta version" of the now released "official version," the book also contains many threads that will make it "interlinked" to Yao's future works. For example, when introducing "Liu the Little Pigtail," Yao briefly mentioned that he used to be a gangster under Zeng Guozhang 曾國璋, and he quit the *jianghu* after Zeng's gang lost in the competition with another gang led by Xu Baoshan 徐寶山. Our eyes will not stop on these two names for a second because in the book there are too many such "irrelevant talks." However, when we read *The Massacres of the Salt Smugglers* published in 1924, we will find out that the whole story is about the gang wars between Zeng and Xu, both were "salt smugglers."

Contemporary critics criticize the so-called "interlinked unconventional" structure for the same reason as they do with *The Highwaymen of Shandong*: it is random, incoherent, and with

[46] Yao Min'ai, "Ruomao shanwang" 箬帽山王, *Hongmeigui* 6.1 (1930): 1–8.

too many threads that are not properly organized.[47] I argue, however, that this structure is particularly effective in Yao's alleged agenda of revealing the "true *jianghu* secrets." The "interlinked unconventional novels" that Yao envisioned would have grown into an extensive network of books (if Yao's career and life did not sharply end). If the real *jianghu* (as Yao asserted) is an interlinked network of personas, romances and secrets that defy a clear organization, then such a seemingly messy network of books is actually the most realistic representation of the former. Of course, we don't want to essentialize a "real" *jianghu* and we won't naively take Yao's claim of authenticity literally. Then a better way to put it is that it is precisely through Yao's messy network of *jianghu* writings that the *jianghu* worldbuilding is concretized in the readers' imaginaries.

This "interlinked" quality is also one way to look at the intertextuality of Yao's *jianghu* writings. Yet, here by "intertextuality," the third parameter with which I approach Yao's manipulation of the boundary between the fictional and the factual, I am focusing more particularly on the intertextual relationship between Yao's works and the various forms of *jianghu* secret scrolls that were circulating in the time. Yao's works are famous for citing such materials, and this tendency is already very clear in *Highwaymen of Shandong*. In the book, Yao frequently digressed away from the story line and started elaborating various forms of *jianghu* knowledge, which can often be verified in other sources. Most of such knowledge is about the "codes" of the *jianghu*, including secret language, secret tokens, literary conventions (such as the format of secret letters and ritualistic documents), and rituals. For example, under the title of the second "Section" there is a line of smaller sized characters reading: "In the paragraphs below, the words in quotation marks are all vocabularies of the bandits' *qiekou* 切口."[48] *Qiekou*, literally "matching the mouths," is another argot for the *jianghu* secret language just like "spring canon." Narrating the scenario that Yao and Shi were stopped by a gang of bandits, Yao spent a full page and half documenting the conversation in secret language between Shi and the bandits. After they safely passed the "verbal test," Shi started telling Yao everything about the *jianghu* in this area, and that long monologue was an extensive exhibition of the secret language. In the fourth "Section," the bandits sent Sun Meizhu a "Proclamation of Alliance" 盟書. Yao meticulously detailed the presentation of the document, from the ribbons tying the cloth envelope to the design of the paper, and then he used another one and half pages to cite the text of the document in full.[49] In the last "Section" when Sun finally assumed his position as the leader of all gangs in the Baodugu mountains, the story was quite simple, yet Yao's writing was extensive, which painstakingly documented the organization of the bandits and the ritual procedures of the ceremony.[50]

How did Yao learn all this knowledge? It would be naive to take Yao's statement literally and believe he learned everything from Shi, unless we convince ourselves that Yao was working like a meticulous anthropologist, taking notes of Shi's lectures word by word, including every single vocabulary of the secret language and every character in the ritualistic documents. However, it is also unwise to assume that Yao made up everything out of a fiction writer's ingenuity. Once Shi asked Yao, after realizing that Yao knew a little bit secret language: "How come you know the 'spring canon'? Are you 'empty' (meaning someone who is not a part of the *jianghu*) or do you have your 'doorsill'? (meaning someone with a definite *jianghu* identity

[47] Xu Sinian, "Yao Min'ai pingzhuan," p. 30.
[48] Yao Min'ai, "Highwaymen of Shandong, section 2," *Zhentan shijie* 08 (1923): 1.
[49] Yao Min'ai, "Highwaymen of Shandong, section 4," *Zhentan shijie* 18 (1924): 5–7.
[50] Yao Min'ai, "Highwaymen of Shandong, section 6," *Zhentan shijie* 22 (1924): 10–20.

bound to certain gangs or societies)" Yao said he was "empty." Shi then said: "Your Jiangnan people don't lack 'empty smarties' anyway."[51] Shi's words suggested that the *jianghu* knowledge was becoming something not inapproachable in the Jiangnan area, the commercial center of the country. He was absolutely correct about this. As we have discussed earlier in this chapter, various *jianghu* secret scrolls were being produced in this period for popular consumption (though it was definitely not limited to Jiangnan). The popular consumption nurtured more and more "empty smarties" like Yao Min'ai, who would further reproduce the *jianghu* knowledge in various ways, and by doing so join the endless loop of the *jianghu* worldbuilding in the popular imaginary.

Seabed 海底 is an example particularly relevant here. *Seabed* is believed to be the secret document of Tiandihui 天地會, aka Hongmen 洪門, the most iconic secret society in China since the Qing dynasty. The name "Tiandihui" comes from a homonymic mutual aid society established in Fujian province in 1761, which was but one among many other mutual aid societies without particular political appeals that took shape in an undercurrent that could be traced back to the early Qing. However, the name gradually became a general label for a wide network of heterogenous secret societies across the country. Different origin myths also started circulating, and they commonly designated the Tiandihui a strong anti-Manchu ideology. Thanks to Sun Yat-Sen and other revolutionaries' promulgation, the most widely known origin story in the twentieth century dated the Tiandihui back to the iconic anti-Manchu figure Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 (1624–1662).[52] The story goes that in 1683, the Qing army started the battle annexing Taiwan, and Zheng Chenggong's grandson Zheng Keshuang 鄭克塽 (1670–1707) sealed the Tiandihui secret documents in an iron case and sank it deep to the seabed. A fisherman would uncover the iron case by accident, and in 1848 sell the documents to a Fujian local Guo Yongtai 郭永泰, which started the circulation of the *Seabed* in public.[53]

This story, of course, bears little credibility, but it testifies the popular assumed knowledge that the *Seabed* was a synonym for secret scrolls telling the histories, rules, languages, and ritual protocols of the Tiandihui (and other secret societies, since the name "Tiandihui" was often a general label covering heterogenous groups). In the Republican period, various versions of the *Seabed* were published. The Japanese revolutionary Shū Hirayama's 平山周 *The History of Chinese Secret Societies* 中國秘密社會史 published in 1912 heavily relied on such materials. Although it was presented as a semi-scholarly work, Hirayama's close relationship with Sun Yat-Sen and other Chinese revolutionaries as well as his narrative that integrated the Tiandihui with the Chinese revolution made his book particularly popular in the book market, and it served as an important source for some later compilations of *Seabed*.[54] The Republican era publications that used "Seabed" in the titles, based on my observation, include *Tongcao haidi* 通漕海底 (aka

[51] Yao Min'ai, "Highwaymen of Shandong, section 2," *Zhentan shijie* 08 (1923): 5.

[52] For the history of the Tiandihui in English language scholarship, see Dian H. Murray and Baoqi Qin, *The Origins of the Tiandihui: The Chinese Triads in Legend and History* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994). David Ownby, *Brotherhoods and Secret Societies in Early and Mid-Qing China: The Formation of a Tradition* (Stanford, Calif.: Standford University Press, 1996). B. J. Ter Haar, *Ritual and Mythology of the Chinese Triads: Creating an Identity* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 1998). For the most acclaimed Chinese language scholarship, see Qin Baoqi 秦寶琦, *Hongmen zhenshi*, revised edition 洪門真史, 修訂本 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2000).

[53] Qin Baoqi 秦寶琦, *Hongmen zhenshi*, pp. 4–5.

[54] For example, the 1940 *Seabed* complied by Li Zifeng 李子峰 used Hirayama's book as an important source. See Dou Changrong 竇昌榮, "Chuban shuoming" 出版說明, in *Haidi*, complied by Li Zifeng (Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe), p. 2.

Zengding miben san'an quanji 增訂秘本三菴全集, Qianqiushe 千秋社, 1932 second edition), Chengdu *Jianghu haidi* 成都江湖海底 (Chunlin Books 春林書社, 1936 new edition), *Haidi* 海底 (1940 Dadong Boosk 大東書局), *Haidi quanzhen* 海底詮真 (compiled by Wang Yunzi 王蘊茲, 1946), etc.[55] Of course, there were more books with other titles that revealed the same sort of knowledge.

There is no way to pinpoint what editions Yao had read, but he apparently was very familiar with the *Seabed*. In addition to the rich *Seabed* contents that Yao extensively cited in this book and in his future writings alike,[56] Yao also explicitly mentioned the *Seabed* in the narrative, not only diegetically as a repository of the *jianghu* knowledge and a token of initiation, but also nondiegetically as a direct communication with his readers. According to Yao's voice, although the Shandong bandits were based in a particular locale, they also belonged to the wider Tiandihui network and had their due positions in the grand Tiandihui genealogy. When Sun Meizhu finally arrived in the Baodugu mountains to assume his leadership, the headmen of the various gangs welcomed him enthusiastically and pledged their obedience. Sun responded with the following words in the secret language:

> Your dummy bother me is now at the *xuanmen* 玄門. This is the time for me to *baishan* 拜山, *guibiao* 歸標, and beg for the *Seabed* and the *yaoping* 腰平 from every *xiangzhu* 香主. I have to bother my honorable brothers to *zhangtuo* 掌坨 for me. How come my brothers instead give me the *wanli* 萬笠 to wear? Isn't this to make me *diuren* 丟人? I am afraid I will *za* 砸 when I *fangma* 放馬![57]

As always, our considerate reporter Yao Min'ai added a detailed parenthetical explanation to make sense of these alien words: *xuanmen* was one among the ten different kinds of bandit organizations; *baishan* meant to interact with the bandits; *guibiao* meant to become a bandit; *xiangzhu* were those senior and reputable bandits, *yaoping* was a cloth token that a gangster was supposed to keep for identity check; *zhangtuo* meant to take care of; *wanli* was the praise that one did not deserve; *diuren* meant to be embarrassed; *fangma* was one's first ever action of robbery; and *za* meant to fail. Very interestingly, Yao meticulously explained every single jargon in this monologue, even including "*diuren*" which was a pretty straightforward everyday vocabulary, but left "the *Seabed*" aside. It was as if Yao assumed the *Seabed* was such a familiar term for the readers and there was no need for explanation. In response to Sun's words, a *xiangtou* said: "Your already know the *Seabed* so well, yet you are this humble!"[58] One wonders whether Yao by making up this line was delivering a secret message of compliment to his "empty smarties" readers for their recognition of the intertextuality of his writing.

And his readers would not be indifferent to message of this sort. Yao Min'ai's personable voice was always there, speaking to them directly and with unquestionable sincerity, dragging

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[55] Some other titles according to secondary scholarship include: *Haidi* 海底 compiled by Chen Peide 陳培德, *Jianghu haidi* 江湖海底 published by Qunyingshe 群英社, and *Gailiang zhenben jianghu haidi* 改良真本江湖海底 proofread by Boai shanren 博愛山人. The source does not indicate the years of publication. See Dou Changrong 竇昌榮, "Chuban shuoming" 出版說明, in *Haidi*, complied by Li Zifeng (Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe), p. 2.
[56] Xu Sinian identifies many citations of the *Seabed* in Yao's *The Mighty Gallants of the Jianghu* and *The Thorny Jianghu*. See Xu Sinian, "Yao Min'ai pingzhuan," p. 22, 24.
[57] Yao Min'ai, "Highwaymen of Shandong, section 6," *Zhentan shijie* 22 (1924): 13.
[58] Yao Min'ai, "Highwaymen of Shandong, section 6," *Zhentan shijie* 22 (1924): 13.

them into a network called *jianghu* that continued richening as the "interlinked unconventional" structure kept concretizing, and reminding them of the intertextuality between this network and a much more extensive network of the *jianghu* secret scrolls. These "smarty empties" seasoned in the *xiaoshuo* tradition probably would not take everything delivered in Yao's voice literally, yet they at the same time were pushed to a confusing zone between the fictional and the factual. In 1941, three years after Yao's death, the scholarly reader Xu Wenying 徐文瀅 put it in this way:

> [Yao's works] are actually not martial arts fiction, but secrets of the *jianghu* 江湖秘聞. […] The writer's familiarity with the *jianghu* life and secret language is indeed amazing. It is as if he were himself a "traitor" from the secret societies, making a living inside but revealing the secrets outside.[59]

Yet, revealing secrets is a dangerous thing to do, and the price could be life. In the book edition, there is a last chapter 16 after the story proper is concluded. This chapter was presented as if it were just drafted for this book edition, and Yao's voice was in a memorial tone, starting with "the *Highwaymen of Shandong* that I wrote was once serialized in the *Detective World*." His recollection continued, saying that when it was halfway of the serialization, he received a letter from "Liu the Little Pigtail," from which he learned that "Shi the Carter" was recently killed by the bandits, because he had told too many secrets to the outsider, and what's even more insufferable, these secrets were now published in black and white! Liu advised Yao to stop the serialization to avoid a similar tragedy from happening. While Yao felt sorry for Shi, he had made out his mind: "For me, it was like the arrow was on the bowstring and there would be no turning back. So I went ahead and finished the serialization anyway."[60]

This was, however, not a genuine "recollection." The whole chapter is actually a slightly altered version of a note that appeared at the beginning of the fourth "Section" in the original serialization, and the purpose was to explain the huge time gap between the third and the fourth "Sections." In that version, Yao said after he learned about the death of Shi he decided to follow Liu's advice and stop telling more secrets, and hence there was no following up after the third "Section" for such a long time. But recently he heard that Sun Meizhu's brother Sun Meiyao had been executed and his army disbanded. Since there was no threat anymore, he decided to resume the serialization.[61]

This altered "recollection" (if detected by Yao's contemporary readers too) would immediately put the reliability of Yao's narrative in peril, which had already been wandering in a suspicious zone due to its *xiaoshuo* (instead of historiography) nature, no matter how sincerely Yao's voice had been presenting itself. One would reasonably doubt: was "Shi the Carter" really killed by the bandits, or did Yao just make up this story to excuse his outrageously procrastinated serialization? More critically, did "Shi the Carter" really exist? If not, then to what extent could one continue trusting the *jianghu* secrets which were all presumably revealed by this very person? The reader, however, would never be able to find out the answer, just like every other reader presented with a secret scroll: to buy it or not? That is the question. What is more ironic is that whether or not "Shi the Carter" was real, his death would turn out to be a rehearsal — or, at least, an allegory — of Yao's own death in 1938.

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[59] Xu Wenying, "Minguo yilai de zhanghui xiaoshuo" 民國以來的章回小說, *Wanxiang* 萬象 1.6 (1941): p. 125.
[60] Yao Min'ai, *Highwaymen of Shandong*, the fifth edition (Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1929) pp. 131–134.
[61] Yao Min'ai, "Highwaymen of Shandong, section 4," *Zhentan shijie* 18 (1924): 1–5.

Epilogue: "The Mystery of Yao Min'ai's Death"

On February 6, 1938, the Shanghai-based *News* 新聞報 published an article in memory of "the late Yao Min'ai" under an unidentifiable pseudonym. The article recollected that on November 16, 1937, Yao's hometown Changshu was occupied by the Japanese army following the KMT army's setback in the Battle of Shanghai. Yao was then a member of Changshu's resistance organization. While his colleagues all retreated, Yao refused to leave. He said Changshu was not only his hometown, but also an important epitome of the Chinese culture. Someone needed to sacrifice for this place. He then confronted the Japanese with no fear and was executed.[62]

This short article was like a stone dumped into a peaceful lake. Apparently, nobody at that time was aware that Yao Min'ai had already died, including the *Shanghai Newspaper* 上海報 that was still continuing a daily serialization of Yao's *Dragons and Tigers*. On the very next day, it joined in morning Yao's death and glorifying his sacrifice, by publishing a slightly revised version of the *News* article but explicitly addressing Yao as "the author of this newspaper."[63] In the rest the month, numerous articles were published in various newspapers of the area lamenting for Yao's death and recollecting how excellent he was as a writer, a storyteller, and now as a nationalistic hero.

Yet, a different voice started appearing toward the end of the month. On February 28, *Shanghai Newspaper* reported with a long title: "Mr. Yao Min'ai, for Whom All the Newspapers Have Been Lamenting and Thousands of People Sorrowing, Has Not Died. The Zhu Brother's Partnership Are Now Performing *The Western Chamber* in Tangshi." The news came from someone who just listened to Yao's performance in Tangshi, a small town near Changshu. The witness reported what he learned from Yao: after Yao confronted the Japanese and expressed his will to sacrificed, the Japanese were awed by his courage and released him. Yao then started to perform storytelling to promote his anti-Japanese thought, and he did so even when the Japanese soldiers were listening as audience. The newspaper celebrated Yao's heroism and rejoiced that "it seems our serialization of *Dragons and Tigers* won't have to come to an end."[64]

More reports like this followed up, and a harsh voice also started sounding, saying Yao was not only still alive, but also might have become a collaborationist. A collective condolence in a short time period became "the mystery of Yao's death," and few people seemed to be able to (or be willing to) make a definite conclusion.[65] As if to post a memo of the "mystery," *Shanghai Newspaper*'s serialization of *Dragons and Tigers* stopped on March 31 at the end of Chapter 64, with the last sentence reading "please see the next chapter for what will continue" 請瞧下回便知分曉, which, however, would never be updated again.[66]

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[62] Hong 鴻, "Bukan huishou hua Yushan: Zaojie qianhou de zhuishu, xiaoshuojia Yao Min'ai de sijie" 不堪回首話虞山: 遭劫前後的追述, 小說家姚民哀的死節, *Xinwenbao* 新聞報, February 6, 1938, page 7.

[63] "Ku Yushan: Benbao zuozhe Yao Min'ai xunjie" 哭虞山: 本報作者姚民哀殉節, *Shanghai bao* 上海報, February 7, 1938, page 2.

[64] Shuiping 水萍, "Gebao aidao wanren tongxi de Yao Min'ai xiansheng weiceng yuhai: Dixiong shuangdang xianzai Tangshi tanchang Xixiangji" 各報哀悼萬人痛惜的姚民哀先生未曾遇害: 弟兄雙檔現在塘市彈唱西廂記, *Shanghai bao* 上海報, February 28, page 11.

[65] For example, Zhaoxing 肇醒, "Yao Min'ai weisi" 姚民哀未死, *Shibao* 時報, March 3, 1938, page 5. Xijie 西階, "Yao Min'ai shishi zhimi" 姚民哀逝世之謎, *Jingbao* 晶報, March 23, 1938, page 3. Weimiao 微妙, "Yao Min'ai weisi" 姚民哀未死, *Jingbao*, March 25, 1938, page 3.

[66] Yao Min'ai, "Shuanglong fuhu ji, 848" 雙龍伏虎記 848, *Shanghai bao*, March 31, 1938, page 2.

Finally, on October 23, *Shun Pao* 申報 brought a message about Yao's death, and this time it looked definite. The newspaper's Changshu source reported that in the afternoon of October 19, a guerrilla troop under Xiong Jiandong's 熊劍東 command stopped two suspicious cars on their way from Changshu to Shanghai. The passengers were four or five Chinese and two Japanese, claiming themselves as businessmen going to Shanghai to replenish stock. The guerrilla believed. But as they inspected their luggage, a bunch of secret documents were revealed. They were from the Changshu collaborationist government and were addressed to the Japanese army in Shanghai, and the content was about requesting military reinforce for the purpose of annihilating the local guerrillas. The Japanese and the Chinese collaborationists were all executed by the guerrilla. Among them, one's name was Yao Min'ai.[67]

The Changshu collaborationist government denied the existence of the mission, according to the report. Yet, there seemed to be little doubt that Yao Min'ai was indeed executed.[68] Another round of public voices aroused in the newspapers. Of course, this time they were condemns instead of laments. However, among the overwhelming consensus there were still voices of mysteries. A local newspaper contested in November that Yao's corpse was never found.[69] In December it again announced, this time in the name of "Changshu people's public discourse" 常熟喧傳, that Yao was still alive. The guerrilla valued Yao's talent, so the person who was executed was actually a substitute in Yao's clothes.[70] There is, of course, no way to claim that this report was absolutely groundless. But the narrative just sounds so familiar and reminiscent of all the "substituted execution" stories in the Chinese *xiaoshuo* tradition. To believe it or not? That is the question.

[67] "Changshu Huajun xiji Rijun, Yao Min'ai yizao qiangjue" 常熟華軍襲擊日軍, 姚民哀已遭槍決, *Shun Pao* 申報, October 23, 1938, page 7.

[68] In the 1980s, many local seniors reported their memories about this incident, which roughly corroborated each other. See Shen Qiunong 沈秋農, "Yao Min'ai zhisi qianzheng" 姚民哀之死淺證, in *Changshu wenshi ziliao* 14 常熟文史資料第十四輯, edited by Changshu wenshi ziliao yanjiu wenyuanhui 常熟文史資料研究委員會 (1987): pp. 156–159.

[69] "Yao Min'ai shiti qijin wei xunhuo" 姚民哀尸體迄今未尋獲, *Xibao* 錫報, November 10, 1938, page 4.

[70] "Changshu xuanchuan Yao Min'ai shangzai renjian" 常熟喧傳姚民哀尚在人間, *Xibao*, 錫報, December 8, 1938, page 4.

Chapter 5: The Spiritual and the Global

> It has been told how the fishing boat Lao Can was in was damaged by the mob and sank with him into the depths of the sea. He realized that there was no hope for his life. All he could do was to close his eyes and wait. He felt like a leaf falling from a tree, fluttering to and fro. In a short time he had sunk to the bottom. He could hear a voice at his side calling to him, "Wake up, Sir! It is already dark. The food has been ready in the dining hall for quite a long time." Lao Can opened his eyes in great confusion, stared around him, and said, "Ay! After all it was but a dream."
>
> ——Excerpt from Chapter 2, *The Travels of Lao Can*[1]

The Travels of Lao Can opens by characterizing the protagonist as someone who has "wandered about by rivers and lakes for twenty years." Lao Can's actual "travels," however, do not begin until he wakes up from a dream at the beginning of the second chapter of the book. In the dream, which makes up most of the first chapter, Lao Can and two of his friends are visiting at the seaside Penglai Pavilion 蓬萊閣. They do not get to see the sunrise spectacle as they have hoped to because of the bad weather, but through the lens of an "one-thousand-mile mirror" 千里鏡 (a telescope), they see a wrecked ship swaying in a storm off the coast of the "Pacific Ocean." Realizing the crew lacks the proper technology to navigate the storm, they hire a fishing boat to send them "a reliable compass, a sextant, and several other nautical instruments." Yet, the people on the ship has become an anarchist mob by the time Lao Can and his friends board and present the instruments to the captain. A seaman starts yelling:

> "Captain! Captain! Whatever you do don't be tricked by these men. They've got a foreign compass. They must be traitors sent by the foreign devils! They must be Catholics! They have already sold our ship to the foreign devils, and that's why they have this compass. We beg you to bind these men and kill them to avoid further trouble. If you talk with them any more or use their compass, it will be like accepting a deposit from the foreign devils, and they will come to claim our ship."[2]

The mob then damages their fishing boat and sinks Lao Can and his friends into the sea. Lao Can then awakens from the dream.

This is probably the most famous dream scene in modern Chinese literature. As is commonly observed, this scenario is replete with national allegory. The wrecked ship is a metaphor for China, which urgently needed advanced foreign technologies to help it navigate the dangerous "Pacific Ocean" (and not the rivers and lakes), an apparent synecdoche for the new maritime international order, yet its people saw these technologies as soul-stealing instruments.[3] The author Liu E's political stance and his complex feelings about the foreign are revealed more than explicitly in this dream. Throughout his life, Liu E endeavored to import foreign

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[1] Shadick's 1952 translation, with the Romanization changed to *pinyin*. See Liu T'ieh-Yün, *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, trans. Harold Shadick (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1952), p. 12.

[2] Liu T'ieh-Yün, *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, trans. Harold Shadick (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1952), p. 11.

[3] This allegory is widely discussed in scholarship. See, for example, Theodore Huters, *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), p. 2. See also Rudolf G. Wagner, "China 'Asleep' and 'Awakening': A Study in Conceptualizing Asymmetry and Coping with It," *Transcultural Studies* 1 (2011): 9.

technologies and capital to save the country, which caused many to accuse him of being a "traitor" to the national interest. Lao Can did not die, because it was only a dream. But the author Liu E, when writing the story, did not know that he would die in a few years, and the reason for his tragedy would be precisely his "treasonable" collaboration with the foreigners.[4]

The dialectic of sleeping and awakening is an ancient narrative device in premodern Chinese literature (one could easily date it, like the "rivers and lakes," to the *Zhuangzi*, as we have shown in Chapter 4), but to deploy it for the purpose of national allegory is a particular late Qing invention.[5] Self-consciously or not, Liu E's bundling of the foreign, China's national fate and this dialectic has to be understood in the broader cultural context of the time. More than that, few have noticed that the novel also ends with a story about sleeping and awakening, and in this story, again, the foreign plays an interesting role. In Chapter 15, Lao Can comes across a legal case in which a family of thirteen people have mysteriously died with no obvious sign of trauma or poisoning. In Chapter 19, he is asked to play the role of "Sherlock Holmes" (in their own words) and solve the case. Lao Can says: "There is no doubt it is a question of poisoning, but it's no ordinary poison. […] I'm afraid it's some sort of Western poison, probably some sort of 'Indian Grass.' For a start I'm going to the provincial capital tomorrow. There is a Sino-European medicine shop 中西大藥房 there where I'll make inquiries."[6] In the shop, Lao Can realizes they only deal with prepared drugs sent from Shanghai and have no knowledge of Western medicine. He then goes on to consult a Roman Catholic father with expertise in medicine and chemistry, but the father also cannot help. The mystery is not solved until in the last chapter. It turns out the thirteen people did not die. They fell into deep sleep after being "poisoned" by a Chinese herb called *Qianrizui* 千日醉 (literally, drunk for a thousand days), and they finally wake up after Lao Can acquires from a mysterious hermit the antidote known as *Fanhuixiang* 返魂香 (literally, the soul-resurrecting fragrance).

Lao Can's initial speculation about "some sort of Western poison" deserves pondering. It is not only exemplary of the general perception of the power of Western drugs in the late Qing, but also reminiscent of a particular sort of fear regarding Western medicine: its sorcery-like efficacy in inducing a mesmeric or hypnotic state. In September of 1897, the English-language newspaper *North China Daily News* 字林西報 reported a rumor that was circulating among Chinese people in the Shandong and Tianjin areas: the foreigners would use some "stupefying drugs" to place the Chinese "in the groove of hypnotism," and it was believed that more than five hundred "mesmerists" were sent from Tianjin to everywhere of the country to abduct children. In

[4] In 1908, Liu was arrested by the Yuan Shikai government and exiled to Xinjiang, where he died in despair in the next year. The reason for Liu's arrestment was a mystery for long time. Recent scholarship has concluded that Liu was arrested for collaborating with the Japanese and "smuggling" Chinese salt to Japan and Korea. The salt in question was produced in the Lushun-Dalian area, which was then a Japanese concession. Liu thought his business was helping protect the Chinese national interest from being fully seized by the Japanese, yet from the central government's point of view, Liu was a collaborationist smuggler. See Liu Sufen 劉素芬, "Liu E lihuo yuanyin zaitan" 劉鶚罹禍原因再探, *Journal of Yangzhou University (Humanities & Social Sciences)* 22.5 (Sept 2018): 80–92.

[5] Rudolf G. Wagner, "China 'Asleep' and 'Awakening': A Study in Conceptualizing Asymmetry and Coping with It," *Transcultural Studies* 1 (2011): 4–138.

[6] Liu T'ieh-Yün, *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, trans. Harold Shadick (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1952), pp. 208–209.

June of 1900, the same newspaper reported that foreigners in Wuhan would be suspected by Chinese people as "mesmerizing kidnappers."[7]

Of course, we cannot pinpoint whether Liu E had "mesmerism" and "hypnotism" particularly in his mind when he wrote the story. However, we also cannot overlook the striking resemblance between the "stupefying drugs" in these rumors and Lao Can's suspicions regarding "Western poison," and more broadly, the resemblance between the sleeping-awakening dialectic in the novel and the literal meaning of "mesmerism" and "hypnotism" in their Chinese rendition: *cuimianshu* 催眠術: the art of accelerating sleep. *The Travels of Lao Can* is therefore again connected into the broader context of occult knowledge production through a previously unremarked node. This chapter starts from this node and explores the popular circulation of the knowledge about mesmerism and hypnotism in the late Qing and Republican era.

Mesmerism and hypnotism were often conflated with other occult practices such as spirit photography and spirit writing (*fuji* 扶乩) under a vaguely defined rubric known as the *lingxue* 靈學 (roughly, mentalism or spiritualism) in this period. Through most of the twentieth century, *lingxue* was criticized as "superstition" or "pseudoscience" and hence received little academic attention. Recently, however, more and more scholarly works have emerged to readdress this historical movement, which coincides with a global academic trend of reevaluating the relationship between occultism and modernity.[8] Breaking through the mechanical dichotomy between science and superstition, scholars today see a more complicated relationship between the two, arguing that the *lingxue* often appeared as a scientific study par excellence. It came to China from the West (often mediated by Japan) together with every other modern scientific knowledge; it followed scientific protocols in advancing its studies (though sometimes in a specious way); and most noticeably, it claimed to redress already existing forms of scientism for their over-emphasis on materialism, which for many was responsible for the global human disasters exemplified by the World War I. *Lingxue*, finally, promised to usher in a more advanced age of science in which materialism and spiritualism would be unified.[9]

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[7] Jia Liyuan 賈立元, "Cuimianshu zai jindai Zhongguo de chuanbo (1839–1911)" 催眠術在近代中國的傳播 (1839–1911), *Kexue wenhua pinglun* 科學文化評論 17.3 (2020): 56. Jia notes, however, that the Chinese people probably did not use terms like "hypnotism" or "mesmerism."

[8] Works on China will be introduced as the chapter goes on. Works on the relationship between the occult and modernity in other countries include: John W. Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith: Mesmerism, Spiritism, and Occultism in Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007). Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2007). Alison Butler, *Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic: Invoking Tradition* (Basingstoke and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Sofie Lachapelle, *Investigating the Supernatural: From Spiritism and Occultism to Psychical Research and Metapsychics in France, 1853–1931* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). Julia Mannherz, *Modern Occultism in Late Imperial Russia* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2012). Recent works particularly on mesmerism and hypnotism include: Martin Willis and Catherine Wynne ed., *Victorian Literary Mesmerism* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006). Amy Lehman, *Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance: Mediums, Spiritualists and Mesmerists in Performance* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2009). William Hughes, *That Devil's Trick: Hypnotism and the Victorian Popular Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015). Emily Ogden, Credulity: A Cultural History of US Mesmerism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018).

[9] This approach toward the *cuimianshu* and the *lingxue* is commonly shared by existing scholarship on this topic in the new century. Noticeable works include: Luan Weiping 欒偉平, "Jindai kexue xiaoshuo yu linghun: you *Xin Faluo xiansheng tan* shuokaiqu" 近代科學小說與靈魂：由「新法螺先生譚」說開去, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue congkan* 3 (2006): 46–68. Huang Ko-Wu 黃克武, "Minguo chunian Shanghai de Lingxuehui: Yi Shanghai Lingxuehui weili" 民國初年上海的靈學研究: 以「上海靈學會」為例, *Academia Sinica jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan*

This chapter shares this scholarly orientation, but it has a different focus. Whereas existing scholarship mostly studies *lingxue* per se, addressing where it was from, what it was, who (or what organizations) studied it and how to evaluate it, this chapter is acquitted of this burden (thanks to the groundbreaking work of this scholarship) and focuses instead on a particular aspect of the *lingxue*, namely the medium for the transmission and dissemination of this kind of knowledge. In the several decades after the beginning of the twentieth century, numerous *lingxue* materials were published. Compared to the other forms of secret scrolls that often had (or claimed to have) old origins, these "*lingxue* secret scrolls" (so will I call them in the rest of the chapter), born in the new era of scientism, distinguished themselves in two most noticeable ways. The first has to do with agency and authorship. Various *lingxue* "learned societies," instead of any particular individuals or publishers, played a decisive role in the production of the *lingxue* secret scrolls. These societies published collections of spirit photographs, how-to books on various *lingxue* practices, and periodicals that consistently updated the knowledge in question and documented the activities of these societies. The second has to do with dissemination. In addition to the regular publisher to market distribution that we have examined in other chapters, many of these societies exploited new global postal and finance networks and adopted what was called *hanshou* 函授, or correspondence education, as the medium through which their *lingxue* secret scrolls were disseminated. To take just one of these learned societies, the Chinese Institute of Mentalism, as an example, its correspondence education network not only covered Japan and Southeast Asia, regions that had long been within the Sino-cultural sphere, but also extended to Canada, the United States, Peru, Cuba, South Africa, and Australia. The China-born, bookish form of secret scroll, "modernized" by the "learned societies," went global.

To contextualize these *lingxue* secret scrolls, I begin with a concise history of mesmerism, hypnotism, *lingxue* studies in China's late Qing and Republican eras. I then shift to the Chinese Institute of Mentalism as a case study. By way of introducing the history of the society, I will focus on its establishment of a global network of correspondence education through which its *lingxue* secret scrolls were disseminated. Lastly, I will read some of the correspondence from distance learners that were routinely published in the society's periodicals. (These distance learners in this sense were not only readers of the secret scrolls but also collaborators in producing the secret scrolls.) This correspondence came from countries all over the world, and many of these letters were fond of documenting spiritual "international travels" those in a state of hypnosis had experienced after their "clairvoyance" was activated by the hypnotists. To be sure, it would be naive to take these sources as sheer fact (they were clearly selected; some of them might have been forged by the society; one must also consider the credibility of the "spiritual travels" they document). But for the innumerable readers, these materials not only opened up a new space called the spiritual (or the mental), but also a new world that referred to the global, a world that was essentially different from "the foreign" in Liu

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中央研究院近代史研究所集刊 55 (2007): 99–136. Li Xin 李欣, *Zhongguo lingxue huodong (1906–1935) yanjiu* 中國靈學活動 (1906–1935)研究 (Peking University PhD dissertation, 2009). Huang Ko-Wu, "Lingxue yu jindai Zhongguo de zhishi zhuanxing: Minchu zhishifenzi dui kexue, zongjiao yu mixin de zaisikao" 靈學與近代中國的知識轉型: 民初知識分子對科學、宗教與迷信的再思考, *Sixiangshi* 思想史 2 (2014): 121–196. Zheng Guo 鄭國, *Biandong shehui xiade xinyang fenhua: Shanghai Lingxuehui yanjiu* 變動社會下的信仰分化: 上海靈學會研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2018). Zhang Bangyan 張邦彥, *Jingshen de fudiao: Jindai Zhongguo de cuimianshu yu dazhong kexue* 精神的複調: 近代中國的催眠術與大眾科學 (New Taipei City: Linking Publishing Company, 2020). Jia Liyuan, "Cuimianshu zai jindai Zhongguo de chuanbo (1839–1911)."

E's late Qing narrative. These new readers, unlike Lao Can, were able to (or, at least, were offered the possibility that they might) have mastery over sleeping and awakening, instead of struggling in a dream; they were also able to (or, at least, were invited to imagine to) see themselves as modernized agents in a global network, instead of being shipwrecked in a littoral zone between the foreign and the self.

Mesmerism, Hypnotism, and *Lingxue* Studies

To talk about "mesmerism, hypnotism, and *lingxue* studies" is an adventure into the complicated discursive network produced by way of late Qing and Republican translingual practices. First, "mesmerism" and "hypnotism," although often confused with each other in general use, are two different entities. The former is named after the Austrian physician Franz Mesmer (1734–1815) who invented "animal magnetism" and lit up a social craze for it in France right before the great revolution, as Robert Darnton has vividly portrayed in his classical work.[10] Since its birth, mesmerism was rejected by the authorities as a pseudoscience. "Hypnotism," by contrast, was popularized by the Scottish surgeon James Braid (1795–1860) with the precise purpose of denouncing Mesmer's "pseudoscientific" theory and constructing the study of human trance-states as a rational field in modern science. The British hypnotist John M. Bramwell commented in 1906: "It is only by studying the work of the later mesmerists, and contrasting it with that of Braid, that we are able to understand how hypnotism arose, shook itself free from the fallacies and misconceptions which preceded its birth, and finally established itself among the sciences."[11] This terminological difference was observable in Japanese initially when these ideas traveled to Japan in the Meiji period, but very soon they were conflated within one term: *saimin jutsu* 催眠術.[12] No later than 1898, the same compound entered the Chinese language as *cuimianshu*.[13]

This translingual conflation had critical consequences. Whereas in English a reader can *to some extent* detect whether the topic in question has to do with the meticulously defined empirical science (hypnotism) or the popular discourse with an occult dimension (mesmerism), in Chinese this distinction becomes impossible. In addition, the literal meaning of *cuimianshu*, "the art of accelerating sleep," has a strong power of "suggestion" (to borrow a term from hypnosis), which further forges unexpected new associations between this term and other ideas in the Chinese context. As a result, *cuimianshu* became a contested discourse in the popular culture of the time. Many prominent writers of popular literature included *cuimianshu* scenarios in their works, yet their interpretations were very different, and often determined by which node they had entered into this discursive network. For example, in Xu Nianci's 徐念慈 (1875–1908) 1905 science fiction *New Tales of Mr. Braggadocio* 新法螺先生譚, *cuimianshu* was reported to be taught in a Shanghai seminar, and the most interesting part in the curriculum was called *dongwu ciqixue* 動物磁氣學 (animal magnetism), suggesting that in Xu Nianci's mind the

[10] Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968).
[11] For a history of hypnotism before the twentieth century, see John M. Bramwell, *Hypnotism: Its History, Practice and Theory* (London: Alexander Moring, Limited, 1906), pp. 3–39. For this specific quotation, see page 4.
[12] In some Meiji sources, "Mesmerism" was translated as "*dōbutsu jishaku ryoku* 動物磁石力" and "*dōbutsu denki* 動物電氣." Osawa Kenji 大沢謙二 (1852–1927) translated "hypnotism" as "*masui jutsu* 魔睡術." There were also many other alternative terms in popular use, of which we cannot tell whether they meant "mesmerism" or "hypnotism." See Zhang Bangyan, *Jingshen de fudiao*, 41–42.
[13] Jia Liyuan, "Cuimianshu zai jindai Zhongguo de chuanbo (1839–1911)," 58.

cuimianshu was a category including mesmerism.[14] By contrast, in Wu Jianren's 吳趼人 (1866–1910) *Amazing Tale of the Art of Electricity* 電術奇譚 (serialized between 1903 and 1905), *cuimianshu* was depicted as something practiced by a well-trained doctor for the purpose of scientistic research. One might remark that such a representation resembles the portrayal of hypnotism in the Victorian British novels, and the reason is that Wu's work was indeed originally a Victorian British novel. It was translated into Japanese first; the Japanese version was summarized in classical Chinese, and then Wu finally localized it as a Chinese fiction.[15] Thus far we can still match *cuimianshu* to either mesmerism or hypnotism. But in Xu Zhuodai's 徐卓呆 (1881–1958) short story *The Secret Room* 秘密室 (1912), a man subjected to *cuimianshu* sleeps for eight-four years before being waken up, a span rather difficult for either mesmerism or hypnotism to manage. Apparently, the term *cuimianshu* here just came in handy for the writer to make sense of the ancient "death and resurrection" motif in traditional Chinese literature in a new age of scientism. Perhaps most interestingly, both Lu Shi'e 陸士諤 (1878–1944) and Chen Jinghan 陳景韓 (1878–1965) in their stories invented something called *cuixingshu* 催醒術, literally "the art of accelerating awakening." This *cuixingshu*, however, had nothing to do with mesmerism or hypnotism whatsoever, but was coined to invoke the very "sleeping-awakening" national allegory that we have discussed earlier.[16]

The problem becomes even more complicated if we try to clarify the relationship between *cuimianshu* and *lingxue*, literally, "the studies of the spirit." The word "*lingxue*" was often interchangeable with terms like "*jingshen xue*" 精神學, "*linghun xue*" 靈魂學, "*xinling xue*" 心靈學, and etc.[17] As a vague rubric, it could correspond to a wide range of knowledge prioritizing the "spiritual" over the "material," from the traditional Chinese religious interpretations of the "immortals," "ghosts" and "souls," to the recently imported Western knowledge that we now might call the occult: spiritualism, mentalism, psychical research. Of course, it also meant the empirical science that we now call psychology.[18] (In fact, the abovementioned "occult" branches of knowledge always considered themselves as "empirical sciences.") It was only with the rise of *xinlixue* 心理學 in modern universities that the boundary was concretized between psychology as science and *lingxue* as pseudoscience (at best) or superstition (at worst).[19]

Cuimianshu in China was from the beginning intertwined with the *lingxue* discourse. Liang Qichao 梁啟超, one of the earliest intellectuals who discussed *cuimianshu* in Chinese, basically conflated the two, observing: "'*Guixue*' 鬼學 (studies of ghosts) can be called in a more scholarly way '*hunxue*' 魂學 (the studies of the soul) […] In English it is called

[14] Luan Weiping, "Jindai kexue xiaoshuo yu linghun," 49.
[15] Jiang, Xiaoling 姜小凌, "Mingzhi yu wan Qing xiaoshuo zhuanyi zhong de wenhua fansi: Cong *Xinwen maize* (Juchi Youfang) dao *Dianshu qitan* (Wu Jianren)" 明治與晚清小說轉譯中的文化反思——從《新聞買子》(菊池幽芳)到《電術奇譚》(吳趼人)," in *Wuhua yanjiu, diwuji* 文化研究 (第五輯), ed. Tao Dongfeng 陶東風 (Nanning: Guanxi Normal University Press, 2005), pp. 193–207.
[16] See Luan Weiping "Jindai kexue xiaoshuo yu linghun," 62–63.
[17] Zhang Bangyan, *Jingshen de fudiao*, 192–193.
[18] Zhang Bangyan observes that "*xinlingxue*" was frequently used to translated "mental philosophy" and "psychology" in the late Qing. Luan Wenping also observes that many late-Qing *xinlingxue* books talked about the knowledge that now we would call psychology. See Zhang, *Jingshen de fudiao*, 193, and Luan, "Jindai kexue xiaoshuo yu linghun," 55.
[19] Zhang Bangyan, *Jingshen de fudiao*, 194.

'Hypnologic,' and Japanese translates it as '*cuimianshu*.'"[20] Yet, in practice these terms were not used completely interchangeably. To better understand the complexity of the problem, we need to shift from discourses to practices, and see how the various *lingxue* "learned societies" of the time produced these forms of knowledge.

Between the 1910s and the 1930s, at least twenty-three *lingxue* organizations were established in China.[21] The nomenclature was diverse, but they mostly included the keywords "*cuimianshu*," "*cuimianxue*" 催眠學, as well as "*lingxue*" and its various alternative expressions. Existing scholarship has tended to treat these organizations in two categories according to whether a society's major activity was *cuimianshu* or the traditional Chinese occult practices, most noticeably the *fuji* spirit writing.[22] This division is in general valid. For some organizations, most noticeably the Chinese Institute of Mentalism and the Chinese Institute of Spiritualism 中國精神學會, *cuimanshu* was throughout the predominant theme around which everything else was organized, whereas for some others, for example the Shanghai Lingxue Society 上海靈學會 and the Beijing-based Wushanshe 悟善社, *fuji* spirit writing played a central role. However, this division risks invoking an unnecessary China-West dichotomy, as if there were two different kinds of *lingxue*. In fact, the boundary was never clear. The *fuji* practitioners did not see themselves as simply continuing a Chinese occult tradition. Instead, they made sense of this ancient practice in light of the new "scientific" understanding of human spirit and saw the *fuji* as a Chinese counterpart to Western *cuimianshu*.

Yang Xuan 楊瑄 is a case in point. Yang Xuan started participating in the *fuji* in his hometown Wuxi due to family influence but stopped doing so as he later became a school principal. In 1916, he "studied the philosophy of the spirit and the principles of the soul, and also dabbled in the arts like the *cuimianshu* and telepathy."[23] In 1917, his father Yang Guangxi 楊光熙 became one of the founders of the Shanghai Lingxue Society. At that time, he and his brother Yang Zhenru 楊真如 were helping to establish a Wuxi branch of Bao Fangzhou's 鮑芳洲 Chinese Institute of Spiritualism — a major rival of the Chinese Institute of Mentalism — and therefore they frequently commuted between Wuxi and Shanghai. The brothers then shouldered the most important responsibility in the Shanghai Lingxue Society's *fuji* spirit writing: to hold the wooden stick that "wrote" on a sand table.[24]

On the other hand, the *cuimianshu* practitioners would never exclude *fuji* from their explorations. In 1922, Bao Fangzhou's rival Yu Pingke 余萍客, the leader of the Chinese Institute of Mentalism, published his article "The Studies of the Spirit" 心靈研究 in the organization's periodical the *Xinling* 心靈. In this article, he outlined six major subjects for the field in question: "telepathy, *cuimianshu*, clairvoyance, monsters and ghosts, spirit mediums like the *fuji*, and miracles as recorded in history." He particularly focused on the fifth, spirit mediums. Instead of simply explaining it as a trance state induced by human suggestion (as today's psychologists would do), Yu explicitly confirmed the existence of the "soul" (he used

[20] Luan Weiping, "Jindai kexue xiaoshuo yu linghun," 56.
[21] Li Xin, *Zhongguo lingxue huodong (1906–1935) yanjiu*, 12.
[22] Li Xin has made this division explicitly, see Li Xin, *Zhongguo lingxue huodong (1906–1935) yanjiu*, 12. Other scholars generally share this categorization, because it is indeed a useful thing to do for the sake of studying intellectual history and history of science. But of course, these scholars have also noticed the complicated relationship between the two, instead of treating them as if they were mutually exclusive.
[23] Huang Ko-Wu, *Minguo chunian Shanghai de linghunxue yanjiu*, 110.
[24] Yang Guangxi 楊光熙, "Shengdetan yuanqi" 盛德壇緣起, *Lingxue congzhi* 靈學叢志 1.1 (1918): 6.

linghun 靈魂 and *xinling* 心靈 interchangeably) and even described how the "soul" detached itself from the body when one died.[25]

Somehow Yu Pingke missed spirit photography in the six subjects (or maybe he thought it belonged to the fourth, "monsters and ghosts"). But in fact, spirit photography was a very important topic for both his organization and the so-called *fuji* societies, which again makes it hard to draw a clear boundary between the two. In the same issue of the *Xinling*, we see an eulogy mourning the recent death of Wu Tingfang 伍廷芳 (1842–1922), the man who is usually credited to have introduced spirit photography from the US to China, followed by two spirit photographs with the caption "The Westerners' Photos of the Ghosts" 西人關亡攝影.[26] Similar photographs frequently appeared in the periodical, sometimes accompanied by elaborative essays.[27] Similarly, the "immortals" at the Shanghai Lingxue Society also knew about this "Dr. Wu" 伍博士 very well. They "communicated" extensively about spirit photography with the society members during the *fuji*, and some of them even had their photos taken and sold to the public.[28]

In outlining some of the overlaps between the Shanghai Lingxue Society and the Chinese Institute of Mentalism, the two major *lingxue* societies that are usually seen as contrary in their *lingxue* approaches, I do not mean to argue they bore more similarities than differences. Instead, I hope to highlight the unruliness of the knowledge network consisting of nodes like *lingxue*, *cuimianshu*, *fuji*, spirit photography, and various other discourses, "Chinese" or "Western," that prioritized the spiritual over the material. All societies were suspended on this knowledge network, and they were connected to each other through multiple nodes. Previous scholars, working in fields such as intellectual history and history of science, have grouped these nodes and fit them into a historical narrative (the intellectual history of "the science-metaphysics debate" 科玄之爭, or the prehistory of modern psychology, for example), often at the expense of drawing harsh boundaries and cutting off existing associations. The current chapter does not carry this burden and is therefore able to approach this knowledge network from a different perspective. From this perspective, there is indeed an essential difference between the Shanghai Lingxue Society and the Chinese Institute of Mentalism. The difference is not about their respective *lingxue* knowledge itself (because they are to a great extent interconnected though not

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[25] Yu Pingke 余萍客, "Xinling yanjiu" 心靈研究, *Xinling* 心靈 (fall 1922): 6.

[26] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Xiren guanwang sheying" 西人關亡攝影, *Xinling* (fall 1922): preliminaries, not paginated.

[27] The Chinese Institute of Mentalism's engagement with spirt photography is understudied. Li Xin has a one-page sketch, see Li Xin, *Zhongguo lingxue huodong (1906–1935) yanjiu*, 72–73. Some spirit photographs and essays published in the *Xinling* include: 1924 fall issue: nine photos in the preliminaries (not paginated) and an essay by Li Shengfu 李聲甫, "Xinling sheying" 心靈攝影 (18–19). 1925 issue: six photos in the preliminaries (not paginated) and two essays by Ping Qing 平情, "Xinlingti touying" 心靈體投影 (18–22) and "Sishi zhi linghun sheying" 死時之靈魂攝影 (33–34). 1931 memorial issue: three photos in the preliminaries (not paginated) and three essays by Yu Pingke, "Huoren de linghun sheying" 活人的靈魂攝影 (114), "Sishi linghun tuoli routi qingxing zhi guancha" 死時靈魂脫離肉體情形之觀察 (115–116), and "Linghun sheying tan" 靈魂攝影談 (117–123).

[28] The Shanghai Lingxue Society's spirit photography practice has been well studied. Except the aforementioned studies on the society as a whole, works focusing on this particular practice include: Wang Hongchao 王宏超, "Xu Banhou linghun zhaoxiang shijian" 徐班侯靈魂照相事件, *Shucheng* 書城 (July 2015): 101–107. Wang Hongchao, "Shenjie lingguang: Shanghai Shengdetan zhi linghun zhaoxiang huodong" 神界靈光: 上海盛德壇之靈魂照相活動, *Shanghai wenhua* 上海文化 6 (2016): 67–76. In English, see Shengqing Wu, Photo Poetics: Chinese Lyricism and Modern Media Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), chapter 5.

entirely overlapped, as explained above), but about the medium through which their knowledge was transmitted and disseminated. We will start with examining the history of the Chinese Institute of Mentalism, which has never been properly addressed in English, before moving on to its global network of correspondence education through which its *lingxue* secret scrolls were disseminated.[29]

The Chinese Institute of Mentalism

A striking feature of the mushrooming *lingxue* societies in modern China is that they heavily exploited the new print culture to produce their own *lingxue* secret scrolls.[30] The Shanghai Lingxue Society is a well-studied case in this regard.[31] The founding members of the society included two prominent publishers of the time, Lubi Kui 陸費逵 (1886–1941), the founder of Chunghwa Books (Zhonghua shuju) and Yu Fu 俞復 (1856–1943), the founder of Wenming Books. Between 1918 and 1919, Chunghwa Books published the journal *Lingxue congzhi* 靈學叢志, mostly to document the conversations between its members and the immortals in the course of their *fuji* activities. Lubi Kui, who was responsible for the publication of the periodical, saw it as a defining feature that distinguished the society from traditional *fuji* activities, because, he elaborated, even though traditional *fuji* activities occasionally garnered some useful knowledge, "they could not share the knowledge with the whole society and the whole nation due to the restrictions of poor printing technology and inconvenient transportation."[32]

The Shanghai Lingxue Society and its *Lingxue congzhi* have received much attention because they indeed bore great significance from the perspective of intellectual history and history of science (which are predominant in current scholarship, as stated above). In addition to Lubi Kui and Yu Fu, the founding members and frequenters of the society also included famous personas such as Yan Fu 嚴復 (1854–1921), Ding Fubao 丁福保 (1874–1952, a Buddhist scholar and a pioneering promotor of modern medicine) and Wu Zhihui 吳稚暉 (1865–1953, the linguist who led the first ever national enterprise of standardizing the Chinese language). During the New Cultural Movement, the society and its "superstitious" activities received harsh criticism from the *La Jeunesse* 新青年 group including Chen Duxiu and Lu Xun. The language of this criticism would directly shape the discourses in the great 1923 "Science-Metaphysics Debate."[33]

However, if we leave aside this "historical significance" and look at actual social influence, then the Shanghai Lingxue Society and its *Lingxue congzhi* were hardly successful.

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[29] The only sketch of the history of the Chinese Institute of Mentalism is found in Weihong Bao, Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an Affective Medium in China, 1915–1945 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), pp. 94–95. This sketch is based on Li Xing's scholarship in Chinese.

[30] For a list of the publications of the *lingxue* societies, see Li Xin, *Zhongguo lingxue huodong (1906–1935) yanjiu*, 12–16.

[31] Most aforementioned scholarship on the *lingxue* use the Shanghai Lingxue Society as a primary case. The society has also received some attention in the English language academia. For a short introduction, see Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 103. For its practice of the *fuji* spirit writing, see Matthias Schumann, "Science and Spirit-Writing: The Shanghai Lingxuehui 靈學會 and the Changing Fate of Spiritualism in Republican China," in *Text and Context in the Modern History of Chinese Religions: Redemptive Societies and Their Sacred Texts*, ed. Philip Clart, David Ownby, and Chien-chuan Wang (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 126–172.

[32] Lubi Kui 陸費逵, "Lingxue Congzhi yuanqi" 靈學叢志緣起, *Lingxue congzhi* 1.1 (1918): 3.

[33] Huang Ko-Wu, "Lingxue yu jindai Zhongguo de zhishi zhuanxing," 178–87.

The society was short-lived, with only eighteen issues of the journal published (often behind schedule) between 1918 and 1919. The journal had a small number of copies and was circulated mainly among its members. Turning to 1919, "the number of the members decreased, and the journal did not sell well," which soon led to the termination of the publication.[34] The Lingxue Society's failures show that cooperation with the print industry alone does not guarantee the successful dissemination of secret knowledge. The case of the Chinese Institute of Mentalism, by contrast, showcases how the power of print could be maximized when it met the right means of dissemination.

The Chinese Institute of Mentalism was born with transnational genes. On the day of the Dragonboat Festival (June 1) of 1911, Zheng Hemian 鄭鶴眠, a Chinese man who had recently returned from the US to Japan, organized a "mentalism club" 心靈俱樂部 in Yokohama with several overseas Chinese students.[35] It was meant to be a small coterie in which a few students explored their shared interests in *cuimianshu.* In the next year, the Republic of China was established. To exercise their "freedom of association" as citizens of the new Republic, they decided to make the club a formal society and renamed it *Xinling hui* 心靈會, literally the society of spiritualism. Under Zheng's leadership, Fang Minle 方民樂 was responsible for

[34] At the beginning of the twelfth issue (volume 2, no. 2), the journal reminded its members that it was the time to renew their annual membership. The notice was repetitively published at the thirteenth and fourteenth issues, but apparently, it received little response. At the beginning of the fifteenth issue (volume 2, no. 5), the journal announced that the twentieth issue would be the last one due to the reason as cited above. This announcement repetitively appeared until the eightieth issue, which was the last one ever published.

[35] Existing scholarship has different statements of the year when the club was established. Li Xin uses the year 1908. See Li Xin, *Zhongguo lingxue huodong (1906–1935) yanjiu*, 34. Zhang Bangyan uses the year 1910, and he also notes that in a different source the year is 1913. See Zhang, *Jingshen de fudiao*, 131 and 139. My dating of 1911 is based on multiple evidence. As will be elaborated below, the society's history consists of two periods, the Japan period and the Shanghai period. In the Shanghai period, the narrative of the society's history has the tendency to make Yu Pingke the center of the stage. But in the important 1916 special issue of the *Xingling* published in the Japan period, Yu Pingke's name does not show up at all. Apparently, Yu Pingke was not a member (or, at least, not a noticeable member) by 1916. But after he became the president, a new narrative centered around him emerged. The society in the Shanghai period was also in a great tension with its rival the Chinese Institute of Spiritualism, each of which claimed itself as the first ever organization of its kind. Therefore, very likely the narrative invented in this period tended to give the society an older birthday. For these two reasons, I use the 1916 source from the Japan period as a basis, and the materials in the Shanghai period only serve for cross-checking. The 1916 source says the club was established in "*min'guo yuannian*" 民國元年 (literally, the first year of the Republic), and the club became a formal society in "the spring of *min'guo ernian* 民國二年 when the new Republic was established and people were granted the freedom of association." This is a self-contradictory statement, because "*minguo ernian*" literally means the second year of the Republic. But in materials from both the Japan and the Shanghai periods, the birth date of the club is clear: the Dragonboat Festival by the lunar calendar and June 1 by the Gregorian calendar. The Dragonboat Festival in 1912 is June 19, and in 1911 it is June 1, which makes it clear that the correct year should be 1911. Also, the society celebrated the 5th anniversary in 1916, the 11th anniversary in 1922, the 13th anniversary in 1924, the 15th anniversary in 1926, and the 20th anniversary in 1931, all pointing to 1911 as a starting point. Some sources in the Shanghai period recall the club was established in "the second year before the Republic," which also means 1911. (Zhang Bangyang probably has misunderstood this as 1910.) But why does the 1916 source make such a self-contradictory statement? My guess is that when the new Republic was officially founded on the New Year's Day of 1912, by lunar calendar the new year had yet come. But when the Provisional Constitution of the Republic of China that granted people the "freedom of association" was announced on March 11, it was in the new year by the lunar calendar. Therefore, for many people who based their life rhythm on the lunar calendar, the publication of the Provisional Constitution was already in the "second year" after the Republic was established. The 1916 source is Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Zhongguo Xinling yanjiuhui xiaoshi" 中國心靈研究會小史, *Xinling* 1.4 (1916): 48–50.

general affairs and Yang Weiwen 揚偉文 was in charge of teaching *cuimianshu*. In the fall of the same year, Zheng Wenju 鄭文舉 and Lin Yiming 林一鳴 founded the department of therapy and the department of addiction treatment, respectively. Very soon, Liu Yuchi 劉鈺墀 joined the society. Liu Yuchi was a central figure in the early history of the society. It was reported that he had just received a degree in "the philosophy of fitness" 健全哲學士 from the Tetsugakukan 哲學館 and he also held the certificate of "teishin tokugyōshi" 帝神得業士 from a certain "Japanese Society of Psychology and Theology" 日本心理神學會. We are not sure what exactly the latter organization was (it might mean the Imperial Association of Mysticism 帝國神秘會[36]), but the Testugakukan is the predecessor of today's Toyo University, and it was established by Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919), whose *Lectures on Specters* 妖怪学講義 was one of the most important works in the Japanese history of hypnotism. Apparently, to be a graduate from the Tetsugakukan was quite something for the young society. Liu "modeled [the society] after the new Western pedagogy and established the department of correspondence education, which attracted four hundred students all over the world in only a few months."[37] In 1913, the society launched its journal *Xinling* 心靈, which would intermittently continue to be published at least until 1931.[38] In 1913 or 1914, Zheng Hemian had to go to Paris and Liu Yuchi took over the presidency (Zheng's title subsequently became "honorary president").[39] Liu further optimized the organization of the society, which would remain stable in the future. The society's major business consisted of three parts: the teaching of *cuimianshu* (the organization was advertised as the "school of hypnotism" in English), *cuimianshu* therapy, and the publication of the *cuimianshu* study materials and the journal *Xinling*. In 1915, Liu Yuchi launched a meticulously compiled textbook in four volumes for the correspondence course, *New Lectures on the Cuimianshu* 新催眠術講義, which would be reprinted six times within two years.

The year 1916 was a great leap forward for the society's development. In April of 1916, the society moved to Tokyo. The Yokohama address became a branch, and at the same time a branch in the Philippines was founded.[40] On June 5, the day of the Dragonboat Festival of that year, the society had an elaborate ceremony in the new Tokyo headquarters celebrating its fifth anniversary.[41] The journal *Xinling* also devoted a special issue to commemorating the anniversary. By the end of 1916, the society had about 5,200 registered members, and two thousand more would join it in 1917.[42]

The 1916 special issue of the *Xinling* is the sole extant source for us to explore the early history of the society. As will become clear below, in the 1920s and 1930s the society would develop a slightly different narrative of its history, in which Liu Yuchi's name was only mentioned in passing, if not completely obliterated. We will not know what exactly happened to

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[36] Zhang Bangyan, *Jingshen de fudiao*, 131.

[37] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Zhongguo Xinling yanjiuhui xiaoshi," 49.

[38] The earliest extant issue of the *Xinling* was published in 1916. According to a short article published in 1922, the journal was originally launched in 1913. See Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Xinling zazhi jixu chuban guanggao" 心靈雜誌繼續出版廣告, *Xinling* (fall 1922): not paginated. I have not seen any issues of this journal published after 1931, nor have I seen any mentions in secondary sources.

[39] The source material records it as "the third year of the Republic." Usually, this expression means 1914. But considering the narrator has been using this expression in a different way (see note 34), this also might mean 1913.

[40] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Zhongguo Xinling yanjiuhui xiaoshi," 49.

[41] Ji 吉, "Wunian wuyue wuri wuzhounian ji"五年五月五日五周年記, *Xinling* 1.4 (1916): 19–21.

[42] See Gu Dao 古道, "Benhui chuangli ershinian de huigu" 本會刱立二十年的回顧, *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* 心靈文化二十週年紀念專號 (1931): 55–56.

Liu Yuchi until new sources emerge, but very likely this shift had something to do with the society's relocation to Shanghai. In the 1916 special issue, the society was already envisioning moving back to China, and it considered Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing as potential destinations.[43] In 1918, a branch was established in Shanghai. This move was very likely triggered by the end of the first World War and an increasingly tense relationship between Japan and China. A member recollected in 1931 that between 1918 and 1919 the headquarters of the society was ransacked several times by the Japanese police.[44] In 1921, the society as a whole was finally moved to the international settlement of Shanghai, with its English name established as the Chinese Institute of Mentalism.[45] According to the same person's recollection, Yu Pingke advocated hard for the relocation, from which we can detect a sense of factionalism.[46]

After that time, Liu Yuchi's name basically disappeared in the records of the society's everyday activities. (Did he come back to Shanghai with the society at all?) Instead, Yu Pingke became the central figure. When the society had its twentieth anniversary in 1931, a new narrative of the society's history appeared at the beginning of the memorial special issue of the *Xinling*. In this narrative, the founding members of the original "mentalism club" included Liu Yuchi, Yu Pingke, Zheng Hemian, Tang Xinyu 唐新雨 and Ju Zhongzhou 居中州 (among them only Zheng Hemian's name appeared in the 1916 narrative). Also, in this narrative the society moved to Tokyo from Yokohama in 1912, instead of 1916.[47] How to make sense of the apparent differences between the 1916 and 1931 narratives? This will remain an open question until new sources emerge, but one reasonable speculation is that Yu Pingke, the latecomer and supporter of the relocation, deliberately altered the historical narrative to underline his significance and to eclipse Liu Yuchi's influence.[48] Whether this was the case or not, Yu Pingke carried forward Liu Yuchi's legacies in terms of how the society was organized and operated, and, if the statistics were not too much exaggerated, brought the society to a phenomenal success.

In 1921, the tripartite business of the society (teaching, therapy and publication) established by Liu Yuchi was transplanted to Shanghai in the form of three divisions: the Academy of Mentalism 心靈學院, the Sanatorium of Mentalism 心靈療養院, and the Press of Mentalism 心靈書局. The "sanatorium" was basically a Shanghai-based clinic that charged fees for the *cuimianshu* treatment of various diseases and addictions. The real expansion of the society depended on the other two divisions: the press kept producing periodicals and study

[43] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Zhongguo xinling yanjiuhui xiaoshi," 50.
[44] See Gu Dao, "Benhui chuangli ershinian de huigu," 55–56.
[45] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Zhongguo xinling yanjiuhui ershinian jingguo" 中國心靈研究會二十年經過, *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* 心靈文化二十週年紀念專號 (1931), preliminaries, not paginated. The source says that in 1921 the society "was renamed as 'Zhongguo xinling yanjiuhui,' Chinese Institute of Mentalism." But in the 1916 source, the society was already called "Zhongguo xinling yanjiuhui." Therefore, the "renaming" was probably only about the English name 'Chinese Institute of Mentalism," which was not seen in earlier sources.
[46] See Gu Dao, "Benhui chuangli ershinian de huigu," 55–56.
[47] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Zhongguo xinling yanjiuhui ershinian jingguo," not paginated. Also see Gu Dao, "Benhui chuangli ershinian de huigu," 55.
[48] Although Yu Pingke might have started studying the *cuimianshu* in Japan very early and have known the founding members when the club was just founded, he was definitely not a part of the group until later. One of Yu Pingke's published article is entitled "Rambling from Mentalism to the *Cuimianshu*: An Invited Talk at the Chinese Club of Mentalism in Japan." This shows Yu was invited as a guest to the club. See Yu Pingke, "Cong xinlingxue jiangdao cuimianshu: Ying Riben Zhonghua liudong xinling julebu yanshuoci" 從心靈學到催眠術: 應日本中華留東心靈俱樂部演說辭, *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* (1931): 1–4.

materials, and these materials were delivered to learners all over the world enrolled in the correspondence courses of the academy. According to the society's own record, by 1925 it had accumulated more than 30,000 registered members, and this number would exceed 80,000 by 1931 (Figure 5.1). A society of such influence would naturally call the attention of those on the very top of the social pyramid. Photos published in the *Xinling* show dedications to the society handwritten by figures like Sun Yat-sen (Figure 5.2), Li Yuanhong 黎元洪 (1864–1928), Tang Jiyao 唐繼堯 (1883–1927), Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927), Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) and Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869–1936). According to the society's report, Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) even paid them a visit on May 28 during his first China trip.[49] How was it possible that a Shanghai-based society teaching a controversial subject could have such a broad social influence? How did it make its business viable? We now turn to the society's creation of a global network of correspondence education.

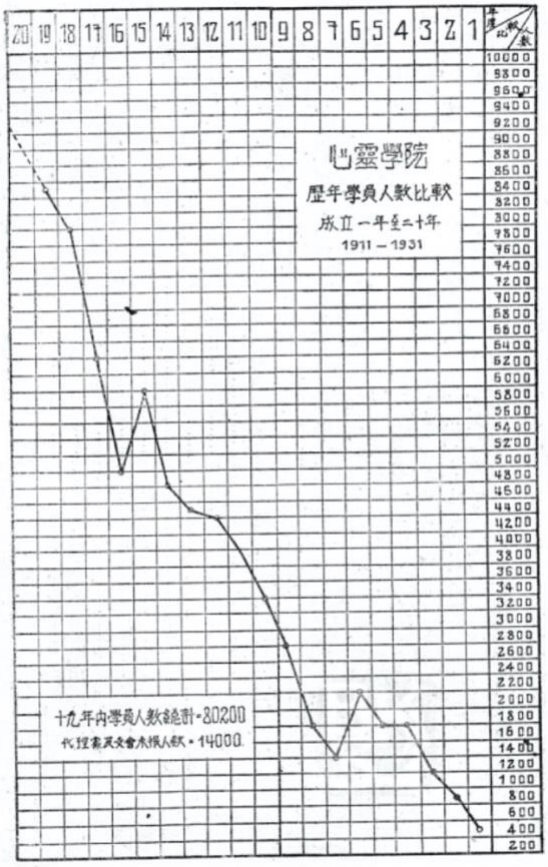

Figure 5.1: Cumulative curve of the number of members of the Chinese Institute of Mentalism (1911–1931). Source: *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* 心靈文化二十週年紀念專號 (1931), preliminaries, not paginated.

[49] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Taige'er laiyou" 泰戈爾來遊, *Xinling* (fall 1924): the "News" section, 1–2.

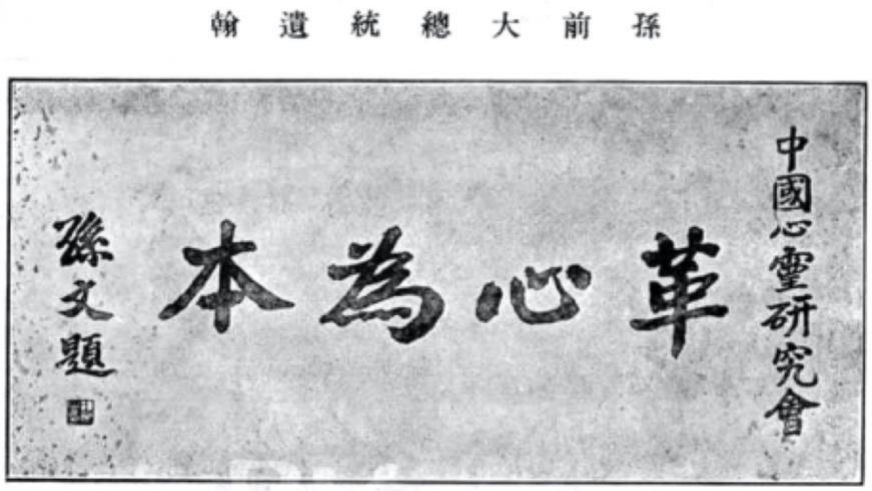

Figure 5.2: Sun Yat-sen's dedication to the Chinese Institute of Mentalism. Source: *Xinling* (1925): preliminaries, not paginated.

A Global Network of Correspondence Education

The history of distance education in modern China is an understudied topic. Existing scholarship has mainly focused on the correspondence education programs developed by several major publishers, of which the Commercial Press Correspondence School 商務印書館函授學校 is often presented as the first and most influential.[50] The school was established in 1915. According to its own statistics, in 1927 it had accumulatively benefited more than 25,800 students, and that number exceeded 50,000 in 1935. But in fact, the Commercial Press was neither the earliest nor the most influential (if measured solely by the number of students). In the end of the ninetieth century, messages about correspondence education programs already emerged in the Shanghai newspapers. In 1908, the Esperanto promoters started teaching the language through correspondence. In 1910, Yan Fu and Zhang Yuanji 張元濟 (1867–1959) started a teachers training program, which was facilitated by the latter's Commercial Press in producing materials and maintaining correspondence. In the same year, Ding Fubao (who would be one of the founding members of the Shanghai Lingxue Society) established the Correspondence School of New Medicine 函授新醫學講習社 and launched a periodical to distribute the study materials that he had recently acquired from Japan.[51]

The Chinese Institute of Mentalism was one of the earliest Chinese organizations practicing correspondence education (if we put aside the fact that its physical location was in Japan before 1921). As mentioned above, Liu Yuchi established the correspondence teaching program right after he joined the society, which in several months transformed the society from a

[50] The only book-length study on this subject is Ding Wei 丁偉, *Jindai minying chuban jigou de yingyu hanshou jiaoyu (1915–1946)* 近代民營出版機構的英語函授教育 (1915–1946). Zhejiang University PhD dissertation, 2015. The author also published many articles on the Commercial Press as the most representative case. In English language scholarship, the Commercial Press' correspondence education is studied in Michael Gibbs Hill, "Between English and Guoyu: 'The English Student, English Weekly,' and the Commercial Press's Correspondence Schools," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 23.2 (fall 2011): 100–145.

[51] See Liu Xuan 劉玄,"Yixue yu shangye: Qingmo Shanghai hanshou xinyixue jiangxishe yanjiu" 醫學與商業: 清末上海函授新醫學講習社研究, *Nanjing zhongyiyao daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 南京中醫藥大學學報 (社會科學版) 17.3 (2016): 168–172.

small Yokohama-based coterie to a transnational organization with about four hundred members. Onsite teaching would remain a standard practice of the society, but correspondence education became from that point forward the most important business of the society and the predominant contributor to the continuous expansion of the society's membership. By 1931, the society had accumulated more than 80,000 members, whereas the "most influential" Commercial Press Correspondence School had only 50,000 in 1935. (Of course, we won't take these numbers literally, and "influence" also cannot be measured solely by the number of members.) These 80,000 members were spread across the world. In 1924, the *Xinling* announced that the society had seven thousand members in Southeast Asia, which constituted a quarter of the society's whole membership at the time.[52] The society did not publicize detailed statistics about other places. But to put together scattered clues in the *Xinling* (letters and reports sent from the members, news about the members' activities, the society's announcements, etc.), we can get a general sense of the diversity of the members' geographic locations (Table 5.1). As Table 5.1 shows, the extent to which the society's members were spread across the globe is stunning. It seems that wherever there were overseas Chinese, there were distance learners of *cuimianshu*. (The members were most likely all Chinese; I have never seen records of a non-Chinese member, although there are reports showing how the overseas Chinese learners hypnotized the local people in the local languages.)

Continents	Countries or Colonies (Cities if Specified)
Asia	The Philippines (Manila); French Indochina (Tỉnh Vĩnh Long, Saigon); the Dutch East Indies (Surabaya, Semarang, Batavia); Burma (Yangon, Tavoy, Lashio); British Malaya (Singapore, Ipoh, Seremban, Pusing, Penang); India; Hong Kong; Macau; Japan (Yokohama, Kobe).
Oceania	Australia (Sydney); Hawaii (Honolulu).
South America	Mexico (Mexico City); Cuba; Brazil; Peru; Columbia; Ecuador; Grenada.
North America	The US (San Francisco, New York); Canada.
Africa	South Africa.
Europe	The UK (London).
Unidentified Place Names	陀利安埠 and 利市埠 (in Mexico); 英屬加奈太市, 哥倫拿頓埠; 域多利埠; 爪哇麻里島 (probably Madiun or Malang in the Java island); 爪哇吉三朋; 阿干低 (in the Dutch East Indies); 干那低 (somewhere in Southeast Asia), 砵李埠 (in Canada).

Table 5.1: The geographic scope of the members of the Chinese Institute of Mentalism (except China proper)

How did these members join the society and stay connected? Some of them were mediated by the society's local branches and agents. A branch was formed when more than ten members in the same place made a motion to establish a branch and were approved by the Shanghai headquarters.[53] It is not clear how many branches there were, but scattered information reveals that branches used to exist in Yokohama (established in 1916 after the relocation to Tokyo), the Philippines (1916), Mexico (1923), Peru (1923), and the Dutch East Indies (1924).

[52] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Benhui Nanyang Heshu fenbu yigao chengli" 本會南洋和屬分部已告成立, *Xinling* (spring 1924): the "News" section, 2.

[53] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Zhongguo Xinling yanjiuhui zhihui guiyue" 中國心靈研究會支會規約, *Xinling* 1.4 (1916): 64–67.

An agent was usually an individual who had a small business (like a shop) and would help distribute the society's periodicals and study materials locally. In 1923, the society had seventeen certified overseas agents, covering the major port cities across Southeast Asia and Canada, Mexico, Cuba, Brazil and Ecuador.[54] The society took these agents seriously. Accountments were regularly made in the *Xinling* about the certification of new agents or the termination of old ones. The existence of these onsite mediations notwithstanding, the majority of the members joined the society and stayed connected to Shanghai through direct postal correspondence. The society's periodicals and study materials always attached several copies of blank forms known as "Intent of Enrollment" 入學願書 or 入會證書 (Figure 5.3). Anyone interested could fill out this paper slip, prepare the fees (the membership fee and the tuition), and then deliver the slip and the fees to the society's Shanghai address. Table 5.2 shows the membership fees and tuitions in 1916.

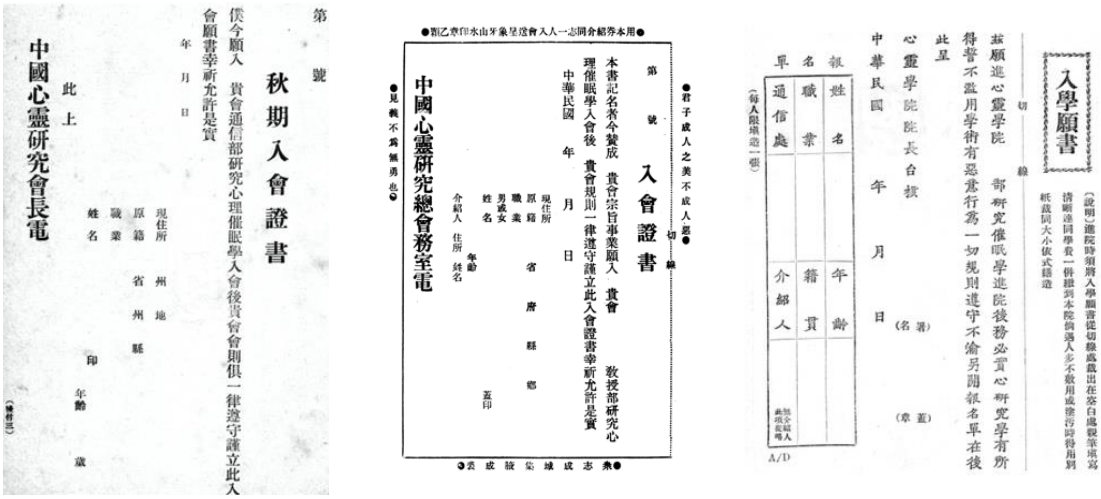

Figure 5.3: "Intent of Enrollment." Sources: left: *Xinling* 1.4 (1916). Middle: Liu Yuchi, *Xin chuimianshu jiangyi* 新催眠術講義, the 6th edition (Shanghai: Chinese Institute of Mentalism, 1922). Right: *Xinling* (1925).

	Accelerated Onsite Course	Correspondence Course	Regular Onsite Course
Session Frequency	Three times a month.	Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter.	Once a month.
Session Length	Three to four days.	Between one month and three months.	Within one month.
Membership Fee (in Japanese Yen)	1 (Half price for three people joining together; exempt for six people joining together; applicable to all courses.)		
Tuition (in Japanese Yen)	10	6	8

Table 5.2: Chinese Institute of Mentalism's rates in 1916. Source: *Xinling* 1.6 (1916).

[54] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Jinnian benhui congxin jiawei zhi gebu daili" 今年本會從新加委之各埠代理, *Xinling* (spring 1923): 45.

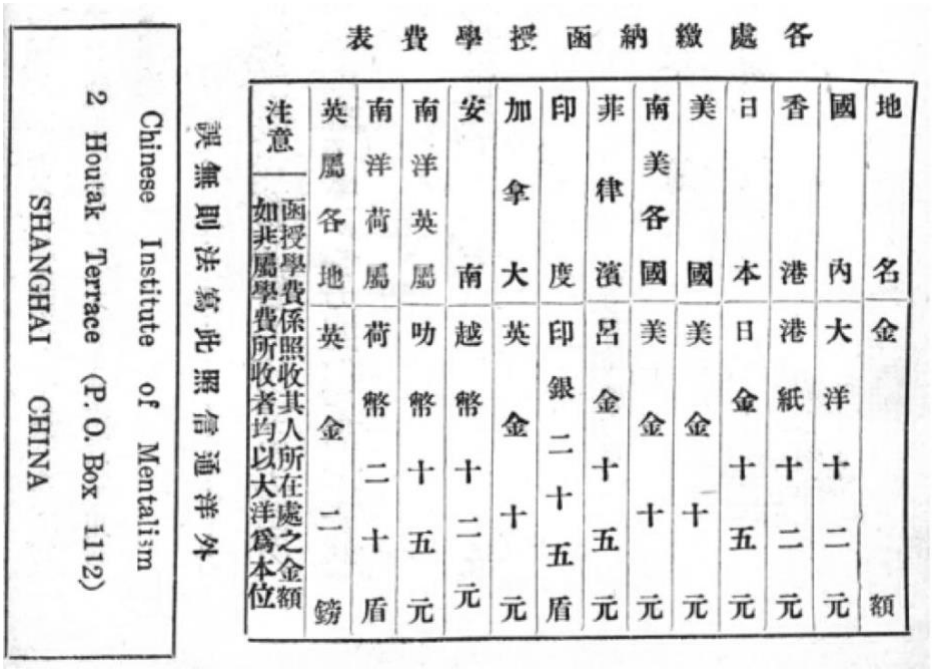

Figure 5.4: The Chinese Institute of Mentalism's address label in English (left) and the correspondence course tuition in foreign currencies (right). Source: *Xinling* (1925).

This curriculum structure remained stable in the 1920s. In 1921, the fees were denominated in the Chinese currency: thirty *dayang* 大洋 (silver coin) for onsite regular courses, twenty for onsite accelerated courses, and twelve for correspondence courses. In 1922 the rates were increased to fifty and thirty for the on-site courses, but the rate for a correspondence course remained twelve. These rates stayed the same until a new increase went into effect in 1931. To accommodate members all over the world, the society always considerately attached a table to the "Intent of Enrollment," in which one could quickly look up the rates in local currency (Figure 4). The members were encouraged to transfer the money through the postal system, but they could also put cash into an envelope and send it out as registered mail or buy an insurance for it. After the society received the "Intent of Enrollment" and the payment, it would send the member a package with a receipt, a membership certificate, as well as the study materials. Within three months, the student was expected to finish the course and mail back a completed written examination as well as a *cuimianshu* field report. If these passed the evaluation process, and if another one *dayang* was paid for the cost of production, the society would mail the student a certificate of completion.[55] In the period in which it was based in Japan, the society claimed that they had established a partnership with the Japanese Association of Hypnotism and they would help the outstanding graduates get degrees like "kagakushi" 科学士 and "tokugyōshi" 得業士 issued by that association.[56] Once the society moved to Shanghai, it created its own degrees for outstanding graduates called "Bachelor of Cuimian" 催眠學學士 and "Bachelor of Medicine in Mentalism" 心靈醫學士.[57] Starting from 1922, the society inaugurated a new program called

[55] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Xinling xueyuan zhangcheng," 心靈學院章程, *Xinling* (fall 1922): 8–9.
[56] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Benhui huiyou zhi xingfu" 本會會友之幸福, *Xinling* 1.4 (1916): 68.
[57] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Xinling xueyuan zhangcheng," 心靈學院章程, *Xinling* (fall 1922): 9.

"The Special Correspondence Program" 特別函授科, which was meant to select ten outstanding graduates each year from the regular correspondence programs and give them one year of advanced training. This program was continuously popular with the members. (It seemed to be merit-based and did not charge tuition.) The second session in 1923 ended up having fourteen students because too many graduates sent in applications.[58] The number increased to nineteen in the fourth session in 1925.[59] In 1931, the society decided to start offering two sessions a year so that twenty graduates could join in.[60]

How to make sure the correspondence learners would actively and effectively participate in the learning process? In an advertisement in the 1916 special issue of the *Xinling*, the society listed five "advantages" that helped distinguished itself from the other *cuimianshu* organizations.[61] With the exception of the first "advantage," which was about its righteous *cuimianshu* ethics (as we know, to associate *cuimianshu* with sorcery was a common social discourse of the time), and the fourth, which was about the cheap price (it reported that some organizations charged hundreds of Japanese Yen), the other three "advantages" actually all pointed to how the society made its correspondence education useful and sustainable: the quality of the study materials, the smooth communication between the society and the members, and the periodicals that foster an imagined community.

First, the society claimed that it had "effective study materials." The advertisement complained that there were only two or three *cuimianshu* books available in China and they all over-emphasized theories and overlooked practicality. This complaint was to the point. The earliest how-to book about *cuimianshu* in China was contributed by the famous revolutionary Tao Chengzhang 陶成章 (1878–1912). Tao studied *cuimianshu* in Japan. In 1905, Tao offered a series of *cuimianshu* classes in Shanghai. In the same year, a student serialized his class notes in the newspaper *Continental* 大陸報 as *Lectures on the Cuimianshu* 催眠術講義. In 1906, Tao authorized the Commercial Presse to publish his full lectures as a book edition under the same title. We don't know how good Tao was at the *cuimianshu* practice — probably not very good. Lu Xun used to make fun of him by revealing that Tao was looking for drugs that would help people fall asleep immediately so that his *cumianshu* would work.[62] (This is reminiscent of the anecdote of using "stupefying drugs" to "hypnotize" people that we read at the beginning of the chapter.) But as the only Chinese book of its kind for quite a while, Tao's book was printed fifteen times by 1916.[63] Sometime between 1910 and 1914, Ding Fubao, whom we have encountered twice in this chapter, also collaborated with his fellow-townsman Hua Wenqi 華文祺 and compiled a text titled *Modern Cuimianshu* 近世催眠術 based on Japanese sources.[64]

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[58] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Tebie hanshouke dierqi xueyuan fangming" 特別函授科第二期學員芳名, *Xinling* (fall 1923): the "News" section, 1.

[59] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Disijie tebie hanshouke xueyuan minglu" 第四屆特別函授科學員名錄, (1925): the "News" section, 1.

[60] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Tebie hanshouke zhangcheng biantong" 特別函授科章程變通, *Xinling wenhua ershizhounian jinian zhuanhao* (1931), the "News" section, 6.

[61] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Benhui zhi tese" 本會之特色, *Xinling* 1.4 (1916): 52–53.

[62] Lu Xun, "Wei Bannong tiji Hedian" 為半農題記何典, in *Lu Xun wenji* 魯迅文集, vol. 3 (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1995), pp. 375–378.

[63] Tao Chengzhang, *Cuimianshu jiangyi* 催眠術講義, the fifteenth edition (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1916).

[64] The edition I see is Ding Fubao 丁福保 and Hua Wenqi 華文祺 , *Jinshi cuimianshu* (second edition) 近世催眠術 (再版) (Shanghai: yixue shuju, 1914). It is not clear when the first edition was published. But we know Ding did not start publishing medical books until 1910.

These were pretty much the "two or three" resources produced in China proper. Using these as a reference point, it becomes clear that Liu's *cuimianshu* books indeed had many "advantages." To take the aforementioned *New Lectures on Cuimianshu* in four volumes as an example, it was organized in such a manner that it looked and functioned like a collection of useful questions and answers. When it came to hands-on practice, it gave step-by-step instructions and even scripts that a learner could copy when giving "suggestions." A more telling example is *The Practical Cuimianshu* 實用催眠學, which was originally serialized in the *Xinling* before it became a book in 1916. As the title suggests, the thin pamphlet gave particular emphasis to hands-on practice and avoided theory to the extent possible.[65] In 1916, the *Xinling* published a letter from a laborer in Hong Kong, who expressed the intention of becoming a correspondence learner but worried about whether or not his limited literacy would stop him from understanding the study materials. The society responded that anyone with basic literacy would not encounter any problem in understanding the course.[66]

But it also bears pointing out that this advertisement was not entirely fair in that it did not (probably deliberately) acknowledge the works produced by its rival, the Chinese Institute of Spiritualism. The Chinese Institute of Spiritualism was in many regards like a mirror of the Chinese Institute of Mentalism. Similarly, it started as a Chinese students' coterie in Kobe, Japan in 1909. In 1912, it was reformed as a formal society with its current name.[67] By the time the Chinese Institute of Mentalism made a complaint, Bao Fangzhou, the leader of the Chinese Institute of Spiritualism, had already authored several *cuimianshu* how-to books that were very similar to Liu Yuchi's.[68] In this period, Bao Fangzhou also started building up a global network of correspondence education. In 1917, Bao established a Shanghai branch and in 1920 the society was relocated to Shanghai. The two institutes never ceased to engage in mutual recrimination and competition, but at the same time they shared more similarities than differences. I therefore hope to emphasize that although this chapter chooses to focus on the Chinese Institute of Mentalism as its case study, its findings and analyses reveal a broader social trend.

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[65] Liu Yuchi, *Shiyong cuimianxue* 實用催眠學, the third edition (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1923). In the end of the book, Liu Yuchi states it was originally serialized in the second, third and fourth issue (the 1916 special issue) of the *Xinling.*

[66] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Xianggang Wang Fucheng jun laihan" 香港王福成君來函 and "Benhui da Wang Fucheng jun han" 本會答王福成君函, *Xinling* (fall 1922): 66.

[67] The Chinese Institute of Spiritualism is rarely studied. Zhang Bangyan's 2020 monograph is the first scholarship that brings this society onto the stage. See Zhang Bangyan, *Jingshen de fudiao,* pp. 134–138. My narrative here is basically a summary of Zhang's research. I have not got access to the primary sources that Zhang has discovered; therefore, I cannot comment on the reliability of this history. But the Chinese Institute of Mentalism was consistently claiming itself as the very first *cuimisnhu* society, which suggests it did not buy that its rival's birth year was 1909. On the other hand, although the Chinese Institute of Mentalism was mostly consistent about its birth year (1911), occasionally it also mentioned the year 1908, which, in this light, was clearly meant to be older than its rival. These facts remind us to be careful of the historical narratives produced by either party.

[68] These include *Cuimianshu duxi* 催眠術獨習 (1915), *Cuimianshu hanshou jiangyi* 催眠術函授講義 (1915), and *Cuimian xinfa* 催眠新法 (1916).

Figure 5.5: The Chinese Institute of Mentalism's *cuimianshu* books catalogue. Source: *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* (1931).

In the Shanghai period, the Chinese Institute of Mentalism continued its rivalry with the Chinese Institute of Spiritualism in every regard, including the publication of *cuimianshu* how-to books. A catalogue shows that in 1931 the society had nearly forty different titles on sale (Figure 5.5). Yu Pingke was the most prolific author on this catalogue, and his bestseller was *The Cuimianshu with An Electric Mirror* 電鏡催眠法. The "electric mirror" is a small device conceived by Yu Pingke to accelerate the hypnotic process. It is a small piece of reflective metal

which moves around to mesmerizes one's eyesight. This thin pamphlet pushes Liu Yuchi's advocacy for practicality to its extreme. Unlike every other book of this kind written with dry technical terms, this book presents itself as a story written in lively vernacular language. It reports that on May 10, 1920, Yu Pingke and his wife Yang Pingzi 楊萍子 were on a train to Beijing. They encountered an old friend of Yu's who then joined them for company. Yu taught the friend how to practice *cuimianshu* with an "electric mirror" in only three hours. Yang Pingzi transcribed this long conversation and published it as a book, for she believed that if Yu's friend could learn the *cuimianshu* in three hours, then anyone else would be able to do the same thing by reading the transcription. Yang even left her correspondence address in the narrative, asking the readers to get connected and share their successful experiments.[69] It seems that many readers indeed responded to Yang's call. A 1922 advertisement of the book in the *Xinling* says that thus far two hundred people have successfully learned the *cuimianshu* by reading this book, followed by a letter from one of the successful learners.[70] This "three-hour course" seems to serve as an appetizer to recruit more students to join the three-month correspondence program, for which the standard study material remained Liu Yuchi's *The New Lectures on the Cuimianshu* and its continuously updated editions. In the May of 1931, Yu Pingke finally published his own *The Cuimianshu Lectures for Correspondence Education* 催眠術函授講義. He was so proud of this achievement that he offered a reward of one thousand silver coins for any *cuimianshu* book that could surpass this one.[71]

Coming back to the 1916 advertisement, the second "advantage" the society claimed is that it allowed the students to send in letters with any questions, which differentiated itself from those that only used the postal system to sell books. This actually points to the significance of a smooth two-way communication in making the correspondence education sustainable. In 1923, a student wrote to the society saying he used to enroll in a *cuimianshu* correspondence course offered by some "institute of spiritualism" in Shanghai (clearly, this was a euphemism for the Chinese Institute of Spiritualism), but that institute only mailed him some confusing books and never responded to any of his inquiries. He thought he had been deceived, and he did not get to really learn the *cuimianshu* until he found the Chinese Institute of Mentalism.[72] It is hard to tell the credibility of the letter, but it looked as if the Chinese Institute of Mentalism indeed made great efforts to respond to their students. More than that, it also spent time on educating the students to become efficient correspondents. In the society's periodicals, one can always easily find an address label in English, which was designed for the oversea students to use so that their mail would successfully land in the Shanghai headquarters (Figure 4). In 1916, the *Xinling* meticulously instructed the members how to draft and layout a letter for fast response. While an outsider's letter of inquiry needed to include return stamps in the envelope, the registered students were exempt from this expense.[73] In 1922, the *Xinling* urged the students to clearly

[69] Yang Pingzi 楊萍子, "Jilu di qiyin" 記錄底起因, in Yu Pingke, *Dianjing cuimianfa* 電鏡催眠法 (Shanghai: Xinling kexue shuju, 1921), pp. 1–4.

[70] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Dianjing cuimianfa" 電鏡催眠法 and "Zhengming Dianjing cuimianfa ji rongyi yanjiu chenggong" 證明電鏡催眠法極容易研究成功, *Xinling* (fall 1922): the "Shuqi mulu" 書器目錄 section, 1–2.

[71] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Xuanshang yiqianyuan" 懸賞壹仟圓, *Xinling wenhua ershizhou jinian zhengqiuhao* 心靈文化二十周紀念征求號 (1931): not paginated.

[72] Lu Zhendong 呂震東, "Buyin shoupian er huixin mingyu qubie wei deji" 不因受騙而灰心明於區別為得計, *Xinling* (fall 1923): the "Chengong tiezheng" 成功鐵證 section, 6–7.

[73] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Benhui guize" 本會規則, *Xinling* 1.4 (1916): 61.

indicate their membership ID numbers when sending in a letter, otherwise it would make it impossible to match the student's name to his/her file given the huge student body.[74] In 1923, the *Xinling* reported that the society had received a large number of undelivered mail because the addressees had moved. It then urged the members to update their addresses if they had to move.[75] The society acknowledged, however, that sometimes the postal service was to blame. It reminded the members in Cuba that somehow the postal service in Cuba had been interrupted and it advised the members there to be more careful and patient. But it asked the members in Peru to be worry free because it seemed the problem was Cuba-specific and it did not affect other South American countries.[76] At the same time, the society asked the members in the Philippines to spell their names in accordance with their local registrations instead of using aliases, otherwise their mails won't be delivered according to a new regulation issued by the Philippine government.[77] Indeed, the global correspondence education network was predicated upon the global postal network, and any change in the latter would directly affect the former. In 1931, the society informed its members apologetically that it had to start charging postage for the study materials which were previously exempt as a membership privilege, because China Post had recently increased the postage rate for international packages.[78]

The third "advantage" that the society claimed in the 1916 advertisement was that in addition to learning *cuimianshu*, the correspondence learners could enjoy the fun of reading the society's journal the *Xinling*. The society published three different periodicals. The other two were the 1918 or 1919-launched *Xinling Monthly* 心靈月報, a single-page newspaper which was reformed as the *Xinling xunkan* 心靈旬刊 (published every ten days) in 1923,[79] and the 1921-launched *Xinling Movement* 心靈運動 which had yielded twenty-four issues by 1931.[80] Both periodicals, according to the society's own statistics, printed tens of thousands of copies each issue.[81] The *Xinling* was the oldest. Launched in 1913 as a quarterly, it was likely meant to facilitate Liu Yuchi's newly established correspondence courses.[82] In 1918, it was replaced by

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[74] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Benhui buyu huida zhi youjian" 本會不予回答之郵件, *Xinling* (fall 1922): not paginated.

[75] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Xueyuan qiandi zhi wei baogao zhe" 學員遷地之未報告者, *Xinling* (spring 1923): 43.

[76] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Guba xinjian zhi zuzhi" 古巴信件之阻滯, *Xinling* (spring 1923): 46.

[77] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Tongxin wuyong biezi" 通信勿用別字, *Xinling* (spring 1923): 46.

[78] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Goushu xinding banfa" 購書新訂辦法, *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* (1931): the "News" section, 5–6.

[79] I have not seen a copy of this newspaper. Its launching date has conflict records in the *Xinling*. According to the 1923 spring issue of the Xinling, it was launched in 1918. But according to the 1923 fall issue, it was launched in 1919. See Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Jinggao aiyue Xinling yuekan zhujun" 敬告愛閱心靈月刊諸君, *Xinling* (spring 1923): not paginated. Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Jinggao aiyue Xinling xunkan zhujun" 敬告愛閱心靈旬刊諸君, *Xinling* (fall 1923): not paginated.

[80] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Xinling yundong xiaoshu zengjia" 心灵运动销数增加, *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* (1931): the "News" section, 7.

[81] In 1923 when the *Xinling Monthly* was reformed as the *Xinling xunkan*, the society announced that the new periodical would print fifty thousand copies for each issue. See Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Jinggao aiyue Xinling xunkan zhujun" 敬告愛閱心靈旬刊諸君, *Xinling* (fall 1923): not paginated. In 1931, it was reported that the *Xinling Movement* sold 10–100 thousand copies each issue. See Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Xinling yundong xiaoshu zengjia" 心灵运动销数增加, *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* (1931): the "News" section, 7.

[82] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Xinling zazhi jixu chuban guanggao" 心靈雜誌繼續出版廣告, *Xinling* (fall 1922): preliminaries, not paginated.

the newly launched *Xinling Monthly*. In 1922, the *Xingling* was revived as a semi-yearly published in Spring and Autumn,[83] and the sales volume in 1923 was more than 10,000 copies each issue.[84] Starting from 1925, it was redefined as an annual. Whereas the *Xinling Monthly* and the *Xinling xunkan* were probably something like flyers distributed to the public for free for the purpose of marketing,[85] the *Xinling* was more elaborate, marking all important milestones in the society's development. Therefore, although it had a pretty high price (the semi-yearly cost half a silver coin for each copy and the annual cost one silver coin, with a 10% discount for the members), the demand for it seemed to always exceed the supply. The previous issues were sold at tiered prices, and issues published ten years ago would cost ten silver coins. (The society also promised to buy back old issues at the same price to show that it only meant to help with the circulation instead of making profits.[86])

The periodicals and the study materials together made up the secret scrolls that a correspondence student received from the society. But unlike the study materials that were meant to transmit knowledge, the major function of the periodicals — here we use the *Xingling* as an example — was to foster a community. The *Xinling*'s contents always included at least five sections, as outlined below:

1) Papers that helped recruit new members ("Intent of Enrollment," the academy's constitution, etc.).
2) Advertisements for the society's books and products (most noticeably the "electronic mirror" invented by Yu Pingke and the planchette known in Chinese as *bailingshe* 百靈舌).
3) News and announcements.
4) Essays authored by the core members on various *cuimianshu* related topics.
5) "The Ironclad Evidence of Success" 成功鐵證, which published letters and reports from the correspondence students sharing their successful *cuimianshu* trials.

Each section played a different role in fostering the community. Section 1 and section 2 are purely functional and need little elaboration. In section 3, the society routinely brought individual members' names forward for recognition. It acknowledged the members' donations, cited those who had introduced new members, and also mourned those who were recently deceased. Section 4 might seem solely to concern knowledge transmission. But in fact, it fostered the community in a unique way. Most of the essays published in this section, by introducing the latest *cuimianshu* theories and practices from abroad, helped set the society's enterprise in a global context, giving the readers the sense that they were not only students of Yu Pingke's, but also individuals in a global network of spiritualism. For example, this section in the

[83] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Xinling zazhi jixu chuban guanggao" 心靈雜誌繼續出版廣告, *Xinling* (fall 1922): preliminaries, not paginated.
[84] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Jinggao aiyue Xinling yuekan zhujun" 敬告愛閱心靈月刊諸君, *Xinling* (spring 1923): not paginated. Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Jinggao aiyue Xinling xunkan zhujun" 敬告愛閱心靈旬刊諸君, *Xinling* (fall 1923): not paginated.
[85] An announcement in the 1925 issue of the *Xinling* confirms the *Xinling Monthly* and the *Xinling xunkan* were for free distribution. See Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Jinggao aiyue Xinling zazhi ji Xinling yuekan zhujun" 敬告愛閱心靈雜誌及心靈月刊諸君 (1925): not paginated.
[86] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Jinggao aiyue Xinling xunkan zhujun" 敬告愛閱心靈雜誌諸君, *Xinling* (fall 1923): not paginated.

1924 fall issue included essays on these topics: Sigmund Freud, Western mysticism, spirit photography in Japan and in the West, a selected translation from an English article titled "The Return of Oscar Wild" (the translator misspelled Wilde's last name) that was said to have caused a sensation in London in the last year, spiritualism in East Asia, Caesar's death and its relationship to spiritualism, Indian rat worship and its spiritualistic explanation, and the Italian spirit medium Nino Pecoraro. To be sure, the community that the *Xinling* fostered was an imagined one. But it could not be easily made sense of in Benedict Anderson's terms, because the imagined community was not a national one, but a global one. Section 5, "The Ironclad Evidence of Success," was most effective in this regard. If everything else made the students aware that they were connected to a global network, reading the letters from fellow students, and especially those reporting the efficacy of the *qianliyan* 千里眼 (clairvoyance) effect, allowed the readers to "actually" travel through global space. We will read some of these "travels" below.

Clairvoyance and Global Travel

"The Ironclad Evidence of Success" had a plainer name in the 1910s: "Collection of the Members' Trial Reports." To graduate from the program, a correspondence learner was required to successfully hypnotize one or more people, with an eyewitness present, and send a report on this practice to the Shanghai headquarters. The society would select some reports and publish them in this section, together with students' profile photos, membership IDs, and address (probably to prevent any skepticism of the authenticity of the reports from happening). It is not clear whether the society had a particular sort of favoritism or not, but most of the reports selected were from overseas students. There is no standard structure for a report, but a student usually starts with telling how he enrolled in the program (I have not seen any report from a woman, though the society indeed had some female students), how he used the study materials, and whether the learning was effective (the cases selected here were of course all very effective; some only used three days to succeed). The student then moves on to tell about the hypnotic process, usually in meticulous detail, including the exact language he has used for his "suggestions" to the subject. After the hypnotic subject enters the trance, the student often begins with some simple tasks, such as instructing the hypnotic to move the body, like a puppet. What happens next then varies. Some students would do nothing beyond this. Many of them attempt to cure a disease suffered by the subject, but most of them would attempt *qianliyan*, literally, the one-thousand-mile eyesight, which was the Chinese translation of clairvoyance. (*Qianlijing* 千里鏡, or the one-thousand-mile mirror, was the translation of telescope, as I mentioned in the discussion of Lao Can's dream.)

Clairvoyance was a standard course in the *cuimianshu* curriculum of the time.[87] Yu Pingke himself authored a book devoted to this practice, as did his rival Bao Fangzhou of the

[87] Weihong Bao has a brilliant analysis of hypnotism and the *qianliyan* as one of the new technologies of the body in the early twentieth century that fostered an "intermedial spectatorship" in China. See Weihong Bao, *Fiery Cinema*, 93–108. She translates the *qianliyan* as "telepathy" when the term means more generally the psychic effects of extraordinary senses and "tele-vision" when it is more specifically about the X-ray like eyesight. To be sure, jargon in the spiritualistic studies are never clearly defined and sometimes terms like telepathy, telekinesis, and clairvoyance are indeed used interchangeably. I use "clairvoyance" because it was the English term most often used by people in the society when they meant to match the "*qianliyan*" to English (though sometimes they also used "telepathy"). Also, etymologically, the word "clairvoyance" means "to see clearly," which matches perfectly to the "*qianliyan*."

Chinese Institute of Spiritualism.[88] It was believed to be a hidden ability of human beings that could be activated in the hypnotic state. In a 1925 article in the *Xinling,* Gu Dao 古道, the editor of the *Xinling Monthly* and the *Xinling xunkan,* elaborated there were two forms of clairvoyance. The first was likened to how an X-ray machine works: to actually see through an object in the visual field. The second was some sort of extraordinary sensibility which let the person acquire usually inaccessible information in visual form. Gu further differentiated the second form into two kinds depending on whether the information was about time or about space. In the temporal dimension, one with clairvoyance was able to "see" what had happened in the past and what would happen in the future. In the spatial dimension, one could "see" things that are physically far away, even in a foreign country.[89]

Figure 5.6: Photo from a correspondence student showing a hypnotic identifying an object in a locked suitcase. Source: *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* (1931): "Benhui xueyuan shiyanchengji zhi yiban" 本會學員實驗成績之一斑 section, 5.

[88] Yu Pingke, *Qianliyan* 千里眼 (Shanghai: Chinese Institute of Mentalism, 1929). Bao Fangzhou, *Qianliyan yanjiufa* 千里眼研究法 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1928).
[89] Gu Dao 古道, "Qianliyan, nianxie, niandong" 千里眼, 念寫, 念動, *Xinling* (1925): 29.

Many students reported on their experiments with the first form of clairvoyance. Some let the hypnotic identify an object or read the words on a piece of paper that were locked in a box (Figure 5.6); some asked the hypnotic to tell the time by looking at (or just touching) the back side of a watch; and some would ask the subject how many people there were in the next room. (To be sure, the hypnotics always gave the correct answers.) But these reports were all rather brief. Few of them, except for one case that I've seen, showed any interest in clairvoyance across the temporal dimension, namely, to know what happened in the past and what would happen in the future. But when it came to the clairvoyance in the spatial dimension, the students became particularly enthusiastic, and they would usually write long reports full of vivid details. Interestingly, their experiments with clairvoyance in this sense almost always took the form of travel, and in many cases, international travel.

In 1922, a Fuzhou student named Xu Zhijun 許智軍 sent in his report titled "The Trial Report on A Virtual Tour of Paris" 幻遊巴黎之實驗報告. Xu reports that a friend of his wanted to go to Paris to see his nephew, so they together started this international trip as Xu hypnotized the friend. The trip was proceeded by a series of Xu's "suggestions." He instructed the friend to take a sedan chair to go to the wharf. Before long, a steamship took them to Hong Kong, where they boarded an airplane. "We have landed in Paris, and now we go to take a motor car," instructed Xu, and the friend's body started shaking, as if the car were driving on a bumpy road. Soon the car took them to where the friend's nephew studied. The friend said he saw his nephew writing notes in a study room, and he also saw his nephew's classmates, each doing something different. Since "it's getting dark" in Paris, Xu asked the friend to go back. They again took the car, the airplane, the steamship, and the sedan chair until they returned where they were. After he woke up, the friend remembered everything during the trip.[90]

To carefully describe the travel itinerary, the means of transportation, and the scenery during the travel was very common in these reports. Xu's report on the Paris tour was followed by Zeng Yi's 曾義 report on a trip from Guangzhou to Saigon. Zeng's friend Liu Zijin 劉子進 came back alone to Guangzhou from Saigon, where his parents ran a shop. He asked Zeng to give him clairvoyance so that he could visit his parents. Zeng then hypnotized Liu, instructing him to take a sedan chair to the train station. In the previous case, Xu was dominant in the proceeding of the trip, but here Zeng let Liu the hypnotic take the lead in the rest of the journey. He asked Liu: "has our train arrived?" Liu said yes. After a while, Zeng asked: "Has the train moved?" Liu said, "It has been going for quite a while. Don't you feel it? We are approaching the Shenzhen station now." The train passed Shenzhen and arrived in Kowloon, where Liu asked Zeng to get off the train and take a steamship. Zeng suggested taking a break since it would be a long ride, so Liu took him to the Guangjiaxing Inn 廣嘉興棧. Liu then went out to check the steamship schedule. Later he came back and reported: "There are two steamships going to Annam. One is the Sima Yi 司馬懿 and the other is the Jinling 金陵 […] Sima Yi is filthy and slow, and Jinling is clean, stable and fast." They slept in the inn for one night and boarded the Jinling the next morning. When the steamship approached Saigon, Liu showed Zeng the artillery batteries built by the French. Getting off the steamship, Liu led Zeng to his parents' shop. Suddenly, Liu started crying in the hypnotic state, and told Zeng that his father had died. The sorrow did not last long though, and Liu took Zeng out and showed him around. They went to a

[90] Xu Zhijun 許智軍, "Huanyou Bali zhi shiyan baogao" 幻遊巴黎之實驗報告, *Xinling* (fall 1922): the "Chenggong tiezheng" section, 1–2.

French park, saw some animals, and also visited Liu's former school, before they bid their farewells to Liu's family and started the return trip.[91]

Thus far we have seen a trip from China to Europe and one to Southeast Asia. In another report, the hypnotic Zhen Yaonan 甄耀南 travelled from Mexico to New York, Vancouver (Xianshui bu 鹹水埠), and Hong Kong, before he travelled home to China and saw her mother on her deathbed.[92] It was not reported explicitly whether what the hypnotic travelers saw in their clairvoyance was true or not. We would naturally suspect that these hypnotics did not actually go anywhere. Instead, the hypnotic simply had something like a dream induced by the suggestions from the hypnotist, which was concretized by images, memories and imagination that were hidden somewhere in the hypnotic's unconsciousness. The bad news of Liu's father's death and Zhen's mother's fatal disease, in this light, were but symptoms of the overseas Chinese communities' homesickness and their diasporic anxiety.

Many reports, however, would defy this explanation. In 1923, Cen Guanghan 岑洸漢 from Mexico reported his experiment with clairvoyance on a group of Mexican women. Cen first hypnotized one of the women named Bianca (Bilansha 比蘭沙), suspending her body over two pieces of furniture, with one supporting her head and the other her feet. Another woman Melia (Maila 買拉) sat on Bianca's body, which was as sturdy as a bridge. This was a particularly popular *cuimianshu* trick taught in that time for its spectacular quality. A 1922 edition of the correspondence course material included a photo sent from a student showing his "successful" practice of the trick (Figure 5.7), which had almost surely inspired Cen who took the course in 1923. With this spectacle, Cen successfully convinced the audience about the credibility of his technique. Knowing he could also practice clairvoyance, the hostess of the party, Melissa (Meisha 美沙), asked Cen to let the hypnotic Bianca go to her hometown seven thousand miles away and check on her family. Cen then instructed Bianca to set out toward the destination. After a while, he asked Bianca whether she had arrived or not. Bianca responded with a weak and hardly recognizable voice: "I am too tired to go any further. Also, there is a big river in front of me and I cannot cross it." Cen then woke up Bianca, and hypnotized Victoria (Yuduoli 域多利) to perform this task. Victoria successfully arrived in Melissa's hometown and reported about the family members she saw, including a middle-aged man who was sick in bed. Hearing this, Melissa looked unhappy. Cen was not sure whether what Victoria had seen was true or not, so he woke up her right away, in case she brought Melissa undue anxieties. After a while, Melissa's family came to visit, and they confirmed that Melissa's brother was indeed sick in bed at the time when Cen performed the clairvoyance.[93] In other cases, what the hypnotics saw were reported to have been confirmed by letters and personal inquiries.

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[91] Zeng Yi 曾義, "Zhi qianli xionghao zhi shiyan baogao" 知千里兇耗之實驗報告, *Xinling* (fall 1922): the "Chenggong tiezheng" section, 3–4.

[92] Zhong Renxin 鐘仁心, "Wanli xingqin ji duchuang zhiliao zhi shiyan baogao" 萬裡省親暨毒瘡醫治之實驗報告, *Xinling* (fall 1922): the "Chenggong tiezheng" section, 8–9.

[93] Cen Guanghan 岑洸漢, "Wei xinü zuo woyou yin faxian qianliyan zhuangtai zhi shiyan baogao" 為西女作臥遊因發現千里眼狀態之實驗報告, *Xinling* (spring 1923), the "Chenggong tiezheng" section, 3–4.

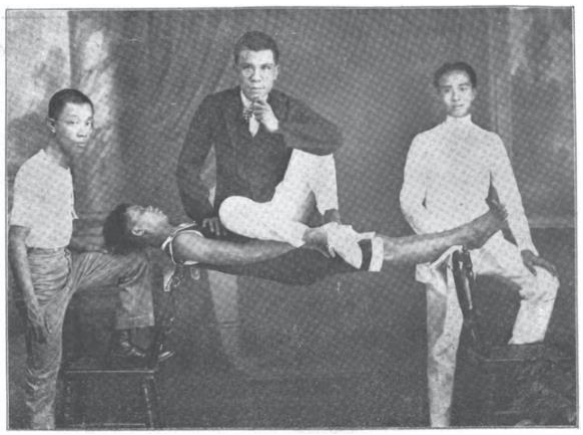

Figure 5.7: Photo from a student showing the "human body bridge" effect. Source: Liu Yuchi, *Xin chuimianshu jiangyi*, the 6th edition (Shanghai: Chinese Institute of Mentalism, 1922).

As a matter of fact, for *cuimianshu* teachers and students of that time, it was a basic assumption that the clairvoyance was a true and verifiable effect, rather than one caused by hallucinations. The society had systematic theories to make sense of clairvoyance and various other spectacular *cuimianshu* effects. Zhang Bangyan has observed that in the Japan period the society's theoretical foundation was shaped by Japanese sources. But arriving in the 1920s, it established direct contacts with European and American institutions and imported theories without Japanese mediation.[94] In 1931, the *Xinling* announced that there were new theoretical trends in European academia and that the society would accordingly update its own propositions.[95] One such proposition was about the explanation of clairvoyance, which was elaborated in the article "Radio and Clairvoyance" 無線電與千里眼 authored by Li Haitao 李海濤. Li Haotao was a Chinese student in France studying electric engineering. He was entrusted by the society to acquire blueprints of the latest experimental equipment so that the society could follow up with the new trends.[96] In this article, Li argued that radio, "electric wireless image transmission" 無線電傳影 (he was probably referring to television), and clairvoyance shared the same mechanism. With heavy technological jargon and meticulously drawn diagrams, Li explained that a person in clairvoyance travel was in fact using his mind as a frequency modulator to modulate the electromagnetic waves that carried information from afar. Just like a radio in China could receive sound from, say, the American Broadcasting Company, one's mind also had the ability to receive optic and mental information broadcast from a different country (Figure 5.8).[97] In other word, one's mind did not really go anywhere; instead, the world was brought home with the highest possible fidelity. Ju Zhongzhou 居中州, the director of the sanatorium, quickly picked up this theory and claimed the practicality of distance *cuimianshu* therapy. "Say the therapist is in Shanghai — he can still treat patients in faraway places like

[94] Zhang Bangyang, *Jingshen de fudiao*, 195–206.
[95] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Caiban shiyan yiqi" 採辦實驗儀器, *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* (1931): the "News" section, 7.
[96] Chinese Institute of Mentalism, "Caiban shiyan yiqi" 採辦實驗儀器, *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* (1931): the "News" section, 7.
[97] Li Haitao 李海涛, "Wuxiandian yu qianliyan" 無線電與千里眼, *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* (1931): 24–30.

Beiping, Guangzhou, Singapore, London and New York."[98] Compared to the academy with a global network of correspondence learners, the local-based sanatorium had been marginal in the society. It looked like Ju Zhongzhou had discovered the right way to expand his unit and create a new a global network of patients.

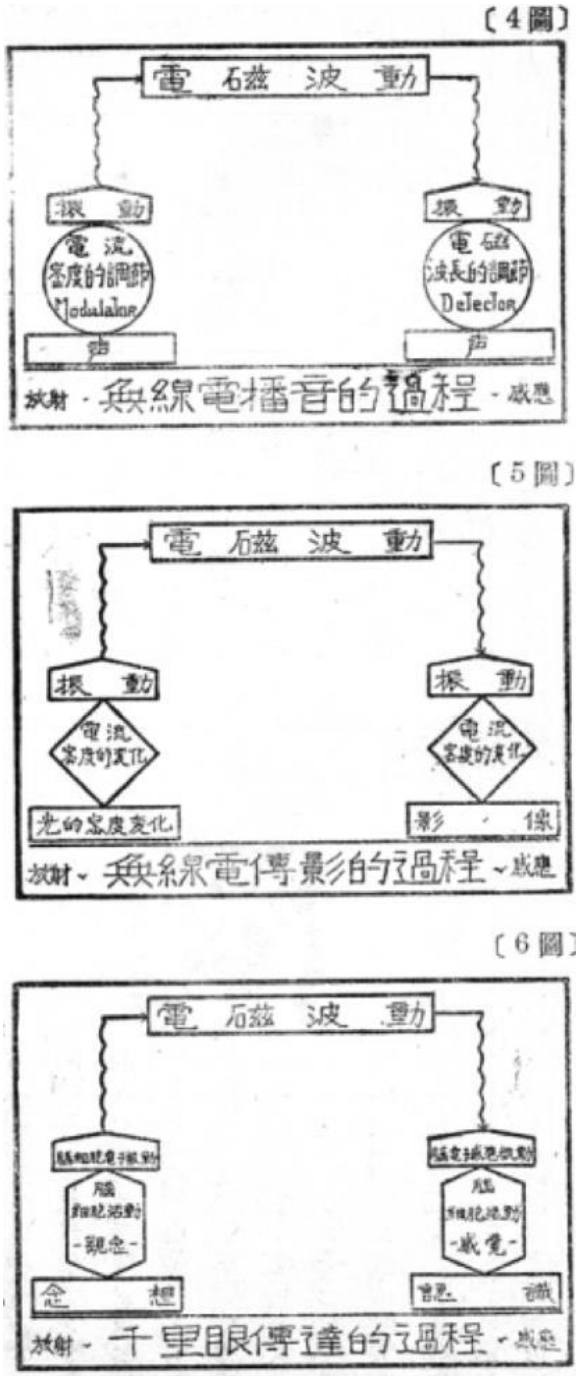

Figure 5.8: Li Haitao's comparative illustration of the mechanism of the clairvoyance. Source: *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* (1931): 24–30.

[98] Ju Zhongzhou 居中州, "Cuimianshu de gedi zhiliao" 催眠術的隔地治療, *Xinling wenhua ershi zhounian jinian zhuanhao* (1931): 104–106.

Are we going to buy this theory's explanation of international travel via hypnosis? In fact, before worrying about the explanation, we can hardly take these reports as sheer facts, even though we restrain our scientific bias toward *lingxue* as much as possible. Some reports depicted scenarios that even the most open-minded person would find impossible. For example, a student admitted into the extremely selective program "Special Correspondence Course" reported that he had learned how to fly.[99] Maybe for some students, to model their work after the published template and make up a "successful" report was a reasonable thing to do: he had already paid the fees, why would he give up the graduate certificate?

This is not to make the accusation that all these reports were lies or that the society was throughout a hoax (though the society repetitively denounced its rivals as swindlers). To evaluate *cuimianshu* and the *lingxue* within the history of science, as clarified at the beginning of the chapter, is not my purpose. I am more interested in how the foreign secret knowledge packed in the new forms of secret scrolls was disseminated through new media infrastructures and how this dissemination affected the readers' (in our case, the distance leaners') understanding of their positions in this changing world. The *lingxue* secret scrolls promised them access to the spiritual realm. Whether they had entered the spiritual realm is beyond the scope of my abilities. But it looks clear to me that by way of exploring the spiritual they were granted access to the global. No matter whether they were overseas Chinese stuck between the "*turen*" 土人 (a slightly discriminatory term for local or indigenous people that frequently appeared in the student reports) and the "advanced" races who invented the science of the *lingxue*, or whether they were from China proper, a country struggling in the new global order, the Chinese Institute of Mentalism connected them into a global community, took them on global travels, and promised them one-thousand-mile eyesight with which to see the world. To be sure, the community was imagined, the travels were artificial, and the clairvoyant eyesight did not always work. But the feelings, or to use their own term, the movements of the *xinling* 心靈, were authentic and experienceable. Unlike Lao Can who could only see the world from a *qianlijing* telescope in a dream full of anxieties, the numerous *cuimianshu* students' application of *qianliyan* was conscious and was saturated with aspirations and anticipations. True, these aspirations and anticipations wouldn't be easily fulfilled, or might never be fulfilled — as I have been arguing in this dissertation, to read a secret scroll is to initiate a rite of passage that will last forever — but they were not meaningless. A student developed this slogan in 1916: "The *cuimianshu* has the power to accelerate the great unity of the world" 催眠術有進世界大同之能力.[100] Did the student have any scientific basis to make this claim? Probably not, according to how we define the "scientific" today. But let us consider how he imagined the scope of the knowledge that he chose to pursue: it was not about the unknown "fate of China," not about the esoteric teaching of the old Sage-Kings, not about the hidden truth of the rivers and lakes, nor was it about the secret paths toward longevity and transcendence. It was about the "great unity of the world," and that scope itself is what is meaningful.

[99] Du Jiuru 杜玖如, "Shenti feidong lidi shuchi" 身體飛動離地數尺, *Xinling* (fall 1923), the "Laihan" 來函 section, not paginated.

[100] Chen Zesheng 陳澤生 "Cuimianshu you jin shijie datong zhi nengli" 催眠術有進世界大同之能力, *Xinling* 1.4 (1916): 22.

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