

## Daily Life for the Common People of China, 1850 to 1950

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# Daily Life for the Common People of China, 1850 to 1950

*Understanding Chaoben Culture*

*By*

Ronald Suleski



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*Dedicated to*  
*Jonghyun Lee* 李鍾玄  
*and*  
*His Excellency the Jade Emperor*  
*Yuhuang Dadi* 玉皇大帝





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My first “teacher” in learning how to understand *chaoben* was He Zhaohui 何朝晖. We met in 2006, when he joined the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard as a postdoctoral fellow. He served as a specialist in rare books at the Peking University Library and has been teaching since 2008 at the Advanced Institute for Confucian Studies at Shandong University. We have met in Beijing and at the Shandong University campus. Reviewing with me a number of *chaoben* I had bought, he helped to put those manuscripts in the context of the times in which they were produced. He also pointed out how valuable and interesting the comments, stories, and poems written in the margins as an afterthought by the copyists could be. He gave me good ideas on how to identify the handmade paper used in *chaoben*. He was always willing to look at my materials and to answer questions. In 2009 we enjoyed the experience of finding a number of old handwritten and woodblock-print books in Qufu, the hometown of Confucius. We divided the treasures we had found to our mutual satisfaction.

My second “teacher” was Li Renyuan 李仁淵. I met him later that year while he was working on his Ph.D. and was a teaching fellow in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University. He was also familiar with *chaoben* and was interested in the materials I was collecting. He visited me a few times at my home in Cambridge, offering several hours of excellent tutoring in how to “read” *chaoben* by locating critical points in the text, how to appreciate the expressions used by the writers, and even how to become comfortable with the nonstandard characters that occurred every so often. He clued me in to the idea that the particular expressions used by the *chaoben* writers could be seen as expressions of their social status and worldview. He received his Ph.D. in 2013 and is now at the Academic Sinica in Taiwan where he continues his fieldwork in the villages of Fujian.

In order to make sense of the wide range of materials I was collecting, I chose a few topics to concentrate on in more detail. I prepared that material in the form of PowerPoint presentations and wrote up a few articles that were then published. Along the way, and continuing until the preparation of this book, I regularly consulted with colleagues, specialists, and fellow scholars, all

of whom I consider friends. Space limitations prevent me from listing all of their accomplishments and affiliations, as I would have liked. In lieu of that, I ask them to accept my gratitude for their help and here list them only by name, in alphabetical order.

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William Leete was a New Englander who graduated from Yale Divinity School. He went to China as a Christian missionary and lived there from 1913 until his death in 1952. During that time, he often carried a box camera and took thousands of pictures. He was most interested in the common people he encountered on the streets and in the villages. He photographed them while they were engaged in their daily routines and activities. The photos capture the sense of energy and the atmosphere of a time and place that no longer exist. His grandson William Morse now operates Wm. Morse Editions, a fine art printmaking studio in Boston. Mr. Morse is conserving and restoring the thousands of photographs taken by his grandfather. He has generously agreed to allow a number of these photos to be published in this book. These treasures, which show us the lives of China's common people during the period covered in this text, have never before been published. The photos, appropriately credited, appear throughout the book.

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visited China several times between 1908 and 1932. On the first visit he went with his parents and had not yet graduated from Princeton University. In subsequent visits he was doing Christian social work for the YMCA and also conducting social surveys. Although he enjoyed great wealth because his father was part of the Procter & Gamble conglomerate of cleaning agents and cooking oils, Sidney was interested in the lives of the typical people he encountered daily in the streets. He took many photographs of these ordinary people and the scenes he observed.

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# Introduction

## 緒論

The hundred-year period from 1850 to 1950 was a time of astounding change in China and the world. In 1850, most people in China used oil lamps for light, they had never seen a steam engine, and medicine was a mixture of secret recipes and supplication to the deities. By 1950, radios everywhere broadcast music, news, and stories, and even rural villagers might have seen a motion picture shown outdoors on a large screen. The aircraft flying overhead were often nothing unusual, and bus services linked villages and towns. For rural peasants and city dwellers alike, new material goods were becoming a part of their environment.

Yet during those crucial hundred years, the values, social customs, and perceptions of life and death appear to have remained virtually unchanged among most Chinese people. From all the accounts we have, including fictional accounts by Chinese scholars recalling that time as well as newspaper reports and photographs from the period, the cultural and social constructs inherited from centuries before continued to be applied and followed in most villages and cities, usually without even cosmetic changes. The cultural imperatives were so strong that they easily survived the intrusion of new mechanical and material objects. The traditional social and cultural milieu in which most Chinese lived, especially those in the smaller cities and in the rural countryside, was satisfying because it had been built up over generations, and its own logic was consistent with all the symbolism that had been handed down from earlier times. The handwritten materials that are the focus of this study conveyed ideas and expressions that had been inherited from those earlier times. All the materials examined here expressed assumptions and values that did not change in any perceptible way during the century leading up to 1950.

During that crucial hundred-year period, our best estimates are that about 70 percent of the Chinese were functionally illiterate. Many could recognize some characters; they could write their own name, possibly the name of the village and province where they lived, and some words crucial to their everyday lives. But most people were labeled functionally illiterate because they could not read a book or newspaper with full comprehension. In many cases, even for a letter from a relative or a rent contract that defined their obligations to a land owner, they needed to call on the services of a more literate scribe in order to fully understand the content of the written material. Most of these typically not highly literate people have not left behind written materials that we could

use to understand how their lives were organized, the cultural milieu that was important to them, or their hopes and fears. We call these the “common people” [*pingmin* 平民] of China, a term that is not derogatory but expresses the idea that these people formed the majority.

The common people participated in the world of writing through thousands of men who had gained some formal education and were able to read and to write. Many of them were aspiring scholars who had studied in the hope of obtaining the lowest level of formal degree, called licentiates [*shengyuan* 生員]. Successful candidates were called *xiucai* 秀才 [flourishing talent]. Most of these men, however, were from non-elite families that could not afford to pay for any extended formal study. Some dropped out of school before taking the provincial exam that would formally recognize their studies, and they often became government clerks or scribes. Even those who obtained the basic degree needed to find a way to earn a living. Most turned to occupations that took advantage of their literacy and calligraphy: their ability to write.

These generally literate men found it hard to enter the social strata of the financially secure or the elite. They continued to live in their hometowns or as members of general society. They interacted on a daily basis with the illiterate masses to provide the reading and writing skills that even rural peasants sometimes found they needed. These men, who could read and write, worked at the precise nexus of literacy and illiteracy. They became fortunetellers, letter writers, ritual specialists such as Daoist priests, legal advisors, elementary schoolteachers, herbal doctors, government clerks, and scribes who could prepare formal documents or write letters for the illiterate. Because the scribes and scholars were familiar with the world of writing, the common people assumed these men had knowledge of many topics for which reading and writing were required, so they were regularly consulted. The scribes and scholars dressed in traditional gowns and skullcaps to display their status as literate individuals. They were treated with a degree of respect by the common people, even though people knew that a lower-degree holder or a local scribe was not a member of the upper classes. Most scribes or *xiucai* had to survive on a low annual income. They lived very close to the common people, both physically and psychologically.

The written materials that the scribes and *xiucai* scholars produced were requested by the common people. The scribes and scholars often set up a table at a local market or at a temple fair, where people would approach them, willing to pay for advice and writing services from them. Those materials, prepared at the request of the common people and paid for by them, were items of keen importance to them. The items reflected the needs, concerns, and value systems of the common people. They can be seen as a mirror of the ways in

which society was functioning for most people in China between 1850 and 1950. As we can see from examining the materials that have survived from those times, they were often consulted, showing smudge and dirt marks as well as deterioration of the paper from having been frequently handled.

We have many examples of these written materials, available nowadays in the numerous antiques and flea markets in China. The volume of these materials attests to the extent to which the common people needed writing in their daily lives, even though they were unlettered. From the available examples, we see that these materials were almost always written on low-quality handmade paper made from tree bark, bamboo, and sometimes rice. The quality of the paper can range from thick, coarse sheets to thin, unbleached paper, and often the paper is of the cheapest kind and of low quality. It makes sense that the materials requested by unlettered people for some practical aspect of their daily lives and prepared by scribes and scholars contacted at the local market or found in a small shop would be of such modest quality. The paper was sometimes assembled as a small booklet, bound with string or, for those too poor to afford string (since string could be used for sewing and probably commanded a higher price), with coarse bits of paper twisted to make a sort of twine. The twine bindings [*maozhuang* 毛裝] could be intended as temporary bindings for a work still in progress, but over the years, for the common people who owned them, they became the permanent binding of written material passed down to the family. The quality of the writing indicates that some of the scholars and scribes had much practice using the brush and wrote with a good calligraphic hand, while others had only a rudimentary ability and did not write handsome characters. They regularly made mistakes in writing the characters and also used popularized but nonstandard forms of characters. Such materials that are bound into a booklet that translates as “copybook” [*chaoben* 抄本].

As in the rest of the world, in China for centuries books were composed by hand and circulated in handwritten form as manuscripts. Early collections in personal libraries in China consisted mostly of such handwritten books until the spread of woodblock [*muban* 木板] printing after 600 CE. The word *chaoben* can also mean “manuscript,” and, for some Chinese today, it denotes books on philosophy or literature copied out in neat calligraphy by hand on high-quality bleached handmade paper. Elite scholars were fond of copying classical texts and philosophical treatises in such a manner. For some contemporary Chinese people who remember the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the word *chaoben* refers to novels or historical romances that circulated secretly in handwritten form because creative literature was denounced by the communist officials as degenerate and “feudal.” But today the word *chaoben* refers to the books studied here that rarely have anything to do with philosophy or

literature. They can be most accurately called “popular copybooks” [*minjian chaoben* 民間抄本], to distinguish them from the elite manuscripts held in university libraries and museums. This study uses the more general term *chaoben*, because that is the term used by all the booksellers and dealers at flea markets in China today.

Throughout the century we are concerned with in this study, China had a wealth of printed books that circulated and were sold throughout the country. Many were in woodblock editions using cutting and printing techniques that had been employed for hundreds of years. After 1850, lithography became a popular method of printing in China. Books produced using this method were labeled as “lithographed” [*shiyin* 石印]. Other styles of printing, such as offset printing and metal typesetting, appeared in China by the early 1900s, but only books produced using lithography from the late 1800s to about 1930 were so identified; otherwise the exact printing method was not mentioned. Unlike the traditional woodblock printing techniques, the newer imported methods depended on chemicals and metal, but they could also reproduce older woodblock pages, calligraphy, drawings, and photos and in multiple colors. Hundreds of copies could be easily and rapidly produced using the newer methods, and as the number of copies on the market increased, the price of each copy usually went down. Commercial publishers had been issuing woodblock books in inexpensive editions of popular titles to be sold both in the cities and in the rural markets. When the newer printing methods took hold, commercial publishers had a field day, flooding the market with popular titles aimed at the mass market.

In spite of the availability of inexpensive printed books, a great many people in China still preferred to copy information themselves with a brush in the age-old manner. They were keeping alive the tradition of a manuscript culture. The examples of hand-copied books we find in the collections, museums, and antiques markets in East Asia today show that China's *chaoben* manuscript culture was very vibrant. It was also practiced by Koreans in those years, but it appears from examples we have that scholars in Korea most frequently copied out already published woodblock editions from China of manuals, encyclopedias, and instructions for family ceremonies. In Japan, the samurai elite maintained a manuscript culture, but their writings were less in evidence among the common people. In China many people seemed to prefer the information in the hand-copied books to what they found in the printed versions.

The reasons for the existence of an active manuscript culture among the common people in China down to the 1950s were very logical. Most of the scholars offering their services to the people had a proprietary feeling toward their knowledge and techniques. The herbal doctor, the legal advisor, and the

ritual specialist did not want to make public the information they held, so the handwritten notebooks they kept for themselves were intended for their own reference, with their specialized information to be imparted to others as necessary—and at a price. Indeed, one way to define the *chaoben* is that they were notebooks to be used as references by the *xuicai* or scribes offering their services to the people. In the case of individual horoscopes, that was a specialty in which one-time manuscripts could command a fairly high price, because the astrological calculations and horoscope predictions were focused on one individual whose future was being foretold. In contrast, the scribes and scholars who were willing to disseminate their information more widely were those who wrote poetic matching couplets [*duilian* 對聯] extensively used for ceremonial and holiday occasions, and those who worked as local schoolteachers, because their income derived from demonstrating their skills to the wider public, including the students and their relatives paying the school fees.

In the past few decades, many *chaoben* have been turning up in antiques and flea markets in China. The booklets were often thrown out by a rural or provincial family that no longer wanted them. Most Chinese today cannot easily read the traditional-style characters or understand the grammar in these old items. Paper recyclers pick up the volumes and transfer them into the system of flea market dealers, where they eventually make their way to the larger flea and antiques markets now held on weekends in many Chinese cities. Even in the larger cities, these days the audience for most *chaoben* is limited, so the prices, although rising, are still reasonable. Very few contemporary scholars in China or elsewhere are collecting or researching these materials. Almost no libraries are collecting them or trying to rescue them from the vagaries of the marketplace. Because the materials are old and were originally written on low-quality paper, they are usually in fairly fragile condition, are missing pages, or lack covers.

My book is a study of the *chaoben* that I bought in China since 2004. When I first saw them at the Beijing Panjiayuan antiques market [Beijing Panjiayuan jiuhe shichang 北京潘家園舊貨市場], I was intrigued by these old booklets and pamphlets and, at the same time, was very unsure about exactly what they were. They were written with a brush, meaning that some of the characters could be hard to decipher, or they used nonstandard characters that did not appear in most dictionaries. They were written in a form of classical Chinese that regularly lacked any punctuation, except for heavily used texts, in which a reader later added some basic punctuation. The red circles used as punctuation were also an indication that the text had been consulted enough to warrant the help of punctuation; for religious texts, it would help when the contents were

read aloud. Many of them have no title on the cover, so a quick glance would not tell me what the book was about. Entire sections of the text were lost to crumbling and torn pages. The ravages of silverfish, mildew, and even bites by a hungry goat, along with the smells trapped in the paper, were clues to the past life of the *chaoben* I bought.

My first task, then, was to understand exactly what these items were, why they were produced, and how they were used. Along with answering these questions, I wanted to understand them in terms of a conceptual anthropological framework. Further, I wanted to understand the economic, cultural, and social imperatives that caused them to be written and needed by the people. Chapter 1 suggests how to interpret them from an anthropological point of view that I found logical and conducive to seeing the context in which they existed. This chapter also presents a survey of the different types of copied books that are available. The handwritten books produced fall into specific categories, which define the particular situation in which an economic exchange took place, as the *xiucai* prepared the materials and as the customer paid for them. The type of information requested by the customer illustrates the social or cultural imperatives in play that created its utility in the first place. We should interpret every *chaoben* discussed in this book from those anthropological, economic, and cultural perspectives.

The men who wrote these *chaoben* have unwittingly told us a lot about themselves, perhaps more than they intended. Chapters 2 and 3 look at *chaoben* texts in terms of trying to find how the scholars who wrote these texts felt about themselves and the work they were doing. Chapter 2 looks at the way in which the scholars imitated more formal works of philosophy and literature by writing polite apologies or self-deprecation [*qianci* 謙辭] at the end of their texts. We find they saw themselves as having low status, quite inferior to those with more formal education. By contrasting their expressions with those used by fully trained scholars, we find that the *xiucai* used direct and unrefined language to express their polite apology. This chapter also briefly examines a few examples of the tongue-in-cheek “humor” of the time that appeared in some *chaoben*.

In Chapter 3 we explore the miscellaneous comments that the authors wrote in the margins of their texts. Those comments sometimes touted the value of what they were doing and can be seen as a form of marketing and self-promotion to affirm the value of the information they were selling to their customers. At the same time, they allow the writer to affirm the worth of his occupation, which probably did not earn him a great deal of money.

Chapters 4–9 focus on a particular *chaoben* or a category of *chaoben* and give a more detailed examination of how the item or category of items actually

reflects the values and the economic and social situation of the common people who used them. Chapter 4 concentrates on materials used by an elementary schoolteacher, with an attempt to determine the chronology of those materials. It is always useful, but not always possible, to assume the dates of the *chaoben*. Establishing the precise dates of the teacher's materials is not necessary for us to look into the teacher's classroom, but tantalizing writing on the handwritten "textbook" he used inspire me to guess about the course of the booklet's life.

Chapter 5 discusses the horoscope prepared by a fortuneteller who made amazingly correct predictions, in context of the economic and social conditions about which he was writing, even though he was predicting fifty years into the future! Chapter 6 looks at a short family history that, at first glance, seems all too brief and vague but, when viewed critically reveals much about the village family that struggled to attain social status and in 1944 feared for the continuation of its lineage. The simple genealogical entries tell us a great deal about the family's self-perceptions when interpreted from an informed perspective.

Chapter 7 focuses on Mr. Bai, a poor scholar who made his living by writing New Year's scrolls, and, from the messy notebook he prepared, we can speculate about his personality and the poor, small village community in which he worked. Chapters 8 and 9 examine a number of materials prepared by ritual specialists to deal with the Daoist deities who could relieve the sufferings and fears of the people, as well as with the ghosts and goblins who lay in wait to harass the poor peasant.

Chapter 8 addresses the formal deities of religious Daoism and how the common people in China related to them, both asking for help and interacting with their gods reflected through colorful spectacles. The deities presented in this chapter continue to be treated with veneration and respect among the devotees of popular Daoism in China and Taiwan today. Chapter 9 continues the examination of popular spirits by looking at the ghosts and goblins that disrupted the lives of the working poor, causing headaches and vomiting. If you knew the name of the goblin and shouted it out, the baleful spirit might run away. Such were the vexations that could be faced by any of the common people of China on any day.

The study of *minjian chaoben* is a field that almost does not exist. This is a category of materials rarely used by contemporary scholars to reconstruct the lives of people in the late Qing and Republican periods. The names of the few scholars writing in Chinese or in English who reference *chaoben* are mentioned in Chapter 1. In a broad sense, this book is a guide to how to extract possible meaning and how to creatively evaluate these materials.

One convention used in this work is that, for all items in the author's personal collection, which are usually handwritten *chaoben* but, in a few cases, are printed woodblock or lithographed editions of books closely linked to the *chaoben* discussed in this study, the English-language title is given first in bold-face, followed by the Chinese-language title in pinyin romanization and then in the Chinese characters. If the booklet lacked a title page, which was not uncommon, I usually used the first few words on the first readable page as the title. This convention helps to distinguish the primary materials studied here from the other materials consulted.

Many handwritten *chaoben* are available on the market at present, at antiques or used book fairs held in many Chinese cities all over the country. Some fairs are associated with temples or held by former Confucian temples [*wenmiao* 文廟], as a continuation of the traditional Confucian respect for antiquity and literacy. Other markets, both indoor and outdoor, are held near one of the antiques malls [*guwancheng* 古玩城] that entrepreneurial merchants have set up to meet the demand for old art and antique items, both genuine and reproductions. Some of the items on sale in the category of antiques are “fakes,” reproductions made to look old, but those are usually items presumed to have historic value, such as reproductions of a memorial to a Qing emperor or a document announcing an appointment to a high government office. Sometimes the forgers appear to give observant collectors clues that the item they are looking at is not authentic by, for example, writing in a portion of the text read left-to-right as in the present, whereas the Qing practice and the Qing way of thinking was to write in a right-to-left style. I have bought some faux antiques because they looked so interesting. When the seller and I both acknowledge the item is a fake, the price is reduced, and both of us are satisfied with the transaction. Around 2005 to 2011, some *chaoben* from the Qing with a religious theme, containing talisman and illustrations of Daoist deities, were reproduced and flooded the markets in China. Vendors on the street sold them at very low prices almost exclusively to Chinese customers. Merchants at the antiques fairs sold them at whatever price they could get from the Chinese or foreign customers. But the reproductions were not at all sophisticated, and the paper used lacks the clothlike quality of the old books. They can still be found for sale at some stalls, placed next to authentic *chaoben*. The *chaoben* used in this study are all the “real thing,” as any examination of them confirms.

The handmade paper used in Qing- and Republican-era *chaoben* is almost always very pliant. The best of it, even the lower-quality examples, is like thin cloth, and some of that paper will not tear but will, instead, pull apart as if it were cloth disintegrating. Handmade paper of low or typical quality always has

a lot of imperfections in the paper, which contains broken pieces of leaves or other fibers. Most of the paper used by the *pingmin* of the time was unbleached, and it has turned yellow or brown, especially paper made from bamboo. Some of the paper looks as if it were intended for use as wrapping for a package, rather than for writing, and it seems too thick to be used for writing. Paper of better quality used by calligraphers and the upper classes exhibits fewer if any imperfections. Fine-quality paper was bleached white, and in combination with good calligraphy, denotes a quality manuscript, as will be reflected by its price in antiques markets. This study does not include manuscripts with those marks of elite provenance.

Handmade paper often shows signs of the papermaker's screen strainer. To see these qualities, hold the paper up to the light and let the light shine through it. Keep in mind that, in traditional string- or twine-bound volumes, each page consists of a sheet that has been folded, so try to separate the leaves slightly to see a single sheet in the light; for many traditional *chaoben* even the leaves, when folded double, reveal in the light the mix of plants used in the paper-making process. As the sheet of paper is held up to light, one can also see the marks of the bamboo strainer that was used in the paper-making process.

From the least expensive and the most deteriorated to the higher-quality examples, all the paper used took the writing ink very well. Words are rarely blurred or fuzzy and retain their crispness even over a hundred years later. The ink makers, the scribes, and *xiucai* who prepared their ink deserve credit for that.

In a few cases, the person who prepared the *chaoben* numbered the leaves in a traditional manner. For example, leaf 1 has two sides, so I cite the numbering as leaf 1 side "a" or side "b." In a majority of the *chaoben*, however, no page numbers were given, so I counted each side as an individual page and wrote the page number in pencil at the bottom of the page for my own reference. That is how they are usually referenced in this book, as consecutively numbered pages.

Authors of the *chaoben* sometimes identified themselves. This was especially the case with religious sutras that were copied, because the writer was doing so as a way to receive blessings from the deities or as a religious act paid for by the person who had ordered a hand-copied version of the religious text. Texts to be used for religious purposes usually identify the copier, give a date, and often the name of the copier's "study" [*zhai* 齋]. In a number of cases, often on one of the vocabulary lists [*zazi* 雜字] discussed in this study, the copier, and perhaps the author, put their names on the cover. Judging from the materials I found used by students, the students seemed to like to put their name on the cover of a *chaoben*. But, in general, the author did not write his name anywhere in these booklets. Even in those cases, though, sometimes seals were placed on

the work. The seals in red, sometimes in purple accountant's ink or in plain black ink, were put on certain pages. The seals could be the name of a person, the author or owner of the work, or the name of the author's "studio" [*tang* 堂]. Seals always add to the colorfulness of the work, and I have tried to translate the seals when I could. Many contemporary Chinese cannot read the stylized writing on the old seals. In some cases, the seals are so blurred and indistinct that it is impossible for anyone to read them. When we can read the seals, they are a clue to identifying something about the *chaoben* in question, but documented references are rarely found to seals placed in a "popular copy book" intended for the common people.

The chapters in this book were originally intended as academic articles that I planned to publish separately. Some have been published in earlier versions in English (Chapters 5 and 6) or in Chinese (Chapters 1 and 6). The majority of the chapters have not been published previously. Since I intended them as individual articles, the reader may find a degree of repetition, for example, more than one chapter explains the role of *xiuca*i or the economic function of *chaoben*, though in general I have removed such duplicated explanations. Readers will also find that some *chaoben* are discussed in more than one chapter, usually to illustrate a particular point and to allow us to see the importance of the item in question from a different point of view. Later chapters raise the themes outlined here, giving more description or detail about the theme and its context. I ask the reader's indulgence when this occurs, but it allows the chapters to be read out of order and yet provide a clear understanding of their role in the larger study of *chaoben*.

# Contextualizing *Chaoben*: On the Popular Manuscript Culture of the Late Qing and Republican Period in China

## 晚清民國時期的民間抄本

Between 1850 and 1950, China enjoyed a vibrant popular manuscript culture.\* Books hand-copied by brush<sup>1</sup> proliferated in the large cities, market centers, and even in many villages. At first glance, it seems paradoxical that handwritten materials would flourish at the very time that printed matter was increasingly available, often in inexpensive, illustrated lithographed editions sold in bookstores and local markets. By the 1920s, printed copies of virtually every popular and well-known text in China had been reproduced for sale and circulated widely. Yet thousands of people continued to copy these texts by hand for use in daily life, and they handwrote notebooks for their own reference. This chapter explains why the practice of hand-copying materials continued and how they were used.

I began collecting these books in 2004, and all the examples used in this chapter come from my personal collection. They are all one-of-a-kind notebooks [*bijiben* 筆記本], also referred to in this study as booklets, since they usually contain fewer pages than books and have the feel of an informal

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\* I gratefully acknowledge two scholars who assisted me in my initial forays into the world of *chaoben*: He Zhaohui 何朝暉 of Shandong University and Li Ren-Yuan 李仁淵 of Academia Sinica, mentioned in the Acknowledgments to this book and below in this chapter. Lin Weiping 林瑋平 of Taiwan National University made helpful comments about my research. Neighboring cultures that adopted Chinese characters for writing, specifically Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, did not have the sort of flourishing handwritten *chaoben* culture that China enjoyed. Certainly handwritten copies of books were made and circulated in manuscript form. They were often produced by literate people for other literate people, and they tended to have religious or literary content. For recent scholarly studies on the book culture, chiefly of printed books, in East Asia, see Joseph P. McDermott, *A Social History of the Chinese Book: Books and Literati Culture in Late Imperial China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006); Peter Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).

1 Note that throughout this book, the terms “handwritten,” “hand-copied,” “notebook,” “booklet,” “book,” and “manuscript” are all used to refer to *chaoben*.

compilation. My best efforts to date these materials find that the majority were produced after 1850. In general, they were for the copier's personal or professional use. At present, these booklets are widely available in China's book, antiques, and flea markets.

Some libraries and research institutes in China are collecting them, but relatively little research is being done on these materials or using them. The most active scholar in China who uses *chaoben* as a way to gain insight into the lives of ordinary people is Wang Zhenzhong 王振忠 of Fudan University. He is an avid collector of *chaoben* and old documents, and his work depicts the context in which they were used. He carefully preserves his large personal collection in good condition against the ravages of moisture and insects. He has written about how he acquires some of the materials in his collection.<sup>2</sup>

Li Ren-Yuan 李仁淵 at the Academia Sinica in Taiwan is engaged in reconstructing local society in northeastern Fujian Province. He is investigating the written materials, both printed matter and *chaoben*, held by people in villages in that region. They range from genealogies to books for practical use, along with items that reflect the waves of thinking that penetrated even remote areas of South China over the past several hundred years. His work plays a major role in defining and documenting the culture of South China. He is an expert at reading these materials and analyzing them from the point of view of their living past, and he explains that they were a vital part of people's lives, a point of view that was strengthened by the time he spent living in rural Fujian and investigating all the old materials the families there had purposefully preserved and were happy to show him. He lectures widely in Taiwan and China about these materials and the implications about daily life that they reveal. Ren-Yuan is one of my "teachers" who taught me how to read *chaoben*.<sup>3</sup>

2 Wang Zhenzhong 王振忠 explains his interest and illustrates his approaches to these materials in his *Richu erzuo* 日出而作 [*Rise Early and Work*] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2010). He concentrates on Huizhou 徽州, Anhui 安徽 Province, and uses, among other materials, old documents and *chaoben* from Huizhou in order to sketch the life and times of society there. See idem, *Huizhou yanjiu rumen* 徽州研究入門 [*An Introduction to Research about Huizhou*] (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2011). He wrote this as a research guide for students.

3 Li Ren-Yuan has been working with Michael Szonyi at Harvard, who is also interested in South China. Li is continuing the ideas he outlined in his first book, *Wan-Qing de xingshi chuanbo meiti yu zhishi fengzi: Yi baokan chuban wei zhongxin de taolun* 晚清的新式傳播媒體與知識份子：以報刊出版為中心的討論 [*New Media and Intellectuals during the Late Qing: On Periodicals and Publishing Institutions*] (Taipei: Daw Shiang, 2005, 2013). His dissertation is Ren-Yuan Li, "Making Texts in Villages: Textual Production in Rural China during the Ming-Qing Period" PhD, Harvard University, 2014. His dissertation advisers were Mark Elliott and Michael Szonyi.



FIGURE 1.1

*Chaoben Covers.* Reading right to left, the covers are: *Ancient Texts Explained* [Guwen shiyi 古文釋義]; *Various Words Offered to the People* [Kuanzhong zazi 欵眾雜字]; *Song by the Wenchang Emperor Advocating Filial Piety* [Wenchang dijun qinxiao ge 文昌帝君勸孝歌]; *Three Items for Mr. Xu* [Xushi sanzong 徐氏三種]; *Writing Talisman* [Shu fu fashi 書符法事]. All these chaoben are discussed in this book.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

Another teacher to whom I am equally indebted for showing me how to read and understand *chaoben* is He Zhaohui 何朝暉 of Shandong University. We met in 2006 when he was a postdoctoral fellow at the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard. He specializes in the Ming 明 dynasty (1368–1644) and in philological studies and rare books, in particular, the imperial examination system during the Ming dynasty. He is also able to discuss the handmade paper used in old books and comment on their manufacture.<sup>4</sup>

Zheng Zhenman 鄭振滿 uses handwritten contracts and genealogies to reveal details of premodern local society in South China. His lively and poetic

4 Among his many publications is He Zhaohui 何朝暉, “‘Mingshi, Yiwenzhi’ yu Mingdai wenxian 『明史·藝文志』與明代文獻 [Record of Books in the Ming History and Ming Literature], *Daitōbunkadaigaku kangakukai shi* 大東文化大學漢學會誌 [*Journal of Sinological Studies of Daito Bunka University*], no. 52 (March 2013).

writing enables the reader to see the reflection of the green hills in the water of the flooded paddy fields and to feel the quiet serenity of the fertile landscape in the southern climes.<sup>5</sup>

Wang Ermin 王爾敏 is a scholar trained in Taiwan and China who works with *chaoben*. His teacher was the late Dai Xuanzhi 戴玄之 (1922–1990), who also wrote about history and local people, especially about secret societies, in a way that highlighted the customs and beliefs of common people trying to survive during the Republic in unforgiving times. Wang appreciates the value of the handwritten materials, including the vocabulary lists that are mentioned below, but he wants the readers to draw their own conclusions about the meaning of the old documents he discusses, so he often provides minimal interpretive comments. He reprints lengthy *chaoben* passages, pointing out the main themes he has observed but then leaving it to the reader to draw other meanings from the text.<sup>6</sup>

A librarian working in Tianjin, Li Guoqing 李國慶, is determined to preserve as much of China's recent literary output as possible, because many books produced for popular consumption are being haphazardly discarded. Among other interests, Li collects vocabulary lists, classifying them according to their presentation style, such as four-word lists. Li is a graduate of Peking University, where he specialized in library studies. At present, he is in charge of the Historical Documents Section of the Tianjin Library [Tianjin tushuguan, lishi wenxianbu 天津圖書館·歷史文獻部]. He has collected and reprinted the texts of several hundred vocabulary lists produced from the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) to the present. *Zazi leihan* 雜字類函 [*Vocabulary Lists*], an eleven-volume work published in 2009, is a bibliography of works he has collected and classified. The bibliography lists 168 titles, covering eighty topic areas divided into thirteen categories. His goal is to describe each book in ways that will identify them and allow scholars to judge their potential research value. As with most handwritten works, many of the vocabulary lists discussed in this study are missing useful information such as clear dates and place names. Each entry has some identifying information on the title, often the first and last line of the

5 See, e.g., Zheng Zhenman 鄭振滿 et al., *Xiangtu Zhongguo: Peitian* 鄉土中國: 培田 [*Rural China: Peitian*] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2005).

6 See, e.g., Wang Ermin 王爾敏, *Ming-Qing shehui wenhua shengtai* 明清社會文化生態 [*The Cultural Environment of Ming and Qing Society*] (Guilin: Guangxi shifandaxue chubanshe, 2009); see also Dai Xuanzhi 戴玄之, *Hongqianghui* 紅槍會 [*The Red Spears*] (Taipei: Shihuo chubanshe, 1973), published in English as Tai Hsüan-chih (Dai Xuanzhi), *The Red Spears, 1916–1949*, trans. Ronald Suleski (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, 1985).

collection, with other names or identifying information as to its origin when they appear in the collection.<sup>7</sup>

These scholars are doing pioneering work in Chinese on the usefulness of *chaoben* for gaining insight into the lives of people in pre-1950s China. Pioneering work in English, which links handwritten materials to local village life in South China near Hong Kong, was done by James Hayes, a former civil servant in Hong Kong and now retired scholar, who began publishing in the 1960s and continues to do so today. Also noteworthy is the work of Patrick H. Hase, who writes about village practices in South China, near Hong Kong.<sup>8</sup>

These booklets were part of the popular manuscript culture [*minjian chaobenwenhua* 民間抄本文化] of the late Qing and early Republic. Although the idea of hand-writing texts derived from the traditional practice of students and scholars copying extensive texts in their entirety (today we sometimes refer to the best of these copies as “excellent reliable copies” [*shanben* 善本]), the texts produced as part of the popular manuscript culture were in a different category. First, they were not lengthy historical, philosophical, or literary texts of interest to the highly educated or the well-to-do. Second, these popular copybooks were not intended to be placed on a library shelf for circulation among scholars for the purposes of research or discussion. Third, *minjian chaoben* texts were not always copied in order to preserve respected writing because they often contained only portions of other texts, except for religious texts, which were copied in their entirety, especially as part of an act of devotion.<sup>9</sup>

7 Li Guoqing has written about other materials of historical interest held at the Tianjin Library but not, as of this writing (2017) on the subject of vocabulary lists. At present, he is working on a manuscript titled “Zazi leihan xubian 雜字類函續編 [Vocabulary Lists, Continued].” On his printed collection, see Li Guoqing 李國慶, *Zazi leihan 雜字類函* [Vocabulary Lists] (Beijing: Xuefan chubanshe, 2009).

8 In the hope of alerting librarians in China to the usefulness of these materials for research, I wrote “Wan-Qing Minguo shiqide minjian chaoben 晚清民國時期的民間抄本 [Popular Copied Books in the Late Qing and Republic],” *Shandong tushuguanxue qikan* 山東圖書館學刊 [Library Journal of Shandong], 2, no. 124 (2011): 89–93, 115. Hase’s most recent book is Patrick H. Hase, *Custom, Land and Livelihood in Rural South China: The Traditional Land Law of Hong Kong’s New Territories, 1750–1950* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013).

9 The literary and philosophical texts copied by literati, as mentioned above, were in a different category than the popular manuscripts being considered here. For details on how to judge the fine-quality hand-copied *shanben* works, see Shen Jin 沈津, “Chaoben jiqi jiazhi yu jiangding 抄本及其價值與鑑定 [The Value and Authenticity of Copied Manuscripts],” in *Shuyun youyou yimaixiang: Shen Jin shumu wenxian lunji* 書韻悠悠一脈香: 沈津書目文獻論集 [The Beauty of Books Is an Everlasting Fragrance: The Collected Bibliography and Documentary Writings of Shen Jin] (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2006). Ming-

Like the *shanben* texts produced by students and scholars, the *minjian chaoben* were written on sheets of paper that were folded in the middle to form the outer edge of each page—the open edges were bound together—and a title page and back cover were added. This produced the appearance of a typical string-bound book [*xiandingben* 線定本] that was bound along the right margin and that opened from left to right. But the differences with scholarly handwritten texts were noticeable, especially because the *minjian chaoben* were often bound with inexpensive string or even with paper twisted to make twine (called *maozhuang* 毛裝, to indicate that the binding was temporary). It could mean that the author or compiler was planning to add more pages later. However, for some people, it was simpler and less expensive to prepare twine from scraps of paper, rather than string or thread that was needed to repair clothing. In this study, I assume that twine was used to bind pages to avoid the need to purchase string or thread. This seems a reasonable conclusion when the manuscript in question is made of very rough and inexpensive paper, likely obtained from a local market.

Inexpensive handmade paper was produced from many different plant products. Rough paper for wrapping could be made from rice straw (called “straw paper” [*caozhi* 草紙]). It could be used for writing as long as the paper took the writing ink without blurring and occasionally comprised *chaoben*. Paper made from rice straw may have been the simplest to produce, but, of course, rice was also a food staple and most people grew rice for food, not for the rice straw. Probably paper made from bamboo was more common than paper made from rice.

Paper was also made from the bark of the paper-mulberry [*chu* 楮], a large shrub. Such paper was highly prized during the Qing dynasty, throughout the Republican era, and down to the present day. Paper made from mulberry bark

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dynasty elite manuscripts are examined in Inoue Susumu 井上進, “Zōsho to dokusho 藏書と讀書 [Collected Books and Readers],” *Tōhō gakuho* 東方學報 3 (1990); idem, “Shuppan bunka to gakujutsu 出版文化と學術 [Publication History and Academic Scholarship],” *Meishin jidaishi no kihon mondai* 明清時代史の基本問題 (*Basic Issues in Ming and Qing History*) (Tokyo: Kyūko shoten, 1997). Both Cynthia Brokaw and Joseph McDermott discuss the elite tradition, while being fully aware of the popular manuscript tradition, in Cynthia Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow, ed., *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). At this point in scholarship, the study of these popular manuscripts is subsumed under the study of books and printing history. The state of the field concerning printed books is summarized in Tobie Meyer-Fong, “The Printed World: Books, Publishing Culture, and Society in Late Imperial China,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 3 (August 2007).

was very durable: It deteriorated slowly and was widely assumed to be able to last a thousand years. Before the Song dynasty (960–1280), paper made from mulberry bark was very common, and paper later made for use in the imperial palace was in general from the white mulberry. (This refers to its general designation, not to its color, which was the color of typical tree bark.) Paper makers in Korea and Japan have continued prefer paper using mulberry bark.

After the Southern Song period (1127–1279) and down to the present, the most common handmade paper in China was that made from bamboo. The material needed was easily available in many parts of China, and the resulting paper was pliant and took ink well. Bamboo paper was believed to have less longevity than bark paper and was expected to last only five hundred years. It was not uncommon for paper makers to throw other materials into the “soup” that became the viscous liquid to be strained off to form the paper. Straw fibers were longer than most other fibers in the liquid mix and could be seen when the paper was held up to light. Bark fibers were also among the longer fibers. In some papers, bundles of fiber can be seen embedded in the paper, especially in cases when the liquid mix (the pulp) was not heated (uncooked) before being strained.<sup>10</sup>

In all cases, the bark or fibers were stripped off the plants, softened by steaming and washing with water, and then pounded into a pulp. At that point, the various fibers from other suitable plants could be mixed in to strengthen the pulp. For example, some bamboo or rice stalks could be mixed in with the mulberry or bamboo. Accepted recipes called for a ratio of 60 percent mulberry to 40 percent tender bamboo or 70 percent mulberry bark to 30 percent rice stalks. Before the pulp was ready to be made into paper, an agent to bind the fibers together was added, in some cases starch made from soybeans [*huang dou* 黄豆]. As the pulp was being prepared, locally available chemicals such as potash or soda ash to form lye, or chlorine bleach, might be poured in and then washed out to achieve the desired consistency and color.

A vat filled with water was prepared, and a lump of the claylike pulp was added and vigorously stirred in. Then, a large square screen in a wooden frame, often made from strips of rounded bamboo tied together with wire, silk string, or even long hair from an animal tail, was sunk into the vat below the surface of the milky water. The screen was slowly lifted up horizontally by hand with the

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10 In 2016 I benefited greatly from information and advice given to me by Lü Shuxian 吕淑贤, a rare book librarian at the Peking University Library, who spent a year as a visiting specialist at the Harvard-Yenching Library. We discussed Chinese handmade papers, and she examined a number of the *chaoben* from my collection that are cited in this book.

result that a thin layer of the liquid scum remained on the top of the screen. The screen was slightly tilted to allow excess water to drain off. Some also drained off through the bamboo screen and into the vat. At this point, some impurities, such as small fibers, often remained in the mixture on the screen. When we look at the paper typically used by the common people for the *chaoben*, these impurities are visible, but as long as they were completely flat and imbedded in the paper, they did not affect the surface or the paper's ability to take ink without distortion. Moreover, when a sheet of the *chaoben* paper is held up to the light, the impression of the bamboo screen is also visible in the paper, like a watermark. The more impurities that are seen in the paper, the greater the chances that it was produced hurriedly and perhaps inexpertly. The lower quality of the paper reduced the price, and therefore it was more commonly used by people at the bottom of the economic ladder.

The wet sheets of "paper" could be slid (couched) off the screen and stacked as new sheets came off the screen. When a pile of perhaps ten sheets was stacked, the sheets would be pressed down slowly to allow the remaining water to be squeezed out. Then, after a sheet was fairly dry, it would be placed on a wall or under the sun to dry completely. The entire paper-making process consumed many days and weeks, because it comprised repeated washing and steaming to strip down the plant fibers, to form the pulp, and then to dry each sheet. Preparing the pulp was the most time-consuming part, but after the vat and its liquid were ready, many sheets could be produced from a single vat in a short period. Many of these *chaoben* used paper that had not been bleached, and the *chaoben* I have found have aged to a naturally occurring shade of brown or tan.<sup>11</sup> The handmade paper used in Qing- and Republican-era *chaoben* is almost always very pliant. The best of it is like thin cloth, some of which will not tear but, instead, will pull apart like disintegrating cloth.

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11 For a description of making paper for manuscript and printing use, see Jacob Eyferth, *Eating Rice from Bamboo Shoots: The Social History of a Community of Handicraft Papermakers in Rural Sichuan, 1920–2000* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009). The basic process of handmade paper production is described on pp. 25–30. See also Joseph Needham, ed., *Science and Civilization in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); vol. 5, pt. 1, by Tsien Tsuen-Hsuei (Qian Cunxun) 錢存訓, is on paper and printing; the paper-making process is detailed on pp. 52–79. (Professor Tsien was born in 1910 and died in Chicago in April 2015 at the age of 105, as this chapter was being written.) Informative comments are made about handmade paper in China in Lucille Chia, *Printing for Profit: The Commercial Publishers of Jianyang, Fujian (11th–17th Centuries)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2002), 327–330 nn. 3–25.

The quality of the paper used for the handwritten texts in the market indicates that they were prepared for the common people from inexpensive materials locally available.<sup>12</sup> The quality of the calligraphy in those texts allows us to judge the educational level and formal training of the person who wrote them. The calligraphy varies from that of a novice to that of someone relatively well trained. Most *minjian chaoben* were written using “regular script” [*kaishu* 楷書], though nonstandard characters (called “popular characters” [*suzi* 俗字]) and incorrect characters, which were homophones of the correct ones, are frequently encountered. Judging people’s level of formal education by the quality of their calligraphy is an inexact science, because not all traditionally educated scholars took pains to write beautiful characters. Nevertheless, in general, writing artful characters with a brush was considered a standard part of the educational curriculum, so it seems a reasonable indication of the formal educational level attained by the person who copied a text.

### Popular *Chaoben* in Chinese Society

When I first began buying these *chaoben*, because they attracted and intrigued me, I had only a vague idea of what they were, and I was confused about their place in Chinese society. I was told most of them had been discarded by the families that possessed them. What value, then, should I give them? I did not want to engage in theory building about what I was buying, but I wanted to place them in a meaningful context. I came to believe that the *minjian chaoben*, unlike the texts with some academic value copied by scholars, concern the interests, concerns, and aspirations of the great mass of ordinary Chinese. These booklets should be seen as cultural artifacts created by Chinese people during the crucial century from 1850 to 1950.<sup>13</sup>

12 So far, I have not found any *chaoben* on paper-making, but I obtained a related handwritten manuscript that is a two-volume string-bound set on the intricacies of cutting woodblocks, by Liu Fengge 劉鳳閣 [Liu Phoenix Hall, which could also be the name of the author of this text]. It appears to have been written in late 1936 with notes and the date January 1937 added. The earlier date—Kangde 康德 3 (1936)—refers to the Manchukuo 滿洲國 period. Volume 1 is thirty-two pages, volume 2 is forty-six pages, each is 8 in (20.32 cm) h × 5¼ in (13.34 cm) w, purchased in Harbin, January 2013.

13 One of the more recent *chaoben* I have obtained is a Xue Family Genealogy dated 1982: *Xueshi jiapu: Shiliu shisun Xue Zhonghe jinchao bingbu* 薛氏家譜：十六世孫薛中和謹抄并補 [*Xue Family Genealogy: Carefully Copied with Additions by Sixteenth-Generation Xue Zhonghe*]. This copy uses bleached machine-made paper of good quality. Mr. Xue, who

I define these works as cultural artifacts based on my understanding of the dynamics of cultural creation, using the explanation endorsed by the eminent Harvard medical anthropologist Arthur Kleinman. He wrote that culture is a process that emerges out of the patterns of everyday social life. In this view, culture is a product created by average people. It is not abstract and distant; it is concrete and relevant. The culture that most people create emerges from common sense taken for granted. Even if the elements of this culture are based on a grand philosophical or religious worldview, the particular culture being created by most people must exhibit a logic that is understandable and meaningful to the average person.<sup>14</sup> The majority of *chaoben* that I have collected fall into this category.

Culture is historically determined because it draws on the influences, values, and symbols that have affected the people creating the culture. But the “distant” historically determined elements are transformed by the common people in ways that can meaningfully influence their everyday lives. People always engage in this reinterpretation because the culture that an individual embraces needs to be intimate and deeply relevant to them. Cultural symbols or values that are too distant (in historical time) or too abstract (in conceptual terms) can lose their meaning for ordinary people in everyday life.

The personal culture of each individual merges with the values and perceptions of the people around them to form the dominant culture among their peers. The immediate dominant culture consists of the ways of being and doing, the preferred forms of ordinary interpersonal interaction, and the socially elaborated bodily states understandable to the ordinary people who are creating and living the culture. These elements, in turn, converge to recreate social life in its local specificity. In other words, the culture created by ordinary people is always relevant to their specific time and place and to the local

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was sixty-eight years old when he made this copy, used complex, or traditional, characters throughout although simplified characters have been officially taught and used in China since the 1960s. It is 11 in. (27.94 cm) h × 6½ in. (16.51 cm) w and comprises 19 folio (folded) pages, purchased in Shanghai in January 2013.

- 14 Kleinman endorsed this view of culture in Roberto Lewis-Fernandez and Arthur Kleinman, “Cultural Psychiatry: Theoretical, Clinical, and Research Issues,” *Cultural Psychiatry*, 18, no. 3 (September 1995): 434; see also Arthur Kleinman, “How Is Culture Important for DSM-IV?” in *Culture and Psychiatric Diagnosis: A DSM-IV Perspective*, ed. Juan Mezzich et al. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1996). This broad and relaxed explanation of culture is suitable to these materials because it takes them on their own terms.

circumstances in which they live. We need to accept variants in cultural patterns and expressions as to-be-expected manifestations of the real cultures of living people.<sup>15</sup>

This broad and relaxed definition of culture is appropriate here for several reasons. First, it shows that culture is never fixed. Instead, it evolves over time through people's interactions with the historical, social, and political contexts that they experience, which are perpetually in flux. Second, it explains culture as a product of people. Although everyday lives are regularly influenced by culture transmitted through institutions or received as part of a general milieu, living people create and transmit culture. In this view, culture is not a top-down phenomenon that engulfs a passive people; rather, culture is just as much a bottom-up process created by people in the course of their lives. The culture that these people create is always modified and practiced in ways that fit their lives.

Moreover, this definition tells us that we need to appreciate culture within its local setting. At the local level, we assume we will find variations in cultures because they are practiced and created by people in ways that make sense to them. Local variations of a cultural phenomenon do not disrupt or deny the greater orthodox practices of a major cultural tradition, but the local variations are modifications to be expected in the pattern of more widely followed practices. An examination of any cultural practice in a specific location invariably reveals modifications preferred by the local people.<sup>16</sup>

The *chaoben* that I have collected are all cultural artifacts, produced by ordinary people. The people who copied these texts were cultural creators dealing with the grand value statements and symbolic representations of historical

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15 Chinese have joked and made fun of their high culture, at the same time that they were subject to its values. Another example of this in East Asia is Korean village folk dances that make fun of the *yangban* 兩班 elite. In China, temple fairs sometimes became events for clowning and revelry, discussed in Zhao Shiyu 趙世瑜, "Zhongguo chuantong miaohui zhong de kuanghuan jingshen 中國傳統廟會中的狂歡精神 [The Spirit of Revelry in Traditional Chinese Temple Fairs]," *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 中國社會科學 [*Chinese Social Science*], 1 (1995).

16 In this regard, the fieldwork of Daniel Overmyer gives many examples of how people in North China conduct local village religious ceremonies based on their own interpretations of their relationships with the gods and spirits of their communities. See Daniel L. Overmyer, *Local Religion in North China in the Twentieth Century: The Structure and Organization of Community Rituals and Beliefs* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), published in Chinese as Fan Lizhu 范麗珠 and Ou Danian 歐大年 (Overmyer), *Zhongguo beifang nongcun shehui de minjian xinyang* 中國北方農村社會的民間信仰 [*Popular Beliefs in North China Villages*] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2013).

China, but they altered those grand elements from their distant culture to produce a locally specific cultural item that was relevant to their daily lives.

Such texts were needed for practical purposes, often to help people deal with matters such as marriage, disagreements, or the need for more knowledge. Each of these booklets had a value in the economic exchange of goods and services. For example, the fortunetelling texts were used by fortunetellers [*suanmingshi* 算命師] to earn income. Some texts were used by teachers who earned a living by giving students elementary education. The religious texts were used to reinforce community bonds among people who were likely to contribute goods or money to help sustain their local ritual specialist.

Each of these texts was used in daily intercourse among people. They were laid on the altar of a local temple to be consulted by priests and laypeople. They were carried in the packs of itinerant fortunetellers or by yinyang masters [*yinyangshi* 陰陽師] as they moved from one location to another seeking business. They were set out on the table of the legal advisor as he discussed a family matter with a concerned client, possibly at a table at a periodic market.

The fact that these were working texts, intended for use in the course of daily life, can be illustrated in several ways. The strongest indicator is that many of them contain a variety of materials. It is common to find two or more distinct texts on different, sometimes seemingly unrelated topics on a page. This is because the books reflect the personal interests and needs of the user who copied the texts or who paid to have them copied, not for some unknown general reader. In addition, many of the people who owned these books used them as notebooks in which to jot down other unrelated information that was useful or interesting to them. We can find instances in which someone wrote down a recipe for traditional Chinese medicine or kept an account of recent purchases, a teacher who listed the names of some of his students, or a copyist who added an interesting story at the end of the text—examples discussed below. Although they are bound as books, usually with a title on the cover, it is useful conceptually to think of them as personal notebooks in which the copyist or the owner wrote down information of personal importance.

One often finds that these booklets show a lot of wear and tear and that the paper has become very thin, stained, or discolored, especially where it was frequently handled. The most recent of these manuscripts is now at least fifty years old, and most are more than a hundred years old, so some discoloration is to be expected. These manuscripts were in frequent use because they were intimately connected to their daily lives. The discoloration indicates what a personal and perhaps even indispensable item they were for the common people. They needed the information in these manuscripts for both ordinary quotidian

activities and important life events, whether marriage, filing a lawsuit, or learning to gain enough literacy to get a job.

China's popular manuscript culture remained a living tradition throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The handwritten texts in my collection exemplify this tradition, which remained vibrant among the common people for so long because the materials being copied were needed for a practical and more or less immediate purpose. They were notebooks in which useful information was kept for reference. Their value lay with the person who copied the materials for his own use, but in most cases they had limited value on the open market because their contents were usually so specific to that person and because they often contain miscellaneous notes. Most writers did not seem to have any intention of having such manuscripts available on the market because they often added personal details to the pages. However, they rarely wrote their own name, address, or any other identifying information because the text was for their own use and not intended to be read by members of the public.

It is precisely the eclectic mixture of texts and miscellaneous information that makes these hand-copied books so interesting as cultural artifacts. They are a marker for the specific time and place of the person who copied them—often someone who otherwise might not have left behind particular written materials because he did not have a connection to elite education and the written word and did not engage in its creation for scholarly or intellectual purposes. Some of the texts I've collected show the hand of a person with little formal training in the use of the brush. Those written characters are heavy and far from elegant. Many of the texts in my collection show the hand of a person with obviously some degree of formal education and training in calligraphy, a person comfortable and competent in writing with the brush. But his brush was being put to use to assist a person of lesser social or educational standing, and to assist himself in earning income, as discussed in Chapter 7, whose writing is contrasted with that of his better-placed compatriot in South China.

A common assumption made here is that many of the people in this period who worked with written materials, specifically with those in my collection, were lower-degree holders such as *xiucais*. These men had received several years of basic education, including China's history, literature, and philosophical traditions. They had spent years practicing writing with a brush, so their calligraphy could be adequate. After a number of years of study, which began when they were seven or eight years old, they would at the age of sixteen or seventeen take the county-level government examinations to obtain a *xiucais* degree. Some students failed the examination or, often for financial reasons, suspended their formal study before taking it. All these men were able to read and write and were knowledgeable about China's cultural past but needed to make a



FIGURE 1.2

*Xiucai Scholar* 秀才. The young xiucai scholar proudly wore his robes and cap as a mark of his status. Chinese man and boy in Singapore. Date circa 1890, English: Photograph—Albumen print gold toned.

living. They often took up professions, as mentioned in the Introduction, as a village school teacher, fortuneteller, legal advisor, herbal doctor, or scribe [*daishu* 代書] who wrote letters and documents for others. Others were government clerks or small businessmen who had a basic education and regularly used a brush in the course of their work, meaning that their writing was clear, yet their social status was not considered high. Some scholars have suggested that local merchants were strong consumers of handwritten and printed texts because they were attempting to raise their social position through the acquisition of these symbols of culture and education.<sup>17</sup>

### Striving for Basic Literacy

The ability to read, and possibly also to write, divided Chinese society between those permanently relegated to the lower strata of society and those who could, at least in theory and not infrequently in practice, raise their social and economic status. For many people in China, being able to read and write not only opened the door to intellectual pursuits but, more important, created the possibility of gaining a more lucrative source of income. For those at the bottom of the social and educational ladder, for whom even a year or two of schooling was beyond their means, glossaries called “vocabulary lists” [*zazi* 雜字] were the basic tool most in demand.

A young person who obtained a copy of a vocabulary list could largely teach himself how to recognize and write some characters. Someone older needed

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17 *Xiucai* 秀才 is used here as a proxy for literate people who turned to various types of work to earn a living. They could equally be assumed to have been clerks or scribes. As emphasized above, it is likely that the people engaged in the professions discussed here were all literate persons with some degree of formal education whose careers did not progress to completion of a higher degree or appointment to a government office. In that sense, the men in these professions were students at various, though mostly the lower, rungs of the educational ladder. They might have been licentiates, sometimes also referred to as *xiucai*, imperial academy students [*jiansheng* 監生], or holders of a purchased degree [*gongsheng* 貢生], which can be translated as “tribute student.” See Evelyn Sakakida Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979); see also [http://wn.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial\\_examination/](http://wn.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_examination/), accessed June 23, 2009. Useful comments outlining the traditional education system are in H.S. Brunnert and V.V. Hagelstrom, *Present-Day Political Organization of China* (1911, repr. Taipei: Book World Company, n.d.). The position of these low-level scholars is discussed in Benjamin A. Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).



FIGURE 1.3

*Scribe.* This photo shows a scribe [daishu 代書] writing on behalf of people who were unable to read or write well. The photo was taken in 1941 in Chengdu 成都, Longquanyi 龍泉驛, Sichuan 四川 Province (present-day Longquanzhen 龍泉鎮?), by Carl Mydans, a photographer for Life Magazine, who traveled to various war-torn regions and was photographing in China at the time.

PHOTO BY CARL MYDANS, THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION, GETTY IMAGES

only to read aloud the words for that student to understand the meaning of the written characters that comprised them. If the words were arranged in short rhymes, the student could identify the characters he needed to learn more easily by memorizing the rhymes. Copying the character again and again provided entry-level exposure to the written word, without the need to pay a teacher or take the time to attend classes. Most vocabulary lists were written in pocket-sized editions, which the young apprentice or store clerk could easily carry with him all day.<sup>18</sup>

18 The role of the *zazi* as a basic tool for education and inculcating social and moral values is discussed in Wang Youying 王有英 “Minjian shizikeben zhong de jiaohua yiyi ‘zazi’ yu shehui jiaohua 民間識字課本中的教化意義雜字與社會教化 [The Socialization Function of Vocabulary Lists as Textbooks for Popular Education],” *Xinan shifan daxue*

The contents of most vocabulary lists were specific to their time and place. The words introduced help us to distinguish between a Qing and a Republican text. For example, the words used to describe items of clothing or government offices, changed between the two periods. The words referring to agricultural crops, to grains and fruits, also differed between the northern and southern parts of the country, so we can ascertain the general geographic location where the text was written. Many vocabulary lists contain words in local dialect for tools, items of clothing, or foods. Some native speakers of Chinese can point out such regional usage, which help to pinpoint the geographic origin of a text.<sup>19</sup>

Vocabulary lists were extremely popular in China at the end of the Qing dynasty, judging from the large number of them available for purchase today. One of the vocabulary lists in my collection is titled **A List of Characters to Teach the People** [*Shenqun shunzi* 申群順字]. This publication presents loosely rhyming four-word verses [*siyan zazi* 四言雜字]. It is not divided into sections or categories; the verses simply run from the beginning to the end of the text. It contains 500 characters, most of which are words for items that might commonly be found in a general store or market.

The heavy hand of the copyist tells us it was probably the student himself who copied this book. He had received some training in calligraphy, it appears, but was still at an early stage of practice. From the items mentioned on this first page, we can guess the text was made in North or Northeast China, where these would all be typical food items. The rather poor quality of the paper, which would be for wrapping bundles, might also indicate a rural part of North China. The title page says, “Written on June 12, 1930 [in the intercalary month of June], in the summer” [*Minguo shijiunian runliuyue shi'errixia li* 民國拾玖年閏六月十二日夏立]. An inspirational phrase is penned in the student’s poor calligraphy: “The mountains are high and the rivers long” [*Shan’gao shuichang* 山高水長; p. 1]. The implication of the phrase is that students need to broaden their horizons.

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*xuebao* 西南師範大學學報 [*Journal of Southwest Normal University*], 31, no. 2 (2005). A brief overview of the chronological development of vocabulary lists in Chinese history is given in Gu Yueqin 顧月琴 and Zhang Hongfeng 張紅峰, “Zazi (Zhongguo minjian shizi jiaocai) zai Riben de liuchuan ji yingxiang 雜字 (中國民間識字教材) 在日本的流傳及影響 [Vocabulary Lists (Popular Chinese Educational Texts); Their Spread and Influence in Japan],” *Guojia jiaoyu xingzheng xueyuan xuebao* 國家教育行政學院學報 [*Journal of National Academy of Education Administration*] 7 (2008).

19 Rawski discusses a Shandong dialect vocabulary list, in her *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch’ing China*.

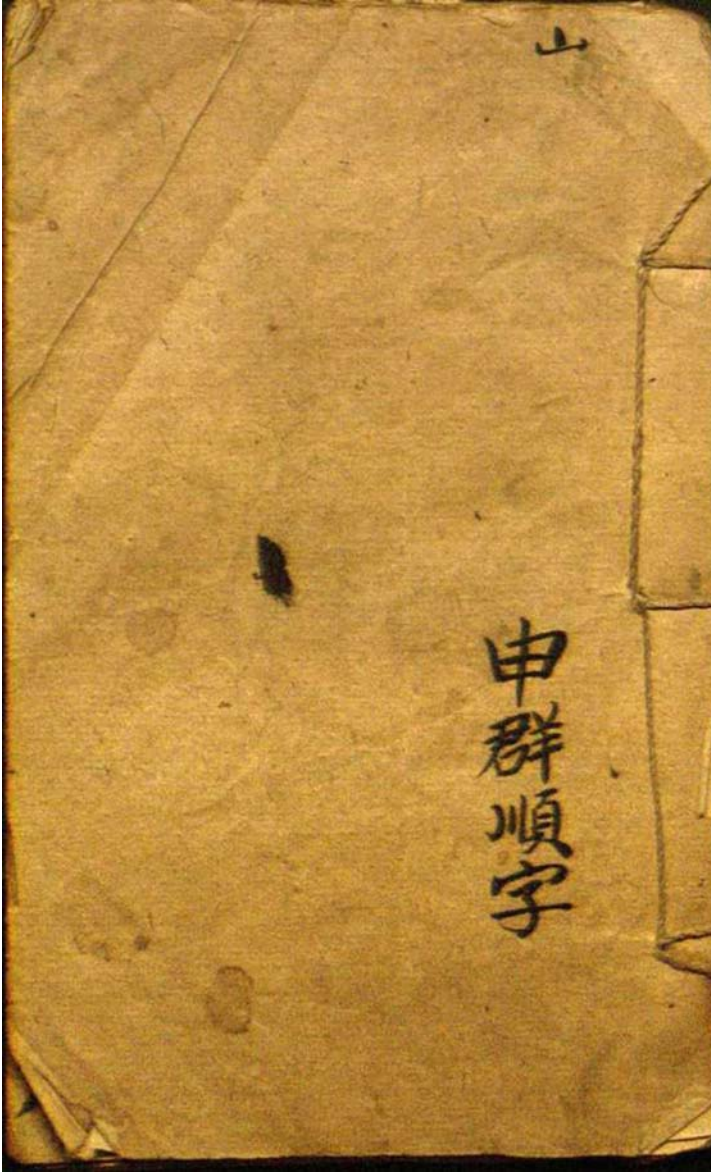


FIGURE 1.4

*A List of Characters to Teach the People* [Shenqun shunzi 申群順字], Cover. This vocabulary list [zazi 雜字] can be considered a classic example of the genre: It introduces a series of words; it is written in simple four-word rhyming phrases; the calligraphy indicates this was copied by a student who had only a limited formal education. The first three characters, Shen Qunshun 申群順, could also be read as the name of a person, but in this book I have read it as shenqun 申群 “Teach the People.”

PHOTO BY AUTHOR



FIGURE 1.5

*A Tinsmith.* This member of the pingmin worked with light metals to repair pots, cooking pans, and vessels that carried liquid. He probably did not have his own shop and perhaps could not afford to maintain one, but instead wandered through the streets and alleys [hutong 胡同] calling out his services. Photo taken about 1918 in North China.

SIDNEY D. GAMBLE PHOTOGRAPHS, DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, DUKE LIBRARY

Following the lists of everyday vocabulary, this collection ends with words that give moral instruction. Many vocabulary lists were only a series of common words, usually in rhyming couplets as an aid to memorization. Some vocabulary lists expanded on the lists of words in order to introduce an element of moral instruction. Not all vocabulary lists included moral or other advice, though the Chinese of the Republican period seem to have taken every opportunity to offer comments on personal morality, virtues, and the proper role of individuals in society.

The emphasis in this volume is on following accepted social norms and the blessings that derived from doing so. The phrases include: “Respect heaven and bow to the earth” [*jingtian lidi* 敬天禮地]; “honor the ancestors and make offerings to the gods” [*jizu jizong* 祭祖祀宗]; “obey your parents” [*xiaoshun fumu* 孝順父母]; “may your children and grandchildren increase” [*fada zisun*

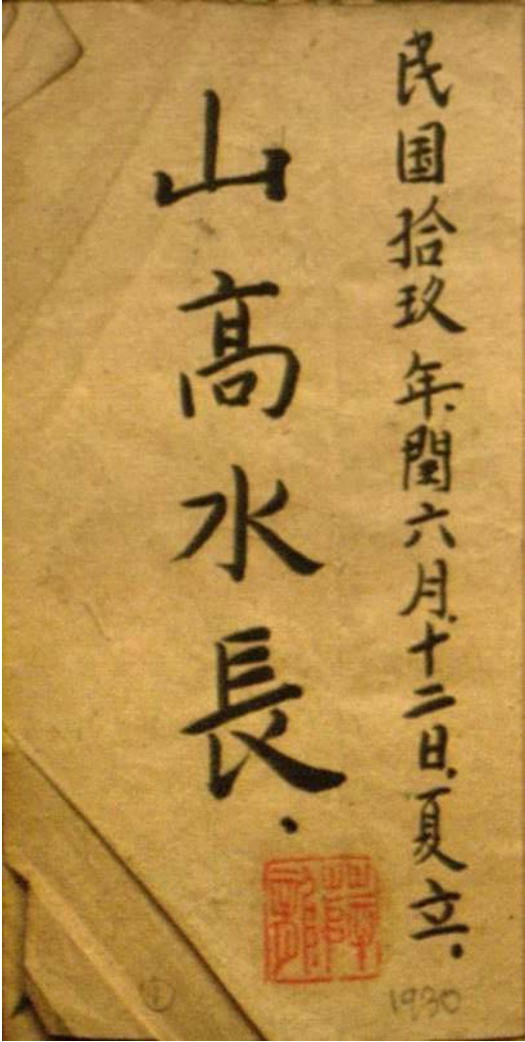


FIGURE 1.6

*A List of Characters to Teach the People* [Shenqun shunzi 申群順字], *Page 1, The Motto*. The motto, written in 1930, reads “The Mountains Are High and the Rivers Long” [Shangao shuichang 山高水長], with the implication that students need to broaden their horizons. The seal at the bottom of this page is mine, showing that the book belongs in my collection.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

發達子孫]; “may your good fortune be as [great] as the eastern sea” [*furu donghai* 福如東海]; “may your blessings increase” [*luwei gaosheng* 祿位高陞]; “may your life be as long as the southern mountains” [*shou bi nanshan* 壽比南山]; “may your home overflow with good fortune” [*xiqi yingmen* 喜氣盈門]; “pearls [of fortune] will line the riverbank” [*zhuhuan hepu* 珠還合浦]; “may you enjoy overwhelming good luck” [*yunzhuan hongjun* 運轉鴻鈞] (see pp. 22–23). These maxims assert the benefits that will accrue from following the teachings set out in the text. Other phrases are often used in standard New Year’s couplets [*duilian* 對聯]. This *chaoben* is also discussed in Chapter 3.

### A Note on Vocabulary Lists

Up to this point, I have emphasized the role of vocabulary lists as a self-learning tool. As mentioned earlier, the vocabulary lists contain terms with relevance to daily life. In that sense, they are invaluable compendia of items, paraphernalia, and personal accoutrements that enable us to reconstruct people’s daily lives at a particular time. Some vocabulary lists are illustrated, which facilitates linking the written word to the item it represents.

Then and now, vocabulary lists played another equally important role. They offered commentaries on the social setting in which people found themselves and regularly strove to uphold conventional morality. More than that, vocabulary lists described the social and economic difficulties for those struggling to survive. They noted haughty officials, made reference to village rowdies who were both bothersome and dangerous, relatives who might pressure a family member, and the need for respecting social conventions regardless of one’s personal inclinations. These and other social, cultural, and philosophical observations are made in the vocabulary lists.

Clearly the vocabulary lists were more than simply strings of words. It seems reasonable to assume that they were passed around among friends, who read them as a type of “magazine.” We have no way of determining the proportion between those who studiously read the vocabulary list pages in order to learn new words needed for their work and those who read them for their content and observations of life. The examples studied here suggest that tongue-in-cheek descriptions of life’s vicissitudes were not uncommon, as were criticisms and, occasionally, warnings about the pitfalls of Chinese society. When vocabulary lists are reprinted in contemporary times, they are read and appreciated mostly for their social observations and descriptions.<sup>20</sup> In this and the

20 An example of a recently reprinted collection of vocabulary words that is filled with

following chapters, our emphasis in discussing vocabulary lists is on discovering their social and cultural commentary, as a way to comprehend the thoughts and feelings expressed in China's *pingmin* culture.

### More Vocabulary Lists

Another example of a vocabulary list in my collection is the volume **Various Words Offered to the People** [*Kuanzhong zazi* 欸眾雜字]. The copyist did not date this work, but we can assume it was written during the late Qing period, possibly in South China, mostly because a few particular characters appear in the book. The word for “officials” [*guanya* 官衙] was common before the Republic in 1912, and the book refers to the government office as a “yamen” 衙門, a type of office that was abolished when the Qing dynasty fell in 1911 (although popular usage continued to refer to government offices as yamen even into the Republican period). Also, the word “mansion” [*dasha* 大廈] came into use in the mid-1800s in South China, later spread to the north, and is now used throughout the country. The paper used for this book has a soft clothlike quality, which I associate with the late Qing rather than the Republican period. The copyist’s control of the brush is better in this example than in the previous one.<sup>21</sup>

We have some information about the person who copied it: Guo Changyun 郭長雲, who added the word “copied” [*ji* 記] after his name. At some later point, his relative Guo Shengkui 郭生魁 wrote his name and indicated his ownership of this particular volume by adding the word “recorded” [*jishu* 記書] next to that of the original copyist on the front cover. The color of the ink differs between these two names, as does the calligraphy.

The first fifteen pages are devoted to lists of plants and animals, minerals and metals. But this text also includes words pertaining to government, family structure, and social and sexual relationships. The phrases in these sections carry a tone of moralizing and reinforcing conventional morality.

The second Mr. Guo also wrote some words on the last page of the book, which likewise stressed morality and responsibility. He then added a seven-word poem [*qiyanshi* 七言詩] on the final page, which reads:

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observations of Qing-period social conditions is *Zazi sudu* 雜字俗讀 [*Reading Popular Vocabulary Lists*] (Ji'nan: Qilu shushe, 2010).

21 **Various Words Offered to the People** [*Kuanzhong zazi* 欸眾雜字], a text of thirty pages was purchased in Beijing in August 2007. It is 5-1/5 in (13.97 cm) h × 4¾ in (12.06 cm) w. This is a handy “pocket” size. This text is also discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

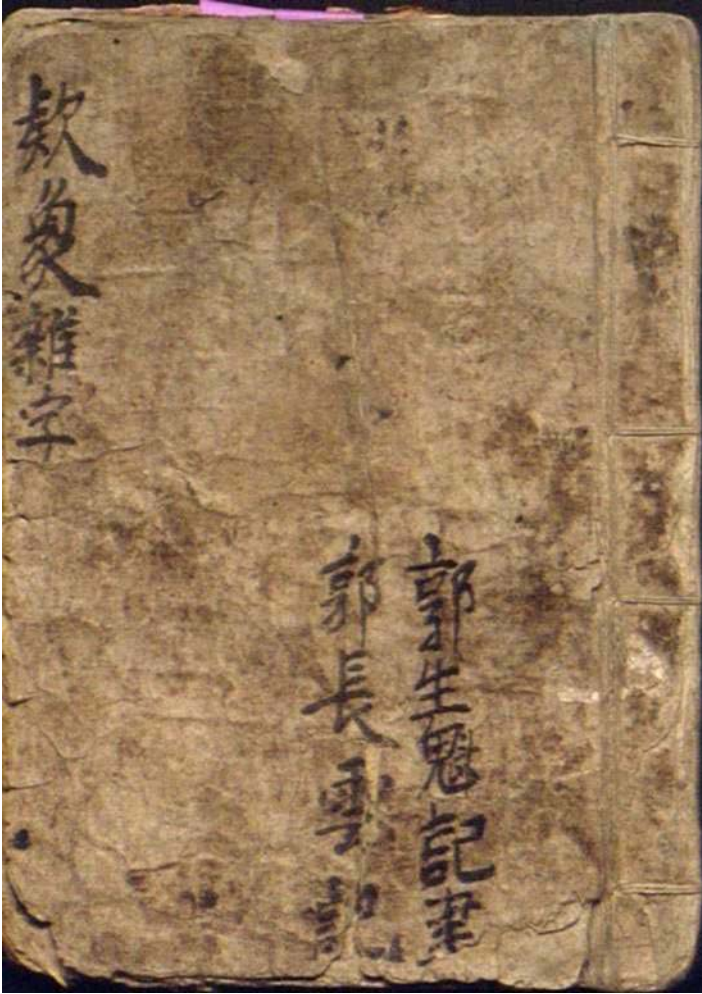


FIGURE 1.7

*Various Words Offered to the People* [Kuanzhong zazi 欵眾雜字], Cover. On the cover are the names of two members of the Guo family: Guo Changyun 郭長雲, who added the word “copied” [ji 記] after his name, and his relative Guo Shengkui 郭生魁.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

The three mountains and the flowing rivers are divided by fields  
 Between heaven and earth are human beings;  
 Man is the most spiritual of all beings,  
 Thus he should be continually nurtured.

*Sanshan liusui yifentian,  
 Tiandi xianglian zairenjian;  
 Renwei wanwu shouzhiling,  
 Ruoyang lianfei yichangkong.*

三山流水壹分田，  
 天地相連在人間；  
 人為萬物首之靈，  
 若養煉廢一常空。

The addition of a poem to this manuscript book by the younger (I assume he was the younger of the two) Mr. Guo makes it more interesting. His calligraphy is not as practiced and is of lower quality than that of the elder Mr. Guo (which colors my assumption about their ages). If this poem accurately reveals something of the younger Mr. Guo's personality, it is that he was a person of conventional morality who enjoyed composing a little poem now and then. Although accepting conventional morality can be the sign of a contented person, as explained below, the younger Mr. Guo shows us that he was not, as some self-righteous people can be, a boringly contented person.

Like the manuscript discussed above (**A List of Characters ...**), this vocabulary list (**Various Words Offered ...**) deals with the themes of morality and proper behavior. In the text on sexual relationships, the author assumes the reader is a young man seeking a female partner. Virtually all the written materials in my collection (except those on fortunetelling) assume that the reader is male, so the advice and suggestions therein are directed toward males. This assumption on the part of the author is in accordance with my assumption that the lists were used most often by young men attempting to improve their chances of finding work.

The section on sexual morality (p. 21) reads:

A diligent lad will not imbibe, but be stable in his life  
 There is no profit in being covetous, if you give in to your [sexual]  
     desires you will harm your own body  
 First, make a good match, there is no need for a forced marriage  
 It is not good to be promiscuous, since it will shorten your life and harm  
     society.

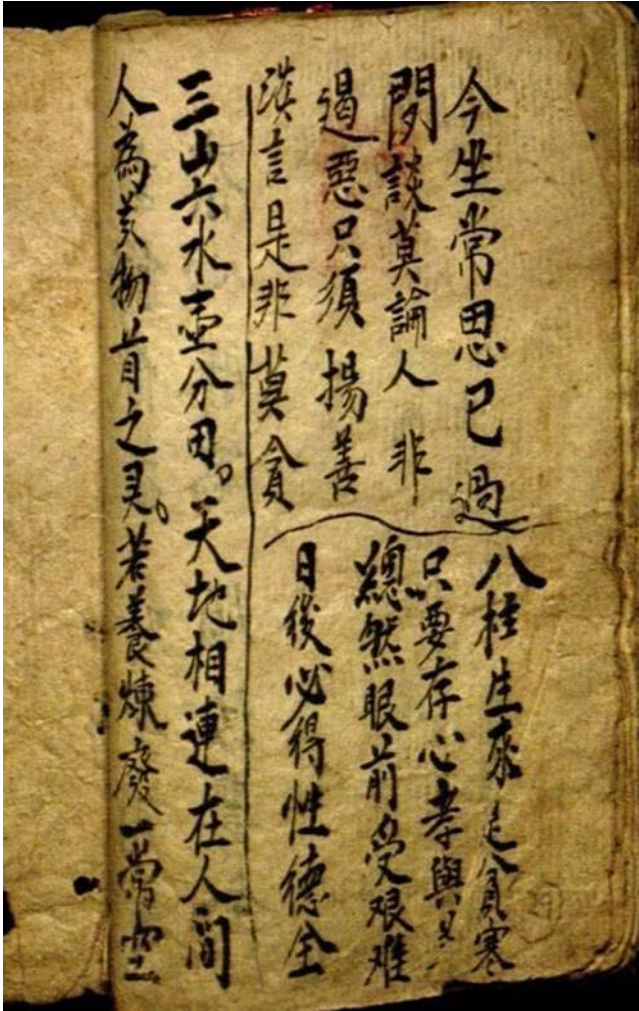


FIGURE 1.8

*Various Words Offered to the People* [Kuanzhong zazi 款眾雜字], page 29, *Poems*. This page shows poems written by one of the Guo 郭 family expressing his acceptance of conventional morality. The poem on the lower right-hand side on page 29 begins, "Man is born by fate to be poor" [Bagui[gua] shenglai shipinhan 八桂[掛]生來是貧寒]. The phrase reflects its author's assumption that this is a general truism, and it was no doubt true for him.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

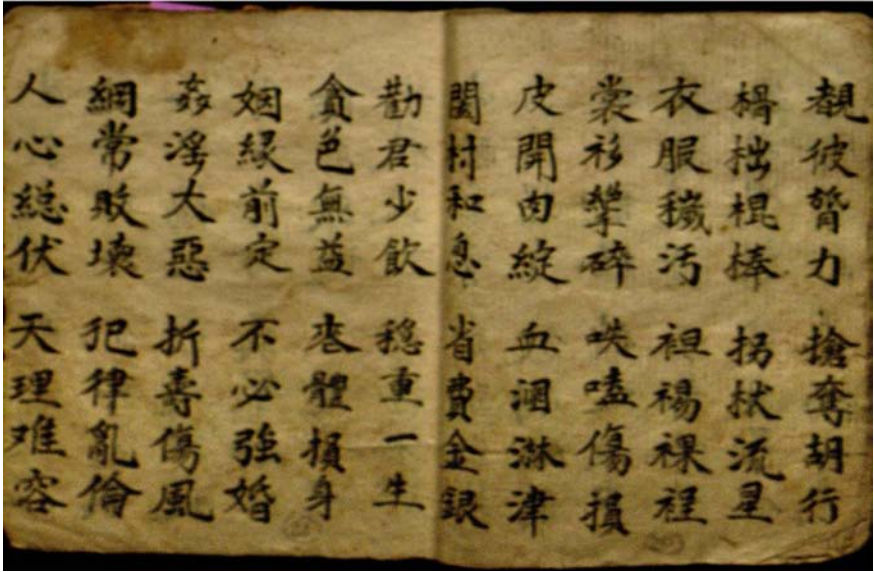


FIGURE 1.9

*Various Words Offered to the People* [Kuanzhong zazi 欵眾雜字], pages 20 and 21, *Sexual Morality*. These pages deal with sexual morality for young men as they move about in society. The exhortation to boys and young men begins, “Don’t steal or do bad things. Don’t wear dirty clothes. Cover your body” [Du bi x li. Qiang duo hu xing. Yi fu hui wu. Tan xi luo cheng 覩彼口力, 搶奪胡行, 衣服穢污, 袒裼裸裎]. These admonishments would not be given to sons of the well-to-do or the educated elite. The instructions in the text show that it was aimed at the working-class youths.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

*Qinjun shaoyin, wenzhong yisheng*  
*Tanse wuyi, x tisanshen*  
*Yinlu qianding, bubi qianghun*  
*Jianyin dae, zheshou shangfeng*

勤君少飲, 穩種一生;  
 貪色無益, 口體損身。  
 鋼線前定, 不必強婚;  
 姦淫大惡, 折壽傷風。

The text on sexual morality unsurprisingly recommends following socially conservative standards of behavior. The majority of common people in China, as in most societies, were not inclined by nature to challenge established mores. Happily, for us, the younger Mr. Guo added a second poem, which was very revealing about his own station in society and his philosophy on life. The poem is simply written, using words in common parlance. It begins (p. 30) with a



FIGURE 1.10

*Street Vendors.* Members of the common people [pingmin 平民] here run an outdoor food stand in Beijing in 1913. They would never get rich and dealt all day with passersby on the streets. Their smiling expressions show that they aimed to attract customers and serve them cheerfully.

STREET VENDORS, BEIJING, 1913; PHOTO: WILLIAM LEETE; RESTORATION AND PRINT ©2016 WILLIAM MORSE. USED BY SPECIAL PERMISSION

mistake, in which the younger Mr. Guo writes *bagui* 八桂 [eight cinnamon trees], when he meant to write *bagua* 八掛 [eight trigrams], which I translate as “fate.”

Man is born by fate to be poor,  
His only hope is to keep piety and respect in his heart;  
What he must face is to endure hardship,  
At the end of the day, he must have his virtue intact.

*Bagui shenglai shipinhan*  
*Zhiyao cunxin xiaoyushan*  
*Zongran yanqian shoujian'nan*  
*Rihou bide xingdequan*

八桂生來是貧寒，  
只要存心孝與善；  
總然眼前受艱難，  
日後必得性德全。

This poem shows that the younger Mr. Guo had only a little beyond a basic education, enough to write a poem, though not an especially accomplished one. He also tells us that he came from a poor family, as probably did most of the people he knew. Life was hard for him, as he expected it was for most people. But this second poem indicates that he accepted the message on sexual morality in this vocabulary list and made it the central message of his second poem. Because of the correlation of the book's message on sex for young people and this second poem, we can conclude that the younger Mr. Guo read and likely studied this vocabulary list.<sup>22</sup>

### Grappling with Fate

A lively religious culture flourished throughout China between 1850 and 1950. Since their very beginning, the Chinese people identified deities and suprahuman forces that influenced all existence. Ancestors became deities, natural phenomena flowed from the actions of heavenly gods, and capricious and malevolent ghosts wandered around on earth. According to commonly accepted beliefs, the world of the gods and spirits resembled the human world. The deities were ranked, much as human beings all held differing social and economic ranks, while vagabond ghosts flitted around at the edge of organized spirit society, just as humans on the lowest economic rungs of the social ladder existed the best they could in a community of fellow humans who showed little tolerance for them.

The indigenous deities in popular religion held complete sway in the minds of most Chinese during this time. The bodhisattvas in popular Buddhism had pedigrees that could be traced back to India, but by the late Qing they had become Chinese-style deities, often with a ranking integrated into the native Daoist pantheon. The hierarchy of Daoist gods usually excluded life that was lesser than human life, such as snakes, animals, and insects (unlike the Buddhists, who should revere all animate life). But the Daoist gods were concerned with all facets of human fate, from the length of one's lifespan to the suffering that might be imposed after death. From the minor inconveniences of daily existence to the need for help as one experienced major life events, Daoist deities protected humans and repelled troublesome lesser ghosts. We

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22 The vocabulary lists reveal much more information, and the topic merits comprehensive study. For an example of a scholar reproducing a vocabulary list, see Wang, *Ming-Qing shehui wenhua shengtai*, 258–262.

encounter the Three Officials and the other Daoist deities again in Chapter 8, where their position in the Daoist pantheon is placed in the context of how they were viewed by the common people.

Fortunately for Chinese people in the late Qing and Republican period, even those who were illiterate, religious practitioners were available who knew how to contact the gods to enlist their help. Holy altars abounded in both cities and the countryside. Temples [*miao* 廟] and shrines [*ci* 祠] were everywhere, and even informal meeting halls or private dwellings might have an altar. Private halls might have an altar [*tan* 壇] tended by someone who could be in communication with the gods. The people who managed these venues were specialists who often relied on written texts as guides to the prayers they would chant or the magic charms they would write.

Many religious practitioners, like the common people they served, had only a basic education and often had only bare literacy. Many had learned enough to be able to read the religious texts and manuals needed to conduct rituals. Even for them, it was the written texts that allowed one to properly summon the gods, to worship them, and to ask for their help. The practitioners, with their ability to read the chants and write the talismanic charms, were always ready to be commissioned by the public to communicate with the gods.<sup>23</sup>

The **Chants of Repentance to the Three Primes** [*Sanyuan fa chan* 三元法懺], a manuscript book in my collection, is a ritual text [*keyiben* 科儀本] for a popular Daoist (and Buddhist) practice of reciting chants [*chan* 懺] to atone for past transgressions and to ask that the power of the deities be extended to help the petitioner.<sup>24</sup> The Three Founders [*Sanyuan* 三元] mentioned in the title

23 Many scholars accept the idea that these religious practitioners were marginalized people, looked at askance by both the common people and the literati alike. Although the wandering Buddhist monk [*hexiang* 和尙] or Daoist ritual master [*fashi* 法師] was the subject of many jokes and scandalous stories, I see them as members of the common *pingmin* class of people. More recent studies by scholars show that both the literati and the *pingmin* utilized the services of these people when necessary. An excellent study citing many cases of such practices is Jeffrey Snyder-Reinke, *Dry Spells: State Rainmaking and Local Governance in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009). See also Liu Yonghua 劉永華, "Daojiao chuanguotong: shidafu wenhua yu difang shehui: Song Ming yilai minxi sibao Zhou gong chongbai yanjiu" 道教傳統, 士大夫文化與地方社會: 宋明以來閩西四保鄜公崇拜研究 [Daoist Traditions, Gentry Culture, and Local Society: Research on the Master Zhou Cult of Sibao in Western Fujian since the Song and Ming Dynasties], *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 [*Historical Research*] 3 (2007). How local communities interact with their local religious institutions in China is examined in Philip Chesley Baity, *Religion in a Chinese Town* (Taipei: Orient Cultural Service, 1975).

24 The text of **Chants of Repentance to the Three Primes** [*Sanyuan fa chan* 三元法懺] of

are also known as the Three Officials [*Sanguan* 三官]. For some Daoists, the liturgical calendar is divided into three segments, with each segment governed by one of these deities. The three areas of human existence controlled by each official are heaven [*tian* 天], which grants happiness and determines the life span [*sheng* 生] of humans; earth [*di* 地], which controls life on earth and deals with death [*si* 死]; and water [*shui* 水], which can ward off evil influences and deals with the difficulties of life [*ku* 苦]. Some scholars believe that the Three Founders represent the earliest objects of worship for the Chinese because, without these three elements, life could not be sustained. Over the centuries, these three deities (or stars) were given honorific titles such as the Three Great Imperial Officials [*Sanguan dadi* 三官大帝] and the Three Imperial Officers [*Sanguan dijun* 三官帝君].

A handwritten book of three volumes totaling forty-seven pages and bound together in one volume in my collection is titled **Repentances to the Supreme Three Primes to Forgive Sins** [*Taishang sanyuan youzui fachen* 太上三元宥罪法懺; also written on the inside pages as *Taishang sanyuan miezui miaochan* 太上三元滅罪妙懺]. It was copied by someone named Qian Yicheng 淺一誠 in Hengyang, Hunan, in the late Qing or early Republic. He called his studio the Rui Tang 瑞堂. This publication contains the text on pages 4 and 5:

To revere heaven on the fifteenth day of the first month, we record the instructions to the hundred offices of the Golden Portal offered to assist the people of the world in their record of sins and blessings, and today at the Daoist altar offer up this work.

*Tianzungyan zhengyue shiwuri, shangyuanguan zhulu baisi shangyi Jinque chengjin shiren zuifu zhiji; jin ri Daochang fengwei ruyi shiguhuixiang.*

天尊言正月十五日，上元天官注錄百司上詣金闕呈進世人罪福之籍；今日到場奉為如意事故回向。<sup>25</sup>

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fifty-one pages was purchased in Beijing in January 2008. It is 9¼ in (23.49 cm) h × 5½ in (13.97 cm) w.

- 25 A thorough explanation of the historical development of the *Sanguan* 三官 is in Zhang Xingfa 張興發, *Daojiao shenxian yinyang* 道教神仙信仰 [*Daoist Beliefs*] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2001), 240–244. Because of the similarity between the Three Gods of the Empyrean (*Sanyuan* 三元) and the Three Officials (*Sanguan* 三官), these two sets of deities have been conflated in popular understanding, and often the *Sanguan* are

This text is fairly standard, consisting largely of praise to the deities, then listing the worries of the common people and asking for the deity's help. The text **Repentances to the Supreme Three Primes** [*Sanyuan fa chan* 三元法懺] is almost interchangeable with **How to Absolve Guilt** mentioned earlier. For example, in the **Chants of Repentance**, on page 20, the Celestial Worthy of Primordial Being [*Yuanshi tianzun* 元始天尊] is praised and called upon to summon the Three Officials. He is seen as the source of all learning and the first author of Daoist scriptures. He is praised by the priest, saying,

*Yuanshi tianzun*, on high, in the limitless universe, who spreads the great [Buddhist] teaching, who makes known the [Daoist] Way, who rules all life, who takes away all worries, who grants happiness.

*Yuanshi tianzun*, *zaishang*, *wuji shijie*, *guangyan dacheng*, *fufa shuodao*, *yaodu zhongsheng*, *lizhu kunao*, *xianling anle*.

元始天尊，在上，無極世界，廣演大乘，敷法說道，要度眾生，離諸苦惱，咸令安樂。

The Celestial Worthy of Primordial Being is then asked by the priest to address the *Zhongguan* 中官 [Middle Official], the deity of the earth able to ward off evil and help with life's troubles. This portion of the text begins,

Primordial Worthy, We beg you to ask the Middle Official who controls the earth, and extending to all the holy ones, from this day forward, wherever there are people worried, when the three calamities arise, when the five evils flourish, when the robbers threaten us.

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called the *Sanyuan* 三元. See the basic explanation in Zhu Yueli 朱越利, ed., *Zhongguo daojiao gongguan wenhua* 中國道教宮觀文化 [*Temple Culture in Chinese Daoism*] (Beijing: Zhongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 1996), 284–286. Conflation of the two is mentioned in Zhang, *Daojiao shenxian xinyang*, 242; in Kubo Noritada 窪德忠, *Dōkyō no kamizami* 道教の神神 [*The Deities of Daoism*] (Tokyo: Hirakawa shuppansha, 1986), 158. Mentioned in the text above is **Repentances to the Supreme Three Primes to Forgive Sins** (*Taishang sanyuan youzui fachan* 太上三元宥罪法懺; also written on the inside pages as *Taishang sanyuan miezui miaochan* 太上三元滅罪妙懺), in three volumes, total of forty-seven pages. It is 9¾ in (24.76 cm) h × 8½ in (21.59 cm) w. This size makes it easy for it to be placed upon an altar and read from. It was purchased in Beijing in March 2009.

*Yuanshi tiancun, fugao Zhongyuan diguan, ji zhu shengzhong, zijin yihou, tianxia, ruo yourenming, buan, sanzai jingqi, wudu xingxing, daozei qinling.*

元始天尊, 復告中元地官, 及諸聖眾, 自今以後, 天下, 若有人名, 不安, 三災競起, 五毒興行, 盜賊侵凌.

On the second to last page of the **Chants of Repentance**, the copyist gives his name as Wang Shuxiang 王恕鄉 and tells us he copied the book in 1909, in the second month of the first year of the Xuantong era [Xuantong *jiyou* *yuannian eryuezhong wanggerri chaocheng* 宣統己酉元年二月中望二日抄成]. On the last page, the copyist wrote his name as “Recorded by Wang Shoudao” [Wang Shoudao *ji* 王守道記]. The name means to “Protect the Dao,” thus it is likely the religious or temple name of the copyist. However, on the first page of the book and at many points throughout the text, the stamp “Copied by Wang Youda” [Wang Youda *ji* 王有達記] appears in black ink.<sup>26</sup> We can assume that these are all names for the same copyist. At a few points in the upper margin, someone different wrote a few characters, as if making notes on the text. This could indicate that, although Wang copied the text, the priest who chanted the text was a someone else. It is possible that Wang copied that text as an act of devotion or because he was paid to do so.

One manuscript in my collection, **Writing Talisman** [*Shu fu fashi* 書符法事], is about the practice of writing out magic charms to keep evil forces at bay and to advertise the protection of the gods. The talisman were magic characters [*fu* 符] written on red or yellow paper. They were pasted in various places in the home where protection by the deities was needed, worn on a person’s body, or burnt to ashes that were then added to a cup of tea meant to be consumed. They were believed to ward off evil spirits and influences, which would then allow misfortune to be avoided and the body to cure itself of any maladies. When pasted up in the home, they were strong enough to keep evil forces away. By the end of the Qing dynasty, the practice of hanging magic talisman over doorways

26 Seals appear on many of the *chaoben* in my collection, so the subject of seals, used so commonly by East Asians for centuries, is referred to elsewhere in this book. However, I have not made a particular study of them and translate them here only when the seal text was clear enough to read the characters. An excellent overview on the topic of seals as used in China is Max Jakob Folster, “Introduction to the History, Use and Function of Chinese Book Collector’s Seals,” *Manuscript Cultures* 8 (2015).

or bedchambers or under gate eaves or even carrying them on the body was widely practiced among China's common people.<sup>27</sup>

This text was “copied out in the autumn of 1895 during the Qing dynasty” [*Daqing guangxu yimo ershiyi nian mengqiuyuezhong huanchaoteng* 大清光緒已未二十一年孟秋月中浣抄謄], by Huang Yongquan 黃湧泉, whose religious name was Huang Daozong [Huang of the Dao Faith 黃道宗]. He embossed his seal prominently on the cover of the book and equally prominently throughout the text. Regardless of which seal was used, his name was followed by *ji* 記, meaning he was the copyist. He also put one of his seals on the inner fold of every page. He may have done this to gain merit with the deities for having copied the text and certainly to record for other people the fact that he had copied the work.<sup>28</sup>

Huang must have been an active religious performer who likely enthralled his audiences with the religious ceremonies he conducted. Because the stamp he placed on this work does not have a temple name, it is likely that he was an itinerant priest, possibly of the Zhengyi 正一 [Orthodox Unity] school visiting various local temples to conduct his ceremonies and in that way earn his living. That was a common practice among the Zhengyi school clergy since as a rule they did not live together in monastic communities but, instead, lived and traveled in the “real” (non-sacred) world. It is possible he conducted the ceremonies in the open at an altar set up at the periodic markets held in one of China's many market towns [*zhen* 鎮] or at the home of people who had invited him to conduct a ritual.<sup>29</sup>

27 Useful comments on how the *fu* charms were understood and used by the *pingmin* in South China villages are in James Hayes, *South China Village Culture* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2001), 49–52. A complete guide to incantations and some related talisman is Zhang Zhenguo 張振國 and Wu Zhongzheng 吳忠正, *Daojiao fuzhou xuanjiang* 道教符咒選講 [Collection of Daoist Incantations] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2006).

28 **Writing Talisman** [*Shu fu fashi* 書符法事] is a work of twenty-one pages, 8 in (20.32 cm) h × 5½ in (13.97 cm) w and was purchased in Beijing in September 2005. Examples of talisman are given on pp. 18–21.

29 Before 1950, religious shrines existed in great numbers throughout China. It is reported that, as late as 1958, Beijing had 2,730 *miao* 廟. See Gao Wei 高巍 et al., *Mantan Beijingcheng* 漫談北京城 [Chatting about Beijing] (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2007), 142. Peter Bol has written that ritual specialists were called in by Chinese families as a matter of course during the Southern Song dynasty. See Peter Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), 237.

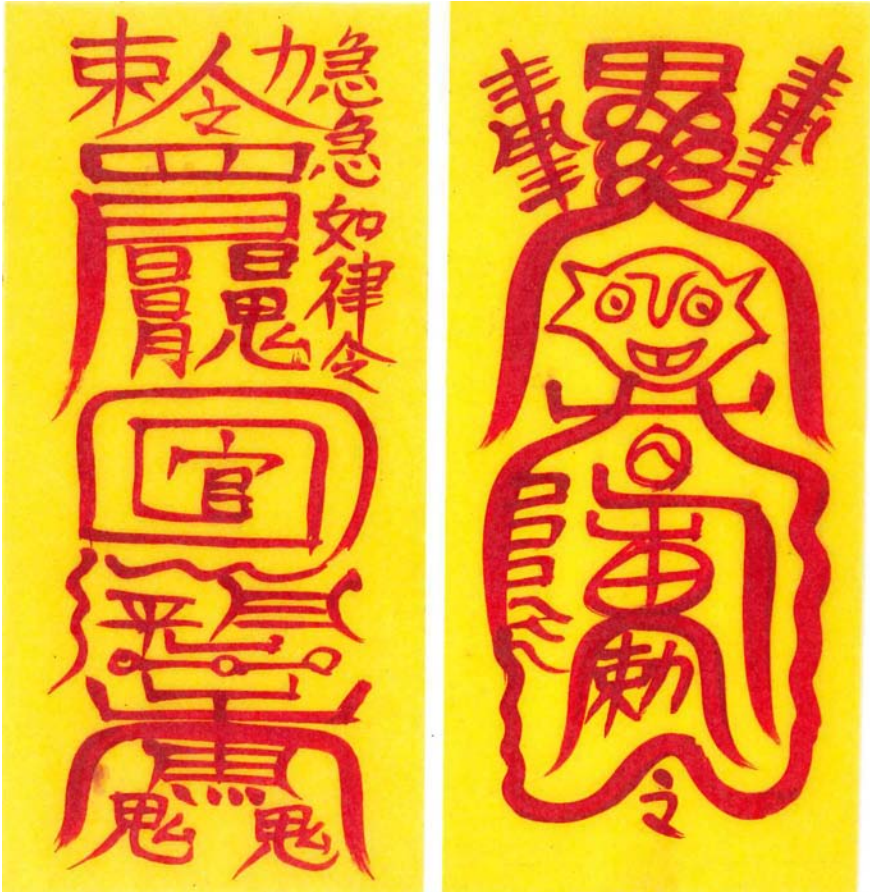


FIGURE 1.11

*Fu* 符. Talisman were prepared by Daoist ritual masters and usually written with red ink on yellow paper. On our right is a charm to expel troublesome ghosts. On the left is a talisman protecting against government officials. Bad ghosts and interfering officials were the bane of all the common people in China. From the author's collection.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

The manuscript discusses the method for writing the magic talisman that were often used in popular religious Daoism. Like **Chants of Repentance to the Three Primes**, discussed above, this is a ritual text. In order to write a talisman with divine inspiration, it is necessary to ask the deities to descend [*jiang* 降] to the altar, and this text consists of the chants and invitation to the gods that will bring them to the altar. One of the deities then possesses the priest, who writes a magic talisman while under possession.

As part of one of his presentations, Huang actually wrote some *fu* while being possessed by a deity. The final pages of this book show the talismans

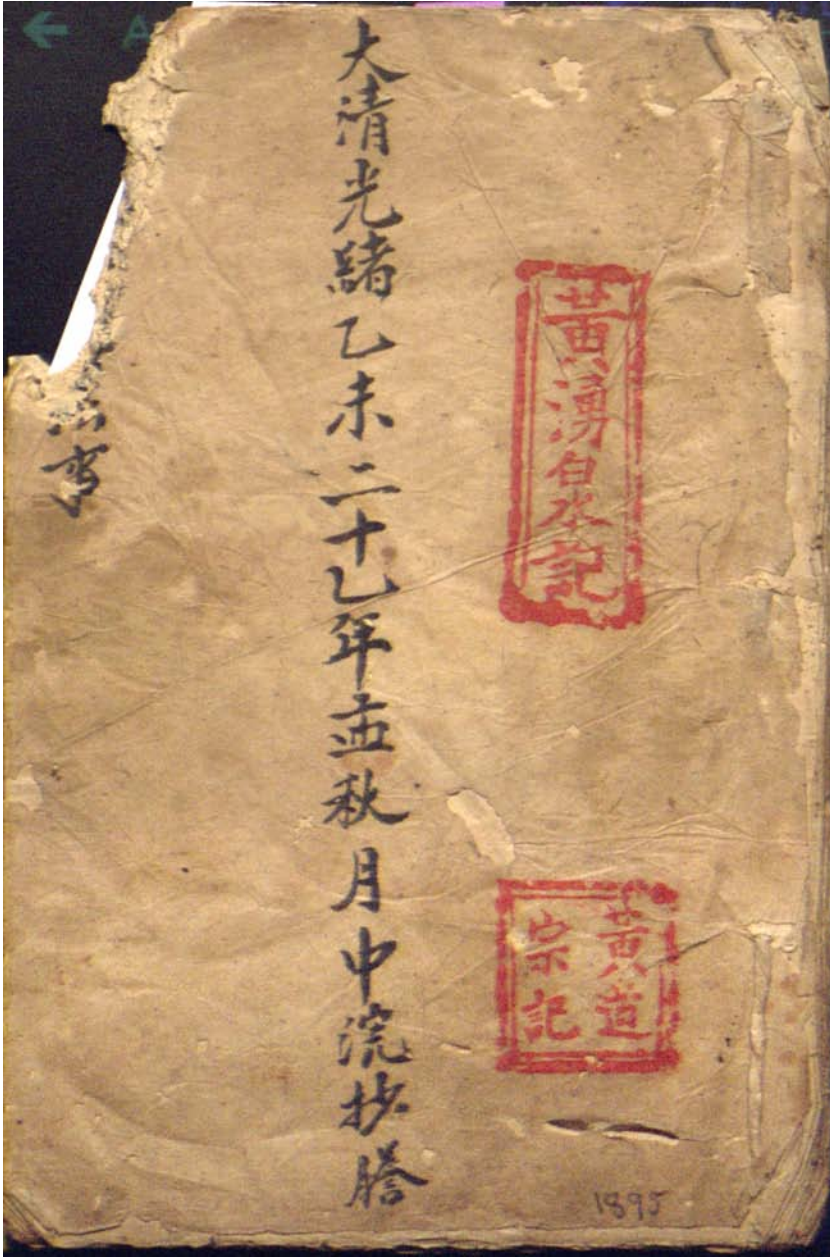


FIGURE 1.12

*Writing Talisman* [Shu fu fashi 書符法事], Cover. This cover was prepared in 1895. The red seals show the copyist's names; the bottom seal seems to be his Daoist religious name Huang Daozong 黃道宗. An animal (or human?) has taken a bite out of the top left-hand corner.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

presumably written by Huang while under spirit possession. The writing is large and somewhat wild. These pages also bear his seal. One of the reasons he so carefully placed his seal on the center-fold of every page might have been that this text was a record of that instance of his own possession by a spirit, and he hoped to ensure recognition of this fact and to certify the authenticity of those pages. A powerful performance of his spirit possession was likely to bring in a higher amount of donations from the viewing audience.<sup>30</sup>

Another text is a booklet used by a yinyang master [*yinyang shi* 陰陽師] titled **Riches Bestowed** [*Qianjinfu* 千金賦]. The copier does not identify himself as such, but the contents of the text and the topics on which it concentrates indicate the concerns and expected healings to be offered by a yinyang master. The concerns and powers of this specialist are outlined below. The booklet deals with preventing evil and baleful forces from causing injury and having negative influences.<sup>31</sup> The evil forces are the baleful stars that can bring harm and the ways of keeping them at bay are set forth in order to keep a proper balance of the forces of yin and yang [*yinyang* 陰陽], by understanding how the forces of fate as expressed through the eight trigrams affect one's life. The evil forces [*sha* 煞; p. 9] try to enter wherever they can, whether the home or marriages, to cause sickness to complicate childbirth. As the text says (p. 6), "When dark influences enter the grave site, they are difficult to dispel. When brightness cannot move at will, it encounters only obstacles" [*Anxing rumu, nanke, wangfeikong, youqie youfu* 暗興入墓, 難剋, 旺非空, 有且有扶].

Some of the elements that have an effect on human beings (pp. 19–22) are given as heaven, water, wind [*feng* 風], mountains [*shan* 山], fire [*huo* 火], earth, and thunder [*lei* 雷]. The interactions of these forces are outlined in some detail in the text. The author (p. 47) enumerates six deities [*liushen* 六神]: The North Star Emperor [*xuanwu* 玄武], the White Tiger [*baihu* 白虎] of the West, the Flying Serpent [*tengshe* 騰蛇], the Bewitching One [*gouchen* 勾陳], the

30 The scholar Gary Seaman has long been interested in Daoist ritual spirit possession. In an earlier study, he discussed how this works in practice: Gary Seaman, *Temple Organization in a Chinese Village* (Taipei: Orient Cultural Service, 1978). Contemporary instances are described in Lin Wei-ping, "Son of Man or Son of God? The Spirit Medium in Chinese Popular Religion," in *Affiliation and Transmission in Daoism: A Berlin Symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012).

31 **Riches Bestowed** [*Qianjinfu* 千金賦] is a work of seventy-four pages written in a very good calligraphic hand on poor-quality handmade paper. It is 8½ in (21.59 cm) h × 5¼ in (13.34 cm) w, a size likely intended for a reference book. This is probably a Republican-era text, and the ink still looks crisp. It was purchased in Beijing in August 2005. This work is also discussed in Chapter 4.

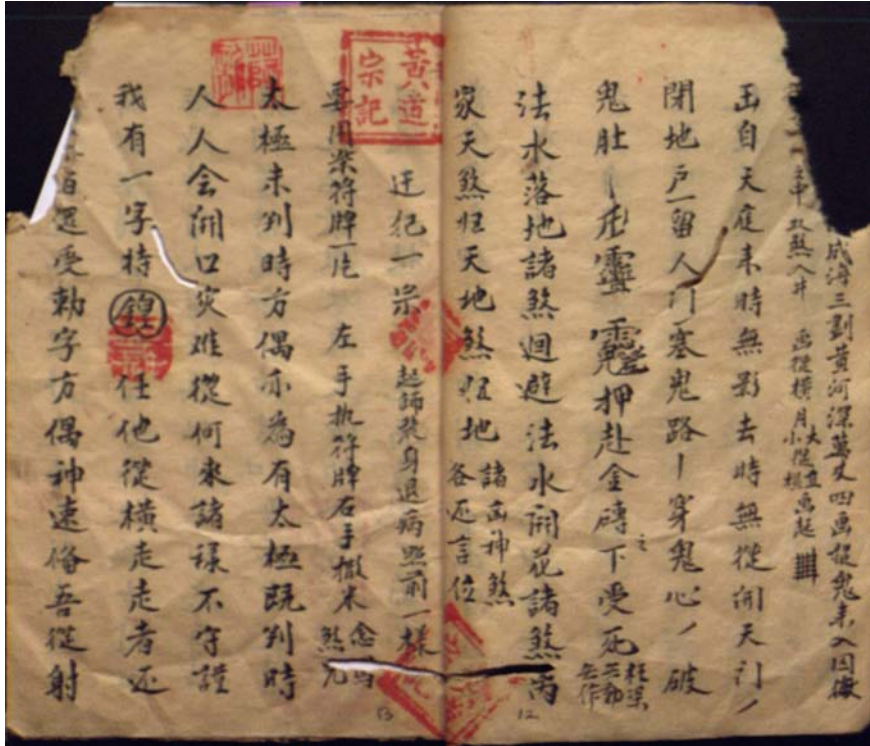


FIGURE 1.13

*Writing Talisman* [Shu fu fashi 書符法事], Pages 12 and 13, *Affixed Personal Stamps*. This shows the stamps of ritual specialist Huang 黃, who placed his seal on every page and on the fold between the pages to assert his preparation of the text. Although written in a style not always easy to decipher, most of the talisman in this book are fairly explicit about which deity is being called upon to perform which action against which evil force.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

Vermillion Bird of the South [*zhuque* 朱雀], and the Azure Dragon [*qinglong* 青龍] of the East. Each of these is a star, said to represent generals and officials from the ancient Yin dynasty (1600–1046 BCE).

Throughout, the text offers sections (pp. 27–28) designed to “help the reader distinguish good and evil” [*banren xiangmao mei'e* 辦人相貌美惡]. At a few points, the text encourages the reader to follow the advice it gives as a way of getting to know themselves and their fate. It says (p. 12), “Seek out the astrologer. After being examined, you will know about the strength of divination and how to avoid the inauspicious days” [*Qiuzhazhe, jianhou, zelingshi bichengxin, hefangziri* 求占者, 監後, 則靈筮必誠心, 何妨子曰]. The text further claims (p. 28) that “[The principles for] gaining inner resolve [to be better] are all here [as revealed in the text]” [*jueding xinzhong changhe ci* 決定心中常合此]. The



FIGURE 1.14

*Writing Talisman* [Shu fu fashi 書符法事]. Pages 20 and 21, *Instructions from the Deities*. These show characters written by Huang Daozong 黃道宗 while being possessed by the deity. These are talismanic characters, written in a wild and oversize hand. Additional comments on the same pages were added later in a more controlled style of writing.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

text summarizes its arguments (p. 27) as follows: “First know your horoscope, then understand your nature. To understand human intentions, you must use the Classic [Book of Changes]” [*Xianshi guamiming, hou shi xing. Zhi renxindi, zhenyao jing* 先識掛密命，後識性。知人心地，真要經].

The person who used **Riches Bestowed** would have been convincing as a yinyang master giving advice to dispel the malevolent influences on his client. The text is sweeping in its coverage of the host of spirits, ghosts, and baleful forces that roamed unseen in the sky above and in the human world on earth. The yinyang master was called upon to decide auspicious days for marriage, a funeral, moving, and so on. Many people afflicted with an illness believed that the cause was a disturbed or angry spirit. Combining ideas of the influence of the natural world on human actions [*fengshui* 風水], the power of star deities, and the calculations of eight trigrams, the service of this category of specialist

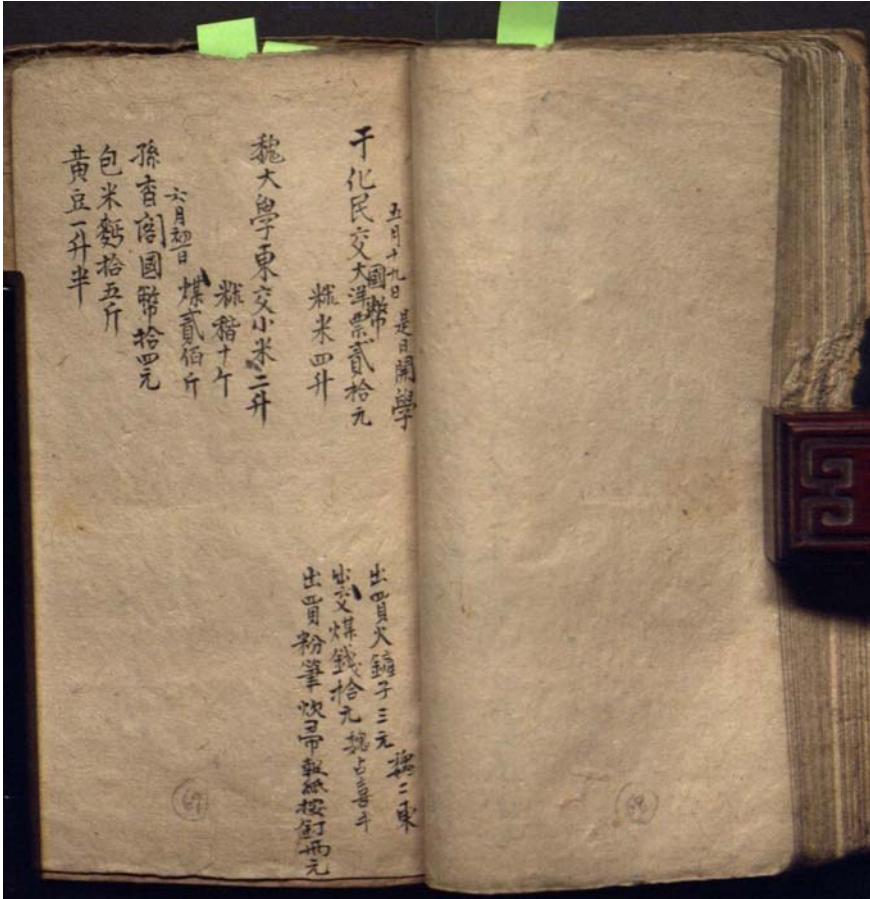


FIGURE 1.15

*Riches Bestowed* [Qianjinfu 千金賦], Pages 68 and 69, *A Teacher's Income*. These pages show the income of a schoolteacher, probably teaching in Chaoyang 朝陽, Fengtian 奉天 Province in the early Republic. He received both money and goods. The level of the payments indicate his income was adequate for living but at the level of a typical semi-skilled worker, and that he was clearly in economic terms a member of the common people.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

was much in demand throughout China, including in both urban and rural areas, mentioned again below.

Not surprisingly, the person who copied this manuscript tells us that he also worked as a teacher in a number of places in his city. At the end of his manuscript, he lists the schools where he taught. This information is an illustration of a point mentioned earlier: these *chaoben* should be considered notebooks, written (or copied from other sources) for the writer's own reference. These were used by the person who wrote them to earn income.

One of the places where he taught was the Sun Clan Temple [Sun *xiangge* 孫香閣], and it appears this clan school was located on Sun Family Bay Road [Sunjiawan *jie* 孫家灣街].<sup>32</sup> It was a well-accepted practice in China to have a school for local and clan boys at a clan temple. One of the other schools where he taught was the Huamin 化民 School, located on Huamin Street. He also taught at a school called Wei University [Wei *daxue* 魏大學]. Along with the names of the schools where he taught and the names of some of the streets in his city [Huigongjie 惠工街, Chongdejie 崇德街, Xiangjie 祥街, Yonganjie 永安街, etc.], the owner of this text wrote a few of his accounts. He wrote (p. 69):

School opened on May 19. From Huamin I received 20 yuan in foreign money [*dayang piao* 大洋票], in national currency [*guobi* 國幣], and 4 *jin* (a *jin* was roughly equal to an American pound) of millet. I purchased a shovel for 3 yuan, handed over 10 yuan for coal, then bought chalk and a broom, and took out a newspaper subscription for 2 yuan.

*Wuyue shijiuri, shiri kaixue. Yuhuamin jiao dayangpiao [guobi] ershi; shimu sisheng. Chumai huochanzi, sanyuan; chujiaomei, qian shiyuan; chumai fenbi, chuizhou; baozhi anding, liangyuan.*

五月十九日，是日開學。于化民交大洋票[國幣]貳拾；黍米，四升。出買火鏟子，三元；出交煤，錢拾元；出買粉筆，炊帚，報紙按定，兩元。<sup>33</sup>

32 More than one location in China was called Sunjiawan. The most likely one here is in Chaoyang, Liaoning Province (at the time called Fengtian 奉天 Province). I reached this conclusion because the market in Beijing where I bought this notebook regularly has materials from Northeast China. The location is given online as: Liaoning sheng, Chaoyang shi, Shuangtaqu xiaxiade yige xiangzhenji xingzhengdanwei 遼寧省朝陽市雙塔區下轄的一個鄉鎮級行政單位. See [zh.wikipedia.org/zh-hk/孫家灣鎮/](http://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-hk/孫家灣鎮/), accessed March 9, 2014. Of course, more work is needed before we can identify the place of origin of this notebook with greater confidence.

33 The terms *guobi* 國幣 [national currency] and *dayangpiao* 大洋票 [foreign notes] became common after 1900 and into the early Republican era. These phrases give us a clue to possible dates for this *chaoben*; probably 1910 to 1930. This phrase appeared in dictionaries compiled in the 1930s. For example, see *Mathews' Chinese-English Dictionary* (Taipei: Wenyou shudian, 1974), 551. It also appears in more recently published dictionaries, such as in John DeFrancis, ed., *ABC Chinese-English Comprehensive Dictionary* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 334. Many paper notes issued by the central government between 1910 and 1935 had the phrase written in English "national currency." The *guobi* was

About his pay from the Sun Family Temple, the owner of this book wrote (p. 69), “On the first day of June, from the Sun Family Temple I received: 14 yuan in national currency, 15 *jin* of corn flour, and 1.5 *sheng* (often used for moist or liquid items, was the equivalent of 2 American pints) of soybeans” [*liuyue chuyiri, sunxiang’ge, guobi shisiyuan; baomimian, shiwujin; huangdou, yishengban* 六月初一日, 孫香閣, 國幣拾四元; 包米麪, 拾五斤; 黃豆, 一升半]. The payment in corn flour suggests that he was living in the northern part of the country, rather than in the south, where payment in rice was more likely. Then, as now, people in North China generally ate fried or steamed bread. Corn flour was common in Northeastern China.

He must have been an interesting teacher for the boys, wrapped up in the idea of baleful forces lurking about and even causing illness in human beings (as he writes at one point), but he wrote well, showing experience in calligraphy. Through his jottings at the end of the manuscript, he left enticing clues about his life, his work, and his modest standard of living. We can conjure up an image of this man as someone with a good amount of formal schooling, living in a community of people not especially Westernized or sophisticated, and probably providing elementary education to local children in writing and some of the classics.

At some point in this manuscript’s history, possibly in the late 1930s or 1940s, it came into the possession of someone who was willing to follow the principles outlined in the text as a way of realizing some gain. This person wanted to believe that the spirits would help him if they were properly honored. He even wrote a motto (p. 1), “The benefit of hard work” [*shike zhi yi* 噬嗑之益], on the inside front cover (in pencil, and up-side-down in relation to the rest of the text that follows; *shike* 噬嗑 is a colloquial expression meaning “hard work” but, more literally: “stop chatting and get to work!”). Alas, this person’s troubles continued even after following the text’s instructions. In a disappointed tone,

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a silver-based currency note established in 1910 and abolished in 1935. It is described online as: “This indicates the national currency of China. It was established in 1910 as the basic unit of currency, and was called “yuan.” It was abolished in 1935 by the Nationalist Government as a silver-based currency, in favor of the Legal Currency ‘*fabi*’, and it was called the National Currency ‘*guobi*’ 指中国国定的银本位货币。清宣统二年 (1910 年), 规定国币单位, 定名曰“圆”。1935 年国民党政府废止银本位币, 采用法币, 沿称国币。” See <http://www.baik.com/wiki/%E5%9B%BD%E5%B8%81/>, accessed May 15, 2014. Photos of many paper notes from the Republican era currently available in China’s markets, along with typical selling prices for them, are in *Gudong sucha shouce zhibi* 古董速查手冊紙幣 [*Quick Guide to Old Currencies*] (Changsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 2010), 61–184.

the possessor of the book abandoned it, writing, “My friend gave this book to me, but it hasn’t been of any help” [*Youren zengshu, wode, ci you wuliyi* 友人贈書, 我得. 此有, 無利益].<sup>34</sup>

### Dealing with Social Conventions

Many Chinese, whether they worked in city or the countryside, had only basic or functional literacy. The majority could probably read and write their names as well as recognize basic characters used in shop signs and local place names. No doubt a number of people were functionally literate within their occupation, especially shop owners, salesmen, and traders. Certainly, many religious specialists, fortunetellers, and practitioners of traditional medicine could be considered literate, at least by the people around them.

In the 1980s, several Western scholars became interested in determining the rate of literacy in late Qing and Republican China. Many reached the conclusion that, in the late Qing dynasty, at least 30 percent of China’s population had some degree of literacy, and this figure is widely accepted for the early Republican era as well.<sup>35</sup> Scholars such as Evelyn Sakakida Rawski and Paul Ropp accept these estimates. Cynthia J. Brokaw performed a survey of the various estimates and has a thorough discussion of the different estimates that might be drawn. Benjamin A. Elman compares the traditional examination system for clues about how it affected literacy. Even Mao Zedong, writing in the 1930s,

34 When I initially bought this book, I classified it as a fortuneteller’s notebook but now see it as having belonged to a yinyang master who also taught school.

35 See Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch’ing China* 23: 241 n. 1; Paul S. Ropp, *Dissent in Early Modern China: Ju-lin wai-shi and Ch’ing Social Criticism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981), 31–32; Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). But estimates of literacy and functional literacy vary from 5 percent to over 50 percent. For a thoughtful and well-documented consideration of this topic, see Cynthia J. Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), 559–568. Broad coverage of the Qing exam system with interesting details are in Yang Xuewei 楊學為 et al., ed., *Zhongguo kaoshi tongshi* 中國考試通史 [*Comprehensive History of China’s Examinations*] (Beijing: Shoudu shifan daxue chubanshe, 2004), 3: 349–375. Mao Zedong’s estimate is in Mao Zedong 毛澤東, *Report from Xunwu* 尋烏調查, trans. and ed. Roger R. Thompson (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 191. The topic of literacy is discussed in the text below and is also discussed in Chapters 4 and 7.

gave this estimate of the literate people in the community he examined, and he accounted for numerous categories of semiliterate people in the community.

On some occasions the illiterate and even the functionally literate needed to call upon the services of an educated and more fully literate person. Major life events, such as marriages or funerals were such times. Although the family members organizing the ceremony probably could not always read or write very well, written invitations and scrolls were considered *de rigueur* for formalizing and solemnizing the occasion. The anthropologist Adam Chau calls the practice of utilizing the power and prestige of the written word to lend authority to an action a “text act.”<sup>36</sup> From the time of the earliest Chinese archaeological finds down to the present day, written characters give importance to events and the information they convey. In the process of organizing ceremonies for major life transitions, Chinese families needed the help of a specialist, both to understand how to perform the ceremonies and to prepare the flowery and formulaic language to be used. Scrolls of poetic couplets were also regular part of these observances.

Marriages and funerals were entwined with the power of the deities, but they were primarily ceremonies involving human beings who were connected by layers of human experiences, disagreements and hopes. Thus the specialists who advised on marriages or funerals also provided advice on how best to avoid problems by adhering to the set practices drawn from the approved traditions. In this category of specialists were those who gave legal advice to individuals who believed they had been wronged. These legal advisors gave practical advice, much as would a marriage go-between, but they also possessed some knowledge of legal practices and procedures.

Individuals who relied on references to written texts for the advice they gave, or who earned an income by writing something for others, were most likely to be holders of at least a *xiuca* degree. Because of their sound basic education, they could turn to the written materials available as guides to writing proper marriage invitations or a eulogy at a funeral, and they could read the samples of legal cases that circulated among the public. Their calligraphy, as demonstrated in the manuscripts examined here, showed good control of the brush and was of acceptable quality in the market or the schoolroom. Many of these ritual specialists also prepared the matched hanging scrolls, and they wrote the

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36 The undeniable power of written words in China, the power of the “text acts” referred to here, is analyzed in Adam Yuet Chau, “An Awful Mark: Symbolic Violence and Urban Renewal in Reform-era China,” *Visual Studies* 23, no. 3 (December 2008).

formal invitations and notices used in family ceremonies. Because these were literate men in a society where the majority of people had limited literacy, all of those who could read and write with any facility possessed skills that gave them access to a number of professions (ways to make a living). A fortuneteller, for example, could also give medical or legal advice, copy a book, or write letters for others. The people discussed in this chapter should not be seen as professionals who were limited by their skills but, rather, as literate men who could simultaneously engage in a variety of occupations.<sup>37</sup>

As educated people with attractive handwriting, many of the *xiuca* could also earn income as scribes. Such specialists sometimes set up shop (which could be a small storefront operation called a letter-writing shop [*daishufang* 代書房] or a simple table set up in the marketplace [*daishusuo* 代書所]). The letter writers could read letters or documents received by their clients and prepare written responses at their client's request. Because scribes were considered fully literate, they could just as easily be called upon to give advice on any other matters in which consulting a written text was involved, as mentioned earlier, such as Chinese medicine, fortunetelling, and writing legal petitions.<sup>38</sup>

One manuscript book I have that deals with a major life transition is titled **On the Foundation of Marriage (This Edition) Free of Mistakes** [*Hunyuanjiang, wushi* 婚元講勿失]. Additional text on the front cover says: "How to Achieve Success" [*Shu mao zhi* 樞懋志].<sup>39</sup> Throughout, the text claims to be laying out everything that must be in place in order to have a successful marriage. For instance, all the stars must be aligned, the proper deities respected, the five elements and the critical eight trigrams all need to be correct. Because spirits and forces abound, every precaution must be taken to correctly carry out each small detail in the planning and execution of the event. The copyist

37 This idea is discussed in Melissa Macauley, *Social Power and Legal Culture: Litigation Masters in Late Imperial China* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 124–125. Legal matters at the local level are studied in Ah Feng 阿風, "Ming-Qing Huizhou susong wenshu de fenlei 明清徽州訴訟文書的分類 [Categories of Legal Complaints in Huizhou during the Ming and Qing]," *Huixue* 徽學 [*Huizhou Studies*] 5 (2008).

38 The work of those who wrote letters and invitations is described in James Hayes, *The Rural Communities of Hong Kong: Studies and Themes* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1983), 195. For an application of these materials for research purposes, see Wang Zhenzhong, "Chaoben—(xinshu) suojian Jinling dianpu huoji de shenghuo 抄本—信書所見金陵典舖伙計的生活 [The Life of Pawnshop Clerks in Nanjing Based on *chaoben*, Written Letters]," *Guji yanjiu* 古籍研究 [*Research on Ancient Texts*] 2 (2004).

39 **On the Foundation of Marriage (This Edition) Free of Mistakes** [*Hunyuanjiang, wushi* 婚元講勿失] is a work of sixty-eight pages. It is 7 in (17.8 cm) h × 4½ in (11.43 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in September 2005. This work is also discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

was no doubt a life advisor and counselor who taught both ritual correctness and the need to propitiate the external forces present in the physical world. He might have also functioned as a yinyang master.

Among the points addressed in the text are those that determine which days and times were auspicious and which were inauspicious for formalizing a match. They are determined in part by understanding that the five elements can align to help or hinder the marriage [*wuxing shengke* 五行生剋], that marriage should not take place in yang years but can take place in yin years [*yangnian jinhun, yinnian bujin* 陽年禁婚, 陰年不禁]. It is crucial to know which days are auspicious [*hongshari* 紅沙日], the directions of the compass that will determine one's fate [*ming zaihefang* 命在何方] as well as the directions to be avoided [*hunyin buke xiangfang* 婚姻不可向方]. Until the 1950s and sometimes beyond, brides were regularly carried in a sedan chair (palanquin) as part of the wedding ceremony, and this text advises (on pp. 31–32) that the bride even be careful to alight from the sedan chair in the proper direction [*xiaqiao fangxiang* 下轎方向].<sup>40</sup>

The text advises adults planning the wedding to know which years are inauspicious and will prevent a good match as well as knowing which star gods to call upon in order to determine the fate of the match [*nan nu minghe qiguanlun* 男女命合起官論]. On the day of the ceremony, it is important to hang a sacred charm over the marriage bed [*jiaqu zhangfang zhenfu* 嫁娶帳房鎮符], and, for this purpose, a number of the magic talisman are given [*fu tu* 符圖; pp. 36–39, labeled as talisman illustrations], so that they may be properly copied by a priest or scribe. How to construct the eight trigrams is also explained.

The text I have was obviously used by the fortuneteller, who marked it with red ink throughout to help him quickly find relevant sections. He must have been a good talker and a persuasive conversationalist, skills that all good fortunetellers should have. In an exercise in good marketing, and to boast of his own skills, he wrote his favorite sales pitches in the upper margins of some of the pages. For example, he wrote (p. 62): “This book is completely beneficial, and each word is worth a thousand cash” [*shishu jie youyi, yizi zhi qianjin* 是書皆有益, 一字值千金]. On another page, touting his own ability, he wrote (p. 64): “It is easy to gain a thousand cash, but difficult to acquire useful advice” [*qianjin yide, haoyu nanqiu* 千金易得, 好語難求]. Of course, he could provide good advice.

40 This aspect is on p. 31 of the text. A discussion on auspicious and inauspicious actions in a marriage ritual is pp. 21 f.

The copyist/author who penned *On the Foundation of Marriage* tells us something about himself, including his address (pp. 2–3) in the Fourth District on the broad open slope, Huo County, Shanxi Province [*Shanxisheng, Huoxian, Disiqu, kuanchangpo* 山西省, 霍縣, 第四區, 寬常坡]. I wonder whether this means he practiced his trade in the open or the broad hillside was a bit of open land where peddlers set up their stalls and the passing townspeople and laborers kept up a steady stream of foot traffic all day? “Broad open slope” may have been the local term for a sloping hillside where small shops were located. This market town was located in southwestern Shanxi Province, south of the large city of Taiyuan 太原 and also south of Pingyao 平遙, home of the famous Shanxi merchants who controlled long-distance trade and banks in much of eastern China in the late Qing and early Republican era. Pingyao is now a well-preserved tourist destination, where former merchants’ handsome homes can still be visited. The Fourth District designation would have been familiar in the 1930s but not much before then.

More to the point of our inquiry here, he indicates that he is a *xiuca*. He wrote at the top of one of the pages (p. 46), “A *xiuca* studying yin and yang will easily burn a lamp’s worth of oil” [*xiuca xueyinyang, yongyou yidengzhan* 秀才學陰陽, 用油一燈盞]. The meaning is that the poor scholar will spend a lot of time and effort learning about fortunetelling in order to make a living. I assume the copyist was describing himself. The point of writing in the margins of the *chaoben* pages, and this example, is addressed again in Chapter 2.

### Legal Issues and Life Events

When an ordinary person in Qing China had a grievance against another like himself or against someone in authority, he could turn to a legal advisor, known politely as a legal advisor [*songshi* 訟師] and less politely as an arguer or pettifogger [*songguan'er* 訟棍兒].<sup>41</sup> Such a person had several years of a typical formal education, was literate, and was hired to advise people who planned to bring a legal case against another person or family. He usually was not trained

41 Two comprehensive sources about *songshi* 訟師 are Macauley, *Social Power and Legal Culture*; and Dang Jiangdan 黨江丹, *Zhongguo songshi wenhua: gudai lvshi xianxiang jiedu* 中國訟師文化: 古代律師現象解讀 [*China’s Litigator Culture: A Modern Explanation of Traditional Legal Masters*] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2005). The backgrounds of the *songshi* are discussed by Macauley, *Social Power and Legal Culture*, 111–114; and Dang, *Zhongguo songshi wenhua*, 144–146.



FIGURE 1.16

*The Red Shore* [Hongpu 洪浦], Cover. This is a manual used by a professional litigator [songshi 訟師], probably a xiucai 秀才, who was also interested in games of chance, as the latter pages describing a game of chance and/or fortunetelling show. His descriptions of criminal cases and their outcomes are abbreviated and clearly taken from other sources.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

specifically in legal matters but developed his knowledge over time through self-study or instruction from someone more knowledgeable. The litigator was likely to be a *xiuca*. It seems likely that other members of his family also had formal education. The litigator would explain the situation in legal terms to the people who had hired him, and he could explain a strategy for winning the legal case. He would write out the complaint to be presented to the local authorities. In traditional China, those authorities included the local magistrate [*zhixian* 知縣] and officials associated with the yamen. Like his brothers who offered fortunetelling about the future, the litigator's place of business might be little more than a table set up at a market.

The manuscript book titled **The Red Shore** [*Hongpu* 洪浦] is a manual for a professional litigator.<sup>42</sup> The volume I have deals with marriage cases [*hunyun lei* 婚姻類]. Sixteen pages are devoted to setting forth six legal cases. In each instance, first, the complaint [*gao* 告] is stated, followed by the formal charge [*su* 訴], and then, lastly, the judgment [*panwen* 判文, *shenyu* 審語]. These six cases were likely drawn from published legal cases in the Ming or Qing eras. They are merely brief summaries of each case and its disposition. The names of the people involved are sometimes given, but other information, such as dates and exact locations, are omitted. These texts were used as examples that the litigator could consult in advising his clients. They gave the litigator an idea of the reasoning or logic that would be used to decide the case and perhaps some indication of the precedents that would be consulted by the authorities in reaching their judgment.<sup>43</sup>

42 **The Red Shore** [*Hongpu* 洪浦] is 6¼ in (15.87 cm) h × 4½ in (11.43 cm) w. It has forty-four pages and was purchased in Guilin in September 2005.

43 A useful discussion of writing legal judgments [*panwen* 判文] from the Tang era is in Norman P. Ho, "Law, Literature, and Gender in Tang China: An Exploration of Bai Juyi's Selected *Panwen* on Women," *Tsinghua China Law Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2009). The legal aspects of handwritten contracts are discussed in Wu Bingkun 吳秉坤, "Qing zhi Minguo Huizhou tianzhai diandangqi shenxi: jian yu Zheng Limin xiansheng shangque 清至民國徽州天宅典當契深析: 兼與鄭力民先生商榷 [Research into Huizhou Mortgage Contracts from the Qing to the Republic: In Consultation with Mr. Zheng Limin]," *Zhongguo jingjishi yanjiu* 中國經濟史研究 [*Research on Chinese Economic History*], no. 1 (2009). Justice as delivered in the world of gods and spirits followed most of the conventions of the secular legal system. For these comparisons, see Paul R. Katz, "Divine Justice in Late Imperial China: A Preliminary Study of Indictment Rituals," in *Religion and Chinese Society*, Vol. 11: *Taoism and Local Religion in Modern China*, ed. John Lagerwey (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004), 2.

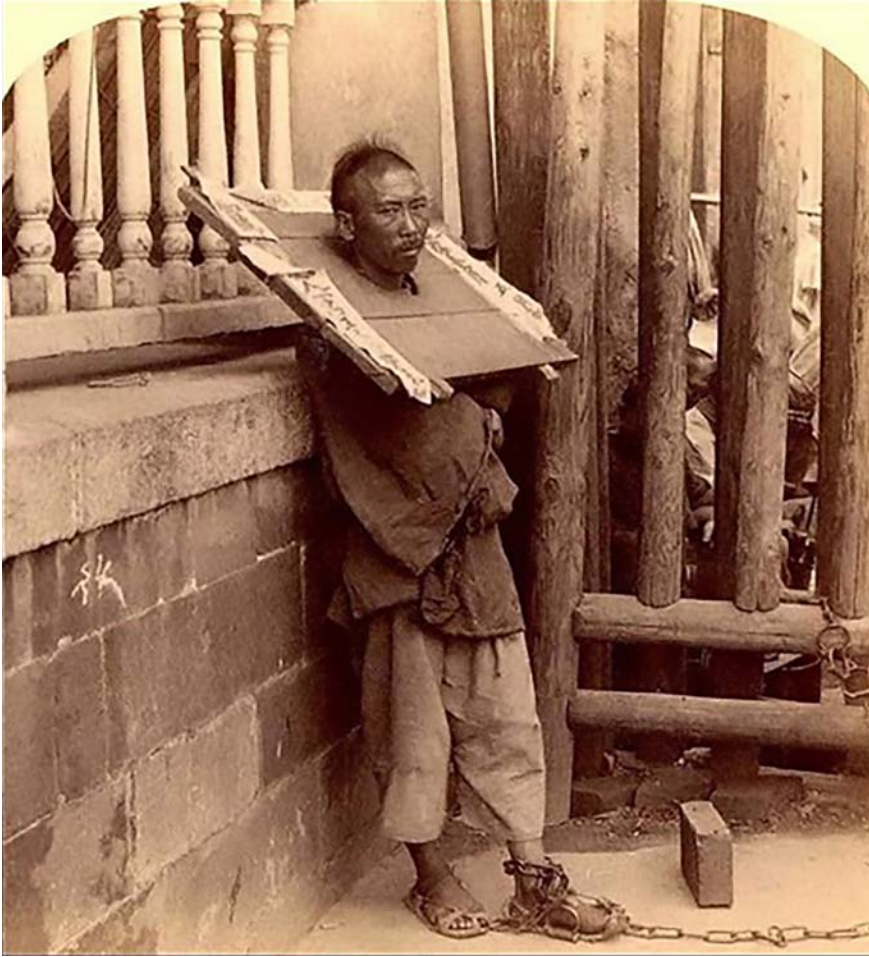


FIGURE 1.17

*Cangue*. Called mujia 木枷 or jiasuo 枷鎖, in the West they are also called shackles or fetters. The prisoner's name and crime were written on paper and pasted onto the board. This prisoner was supposedly photographed in Hankou 漢口. Officially it was a device to restrain a prisoner, but it was heavy and inflicted pain, it restricted a person's movements in many ways, and it was a great humiliation to wear. This punishment could be imposed for relatively minor crimes like petty theft or causing a disturbance, and it was removed at night.

PHOTO FROM JAMES RICALTON, *THE BOXER UPRISING, CHEEFOO TAKU, TIEN-TSIN: A PART OF UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD'S STEREOSCOPIC TOUR THROUGH CHINA* (NEW YORK: UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD, 1902)

Four of the cases are discussed here. Each reveals a pivotal aspect of the social values strongly held in traditional China. In case no. 1 (pp. 1–4), “A Rich Man Took Another’s Wife by Force” [*gao qianghun* 告強婚], taking advantage of his position of power and status over the women. This situation is common in all societies where great disparities of wealth exist, which was generally the case in premodern China. In the bare outline of this case given in the manuscript, none of the possible complicating factors are considered, such as any suspicion that the man and the woman had a consensual relationship in any way.

In case no. 2 (pp. 5–7), a “Widow Was Forced to Remarry” [*shiduo faqi* 勢奪髮妻], in which the late husband’s family forced the remarriage, which resulted in the woman’s suicide. The accepted morality in traditional China was that a wife, once married, should never remarry, even if it meant living most of her adult life alone. But in a society in which families needed a mate for a son and an additional person to labor on behalf of the family, this rule was not necessarily honored. Forcing a woman to contradict the accepted morality, in this case causing her to commit suicide, is a good example of the conflict between ideal prescribed behaviors and the more difficult exigencies of everyday reality, such as the expectation by the groom’s family that, in a few years, they would have another person to labor in their household.

In case no. 3 (pp. 7–9), a “Marriage Contract Was Repudiated” [*gao letuiqin* 告勒退親]. It was not uncommon for families to arrange a marriage contract while both the prospective groom and prospective bride were still children, with the proviso that the contract would come into force in the future, usually when the children reached puberty. In this case, when the time for marriage arrived, one family decided it did not want to follow through with the marriage, and the second family believed it had been cheated. Sometimes, the future bride was sent to live with the family of her future husband. While living with them, she would provide labor for the family, and the family probably believed it had already “captured” the prospective bride. In the case outlined in this manuscript, the groom’s family failed to acquire the bride, who was not physically living with it.

Case no. 4 (pp. 9–11) is about the “Forcible Rape of a Young Girl” [*qiangjian guinü* 強姦閨女]. The girl in question was a servant in the house of someone well-to-do. The circumstances of this case are discussed at length, pointing out the difference in economic status between the rapist and the poor servant girl and the failure of the rapist’s family to protect the girl. The story became the basis of operas and literary fiction because it threw into sharp relief the inequities and power differences permeating Chinese society. Servants were/are regularly taken advantage of sexually in all societies, so this case has near-universal relevance.

In each of these cases, the chief protagonist is a young female. We can conclude from this that young women were especially vulnerable in China's patriarchic social system, especially when they had no financial wealth to give them any social position. It is likely that the litigator had to deal with grievances of this sort on a regular basis because he was dealing with *pingmin* who had been taken advantage of, and so he copied these cases to his manuscript. We should also be open to the possibility that these cases all held a degree of sexual titillation for the male litigator, because they involved young females.<sup>44</sup>

The remainder of this book (pp. 17–44) contains entirely different subject matter. It describes a method of telling fortunes by casting dominoes [*yapai bazhong* 牙牌八種]. The meanings of all the possible ways in which the dominoes might be aligned [*shengua* 神卦] are explained.<sup>45</sup> The inclusion of this material is a strong indication that the litigator, being literate and considered to have wider experience in human affairs than the average person, was also a professional fortuneteller who used the material he had copied into this book for both aspects of his work. At the same time, casting the dominos might have been his favorite pastime. Either way, once again this manuscript, with its two divergent sets of content, demonstrates that these *minjian chaoben* should be seen as notebooks consulted by people who compiled them for their own use.

44 The kinds of cases commonly presented for litigation involving women included: marriage contract disputes, forced remarriage, abandonment, abuse, seduction, rape, and suicide. See Philip C.C. Huang, *Code, Custom, and Legal Practice in China: The Qing and the Republic Compared* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), especially chap. 9. **The Red Shore**, discussed here, contains only a portion of text taken from another source and was used for reference by an informal litigator. But complete manuals, often several volumes long, were published for the use of the litigators. One of these is discussed extensively in Fuma Susumu 夫馬進, “Shōshi mihon [XiaoCao yibi] no shutsugen 訟師秘本 [蕭曹遺筆] の出現 [A Litigator's Handbook: The Received Writings of Mr. Xiao and Mr. Cao],” *Shirin* 史林 [*Historical Studies*], 77, no. 2 (March 1994). Cases of homicide and potential rebellion against the government are translated and discussed in Robert E. Hegel, *True Crimes in Eighteenth-Century China: Twenty Case Histories* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009). My understanding of this text was greatly expanded by my discussion with He Zhaohui 何朝暉 at Shandong University.

45 The casting of dominos is covered in *Yapai shenshu bazhong* 牙牌神數八種 [*Eight Methods for Divine Readings by Casting Dominos*] (Taipei: Wenhua tushu gongsi, 1961).

## Conclusion

This chapter provides the context for *chaoben*, that are focus of this study. These handwritten materials reflect the lives and concerns of the common people of China over a century. Many of those people were illiterate, but they managed to use these manuscripts to learn some characters or they listened as the texts were read aloud or chanted at a religious service. These *chaoben* intersected with many areas of their daily lives. This chapter presents a sampling of the different types of *chaoben* used by the common people.

By 1950, printed materials were found everywhere in China. Yet the common people, whether they lived in large cities, small cities with their bustling markets, or the countryside, continued to copy materials by hand and to bind the materials together in the form of books. These items are characteristic of the popular manuscript culture [*minjian chaoben wenhua* 民間抄本文化].

Although they looked like traditional string-bound books, *chaoben* should be considered notebooks in which the people reproduced texts and information that they found useful and interesting. Many of them contain several sections on seemingly unrelated topics. But the topics in each individual volume were in fact related by the interests and needs of the person who selected them for copying, whether on their own or by someone else. For example, I have a book titled **Funeral Orations** (*Jiwen* 祭文).<sup>46</sup> The man who wrote a number of funeral oration texts in the book as part of his familial obligations of conducting a ceremony at the grave of an ancestor, on the later pages also copied portions of a rhyming dictionary most likely because he enjoyed composing poetry or because he was a teacher of poetry. The man who gave legal advice as a litigator in **The Red Shore** also enjoyed telling fortunes through casting dominos, so the manuscript he prepared contains both types of information.

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46 The cover page has fallen away from this book, so it has no title, but I refer to it as **Funeral Orations** [*Jiwen* 祭文], or eulogies. It likely dates from the early Republican era, because the text contains the phrase Great Han Republic [*Dahan minguo* 大漢民國], which later became the standard *Zhonghua minguo* 中華民國. It is 7½ in (18.41 cm) h × 4¼ in (10.79 cm) w; I bought it in Guilin in September 2005. It seems to refer to Central or South China, which would be logical, based on my assumption that in general these materials appear in markets in the geographic region, widely defined, where they originated. The funeral orations are on pp. 5–19, followed by the poetic rhymes section on pp. 21–54, based on the *Kangxi zidian* 康熙字典 [*Kangxi Dictionary*], a work that has been popular for several hundred years and has been widely reprinted, and continues to be on sale today in China.

Virtually every manuscript in this genre had an economic function. It was used as part of an exchange of information or advice to help its owner earn a living. That was probably the reason for compiling the book in the first place. We assume that most of the men who copied these materials and who used the books in the performance of their professions were *xiuca*. They had managed to acquire a solid basic education, which they used to earn income in a society in which most people were not functionally literate. *Xiuc* used their skills at reading and writing and as possessors of “knowledge,” acquired through their formal education, to engage in a number of professions. The professions, as revealed through the *chaoben* discussed in this chapter, included those as fortuneteller, litigator, ritual specialist, elementary school teacher, medical advisor, professional writer who prepared wedding or birth announcements, writer of congratulatory scrolls, and scribe. *Chaoben* that reflect all these categories are for sale at China’s flea and antiques markets today. We should assume that some of these *chaoben* were compiled for the personal pleasure and private use of the person who produced them, in spite of the assumption that most were made for monetary reasons and were part of an economic transaction.

*Xiuc* worked at the intersection of the literate and the illiterate or semiliterate common people. The common people consulted these professionals in the course of daily life, so the record of information, ideas, and values presented in the *chaoben* prepared by the *xiuca* reflect common people’s needs, aspirations, and values.

Because the authors and copyists of these books saw them as notebooks to be used in daily life, they were uninhibited about what kind of information they added to them. Happily for us, their jottings allow us to broaden our understanding of the men who wrote and used *chaoben* and, by implication, the less literate common people who consulted with them. The *chaoben* in my collection (only a few representative examples are discussed in this chapter) show, for example, that a good recipe for Chinese medicine was always appreciated and so was often copied into its pages (examples of this are illustrated in other chapters, including a full medicinal recipe in Chapter 4). We can imagine the frustration of the *xiuca* who noted that he had to study yinyang practices in order to earn a living or the pride of the merchant who worked hard at his family’s business and expressed himself in a poem in **Various Words Offered to the People**; his original poem was by no means highly accomplished, but it revealed his determination to work for the sake of his extended family.

*Chaoben* are cultural artifacts created by the common people of China. They lay out before us the rich perceptual life of ordinary Chinese as they went about fulfilling their daily obligations, planning for transitional life events, and struggling to understand difficult issues. Each *chaoben* indicates the ways in which

the received teachings and values of the traditional culture were reinterpreted at the local level in ways understandable to the common people. They took the generalized or universalized values and practices from the received tradition and explained them in concrete ways. In doing so, as Kleinman taught us, they created a culture specific to their time and place that was relevant to their daily lives. *Chaoben* thus reveal the lives of China's common people during the vibrant century of change between 1850 and 1950.

## Apologia in *Chaoben*

### 抄本裏之謙詞

#### Introduction

All sorts of information and ideas were recorded in the *chaoben* used in China in the late Qing and Republican periods. The handwritten manuscripts were, in effect, notebooks used to contain any sort of information the writer found important or interesting or entertaining. When a *chaoben* is encountered nowadays, many decades after they were first written and used, it is not uncommon to find that it has no cover; when most *chaoben* were opened and consulted, the cover weathered the heaviest handling and is likely to have fallen off. Many of these notebooks were rebound later on. In those cases, someone took thicker paper or often took several sheets of paper and glued them together to result in stronger sheets to be used at the front and back of the volume covers, and then sewed the pages back together. The newer covers in the resewn version do not all have a title or identifying information. It is not uncommon to find the front cover is blank, with no title, no other written information, and no seal or personal stamp.

The conclusion I draw from this situation is that the creators of *chaoben* considered them informal. The useful and not useful and relevant and irrelevant information they contained were meaningful for those authors, who intended to keep *chaoben* their own private possessions. Such authors used *chaoben* in their jobs for reference to information they were selling to clients or as a reminder of topics they wanted to bring up when chatting and drinking with friends. But *chaoben* were not meant to be widely circulated or given to those with whom their creator was not familiar, so the cover did not need to have a title or other identifying information. It is also possible to infer from this lack of an attempt to identify each volume that the person who compiled and used a *chaoben* did not have many of them in his possession. In that the case, the desired notebook was easy to identify even without a title on the cover.

The lack of a title and other characteristics indicate that *chaoben* were close to the person who compiled them and were considered items for personal rather than public use. This can be deduced from the number of cases in which *chaoben* included miscellanea that may have interested only the writer—among which were apologia.

“Apologia” is used here to refer to *qianci* 謙辭, the somewhat deprecatory remarks that Chinese sometimes jotted at the beginning or end of a written work. In many works, particularly those of an academic nature, it is common to end a preface by saying “I thank the above-mentioned people for their help with this work, but the responsibility for any mistakes is mine.” This type of phrase could be called an apologia: a polite expression intended to demonstrate the author’s humility. Many of the apologia presented here are taken from the vocabulary lists that form the majority of the *chaoben* I have acquired (for more on vocabulary lists, see Chapter 1).

### Informal Apologia

The apologia written in the popular copy books were informal in nature, as befits a volume of handwritten text on low-quality paper. As part of the informal apologia, I sometimes encountered a deprecatory apologia that seemed to contain tongue-in-cheek humor, intended to bring a smile to the face of the reader. Humor was no doubt present in the lives of China’s *pingmin* during the period covered by this study, and it appears at times in the handwritten *chaoben*. But it does not appear frequently, and this makes me think that an emphasis on humor as a social lubricant or as a vehicle for social commentary played a secondary role in the lives of the people of the time. Humor can come in many varieties: ribald, slapstick, tongue-in-cheek, satirical, and so on. Three cases of low-key humorous content are discussed below: the light-hearted monologue that could have entertained a teahouse gathering, in **Ancient Texts Explained**, the often-repeated story of Zhuang Zi testing his wife as referenced in **Song by the Wenchang Emperor Advocating Filial Piety**, and the comment on the behavior of a typical invited (but perhaps not cherished) guest in **Vocabulary List in Five-Character Verses**.

Under the traditional educational system in effect until 1905, students who were preparing to take a government exam at the county level were called “young students” [*tongsheng* 童生]. After they passed that exam, they prepared for the next examination, for the widely respected title of *xiuca*. Doing so indicated that their level of literacy was quite high by provincial standards: they could read historical texts and even write essays with ease.<sup>1</sup>

1 Mao Zedong 毛澤東, in his *Report from Xunwu* [*Xunwu diaocha* 尋烏調查], in 1930 wrote about the abilities of the *xiuca*. See Mao, *Report from Xunwu*, 19–191.

Students preparing for these examinations were assigned academic essays written by Chinese scholars in the past. The student was expected to memorize the essay or parts of it, discuss its contents with his teacher, and write his own essay as a reflection on the piece. By reading the essays and memorizing some of the stories in them, the students learned about important persons in China's long history. By listening to their teacher's explanation of the stories, they learned a lot of historical anecdotes and information. Listening to the moral of the story as expounded by their teacher reinforced the basic values of Confucian moralism that were so widespread among the common people. If the student advanced to the point of taking one of the higher official state examinations given in the capital of Beijing to win a degree offered by the imperial government, these essays and their themes could provide information for the longer examination essays written by the student.

Several versions of collected historical essays were circulating in China by the late Qing dynasty. A hand-copied text in my collection is one of the standard collections titled **Ancient Texts Explained** [*Guwen shiyi* 古文釋義].<sup>2</sup> It is a collection of 144 selections of prose from the Qin 秦 (221–206 BCE) through the Ming dynasties. The woodblock edition of this collection was originally published in 1743. It was modeled after a better-known and more-extensive collection of essays (containing 220 selections) called the *Survey of Ancient Texts* [*Guwen guanzhi* 古文觀止], a collection that has become a standard work in the Chinese academic canon. In the late Qing period, beginning students were advised first to study the texts in **Ancient Texts Explained** in the printed version and then to proceed to the larger *Survey of Ancient Texts*. As indicated above, both collections were used as preparation for the government examinations that could eventually lead to appointment to an official post. The essays in these collections continue to be part of the middle school curriculum in some Chinese schools, especially in Taiwan, and can easily be purchased in bookstores in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

My copy of the **Ancient Texts Explained** is titled volume 5, and it was copied in the spring of 1900 [*jiwu chongding, suizai gengzi ji chunzhong huanshu* 輯五重訂, 歲在庚子季春中浣書]. It has fifty-nine consecutively numbered pages with selections from twenty-two classical essays. Among the essays included in my manuscript copy is "A Record of One's Emotions" [*Chenqingbiao* 陳情表], by the Jin official Li Mi 李密 (224–287 CE). The essay discusses the rise of a

2 **Ancient Texts Explained** [*Guwen shiyi* 古文釋義] is 9–5/8 in (24.33 cm) h × 5 in (12.7 cm) w, a good size for a study manual. It has fifty-nine pages plus a front and back cover with text and was purchased in Beijing in September 2005.

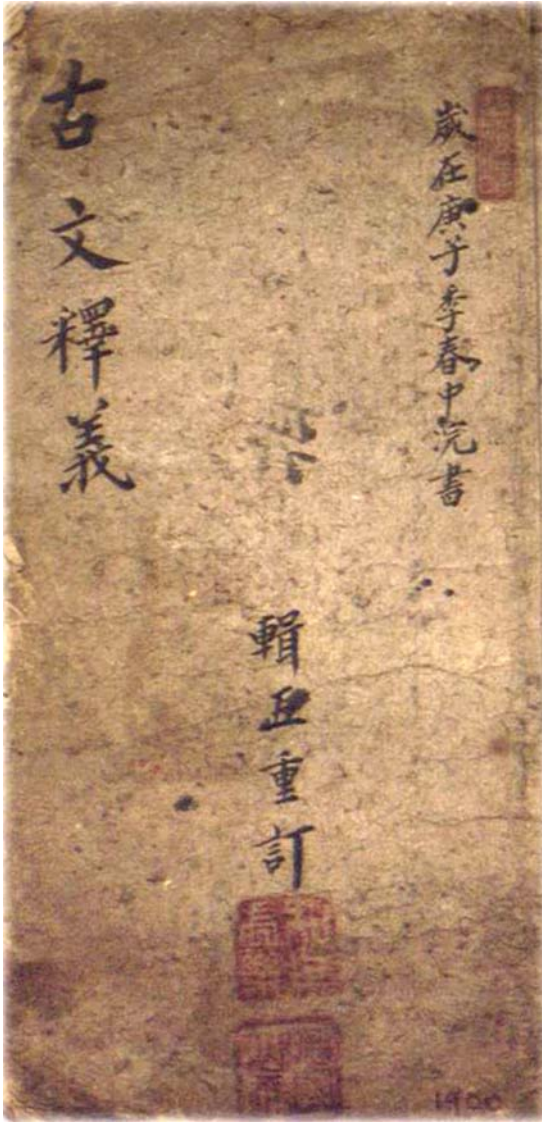


FIGURE 2.1

*Ancient Texts Explained* [Guwen shiyi 古文釋義], Cover. This cover was copied in 1900. It appears that a number of volumes of collected essays with this title were being copied or were providing the samples from which this text was copied. The collection's title is in the upper left-hand corner.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

person of humble birth to high office. A second example is “In Praise of the Five Early Emperors” [*Wudi benji zan* 五帝本紀贊], taken from the *Book of History* [*Shiji* 史記], written by China’s most illustrious historian, Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–86 BCE). The essay speaks of five semi-mythical emperors, including the Yellow Emperor 黃帝 and Emperors Yao 堯 and Shun 舜, and honors their deep knowledge. A third example is “The First Fu on the Red Wall” [*Qian chibi fu* 前赤壁賦], by the Song official and scholar Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101 CE). In the essay, written in 1082, Su Shi and his friend visit an ancient site, which prompts him to recall the past and the admirable actions of the ancients.

In my handwritten manuscript, the student copyist shows good control of the brush, indicating that he had already spent a number of years improving his calligraphy and was probably a teenager or young adult. The volume gives evidence of much use; the outside fold of most of the pages has worn away, so that individual sheets open when the pages are turned, rather than the pages turning as folded sheets. Most of the text is punctuated or “underlined” by circles written with red ink beside the text, meaning it was carefully studied by the student.

At the end of this copy, the specific date of copying is given: “This book was copied on February 31, 1900, and is listed as ‘Volume 5 Containing Twenty-Two Essays’” [Guangxu ershiliunian eryue sanshiri zhi. Jiwuxueshu gongji ershier pian 光緒二十六年二月三十日止. 輯五學書共計二十二篇]. The student did not write his own name.<sup>3</sup>

Our point of interest here are the words the student added on the blank page (p. 59) at the end of the volume of essays he had written down and bound. The story is titled “Luck” [*Shiyun* 時運]. The phrase can also be used to mean “fate” or the “passage of time through its natural cycles.” This is an argument for the way in which people should deal with the passage of time. The story reads:

Humans live between heaven and earth.<sup>4</sup> Who can live apart from nature? People depend on the natural cycle even if they don’t know why it happens. Otherwise they couldn’t depend on nature. But if you live according to its cycles, how could you not live easily? For those who don’t live easily,

3 Two large seals are on the cover. The first is “Sufficient Knowledge, Long Happiness” [*zhizu change* 知足長樂], and the second is “A Lake of Wine, Hermit’s Heaven” [*jiuhai xiantian* 酒海仙天].

4 In the classic text *Lunheng* 論衡 [*Balanced Inquiries*], by Wang Chong 王充 (ca. 27–100 CE?), the work begins with “Above is heaven, and below is earth. Between heaven and earth lives man” [*shangyoutian, xia youdi. Tiandi zhijian you renyan* 上有天，下有地。天地之間有人焉]. A handwritten manuscript in my collection possibly from the late Choson 朝鮮 period

it is because they don't understand that they should depend on the natural cycle. People who understand these things always wait for the proper time to do things. Like the growing seasons of spring and summer. Or autumn and winter after taking in the harvest. Work in the growth season, and rest after the harvest is in. Don't do too much or too little, but depend on the natural flow of time. If one hears this and still has troubles in life, I can't trust them. People who have good luck in this life follow these ideas. How can one go against this cycle? For those who still go against this natural cycle, how can we not call them foolish? I fear you may laugh at me (for speaking in this way).

*Furen shengyutiandi zhijian, shui bulaizhi weiran ye? Lai erbushi qiran, fanshi bulaiye. Guo laizhi youhe bushunzhe zai? Dang you bulaizhe, shi laizhi buming er. Ruo shimingzhe, bidaishi er hou dongzuo. Ru chunxia zhi shengzhang, youqiudongzhi shoucang. Dong yu shengzhang, jing yu shoucang. Buguo buji, laihu shiyun zhi ziran. Daiyan bushunzhe, ze wu buxin ye. Shizhi wei wangshiyunzhe, you rushi. Yu yi fanshiyu? Yushi rouran, shiyun buzhi zhe, qi buyu zai? Jianshen.*

夫人生於天地之間，誰不賴之為然也？賴而不識其然，反是不賴也。果賴之有何不順者哉？當有不賴者，是賴之不明耳。若寔明者，必待時而後動作。如春夏之生長，猶秋冬之收藏。動於生長，靜於收藏。不過不及，賴乎時運之自然。殆言不順者，則吾不信也。世之為望時運者，有如是。與抑反是歟？于是若然時運不至者，豈不愚哉？見哂。

This student could not resist adding something he found interesting and entertaining. In this very serious academic work, he wrote out a logical argument that has an almost humorous side to it. This story might have been recounted as part of a dialogue delivered in rapid fire, as in the popular *kuaiban* 快板 comic dialogues. *Kuaiban* routines, with one or two persons performing, were popular among the common people in the century under study. If this were the text from a *kuaiban* performance, one person would state an argument, and

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(1895–1910) from Korea, titled **Basic Primer** [*Gyemongpyon* 啟蒙篇/계몽편], begins with this passage and has grammatical phrases added in *hangul* 한글 for the sake of Korean students. This was the logical way of referring to all of humanity in the late Qing. The **Basic Primer** is 9½ in (24.13 cm) h × 8 in (20.32 cm) w, a shape that is squarer than the oblong shape of most Chinese texts. Many Korean books tend to be square. This has twenty-four pages and was purchased in Seoul in September 2005. The phrase used by the student in **Ancient Texts Explained** was modeled after the classic phrase by Wang Chong.

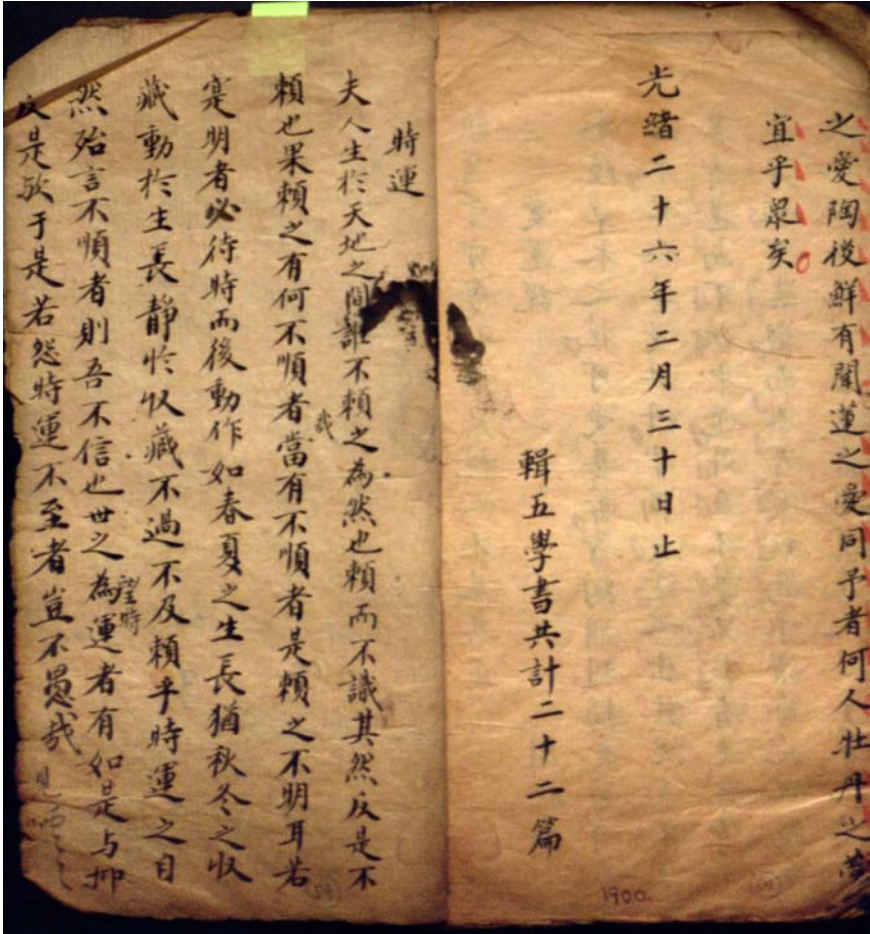


FIGURE 2.2

*Ancient Texts Explained* [Guwen shiyi 古文釋義], Pages 58 and 59, *A Story Once Popular*. Page 58 (right-hand side) shows the date the student copied or compiled the chaoben (1900), and page 59 (left-hand side) shows a story about luck or fate that must have been circulating among students at the time. Was this a version of “social media” as the twentieth century began?

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

the other comic in the group would proceed to pull it apart by confusing the logic of the story.<sup>5</sup> Possibly it was a story making the rounds of students at the time, and our young scholar wanted to capture its presentation so he could memorize it.

5 In some comic monologues, the performer keeps up a rhythm by clapping together two rods of bamboo or two stone clappers as he recites his story, in which the sentences usually rhyme.

The story conflates the ideas of the passage of time in the natural cycle, the idea of fate in this world, and the idea of luck. It is making the point that many people do not seem to realize the importance of this natural cycle. They do not try to live in harmony with the natural flow of time. They claim they have no luck and always complain that things do not go well. How can we not call them foolish [*qi bu yu zai* 豈不愚哉]?

This story seems to have had an impact on someone called Yunpu 雲甫, who wrote on the back cover:

When there is great wealth and much property, one's posterity might include great troubles. How can we explain this? When sons and grandsons have great wealth, they also have a lot of guts. They fear nothing, even if the sky is falling. They won't stop until they lose everything.

*Cai yeda, chan yeda, zisun houlai huo yeda. Jiewen ciruhe? Zisun qianduo, dan yeda. Tianyang dashi yebupa, busangjia, bukenba.*

財也大，產也大，子孫後來禍也大。借問此如何？子孫錢多，膽也大。天樣大事也不怕，不喪家不肯罷。<sup>6</sup>

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This form of entertainment is popular in North China. *Kuaiban* means “fast boards.” I thought the argument written in the text could have been part of a comic monologue, though it does not rhyme. It was my considerations while I was deciding how to respond to the story, but it is probably not in the *kuaiban* genre.

- 6 This short comment is a portion of the text of “family instructions” [*zhijia geyan* 治家格言] written by Yixuan 奕譞 (1840–1891), who held the title Prince Chun [Chun *qinwang* 醇親王]. He was the father of the Guangxu 光緒 emperor (r. 1875–1908). When his son became emperor, Yixuan “retired” and took the title “Withdrawn Master” [*Tuiqian zhuren* 退潛主人]. Sometime after he retired in 1875 and before his death in 1891, he wrote these instructions for his family. The version written on the back cover of the *chaoben* in my collection differs slightly from the actual text of Prince Chun's writing, which has been preserved. This means the writer, Yunpu, was recalling from memory the text he had seen or heard about. It also means that the text was known to the public outside of the elite inner circles by 1900, when this *chaoben* was compiled. The second half of the phrase, omitted here, makes the point that when one has little money and few possessions, one becomes more careful, temperate, and thrifty. From today's perspective, we might see that as a prescient remark about the ultimate fate of Yixuan's imperial family, the Aisin-Gioro 愛新覺羅 clan. See Yang Deng 楊澄, “Modai huangdi Pu Ren huiyi Chunqinwang zhijia geyan, tu 末代皇第溥任回憶醇親王治家格言 · 圖 [Puren, Younger Brother of the Emperor at the End of the Dynasty Recalls the Family Instructions by Prince Chun, Illustrated],” <http://big5.huaxia.com/zhwh/sslh/34099n.html>, accessed November 2014. Yunpu might also have been reacting to some of the essays he read in this *chaoben*.

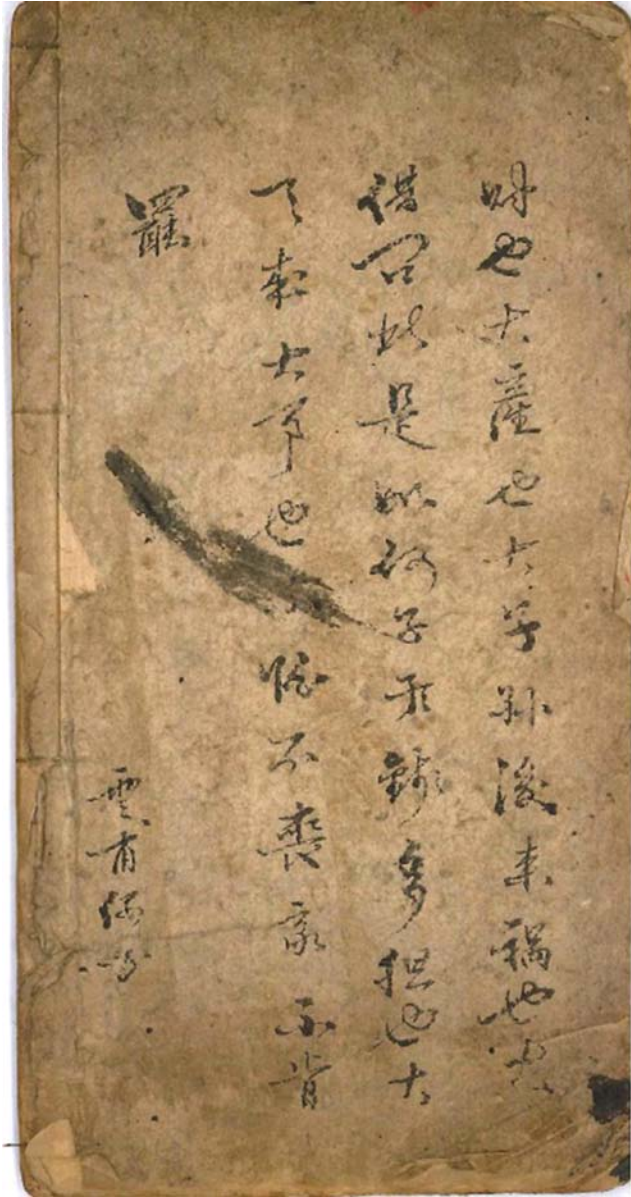


FIGURE 2.3  
*Ancient Texts Explained* [Guwen shiyi 古文釋義], *Back Cover with Additional Comments*. The back cover shows a portion of the text of “Family Instructions” [Zhijia geyan 治家格言] written by Yixuan 奕譞 (1840–1891), who held the title of Prince Chun [Chun qinwang 醇親王]. This indicates that his privately written admonitions had become public knowledge, at least among students, by a decade after his death.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

The student author who wrote the piece on fate ends his disquisition with a brief apologia [*qianzi* 謙字; p. 59], “I fear you will laugh at me” [*Jianshen* 見哂]. This compact expression is an appropriate statement for a student to make in spite of having just presented a strong and logical argument about living in harmony with natural cycles. The student’s argument is quite a different message from the one given in the collected essays in the body of **Ancient Texts Explained**, in which wisdom, righteousness, and virtue are emphasized. By adding this short essay to his hand-copied manuscript text, this amused student allowed us to see something of his less studious side. He related a story that made him chuckle. It was no doubt a story that raised a thoughtful smile among many of the common people in the final years of the Qing.<sup>7</sup>

From our point of view as scholars attempting to understand the role of popular manuscript culture, the inclusion of this amusing essay in an otherwise serious work underlines that the hand-copied texts were seen as everyday documents in which writing even something “irrelevant” in the blank pages was not out of place, much as schoolchildren might write in the textbooks they use every day. From this story, we can appreciate that the student who used this collection of essays was a complete human being with his own sense of delight and humor and most likely was not overly in awe of the unrelentingly serious messages given in the historical essays.

### Amusing Apologia

Amusing or even humorous comments seem to appear in unexpected places in the texts I have collected, only because we get carried away trying to understand

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7 A scholar in Shanghai, Chen Shi 陳實, emphasizes the term *shiyun* 時運 in its meaning as “luck.” His approach is that people act naturally according to the seasons, and in the end if people are successful they call it good luck. This would result in different translations at a number of points, though the main point of the story would be about the same. For example, beginning with the phrase “Ruo shimingzhe, bidaishi er hou dongzuo, ru chunxia zhi shengzhang, you qiudong zhi shoucang. Dong yu shengzhang, jing yu shoucang. Buguo buji, laihu shiyun zhi ziran 若寔明者，必待時而後動作，如春夏之生長，猶秋冬之收藏。動於生長，靜於收藏。不過不及，賴乎時運之自然。” Which could be translated: “People who really know what luck is always wait for a good time to do everything. Like the growth in spring and summer, like the rest of autumn and winter. Work in the growth season and rest in the quiet time, never going too far and never less, let nature take its course.” I thank Chen Shi for discussion and personal communication in July 2014. I was also assisted in understanding this piece by scholars Du Yuping 杜玉平 and Zheng Da 鄭達.

the point of the text and do not expect them to include a smile or witty comment. Such unexpected tongue-in-cheek humor underscores that *chaoben* were close to the real lives of real people. They were created by the people writing them, who felt free to imprint their own personality on the notebook they were creating. Such was the case with the copyist of the **Song by the Wenchang Emperor Advocating Filial Piety** [*Wenchang dijun qinxiao ge* 文昌帝君勤孝歌].<sup>8</sup> Wenchang is a deity in popular Daoism in China. According to legend, he was first born as a human being named Zhang Yazi 張亞子 and grew up in a region of Sichuan called Zitong, so his religious name is sometimes the Zitong emperor [*Zitong dijun* 梓潼帝君]. He is often portrayed holding a book or a register of the deeds of people, because he controls their intellectual life and aspirations. He is especially honored by people who have professions involving writing and paper, such as students, scholars, and civil servants. In traditional China, scholars about to take one of the official government examinations would call on him for help. Nowadays, children in Taiwan and Hong Kong are sometimes taken to honor Wenchang before beginning their first day at school.

In this text, the popular Daoist deity is called upon to teach sons and daughters how to be imbued with the important Confucian value of filial piety [*xiao* 孝], or respect for one's parents and family members. The easy movement between popular Daoist beliefs and the social imperatives of literati Confucian thinking is demonstrated by this text, which might be classified as a "morality book" [*shanshu* 善書]. It is safe to say that the typical person in the late Qing did not draw any sharp distinctions between the teachings of Confucianism and the powers of the Daoist deities. Rather, they blended in a logical universe composed of human beings and supernatural forces. In the famous White Cloud Monastery [Baiyunguan 白雲觀] in Beijing, the hall dedicated to Wenchang [Wenchang *dian* 文昌殿] is flanked on its left (the place of highest honor) by a statue of Confucius and on its right by a statue of the Chinese philosopher Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200).

In this handwritten text, the reader is addressed as "Dear Reader" [*quanjun* 勸君], who is admonished at many points to learn from the book and to follow its teachings. The text begins with the time we are infants and receive much care from our parents, and it talks about the central role that parents play

8 **Song by the Wenchang Emperor Advocating Filial Piety** [*Wenchang dijun qinxiao ge* 文昌帝君勤孝歌] is 9 in (22.86 cm) h × 4½ in (11.43 cm) w. It has fourteen pages written in quite good calligraphy, indicating a person who was comfortable and accomplished in using the writing brush. It was purchased in Beijing in September 2005. It is bound in twine, and the paper seems of mediocre quality.

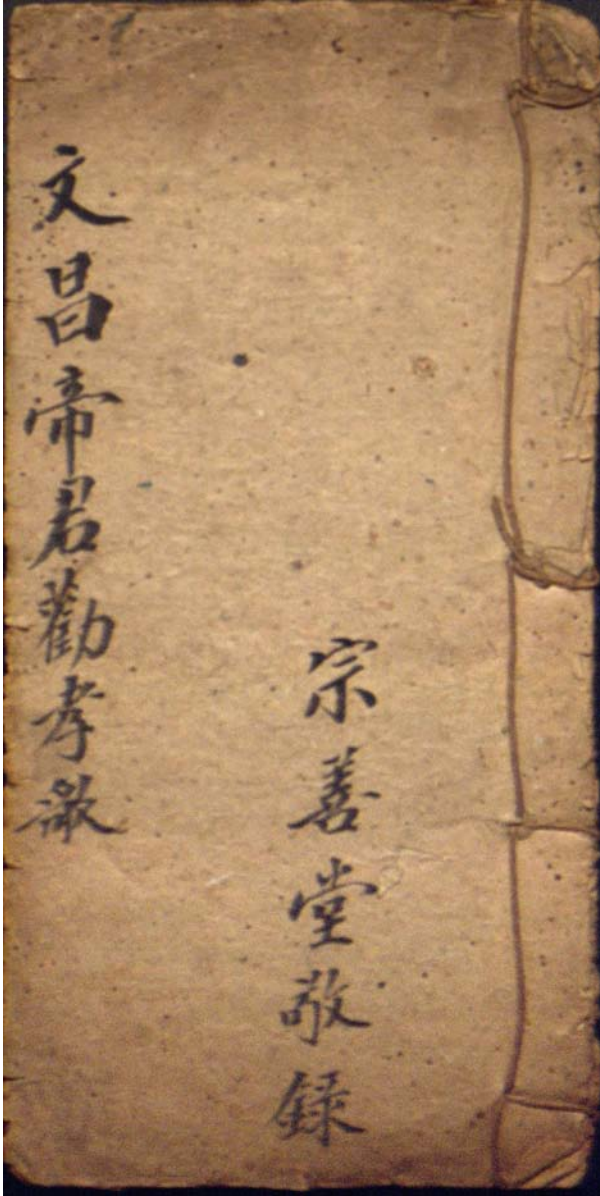


FIGURE 2.4

*Song by the Wenchang Emperor Advocating Filial Piety* [Wenchang dijun qinxiao ge 文昌帝君勸孝歌], Cover. The cover of this chaoben compiled in the late summer of 1886. Chaoben covers of “serious” works made for religious or instructional purposes often contain only a title and the hall where the copy was made. In this case, it was copied in the Hall of Worshipful Virtue [Zongshan tang 宗善堂].

PHOTO BY AUTHOR



FIGURE 2.5

*Wenchang* [Wen Chang di Jun 文昌帝君] is a deity to assist people who use the brush and writing, including bureaucrats, accountants, scribes, writers, and students. Because of his relevance to so many people, he is a popular Daoist deity. “Wen Chang di Jun, Chinese god of literature.”

ACCESSED 20 OCTOBER 2017. NOTED AS FROM WWW.CSUPOMONA.EDU (THIS SITE IS NO LONGER ACTIVE).

in raising children. The text seems to be directed at adults and introduces the conventional ideas often preached in the late Qing of being thankful and respectful to parents. On page 4, for example, it reads:

See the boy entering the morning market to buy buns and cakes. Don't ask if those are for his parents. Most will conclude they are for the younger person. The parents have love, and let the child eat first. The child's heart is not as good as the parents' hearts. Dear Reader, go often to spend money on buns and cakes, and give them to the elders (white heads) whose time left on earth is short.

*Kanjun chenrushu, maibing you maigao. Shaowen gongfumu. Duoshuo sierfu. Qinweishan, er xianbao. Zixin bubu qinxinhao. Quanjun, duochu bing-gaoqian, gongyang baitou, guangyinshao.*

看君晨入市，買餅又買糕。少問供父母。多說飼兒富。親末膳，兒先飽。子心不比親心好。勸君，多出餅糕錢，供養白頭，光陰少。

The front cover of this book says: “Respectfully recorded in the Hall of Worshipful Virtue” [*Zongshantang jinglu* 宗善堂敬錄]. This appears to be the name of a temple or shrine to the Wenchang deity that sponsored or paid for the copying. Possibly it was the name of a local benevolent society.<sup>9</sup> On the back cover is a date: “Respectfully recorded in the late summer of 1886” [*Kan zai bingxu nian mengxia xiahuan gonglu* 看在丙戌年孟夏下浣恭錄]. The phrase *xiahuan* 下浣 means during the last ten days of the month.<sup>10</sup> The *bingxu* 丙戌 year fell in 1826, 1886, and 1946. I believe this manuscript was copied in 1886 because the paper is pliant as was true of late Qing handmade paper, because the name of the temple or hall where it was copied appears, and because of the story related below, a story perhaps more familiar to people in the Qing than in the Republican era. The date of 1946, however, seems equally plausible given the brightness of the ink and the continued use of handmade paper in that period.

As recorded on the back cover, the manuscript was copied in the Studio of Orderly Study [*Siqixue shi* 思齊學室], probably the name of the copyist’s studio. The name of this studio and the humorous story inscribed on the back page indicate that the copyist was a man who questioned the platitudes in the text. He showed that he was not above having a chuckle over the self-righteous advice that Confucian teachers tended to give to their young students. The copyist therefore took up his brush to add some interesting words on the back cover (p. 14). These comments were written with the same brush and by the same hand as the text. His irreverent comment on the back cover is “Treating your friend like a relative” [*Jue tongbao yibenqin* 決同胞一本親]. He added a short poem, using the seven-words-per-line style [*qiyanshi* 七言詩], as follows,

9 On benevolent societies in rural China in the 1930s, some of which did not have a temple, the case of a Wenchang Association is specifically mentioned in Mao, *Report from Xunwu*, 126.

10 See *Xinshidai han-ying dacidian* 新時代漢英大詞典 [*New Age Chinese-English Dictionary*] (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2007), 668.

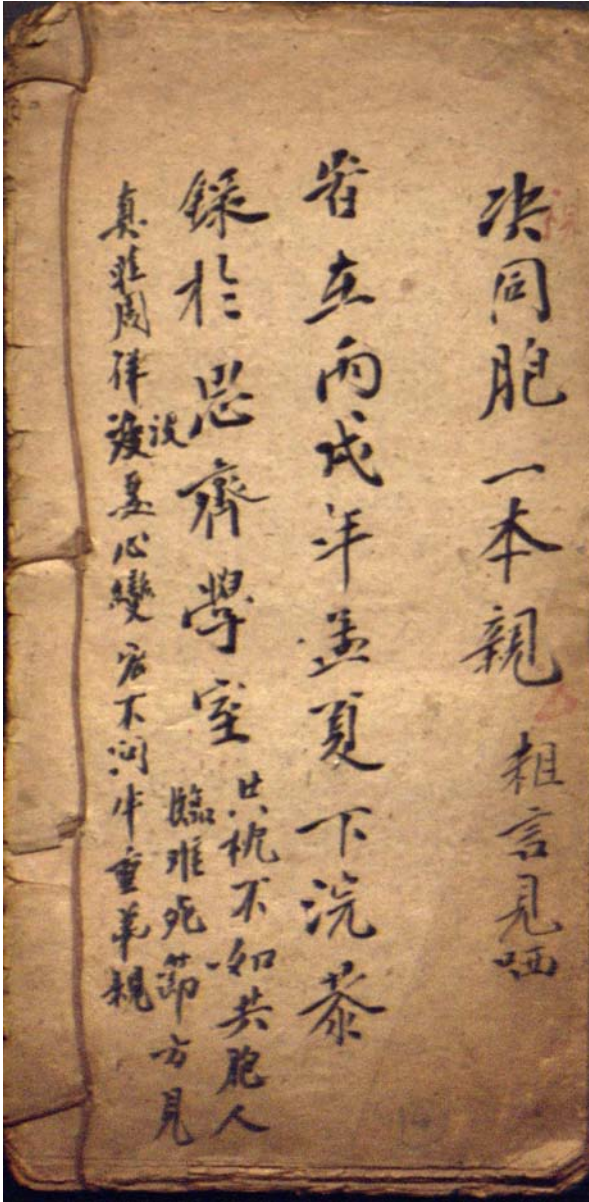


FIGURE 2.6

*Song by the Wenchang Emperor Advocating Filial Piety* [Wenchang dijun qinxiao ge 文昌帝君勤孝歌], *Back Cover with an Irreverent Story*. The back cover (p. 14) showing the often-repeated story among the common people, "Treating your friend like a relative" [Jue tongbao yibenqin 决同胞一本親]. This story can be considered related to the idea of xiao 孝 [filial piety] since the wife was to be bound to complete obedience to her husband.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

The person sharing your pillow [your wife] is not equal to your friend,  
When some temporary difficulties arise you'll see the true nature [of  
your wife].

Zhuangzi tested his wife's faithfulness,  
But came to realize he could better trust his friends.

*Gongzhen buru gongbaoren*  
*lingnan sijie fangjianzhen*  
*Zhuangzhou yangmei qixinbian*  
*hongbu xx zhong diqin.*

共枕不如共胞人，  
臨難思節方見真。  
莊周佯沒妻心變，  
宏不口口重弟親。

This humorous poem refers to the story of the famous philosopher Zhuangzi 莊子 (ca. 300 BCE) in ancient China. His Daoist philosophy was based on the idea that all things change and that how we see the truth depends on the context in which it exists. One day, he decided to test his wife's loyalty. The episode is described in the story "Zhuangzi xiugupen chengdadao 庄子休鼓盆成大道 [Zhuangzi Drums on a Bowl in Attainment of the Dao]," which was in the famous Ming-dynasty work *Jingu qiguan* 今古奇觀 [Strange Stories Ancient and Modern]. The original story has been very condensed in the telling below. The condensed version on the web is titled "Zhuangzi shi qi 莊子試妻 [Zhuangzi Tests His Wife]." It was relayed to me by a Chinese scholar, because it is one of the better-known versions.<sup>11</sup>

The condensed version says that one day Zhuangzi saw a woman weeping by a gravesite, who told him her husband had died. Zhuangzi then asked her why, if she was so sad, she was carrying a fan. She said that now that her husband was dead, perhaps she would remarry. Zhuangzi thought about the woman who was ready to remarry soon after her husband's death, and he decided to test the loyalty of his own wife. Shortly thereafter, he suddenly became ill and died. His wife, who had always proclaimed her faithfulness to him, was very

11 See the original in *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言 [Chinese-English Stories to Caution the World] (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2009), 50–83. The story was popularized in the work *Jingu qiguan* 今古奇觀 [Strange Stories Ancient and Modern]. This version is in *Chatu jingu qiguan* 插圖今古奇觀 [Illustrated Strange Stories Ancient and Modern] (Jinan: Jilu shushe, 2002), 245–251.

sad. Soon, a young man who wanted to become a student of Zhuangzi arrived, and it seemed a romance quickly arose between the handsome student and the late Zhuangzi's wife. This mutual attraction proceeded to the point that they decided to get married (i.e., to have sexual relations). The friend who told me this story put it simply by saying, "The student was in fact Zhuangzi himself, who had come to try to seduce his wife, and he succeeded." In the story, all was revealed when the coffin was opened, and Zhuangzi stepped out of it.

In this version Zhuangzi, emerging from the coffin, said:

The green bamboo [the student] speaks like a snake,  
 In the tail of the yellow hornet [his wife] is a needle;  
 Neither of you are bad,  
 The most harmful is the wife's heart.

*Qingzhu she'er kou*  
*Huangfeng weishang zhen*  
*Liangzhe jie buhai*  
*Zuidu furen xin.*

青竹蛇兒口，  
 黃蜂尾上針；  
 兩者皆不毒，  
 最毒婦人心。

He came to the philosophical realization that one cannot expect a wife to be as loyal as one's friends.<sup>12</sup>

At the end of his comments, the copyist in *Song by the Wenchang Emperor Advocating Filial Piety* added this message about the story: "Rude words to make you sneer" [*cuyan jianshen* 粗言見哂]. This comment has the function of being an apologia. It is a fair warning that those of us who are far removed from the late Qing, in both time and culture, had better read all our texts, especially the pious and moralizing ones, with more than a grain of salt if we hope to understand the manner in which these texts were received by the typical person in China at the time. To accept such an attitude does not

12 A shortened version of the story, still somewhat changed from the version told to me, can be found online. The verse given in the text here is on this version: <http://morganwu.pixnet.net/blog/post/18728812-%E8%8E%8A%E5%AD%90%E8%A9%A6%E5%A6%BB-->, accessed July 26, 2014. I am grateful to He Zhaohui 何朝暉 for his help with the background of this story.

lessen the importance of the cultural values being transmitted by the text or the power of the text to influence people, but it accounts for the people in China who brought their individual personalities to the cultural products they were creating.

### Formal Apologia

Proper etiquette in traditional China called for educated people to appear humble and eschew praise. One was expected to decline invitations to food and drink or to assume an important office several times before finally agreeing. The implication was that one was reticent to accept unearned honors. The idea of an important scholar or high official acting as an unassuming person deferring to others was widely admired, though in practice many popular stories tell of overbearing officials who had little sympathy for the individuals who came before them. This polite convention was followed, however, in scholarly and academic writing. It was often encountered in the preface [*xu* 序] or afterword [*houji* 後記] of published works. In those sections, authors and editors downplayed the importance of their work on the publication and its contents and politely shied away from accepting any honors for it.

The book *Liulichang xiaozhi* 琉璃廠小志 [*A Short Account of Liulichang*] discusses the books and booksellers that appeared in the Liulichang area of Beijing famous for its book and antiques markets. The book originally appeared in 1936 and discusses the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>13</sup> In part of the book, a number of bibliophiles discuss their work on ancient texts they ran across in the market and the difficulty of the editorial work to correct textual material and to establish the route of transmission of the texts. Although each editor was capable and accomplished in his own right, they discounted their own abilities and the value of their work.

In one of the old books discussed in such a manner, titled *Xiaotangji gulu* 猷堂集古錄 [*Collection of Ancient Records from the Xiao Hall*], the editor's remarks are an example of this practice. The apologetic words of the editor quoted here are brief, but they carry the proper implications to illustrate his well-mannered reticence. He writes of the numerous scholars, including his own father, who preceded him in working on editing the text. In a portion of his remarks, he wrote:

13 Sun Dianqi 孫殿起, *Liulichang xianzhi* 琉璃廠小志 [*A Short Account of Liulichang*] (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1962).

I did not [fully] understand the words of the author [little elder brother], and although this work had the stamp of [the scholar] Wang Zhuichuan, I nevertheless [ventured to] revise it, though it remains the writing of [scholar] Wang, and only now do I finally begin to understand [that] this [is a] great work [because I am such a poor learner].

*Nei xiaoxiongyu buming, nei queyou Wang Zhuichuan yinzhang, di yishang jiaogai, jie Wang bi ye, jin shizhi shi dabi'er.*

內小兒語不明，內却有汪稚川印章，弟以上校改，皆汪筆也，今始知是大筆耳。<sup>14</sup>

The *Short Account of Liulichang* has a similar example of an editor discussing his difficult work on a Song-dynasty text. He found that a number of scholars had written opinions on the correct way to read the text and on its meanings and its importance. The editor quoted in the book wrote of his work to establish the most accurate interpretation of the text:

In trying to understand and correct his work, it was a case of taking the many excellent readings and pulling out the most accurate, or like sifting out the precious gold from fine sand, in order to finally find the treasure. It was as if I was incapable, and making many mistakes because of having one hand tied behind my back.

*Qukeben kanzheng, ze jiashengshu chuyibiao, pishajianjin, wangwang debao; ruoyi pixiangquzhi, jishi zhi jiaobi yi.*

取刻本勘正，則佳勝殊出意表，皮沙揀金，往往得寶；若以皮相取之，幾失之交臂矣。<sup>15</sup>

A simpler ending to a vocabulary list in my collection titled **Shortcut to Vocabulary Words** [*Jiejing zazi* 捷徑雜字] dispenses with many formalities. This is a woodblock printed volume of fifty-four pages.<sup>16</sup> A handwritten cover gives it a date of January 1, 1950, but the pages and the paper indicate its date of more than thirty years earlier. The cover was written by Yan Shuwen [Yan Shuwen

14 Ibid., 329.

15 Ibid., 342.

16 **Shortcut to Vocabulary Words** [*Jiejing zazi* 捷徑雜字] is 8¼ in (20.95 cm) h × 5 in (12.7 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in July 2011.

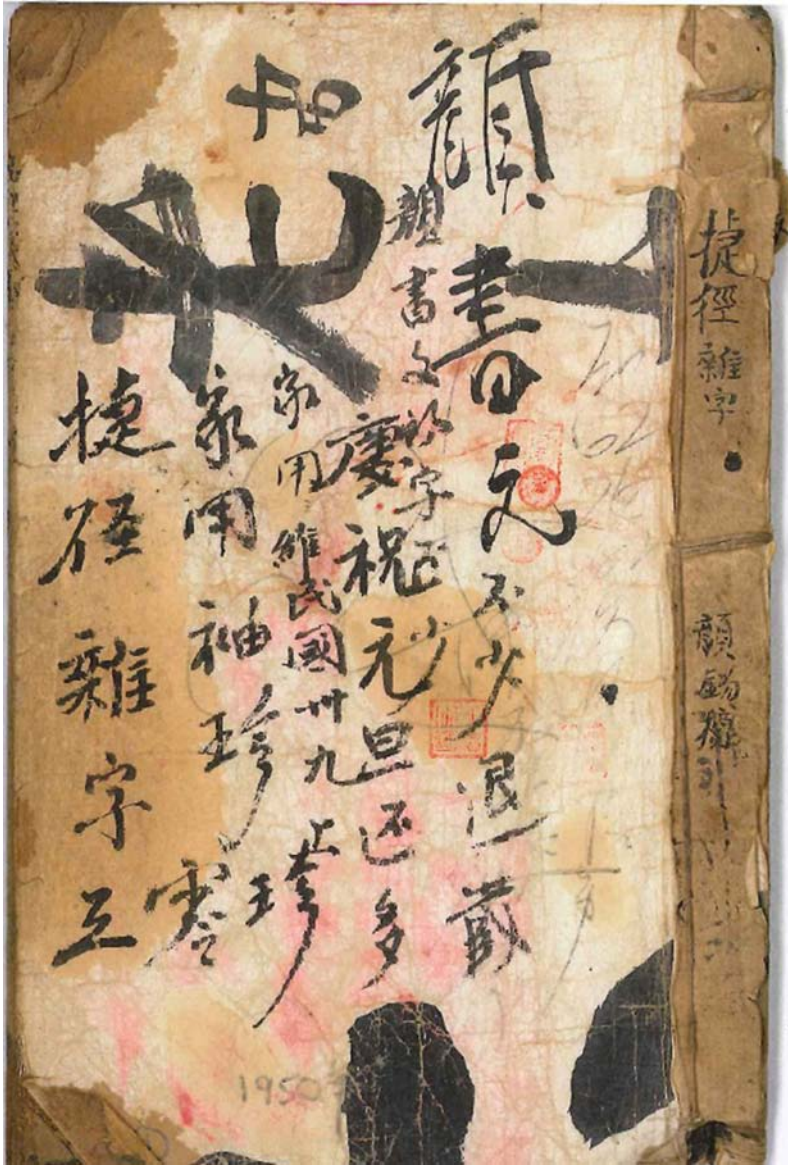


FIGURE 2.7

*Shortcut to Vocabulary Words* [Jiejing zazi 捷徑雜字], Cover. The cover was written by Yan Shuwen [Yan Shuwen dushu 顏書文讀書, p. 53] and was also used by his relative Yan Xibang 顏錫榜, whose name is also on the front cover. They have brushed in on the handwritten cover some words that might have appeared on the original printed cover of the book: "Popular Pocket Edition" [Jiayong xiuzhen 家用袖珍]. All the writing on the cover indicates it was intended to be widely consulted by this family.

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*dushu* 顏書文讀書; p. 53] and was also used by his relative Yan Xibang 顏錫榜, whose name is on the front cover as well. They have also written on the handwritten cover some words that might have appeared on the original printed cover of the book: “Popular Pocket Edition” [*Jiayong xiuzhen* 家用袖珍]. It appears from writing on the front and back covers that members of the Yan family may have passed this book among themselves, as a gift. At one point, after the Communists took over the country and began their campaigns criticizing the old society, someone wrote in ballpoint pen, and a not-well-practiced hand, “This book has no use” [*cishu buyong* 此書不用; p. 53] reflecting, I believe, the likelihood of being denounced for owning it and therefore penning a criticism of it.

In the section of the book on “Farmer’s Affairs” [*nongshilei* 農事類; p. 23], advice is offered to peasants (see p. 27) who will be involved in transporting their goods to a market:

To decrease the rental cost of the cart, weigh the cart itself.  
 The tax is based on the remaining weight [of only the grain inside].  
 To lease a cart, get a valid contract,  
 When not in use, return it to the warehouse.  
 Your pay might be shortchanged,  
 But you’ll still always be busy.  
 Grain is sold, grain is bought,  
 Measure it accurately in baskets or chests.

*Jianzu chengzhuan*  
*Nashui wanliang*  
*Dianzi dangqi*  
*Yuexi jinzhuang*  
*Tunxiang nanzhe*  
*Shangmang xiamang*  
*Tiaochu diru*  
*Biandan luokuang.*

減租稱轉，  
 納稅完糧。  
 佃子當契，  
 月息進庄。  
 屯餉南折，  
 上忙下忙。  
 糶出糶入，  
 匾擔蘿筐。

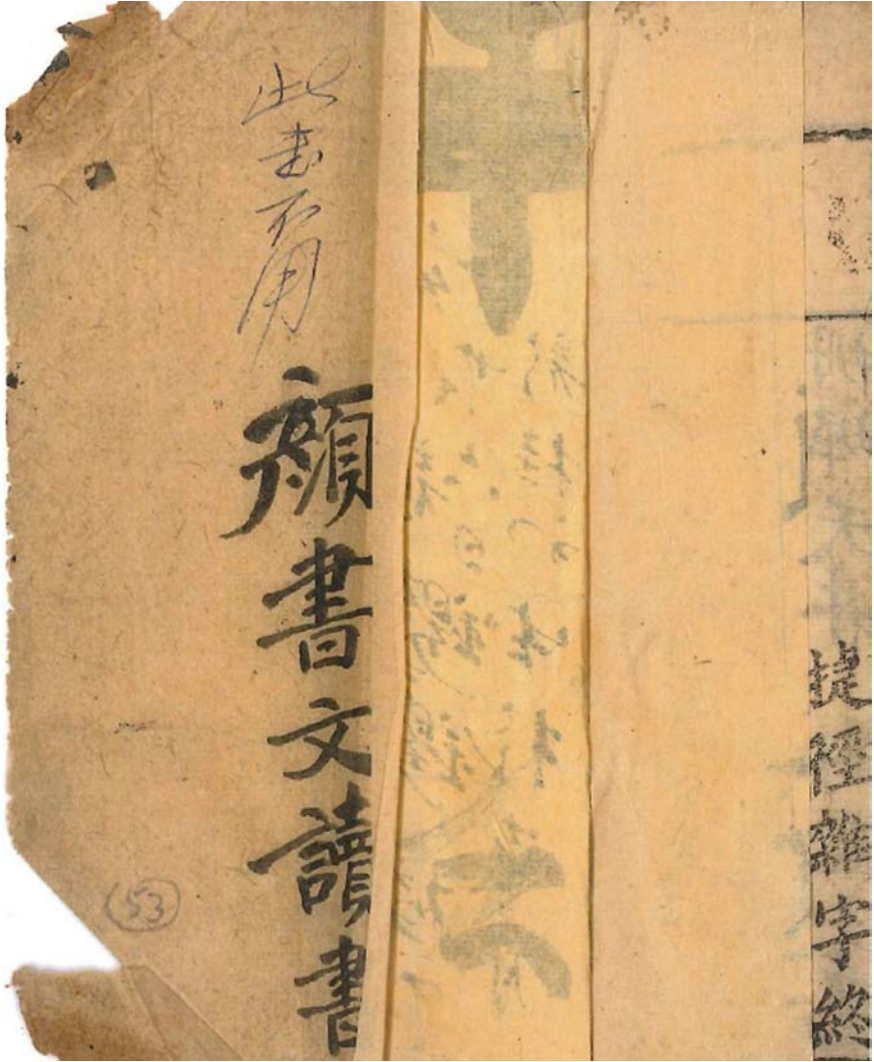


FIGURE 2.8

*Shortcut to Vocabulary Words* [Jiejing zazi 捷徑雜字], Page 53, *Denouncing Your Own Book*. This page shows the statement “This book has no use” [Cishu buyong 此書不用], which was probably written hastily in fear during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), when people who owned “old” books were labeled as “feudal” and were subject to criticism and physical harm.

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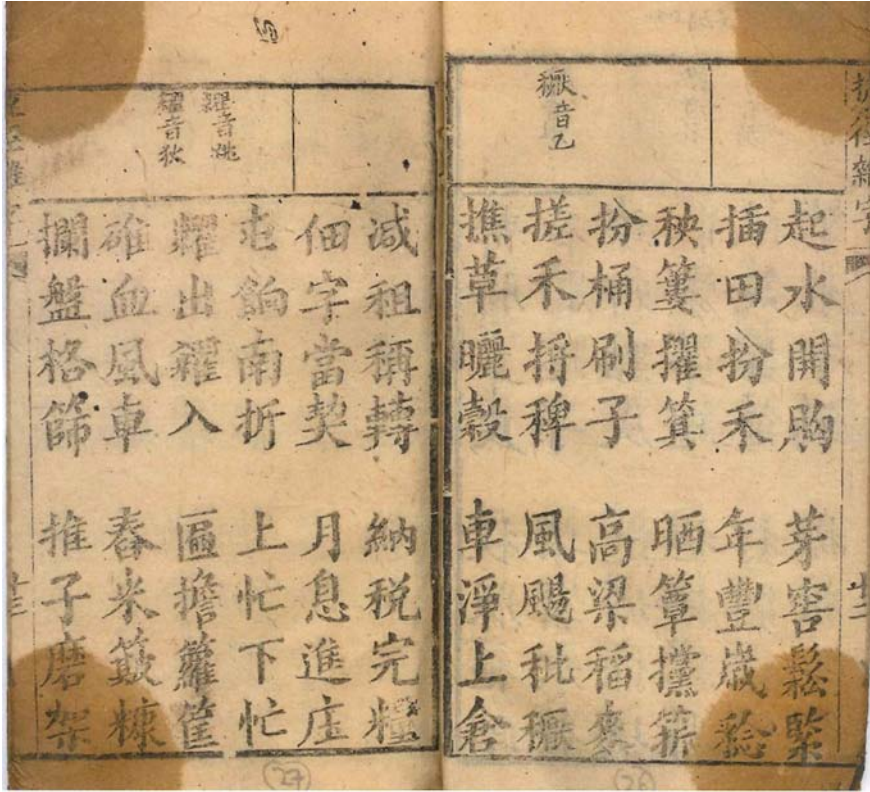


FIGURE 2.9

*Shortcut to Vocabulary Words* [Jiejing zazi 捷徑雜字], Page 27, *Practical Advice Given*. The page begins with the words “To decrease the rental cost of the cart, weigh the cart itself” [Jianzu chengzhuān 減租稱轉].

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The advice given is good and clear and useful. The book came to its conclusion in the same manner. Without undue formality, its apologia stated: “If you fail to use this book, how will you gain knowledge?” [*buju shaoyong, hexu duoxue* 簿據少用何須多學; p. 52]. These are part of the woodblock printed text, though the front and back covers are filled with handwritten words, written there in all probability by the people consulting the book.

In *chaoben* produced by less erudite members of society, the apologies are less elaborate, though they follow the same etiquette of stepping away from their work in an attempt not to attract praise to themselves. The **Chants of Repentance to the Three Primes** [*Sanyuan fa chan* 三元法懺] is a manuscript book of fifty-one pages discussed in Chapter 1. It is a ritual text [*keyiben* 科儀本] for a popular Daoist (and Buddhist) practice of reciting chants [*chan* 懺]

to atone for past transgressions and to ask that the power of the deities be extended to help the petitioner.<sup>17</sup> As explained in Chapter 1, the Three Primes mentioned in the title refer to three deities who are also popularly known as the Three Officials.<sup>18</sup>

This work has the name of the copyist recorded as Wang Shuxiang 王恕鄉 and tells us he copied the book in 1909. On the last page (p. 51), he wrote his name as “Recorded by Wang Shoudao” [Wang Shoudao *ji* 王守道記]. This is likely the religious or temple name of the copyist, since the name means to “Protect the Dao.” However, another name that appears is Wang Youda 王有達. We can assume that these are names used by the same copyist. It is possible that Wang copied the text as an act of devotion or because he was paid to copy it. In the case of hand-copied religious texts, it is common to find the name of the copyist and the date of copying. This is because one purpose of copying a religious text was to gain merit from the deities for this pious act. Although it is not unusual to find the name and date, the location is rarely specified. A hall [*tang*] might be mentioned, but those were small, local rooms or buildings that are difficult to trace.<sup>19</sup>

Wang also considered himself among the lower classes. He was able to read and write but did not feel as though he was among the highly educated. He closed this manuscript by writing his apology: “Don’t laugh at the poor quality of my writing [my unsightly writing]” [*chou wu xiao* 醜勿笑]. One or two characters are missing, and we don’t know what more he wrote. I have sometimes bought *chaoben* that had a portion or a corner seemingly bitten off by an animal. This might indicate the text was stored in a location where animals were also kept. It could have been within a house in sections of the country with a colder climate, where anything to keep the inside warm was acceptable, including living with animals inside the house. Some of the bitten-off portions, such as can be seen on my copy, appear to have been made by a donkey, a rat, or a goat, and the animal’s saliva stains have discolored the paper on the edges of the bite.

Wang’s polite remarks are not as nuanced as those found on manuscripts written by scholars. But considering his world view and his written vocabulary, they show the way he expressed this polite affectation.

17 **Chants of Repentance to the Three Primes** [*Sanyuan fa chan* 三元法懺] is also mentioned in Chapters 1 and 8. The book is 9¼ in (25.46 cm) h × 5½ in (13.97 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in January 2008.

18 For more information on these deities, see Chapters 1 and 8.

19 The name of a temple or the city or village where it was located do not often appear in the copied texts.

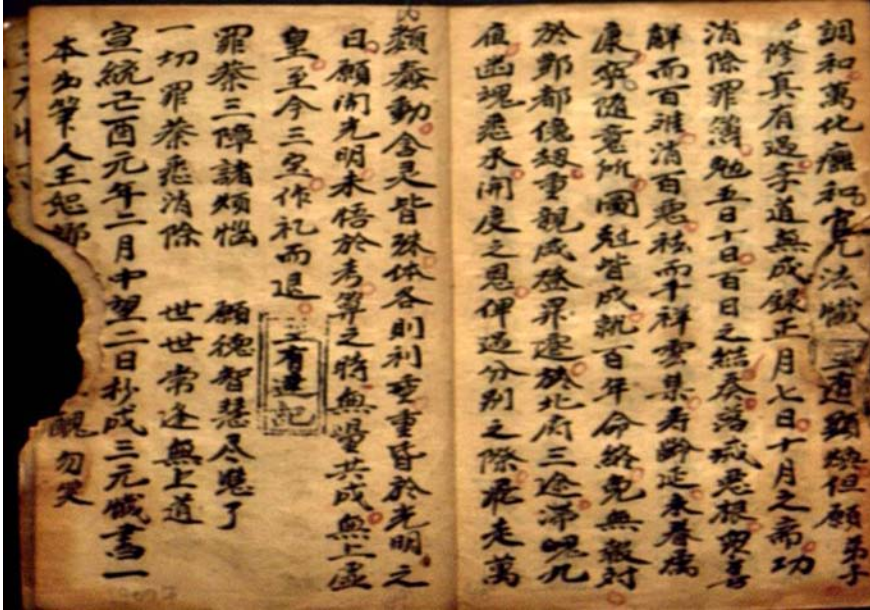


FIGURE 2.10

*Chants of Repentance to the Three Primes* [Sanyuan fa chan 三元法懺], Page 49, *Writer's Apologia*. Here we see the writer's apology: "Don't laugh at the poor quality of my writing [my unsightly writing]" [chou wu xiao ... 醜勿笑 ...]. A portion of the text was bitten off by an animal, possibly a donkey. We see the date (1909) of this copy.

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### Suitably Deprecatory Apologia in Vocabulary Lists

A similarly deprecatory closing is in the text *On the Foundation of Marriage (This Edition) Free of Mistakes* [*Hunyuanjiang, wushi* 婚元講勿失]. The text is discussed in Chapter 1.<sup>20</sup> To summarize the gist of its context, the text claims to lay out elements that must be in place in order to secure a successful marriage. Because so many spirits and forces abound, every precaution must be taken to correctly carry out each small detail in the planning and execution of the event.

On the last page of text, the author's apology reads: "Although this is a rough and vulgar work, please, sir, consult it fully" [*suishi cusuyu, qingjun*

20 Note that in the title *On the Foundation of Marriage (This Edition) Free of Mistakes* [*Hunyuanjiang, wushi* 婚元講勿失] I have sometimes added the phrase "this edition" in the English translation. The phrase is not written in the title, but appears at a different location on the cover. Thus I conclude the copyist intended it to refer to this edition only.



FIGURE 2.11

*On the Foundation of Marriage [This Edition] Free of Mistakes* [Hun Yuan Jiang, wushi 婚元講勿失], Cover. Judging from the contents of the text, this chaoben was used by a fortuneteller or a yinyang master [yinyangshi 陰陽師] knowledgeable about the Daoist explanation of the universe. Heterosexual marriage was considered such an important foundation of orderly society that a wide range of superhuman natural and cosmological forces were said to be at work in connection with the union. This text discusses many of those forces.

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*xixiangcan* 雖是粗俗語，請君細祥參]. In this case, it appears the author thought of himself as far beneath the more highly educated literati. Perhaps he felt somewhat degraded having to work as a fortuneteller and marriage advisor in spite of his education. As can be seen from other comments he wrote in the margins, he was confident about advising his clients. One of these

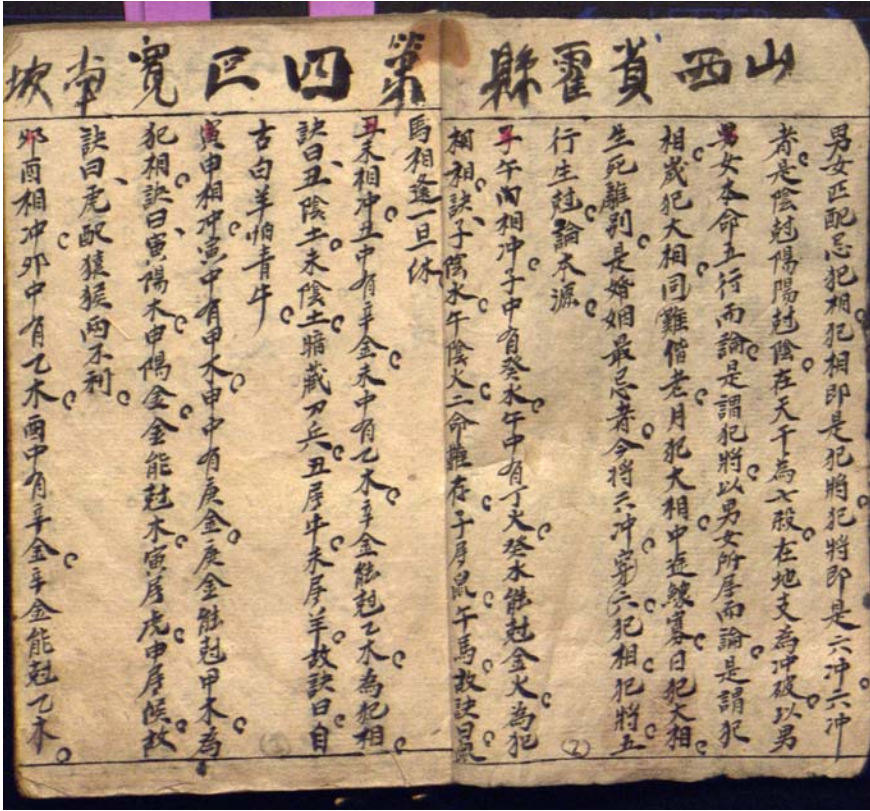


FIGURE 2.12

*On the Foundation of Marriage [This Edition] Free of Mistakes* [Hunyuanjiang, wushi 婚元講勿失], Pages 2 and 3, A Provincial Address. These pages show the address where the person offering his services set up his stand, perhaps at a periodic market. The address he wrote: Shanxi Province, Huo County, in the Fourth District on the broad open slope [Shanxi sheng, Huo xian, disiqu, kuanchangpo 山西省, 霍縣, 第四區, 寬常坡]. Was the address written in case he lost the text and hoped it would be returned or as an advertisement of where his services could be obtained?

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

comments, as also recounted in Chapter One, reads “This book is completely useful, and each word is worth a thousand cash” [*shishu jie youyi, yizi zhi qianjin* 是書皆有益, 一字值千金, p. 61; see also p. 64]. This attitude illustrating his self-confidence, was likely an attempt to bolster his bone fides among his customers.

The closing remarks of *Vocabulary List in the Local Dialect* [*Fangyan zazi* 方言雜字] seemed to have a sneering and sarcastic tone. The text could have been written in about 1915 but a portion of it was copied from an earlier Qing-period work, as can be seen from the phrase “Manchu and Chinese drink

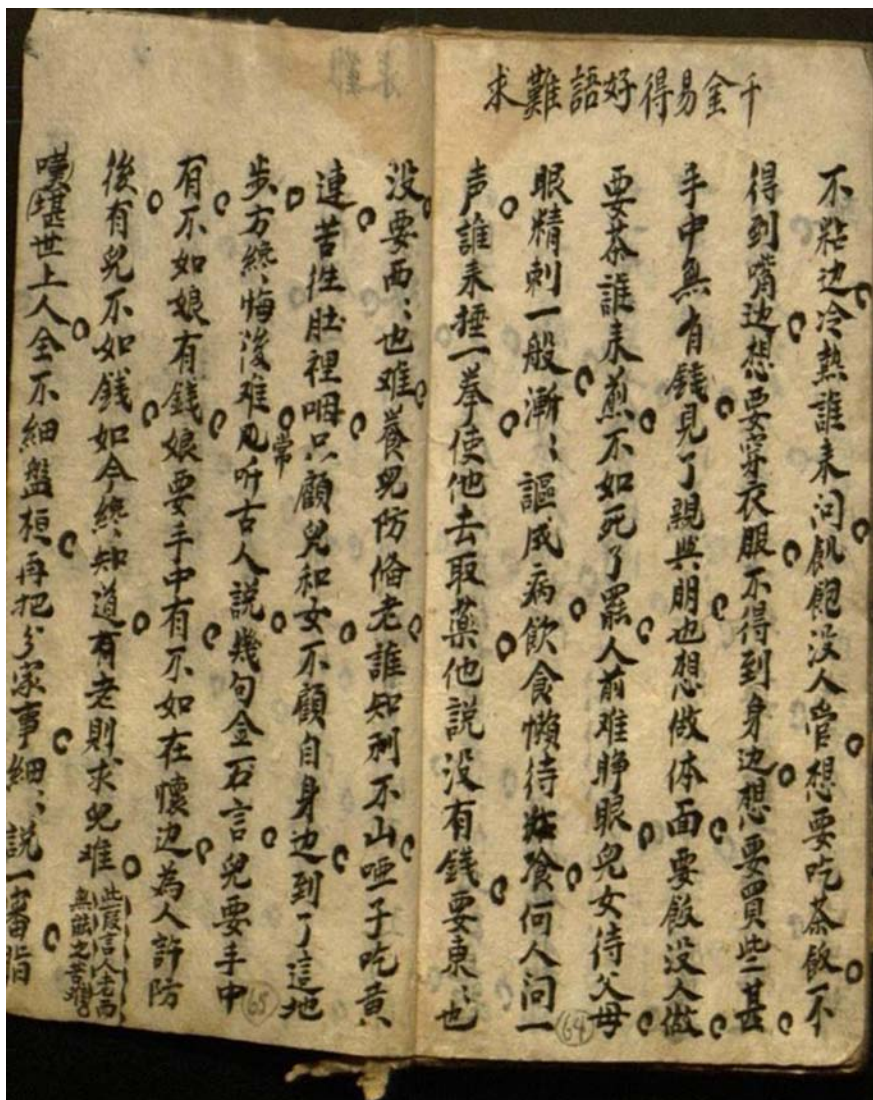


FIGURE 2.13

*On the Foundation of Marriage [This Edition] Free of Mistakes [Hunyuanjiang, wushi 婚元講勿失], Page 64, Self-Promotion. The self-advertising phrase is written in the top margin: "It is easy to gain a thousand cash, but difficult to acquire useful advice" [qianjin yide, haohua nanqiu 千金易得，好語難求]. It appears the person who prepared this text was talking about the excellent services he offered his clients.*

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

together” [*Man Han jiuxi* 滿漢酒席; p. 103].<sup>21</sup> A phrase that indicates a date between 1912 to 1927 is “South and North, two capitals” [*nanbei erjing* 南北二京; p. 57] because those years were a time when the northern warlord [*beiyang* 北洋] government in the north and the Guomindang 國民黨 [Nationalist] government in the south were at odds with each other. The reference to Zhili 直隸 Province (p. 56) indicates the late Qing or early Republic, because it was abolished as a province in 1928. The phrase “October starts winter” [*shiyue lidong* 十月立冬; p. 29] and emphasis on the different seasons of snow—“light snow” [*xiaoxue* 小雪; p. 30] and “big snow” [*daxue* 大雪; p. 31]—indicates the author was attuned to a northern climate, possibly the Northeast. The cover says the book was copied by Wang Tian [Wang Tian *shudu* 王田書讀] and was read and recited by (probably his relative) Wang Zhen [Wang Zhen *songdu* 王禎誦讀]. A third name or phrase on the front cover, between the names of the two relatives listed, was blackened over at some point. It is difficult to read the original phrase through the ink-over, but it appears to be the phrase “Often read by Wang x” [*Chang Wang x du* 常王口讀], with the third character indecipherable.<sup>22</sup>

The text covers many aspects of agricultural life but broadens its coverage to various occupations, and it outlines social organization, all in the Qing period (e.g., on pp. 85–86). In speaking of education, it reads: “First get a *xiuca* degree, then advance to a *juren* [recommended scholar] position” [*xianjin xiucan, houzhong juren* 先進秀才後中舉人; p. 86]. After this long and more-or-less neutral coverage of standard topics, the text closes with two pages (pp. 126–127) of text with more commentary than earlier sections.

When you have money, you have power,  
 You can easily become a good Buddhist or Daoist.  
 No need to leave your home,<sup>23</sup>  
 No need to read the sutras.  
 Offer tea, make herbal medicine,  
 Give up big meals, no need to be greedy.

21 By 1915 this phrase would no longer have been applicable or been used in the following Republican period because the Qing dynasty had collapsed four years earlier.

22 **Vocabulary List in the Local Dialect** [*Fangyan zazi* 方言雜字] is 8½ in (21.59 cm) h × 5 in (12.7 cm) w and bound in string. I bought it in Beijing in January 2010.

23 Both Buddhism and Daoism were often criticized in traditional China because they required those wishing to become a monk to leave their home and family, something that Confucianism opposed.



FIGURE 2.14

*Vocabulary List of the Local Dialect* [Fangyan zazi 方言雜字], Cover. Two names are listed: Wang Tian who wrote and read [Wang Tian shudu 王田書讀] and Wang Zhen who recited and read [Wang Zhen songdu 王禎誦讀]. A third name/phrase was inked over at some point. This copy was probably written around 1915.

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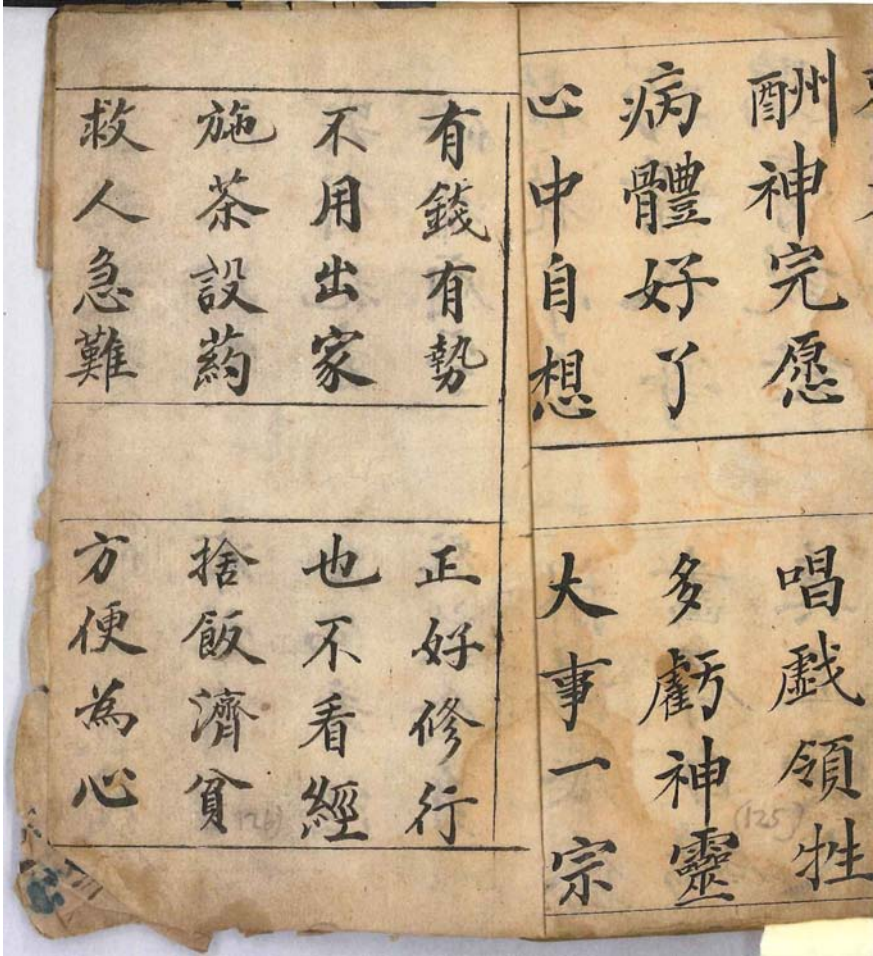


FIGURE 2.15

*Vocabulary List of the Local Dialect* [Fangyan zazi 方言雜字], Page 126, *Looking Down on Those Who Do Not Labor*. This page begins with the phrase “When you have money, you have power; you can easily become a good Buddhist or Daoist” [Youqian youshi; zhenghao xiuxing 有錢有勢; 正好修行]. China’s common people often disparaged those who did not need to perform physical labor. Religious masters were venerated by some but denigrated by others. This text sarcastically suggests ways to appear virtuous, gaining status and money by adopting a pious guise.

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Ask others to do your hard work,<sup>24</sup>  
 It is so easy to get your wish.  
 Practice virtuous learning,  
 Set up your virtuous grave site.<sup>25</sup>  
 Besides all of this,  
 Announce that you have become a monk.  
 Give up smoking and meat, become a vegetarian,  
 Pray to Buddha, read the sutras.  
 Pay to repair the (Daoist) temple,  
 You want to become a gold-plated deity.

*Youqian youshi*  
*Zhenghao xiuxing*  
*Buyong chujia*  
*Ye bukanjing*  
*Shicha sheyao*  
*Shefan jitan*  
*Jiuren jinan*  
*Fangbian weixin*  
*Liqi yixue*  
*Xiuxia yifen*  
*Chuci yiwai*  
*Bushi qiseng*  
*Chiqi basu*  
*Nianfo kanjing*  
*Xiubu miaozi*  
*Zhuangwang jinshen.*

有錢有勢，  
 正好修行。  
 不用出家，  
 也不看經。  
 施茶設藥，  
 捨飯濟貧。

24 The farmers who were used to hard physical labor must have envied the religious practitioners they saw, who seemed to be lounging around most of the day.

25 Even poor peasants thought about the site where they would be buried. They wanted it to be close to their home and relatives, in an auspicious location. See Mao, *Report from Xunwu*, 202.

救人急難，  
 方便為心。  
 立起義學，  
 修下義墳。  
 除此以外，  
 布施齊僧。  
 喫齋把素，  
 念佛看經。  
 修補廟子，  
 粧望金身。

The sarcasm drips from this recitation of a person who puts on the airs of a religious specialist in order to have a life free from toil. All the person's actions are superficial and easily accomplished. It seems that if one acts as if one is a virtuous and pious person, others will buy into your deception, to give you honor and do tasks for you. Your hope is to become so sanctified and deified that you sit like a gilded icon as the world revolves around you.

This degree of sarcasm reflects the social position and aspirations of the person who originally wrote the text and also of the people who were expected to read it and to sympathize with its contents. These people saw the hierarchy of income and social status around them as they saw other people improve themselves through study, but their own opportunity to advance to that status was probably not seen as great, since the majority of the text talks about agricultural life and professions involving physical toil. The final comments show mocking derision for the religious practitioners in their midst, and this option was not presented as a recommended avenue of advancement.

The vocabulary list **Various Words Offered to the People** [*Kuanzhong zazi* 款眾雜字] is mentioned in Chapter 1.<sup>26</sup> It was copied and recited by the two men surnamed Guo 郭 who were committed to the standard of conventional morality as espoused by many people in the late Qing and Republican period. They liked this text because of its moral aphorisms.

26 **Various Words Offered to the People** [*Kuanzhong zazi* 款眾雜字], which was thirty pages and measures 5-1/5 in (13.97 cm) h × 4¾ in (12.06 cm) w, a handy "pocket" size. I purchased it in Beijing in August 2007.

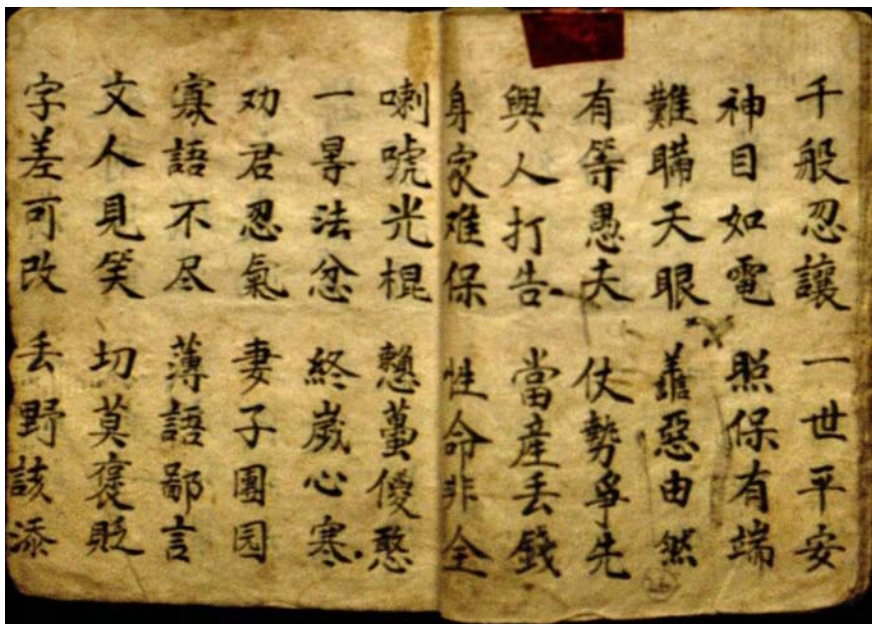


FIGURE 2.16

*Various Words Offered to the People* [Kuanzhong zazi 欵眾雜字], Page 27, *Polite Apology*. Beginning at the fourth vertical line (on the left-hand side) is the text "I offer just a few words here, my words are inadequate and vulgar, scholars will look at this and laugh" [Guayu bujin, Boyu biyan, Wenren jianxiao 寡語不盡，薄語鄙言，文人見笑]. The author of this text was saying that he did not consider himself a member of the cultural elite class.

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In the closing pages of the book, the original author of the text offered a polite apology and in the process told us more about the book. The closing (pp. 27–29) tells us the original author's important message:

I offer just a few words here,  
 My words are inadequate and vulgar.  
 Scholars will look at this and laugh,  
 They would only criticize me.  
 Where there are mistakes, please correct them,  
 Throw out the incorrect characters and correct them.  
 With my limited experience,  
 I've made many mistakes in this book.  
 I wrote the common characters I saw,  
 To teach the young people.  
 Learn to recognize each character,

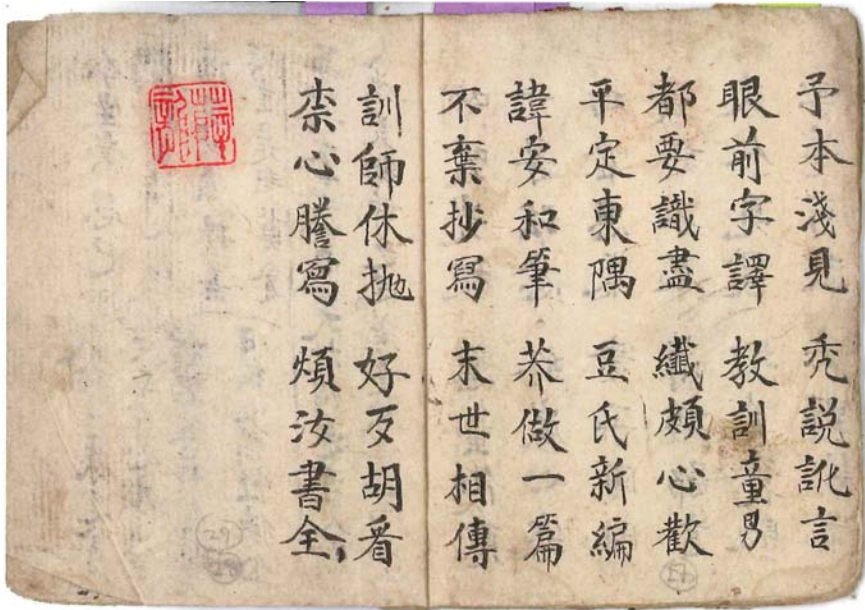


FIGURE 2.17

*Various Words Offered to the People* [Kuanzhong zazi 欵眾雜字], *Pages 28 and 29, Apologia*. The pages continue the author's personal comments, beginning on page 28 with the words "With my limited experience, I've made many mistakes in this book" [Yuben qianjian, Tushuo eyan 予本淺見, 禿說訛言]. The phrase is an apologia and also a boast, meaning "in spite of my limited education, I have written this book."

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Put them clearly in your mind.  
 From eastern Pingding,<sup>27</sup>  
 Mr. Dou wrote this volume.  
 It is the late Anhe's calligraphy,  
 Making up this insignificant volume.  
 Don't discard this but copy it instead,  
 Transmit it to the ends of the world.  
 You don't need a teacher for this,  
 Glance at it with your friend.  
 Copy it,  
 The entire book.

27 Pingding 平定 is a county in eastern Shanxi Province, east of Taiyuan 太原. It is credited with having its own dialect with five tones.

*Guayu bujin*  
*Boyu biyan*  
*Wenren jianxiao*  
*Qimo baobian*  
*Zicha kegai*  
*Diuye gaitian*  
*Yuben qianjian*  
*Tushuo eyan*  
*Yanqian ziyi*  
*Jiaoxun tonger*  
*Douyao shijin*  
*Xianpo xinpin*  
*Pingding dongyu*  
*Doushi xinbian*  
*Hui An he bi*  
*Jiezuoyipian*  
*Buqi chaoxie*  
*Moshi xiangchuan*  
*Xunshi xiupao*  
*Haoyou hukan*  
*Naixin tengxie*  
*Fanru shuquan.*

寡語不盡，  
 薄語鄙言。  
 文人見笑，  
 切莫褒貶。  
 字差可改，  
 丟野該添。  
 予本淺見，  
 禿說訛言。  
 眼前字譯，  
 教訓童兒。  
 都要識盡，  
 纖頗心歡。  
 平定東遇，  
 豆氏新編。  
 諱安和筆，  
 芥做一篇。  
 不棄抄寫，

末世相傳。  
 訓師休拋，  
 好友胡看。  
 奈心騰寫，  
 煩汝書全。

Yet another vocabulary list in my collection is titled **Vocabulary List in Five-Character Verses** [*Wuyan zazi* 五言雜字]. The text probably originated in the Qing period, but the edition I have was copied in 1983.<sup>28</sup> It was written by Zhang Degong 張德恭, who used a brush to write traditional complex characters [*fantizi* 繁體字]. He also wrote a number of characters in nonstandard versions and in vertical lines read from right to left in the book, which he numbered as thirty-eight pages. His many references to a cold, northern climate and to Manchuria locate this as a work prepared in Northeast China. It speaks of agricultural life, with explanation of the cultural customs in the region. For example, in speaking of the extensive preparations for a wedding, the text describes (p. 32) the guests who will arrive to eat the food one has carefully prepared and then quickly depart:

The guest arrives to take his seat  
 So prepare a place for him to sit.  
 The host should place some tobacco,  
 After finishing tea, offer wine  
 Offer up vegetables and greens,  
 Fresh fish of the best quality.  
 At least four main courses,  
 And about twelve other dishes.  
 Rice accompanied by two or three cold dishes,  
 When finished the guest will leave.

*Guanke daoxiqian*  
*Fangcai rangliaozuo*  
*Guanjia zhuangshangyan*  
*Chaba huanshangjiu*

28 I don't usually buy handwritten manuscripts written after 1950 because I want to capture the culture of the common people before it experienced the extreme pressures to change imposed by the Chinese Communist Party. An exception is this text first written at an earlier time. It is 8 in (20.32 cm) h × 6 in (15.24 cm) w. It was copied on modern machine-made paper and bound in string. I bought it in Beijing in June 2013.

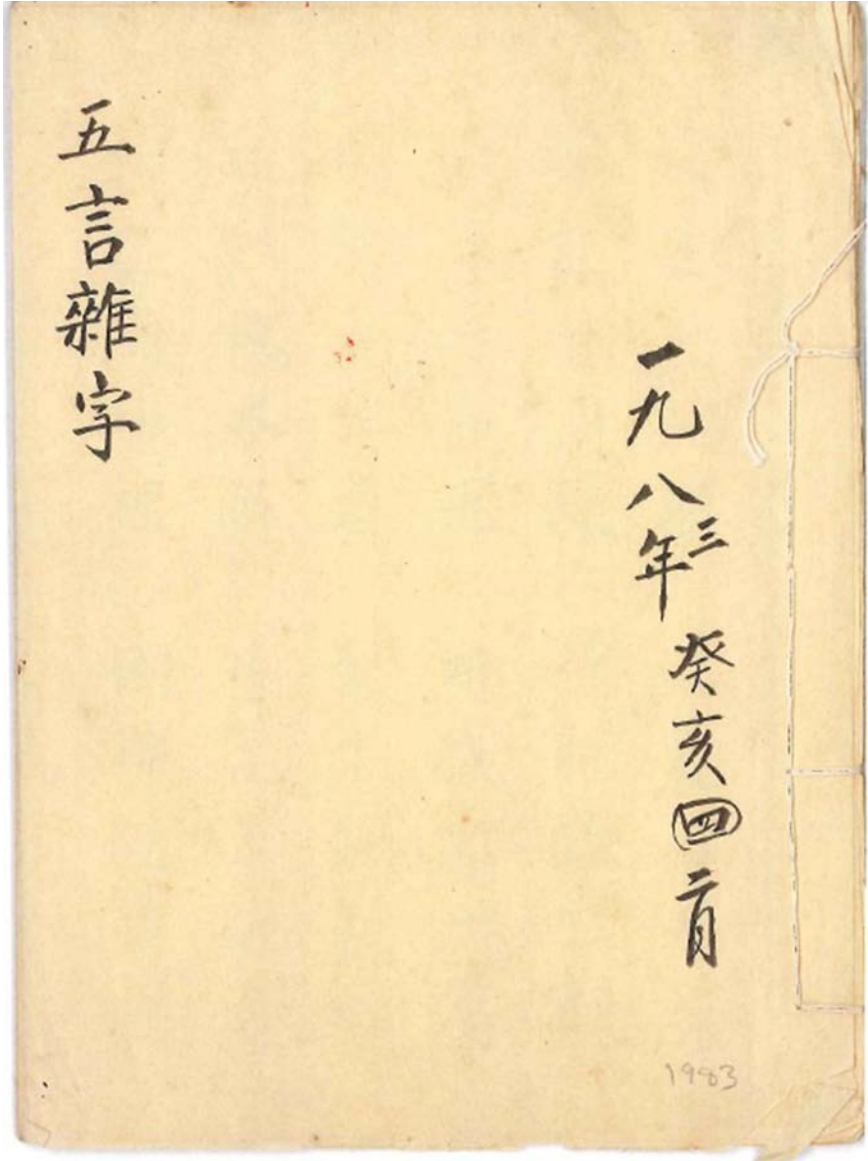


FIGURE 2.18

*Vocabulary List in Five-Character Verses* [Wuyan zazi 五言雜字], Cover. We see the date 1983, with a text that could have originated in the Qing 清 dynasty a hundred years earlier. Finding the practice of copying old vocabulary lists as late as 1983, using a brush to write in the complex characters as is done in the text is seldom used in China, was unexpected.

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*Caisu wangshangzhuan*  
*Xianyu diyipin*  
*Yilian sidapan*  
*Daxiao shierwan*  
*Fanxi liangsanfan*  
*Xizhong guankesan.*

官客到席前,<sup>29</sup>  
 方纔讓了坐。  
 管家裝上煙，  
 茶罷換上酒。  
 菜簌往上專，<sup>30</sup>  
 鮮魚第一品。  
 壹連四大盤，  
 大小十二碗。  
 飯須兩三滄，  
 席終官客散。

These verses might be talking about wedding guests or about an official who comes as a guest. It could be a singular guest or many “guests.” Either way, the host expects little from the guest. He does not mention polite greetings or gifts exchanged but, rather, a guest who comes, partakes fully of the fine meal set before him, and then departs. It seems to say the farmer, the host, expects little from this exchange and supplies the food because that is the expected practice, and, when satiated, the guest simply leaves.

This revealing text closes with an equally unadorned apology about the value of the text on pages 37–38:

These are sentences of everyday expressions,  
 Relax and look at the words.  
 With a sincere heart I’ve written these words,  
 I’ve used my brush and have not sought to offend.

29 *Guanke* 官客 means “guest,” but perhaps it also means a guest who is an official. In that case, the description of the actions of the official guest could be seen as a commentary on officials dealing off-handedly with the public.

30 In the written version, the character for “to hand over” or “to offer” was written with the radical *li* 立, next to *zhuang* 專, and I do so here as well, though I was unable to find this character in a dictionary or any software.

*Jiju suyanyu*  
*Xiudang xiyanguan*  
*Huixin jicizi*  
*Luobi bufannan.*

幾句俗言語，  
 休當戲言觀。  
 惠心記此字，  
 落筆不犯難。

This text shows us that the custom of wiring an apologia at the end of a work was still being observed among rural people in China in 1982. The unadorned way of offering information in the *zazi* continued to be followed, as was the sense of perhaps disdain for those who might take advantage of people from a lower class.

In January 2015, I bought a handwritten vocabulary text titled **Six-Word Vocabulary List** [*Liuyan zazi* 六言雜字] in Beijing.<sup>31</sup> On twenty-four pages of handmade, unbleached rough paper, the text was penned by Wang Juhe, who wrote “earnestly recited by Wang Juhe” [Wang Juhe *qinsong* 王聚和勤誦], which could mean he copied and studied the text or that he actually wrote it. This is probably a Republican-era copy. The author uses many nonstandard [*suzi* 俗字], popular forms of the characters in this text; the meaning often seemed clear but the character was not always easy to find in a dictionary. The apologia comes at the end of the text (pp. 20–21), in particular the last two lines of this humorous section.

While compiling this six-character vocabulary list,  
 For a time it seemed as if I had passed away and went to the world of  
 the dead.

Buddhist monks and Daoist priests were called in,  
 Incantations were chanted and the sutras solemnly read.  
 A Buddhist vestment was draped over me and some Buddhist bells,  
 With blowing and plucking I heard the music of a flute, pipes, a zither.  
 My outer coffin was prepared and placed in a memorial hall,

31 **Six-Word Vocabulary List** [*Liuyan zazi* 六言雜字] is 7¾ in (19.68 cm) h × 4¾ in (12.06 cm) w. It is a work of twenty-three pages, bound in string written on handmade paper containing a lot of chaff but that took the ink very well. This chaoben text was introduced in “Consider it worth a thousand cash,” Manuscript of the Month (09/2016), published by the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Culture at the University of Hamburg.



FIGURE 2.19

*Six-Word Vocabulary List* [Liuyan zazi 六言雜字], Cover. On the cover is the phrase “earnestly recited by Wang Juhe” [Wang Juhe qinsong 王聚和勤誦]. Whether he copied the text or earnestly recited it, the phrase used here means this chaoben was in active use.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

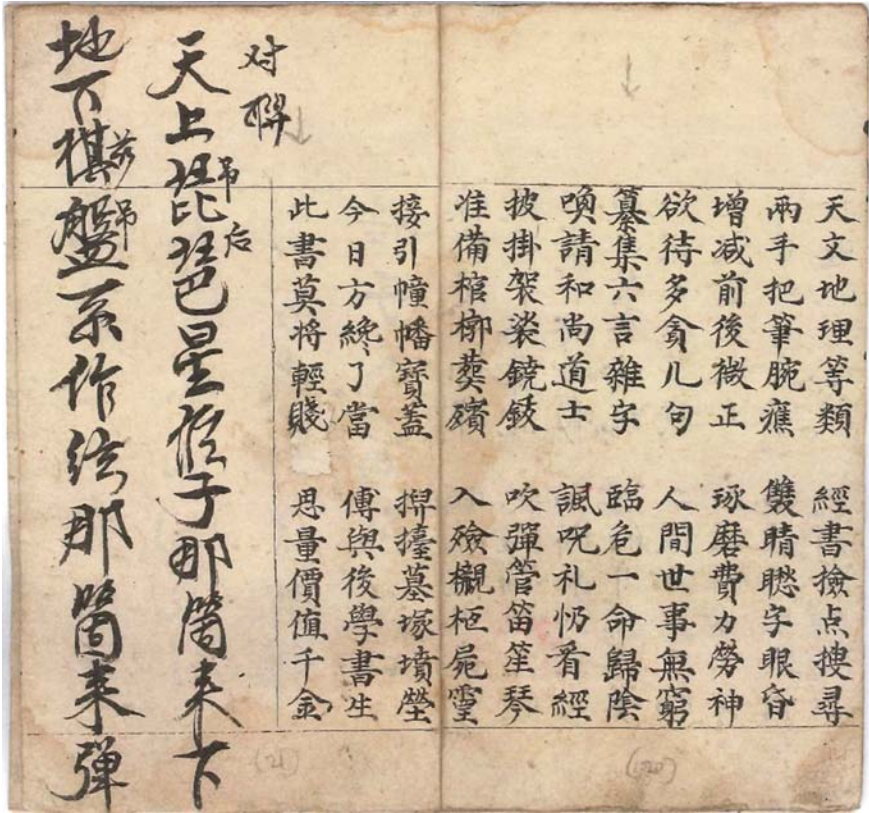


FIGURE 2.20

*Six-Word Vocabulary List* [Liuyan zazi 六言雜字], Pages 20 and 21, *Total Exhaustion after Hard Work*. We see the author's personal comments, beginning on page 20 with: "While compiling this six-character vocabulary list, for a time it seemed as if I had passed away and gone to the world of the dead. Buddhist monks and Daoist priests were called in" [Zuanji liuyan zazi, linse yiming guiyin; Huanqing heshang daoshi 纂集六言雜字，臨色一命歸陰，喚清和尚道士]. He describes his out-of-body experience in a charming way.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

My body was raised and put into the inner coffin like a corpse ready to become a spirit.

Funeral pennants were waving and there was a ceremonial canopy, The coffin was lifted up and taken to the gravesite tomb.

Today I have finally completed the task [of compiling this text], Now it's ready to be transmitted to future students.

This book may be dismissed as cheap and shallow, But [you should] consider it worth a thousand cash.

*Zuanji liuyan zazi*  
*Linwei yiming guiyin*  
*Huanqing heshang daoshi*  
*Fengzhou liji kanjing*  
*Pigua jiasha naobo*  
*Chuitan guandi shengqin*  
*Zhunbei guanguo zangbin*  
*Rulian chenjiu shiling*  
*Jieyin chuangfan baogai*  
*Taotai muzhong fenyong*  
*Jinri fangwen liaodang*  
*Zhuanyu houxue shusheng*  
*Cishu mojiang qingjian*  
*Siliang jiazhi qianjin.*

纂集六言雜字，  
 臨危一命歸陰。  
 喚請和尚道士，  
 諷呪禮懺看經。  
 披掛袈裟鑊鉢，  
 吹彈管笛笙琴。  
 準備棺槨葬殯，  
 入殮襯柩屍靈。  
 接引幢幡寶蓋，  
 搯擡墓塚墳營。  
 今日方纔了當，  
 傳與後學書生。  
 此書莫將輕賤，  
 思量價值千金。

In this apologia, the author tells us that he worked so hard on writing the text that he almost felt as if he had died. The meaning is clear: he had prepared the text to help his students and exhausted himself to the point that he nearly died in the process. His final lines affirm his certainty that what he had labored over was a valuable and useful tool for his students, regardless of how it might be devalued by others. Linking his work to the point of death was his affirmation of the seriousness of his purpose in writing the vocabulary list.

The final lines (on p. 21) are written in bold characters, in more of a “running-hand” [*xingshu* 行書] style and not in the careful *kaishu* [楷書] or “standard” [*zhengkaishu* 正楷書] style used in the text. These two lines form a matching

couplet designed to be written on two long scrolls placed next to each other. It is rather inelegant in some of the word choices, for example in using “who” [*nage* 那箇], which seems out of place in a matching couplet. Further, using the original writer’s “editorial notes” (two small characters to the right of each poetic line), I have changed the couplet to read the way it should be written, rather than the way it appears. It ought to read:

Heaven is a chessboard and the stars are pieces; who shall move them?  
On Earth below, who will play the strings of the lute?

*Tianshang qipanxingzuozi nage laixia*  
*Dixia pipaxizuoxian nage laitan?*

天上棋盤星作子那箇來下  
地下琵琶系作弦那箇來彈?

### Conclusion

This chapter looks at the self-deprecatory words written in the apologia that accompanied a number of the popular handwritten texts I have collected. It draws conclusions from the words about the social position and the self-perceptions of the men who wrote them. When reading a *chaoben*, I look for passages that show low-key humor or polite apologia that were used as a frame in which to set the context of the work. In published works, the apologetic *qianzi* often appear at the beginning of the work, while in the handwritten materials discussed here these polite and deprecatory words come at the end of the text.

Both the humorous stories told and the apologies offered by the writers take us a step closer to the person writing the text, and they demonstrate the psychological makeup of the *pingmin* writer or copier of the text. Both of these categories of text strongly indicate that the writer placed himself on the lower rungs of the social and economic ladder. They were not people who could command others to do their bidding; neither did they have the resources to be unconcerned by the situation they saw around them. If they were from the upper strata or well-off economically, they would not have used the vocabulary lists or most of the examples presented in the texts. The story of Zhuangzi is an exception because literati enjoyed Zhuangzi’s carefree Daoist personality, but common people chuckled at him as well and welcomed this interesting story because its emotions and the psychological interplay of the main

characters are so universal. The story allowed the common person to feel a bond with all of humanity.

Most of the writers of the vocabulary lists realized that their perceived social station in life was quite distant from that of the literati. Both they and the literati used the brush to write, and they depended on their command of a large number of written characters to produce their texts. But the vocabulary list authors and copyists knew that the content they were offering, and the people for whom they were writing, were at a much lower social and economic level than the literati. Some even made specific reference to this difference, as seen in the closing of **Chants of Repentance to the Three Primes** and **On the Foundation of Marriage**. In both cases, the writers expected a class of more highly educated and highly placed literati to sneer and look down on them, and they explicitly said so. All the vocabulary list texts are rather straightforward in their closing statements, as befits a reader who in most cases was using the text to expand their literacy at least to the level of a basic written vocabulary.

The stories that might bring a smile or a smirk found in these *chaoben* allow us to appreciate the ironies of life that caused the Chinese *pingmin* to chuckle in times gone by. The apologia in a number of the notebooks reveal in the attitudes and statements they contain the self-image of the *pingmin* as being in the lower strata of late Qing and Republican society. These aspects of the content found in a *chaoben* help us to form a more complete and nuanced appreciation of the people who wrote and read these texts.

## Written in the Margins: Reading into Texts

### 寫在抄本的邊緣上：了解晚清民國時期的平民文化

This chapter continues the process of examining hand-written *chaoben* from various points of view. A number of the titles introduced in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 are again brought up for examination and several newly introduced *chaoben* are added to the discussion. The goal of this particular chapter is to allow us to read meaning into the “extraneous” or “random” materials we find in *chaoben*. At first glance, we have seen that the *chaoben* usually consist of several texts within the same booklet that deal with various subjects. In addition, as illustrated in Chapter 2, comments, observations, and self-promotion are often written in the margins. Not infrequently, short poems expose some of the attitudes and values of the author or copyist of the booklet. With some regularity we find that the copyist wrote a poem or two of his own creation at the conclusion to his copied text. We can also judge the writing and from it draw conclusions about the degree of formal schooling the copyist received by evaluating not only the quality of calligraphy but the content of the poems or random comments that might have been added in the margins of the copied text. All these observations help us to draw meaning from the booklets that go beyond the surface meaning of the main textual content.

Thus far we have seen that the handwritten *chaoben* were prepared as reference materials for the professional and personal lives of their author. In the “professional” portions, the author wrote down information that would help him to earn a living. This aspect of the texts had an economic function, in that they were used to help the owner earn a living by allowing him to refer to the information he had copied out. At the same time, the men who copied out these texts often treated them as notebooks, in which all sorts of information the holder considered relevant could be written down. In some cases, it appears the copyist earned money from one occupation, perhaps medicine as in the case of Dr. He in the *chaoben* **Internal and External Medical Complaints** [*Neiwaike yanke zazheng* 內外科眼科雜症].<sup>1</sup> discussed below, but was equally

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1 **Internal and External Medical Complaints** [*Neiwaike yanke zazheng* 內外科眼科雜症] is 8 in (20.32 cm) h × 5¼ in (13.33 cm) w. Several styles of handwriting and paper of different sizes

interested in another topic. In the case of Dr. He it was the practice of religious Daoism. So Dr. He included information on two Daoist religious rituals in his notebook. Thus it is typical to find a number of perhaps seemingly unrelated topics all included in the same *chaoben*.

It is important to acknowledge these texts as having both a “professional” and a “personal” side.<sup>2</sup> Taken together, each *chaoben* can guide us to form a multidimensional portrait of its author. This chapter presents some of the insights we gain into the varied interests of the *chaoben* authors. The range of their interests as revealed through the writings and the marginal notes they made on the pages of text, helps to bring out something of their personalities and their perceptions of the societies in which they lived.

### Conventional Morality

Chapters 1 and 2 introduce vocabulary lists, which were welcomed by the illiterate masses because they were texts that could be studied and consulted by the *pingmin* without the need for a formal classroom setting and without the need for a formal teacher. Vocabulary lists were in abundance from 1850 to the 1950s and constitute the single largest category of *chaoben* that I have found in the antiques and flea markets in China. Some lists are illustrated though most are simply written words, and many versions printed with lithography or metal type were produced in this period.<sup>3</sup>

For students, the character lists could expand their knowledge in a rational way. Many vocabulary lists prepared for schoolchildren listed items of daily use, from chopsticks to shoes, from cooking pots to hairbrushes. Students beginning

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are all bound together in this interesting work, so it is unclear whether this is all the writing of Dr. He or if (perhaps after his death?) some students bound together the piles of his writings that they found. In the eyes of their patients, traditional herbal doctors in China had many curative powers. This psychological and spiritual dimension is discussed in Arthur Kleinman, *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), esp. pp. 203–310.

- 2 The division into professional and personal spheres is probably a more recent Western concept. For the Chinese in the late Qing and the Republican era, one had skills and special knowledge of some things and interests that one found personally fulfilling. I put the words “professional” and “personal” in quotation marks because I think this is an artificial division not used by the population under discussion.
- 3 The scholar Cynthia Brokaw presents many observations on printed vocabulary lists in *Commerce in Culture*, in which she refers to them as glossaries.

a course of formal study could begin by learning how to write the words for items of everyday use. Lists of this type were expanded to include the key family relationships, parts of the body, and basic characters for words such as “house,” “store,” “gate,” and “city wall.” Some *zazi* listed the titles of the chief officials in the government or patriotic terms related to the flag, soldiers, and the nation. Most of the vocabulary lists of this type that I have found were printed versions intended for use in the classroom. The lists could be used in the elementary school classroom or for self-study. As long as a literate person explained the words at least once, the students could repeat and write and memorize the words without further help from a teacher. In that way, students might have begun to lay the foundation for a life of complete literacy, of being able to use conversational language to express themselves about life events in writing.<sup>4</sup>

In order to make it easier to memorize the words, they were usually grouped into sets of three- or four-word verses, and the phrases were often arranged to rhyme. We saw this in Chapter 1 with an illustration from **A List of Characters to Teach the People** [*Shenqun shunzi* 申群順字]. The list is bound as a book with twenty-four pages of miscellaneous characters in four-word verses [*siyan zazi* 四言雜字].<sup>5</sup> It contains common words (beginning on p. 3) that young people

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- 4 The illustrated vocabulary lists described in this paragraph were usually printed versions, while the lists copied by hand, which are included in the category of *chaoben*, did not include illustrations. Among the highly illustrated printed vocabulary lists I have collected, one has a cover that says **Vocabulary for Young Students** [*Youxue zazi* 幼學雜字] with the handwritten cover copied by Yan Hailin 閻海林. The full title as printed on the first page is “A New Vocabulary List Illustrated for Young Students” [*Huitu Zhonghua youxue xinzazi* 繪圖中華幼學新雜字], which measures 7¾ in (18.64 cm) h × 5 in (12.7 cm) w. This book of 18 leaves appears to have been printed in the very early years of the new Republic, probably while Yuan Shikai was president (1912–1915). A similar printed list I have is titled **An Illustrated List of Common Words** [*Huitu suyan zazi* 繪圖俗言雜字], which has nineteen leaves and measures 8 in (20.32 cm) h × 5¼ in (13.34 cm) w. The student who rebound the book in 1941 wrote its title on the cover as “List of Common Agricultural Terms” [*Sunong zazi* 俗農雜字], with his name, Liu Weisheng 劉衛生. This book was printed in Andong 安東, Manchuria [Manchukuo], in 1936.
- 5 **A List of Characters to Teach the People** [*Shenqun shunzi* 申群順字] is a work of twenty-four pages that was purchased in Beijing in January 2008. It measures 6¾ in (17.14 cm) h × 4 in (10.16 cm) w, a handy “pocket” size. This work is also discussed in Chapter 1 on contextualizing *chaoben*. On the first page it gives its title as “Four Word Vocabulary List” [*siyan zazi* 四言雜字], which although a generic title, can be taken as its title. In that case the title I have given above would read “Written by Shen Chunshun” [*Shen Qunshun zi* 申群順字]. The possibility is mentioned in the entry for this title in Appendix A.

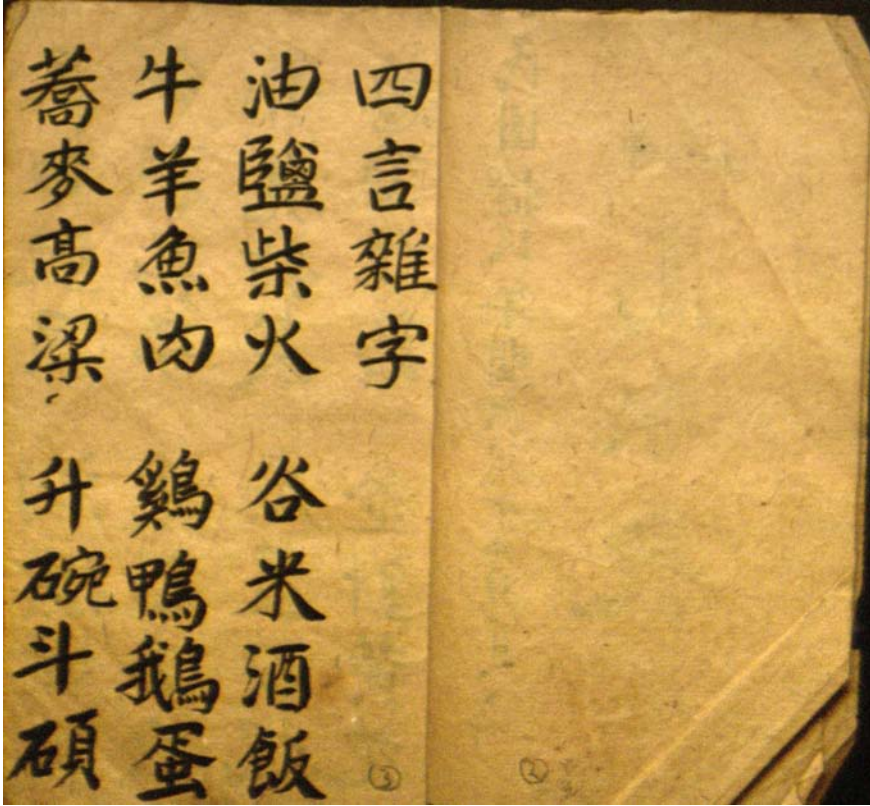


FIGURE 3.1

*A List of Characters to Teach the People* [Shenqun shunzi 申群順字], Page 3, *Common Items for Sale*. The text begins with the words “Four-Word Vocabulary List” [Siyan zazi 四言雜字]. This page begins the list of common items for sale in a general store: “Oil, salt, matches; Rice grains, wine, cooked rice. Beef, mutton, fish, meat; Chicken, duck, goose, egg” [You yan chaihuo; gu mi jiu fan. niu yang yu rou; ji ya e dan 油鹽柴火; 谷米酒飯. 牛羊魚肉; 雞鴨鵝蛋]. Words for a wide range of products and items for sale are introduced. On the final pages are words of advice to honor one’s parents, produce children and grandchildren, and enjoy the blessings of a successful life.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

needed in everyday life [*richang hanzi* 日常漢字], especially if they worked at a grocery store.

Oil, salt, matches,  
Rice grains, wine, cooked rice,  
Beef, mutton, fish, meat,  
Chicken, duck, goose, egg.

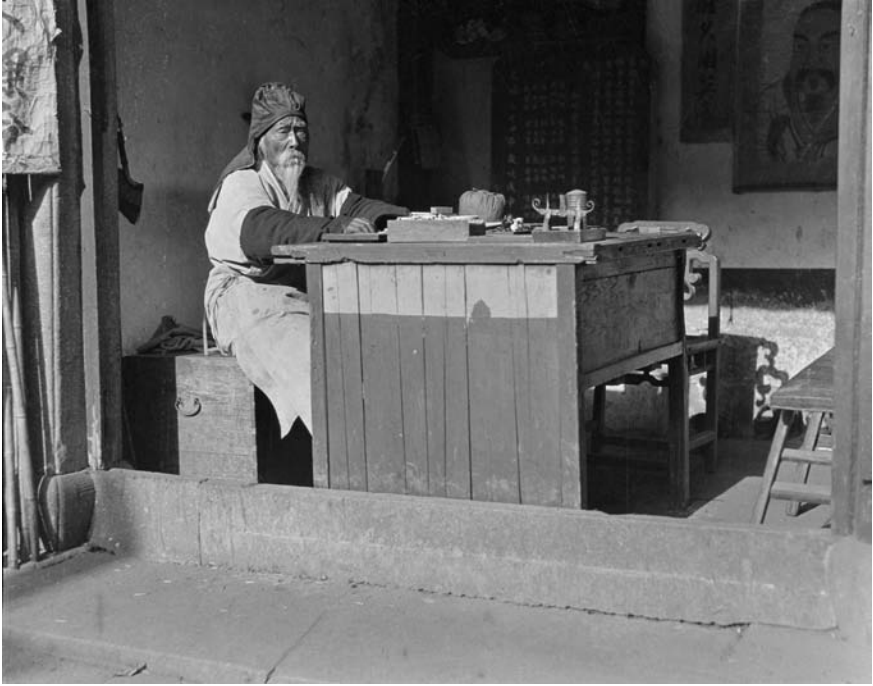


FIGURE 3.2

*A Fortune teller. This fortune teller was in Hangzhou 杭州 in a photo taken about 1919. He had a small shopfront office, clearly catering to passersby and members of the general public. In the photo, we see on the desk some of his paraphernalia for calculating fate and a bench where his client could sit.*

SIDNEY D. GAMBLE PHOTOGRAPHS, DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, DUKE LIBRARY

*you yan chaihuo  
gu mi jiu fan  
niu yang yu rou  
ji ya e dan.*

油鹽柴火  
谷米酒飯  
牛羊魚肉  
雞鴨鵝蛋。

The entire phrase has a rhyming cadence, and the first and third lines rhyme, as do the second and fourth lines. The special attraction of vocabulary lists for ordinary people was no teacher or a classroom setting was needed for a

student to learn the material. Any friend who could recognize the characters could read them aloud, and one could read them over and over to memorize the characters. This was an important point for the barely literate who were working to earn their keep and had little time or energy for periods of study.

At this point, I use another previously discussed vocabulary list to comment on the conventional morality supported by most of these *chaoben*. The value system in premodern China was heavily influenced and elaborately defined by the Confucian perspective. It was an orthodoxy that did not seem to allow for much variation. The outlines of this value system were widely accepted by the illiterate masses seemingly without question. The result was a conventional morality that was cited and repeated in all public situations. In those public spaces, writing or copying a vocabulary list could be counted as entering a public sphere in which conventional morality was expected to rule. Chinese public society took every opportunity to lecture about conventional morality, and the vocabulary lists were no exception. When reading the rhyming sets of words, the reader is advised to read into the logic of the words selected and the message they convey.

In Chapter 1, we discussed **Various Words Offered to the People** [*Kuanzhong zazi* 欸眾雜字].<sup>6</sup> This was copied by Guo Changyun [Guo Changyun *ji* 郭長雲記] or his relative Guo Shengkui [Guo Shengkui *jishu* 郭生魁記書]. The Guo family apparently did not believe in subtlety, and they wrote very clearly (especially pp. 20–27) about moral actions and consequences, all in the context of the need to follow conventional morality. This also used in four-word phrases. In general, the second and fourth lines rhyme.<sup>7</sup> Below is a continuation and more complete version of their comments on morality from pp. 20 and 21 than those that appeared in Chapter 1.

6 The exhortation: “Someday you might commit an offense, It will be hard to protect yourself; The yamen officials will apprehend you, They’ll gang up to give you a heavy sentence” [*yiri yifan, nanbao shenti; guanya nahu, yanxing kaobi* 異日一犯，難保身體；官衙拿獲，嚴形拷比] is on p. 24. This is part of an explanation of conventional morality, and warns the person of no social standing that the authorities do not protect people of his class. **Various Words Offered to the People** [*Kuanzhong zazi* 欸眾雜字] is thirty-page text purchased in Beijing in August 2007. It measures 5–1/5 in (13.97 cm) h × 4¾ in (12.06 cm) w and is a handy “pocket” size. It is also discussed in Chapter 1.

7 The text below comes from **Various Words Offered to the People**, p. 21.

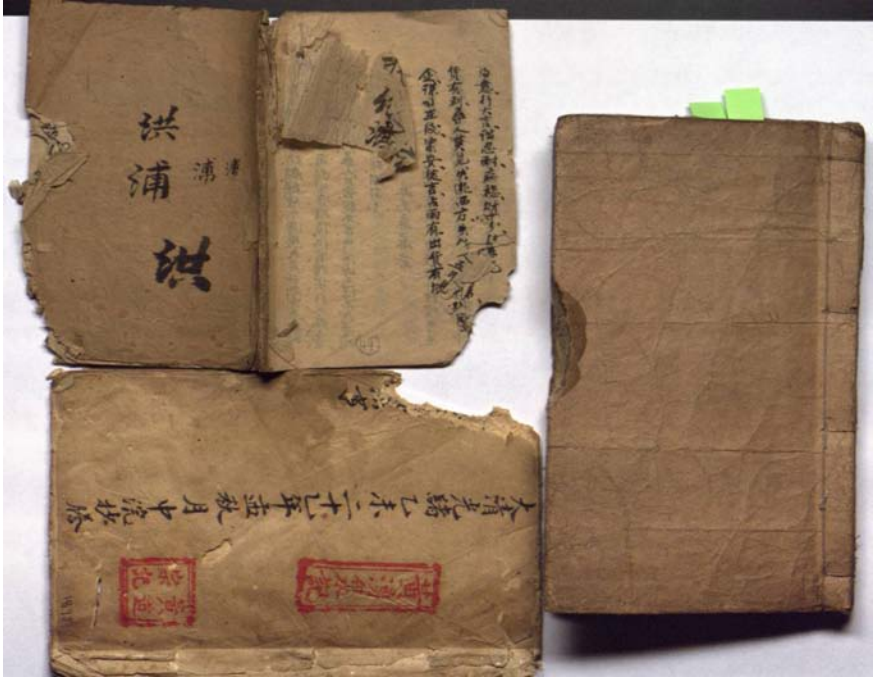


FIGURE 3.3

*Damaged chaoben in the author's collection.* Chaoben suffered all sorts of damage over the years, from becoming food for insects, to discoloration from human handling, to water damage, to extreme deterioration of the handmade paper. This photo shows chaoben that appear to have been bitten by some animal, such as a rat, a goat, or a donkey. Chaoben were kept in the house, and when the weather was extremely cold, the animals were brought inside for warmth. Like the people, the animals were often hungry.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

Don't steal or do bad things.  
 Don't wear dirty clothes. Cover your body.  
 Avoid torn clothes and serious injuries.

*Du bi □ li, qiang duo hu xing<sup>8</sup>*  
*Yi fu hui wu, tan xi luo cheng*  
*Shang shan luan sui, yi ke shang sun.*

8 The squares seen in my translations are the character “wei.” They indicate that a character is missing in the original text.



FIGURE 3.4

*Laborers.* These were the types of young men being addressed in the vocabulary lists when the subject was conventional morality. The text *Various Words Offered to the People* [Kuanzhong zazi 欸眾雜字] lists instructions on pages 20–27 as discussed in the text. Workers, Western Shanxi.

PHOTO: WILLIAM LEETE, 1919; RESTORATION AND PRINT ©2008 WILLIAM MORSE. USED BY SPECIAL PERMISSION.

覩彼□力，搶奪胡行  
衣服穢污，袒裊裸裎  
裳衫攣碎，呖嗑傷損。

When you get a wound, blood will flow.  
Be reserved, try to save money.

*Pi kai rou zhan, xue yin lin jin.*  
□ *cun he xi, sheng fei jin yin.*

皮開肉綻，血涸淋津。  
□村和息，省費金銀。

A diligent lad will not imbibe, but be stable in his life.

*Qin jun shao yin, wen zhong yi sheng.*

勤君少飲, 穩種一生.

There is no profit in being covetous; if you give in to your (sexual) desires you will harm your own body.

*Tan se wu yi, □ ti sun shen.*

貪色無益, □體損身.

Marriage is preordained, never force someone to marry you.

*Yin lu qian ding, bu bi qiang hun.*

姻緣前定, 不必強婚.

Rape is evil; it will shorten your life and harm society.

*Jian yin da e, zhe shou shang feng.*

姦淫大惡, 折壽傷風.

Incest violates all the proper rules.

*Wang chang bai huai, fan lv luan lun.*

網常敗壞, 犯律亂倫.

Heaven cannot abide evil thoughts.

*Ren xin zong fu, tian li nan rong.*

人心總伏天理難容.

In order to appreciate the unequivocal moral aphorisms in this work, we need to go a step farther in our understanding of it. This text was written to be read by a young man. It seems plausible that many of the vocabulary lists were written for a male audience, those who were in paid work. This was clearly not written for sons of the educated literati or high officials. No one would presume to talk

in this manner to such boys. Rather, this text was written for the common young males who were working odd jobs and perhaps running into village bullies and gang members. The words in this text would be applicable to a boy of the common people.

In Chapter 1 we read Mr. Guo's poem about continually nurturing people. On the last page (p. 29) of the booklet, Mr. Guo also wrote another poem in the regulated verse [*lü shi* 律詩] style. This style was then and remains today one of the most popular because it is easy to follow the rhythm of the poem and its rhyme. The poem below by Mr. Guo is in the seven-word poem [*qiyanshi* 七言詩] style. It is not especially elegant and is typical of a poem composed by an ordinary literate person. The reason I insert it here is that the poem reflects Mr. Guo's concern about guiding and educating youth, which was probably one of his strong reasons for copying his relative's vocabulary list.

This second poem expresses Mr. Guo's personal philosophy. He thought of himself as a very ordinary person (exactly the sort of person who would copy and consult these vocabulary lists). His life, like that of others, was determined by fate, and he expected to confront hardship. The importance of maintaining one's virtue, as expressed in his poem above, is stated again in the following poem (p. 29).

Man is fated to be poor  
 The only hope comes from keeping filial piety and goodness in his heart  
 What he must do is endure hardship  
 At the end of the day, he must keep his virtue intact.

*Bagui(gua)*<sup>9</sup> *shenglai shipinhan*  
*Zhiyao cunxin xiaoyushan*  
*Zongran yanqian shoujiannan*  
*Rihou xinde xingdequan.*

八桂(掛)生來是貧寒  
 只要存心孝與善  
 總然眼前受艱難  
 日後心得性德全

9 Mr. Guo wrote *gui* 桂 [cassia], when he should have written *gua* 掛 as part of the phrase *bagua* 八掛 [eight trigrams].

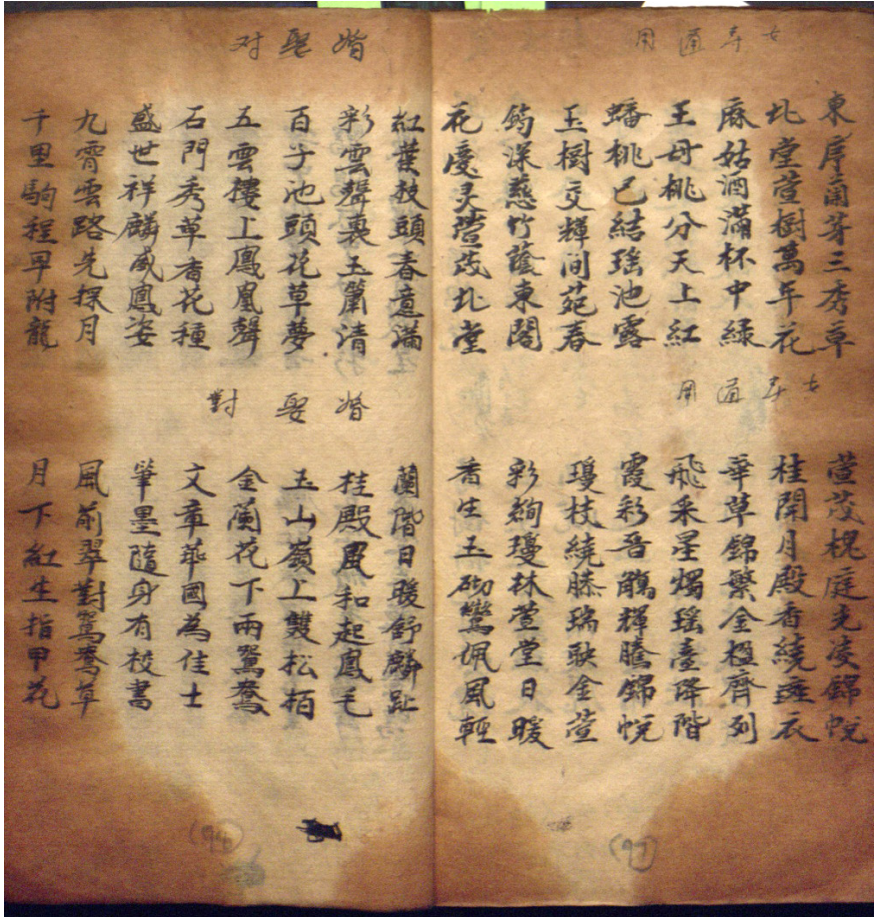


FIGURE 3.5

*Celebrating Many Sons. Invitations and Matching Couplets* [Tieshi duilian 帖式對聯], Page 98, Matching Couplet. On the left-hand side of the photograph, reading from the right-hand fold, this couplet is vertical lines 3 and 4 on the upper half of the page: “A hundred sons by the pond, a dream of flowering grasses; Five clouds above the pavilion, the sound of phoenixes” [Baizi chitou huacaomeng; Wuyun loushang fenghuangsheng 百子池頭花草夢；五雲樓上鳳凰聲]. Phrases extolling heterosexual marriage and many offspring were common fare in wedding poetry.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

In this poem, the second Mr. Guo expressed his worldview that life is a struggle and that people like him (his implication is “like most of us”) were born to be poor. These ideas were a further statement of an attitude of acceptance of the realities of a hard life that were likely shared by most members of the common people.



FIGURE 3.6

*Temple Fair Market.* Popular Buddhist and Daoist temples held a temple fair [miaohui 廟會] at set times during the year. At these fairs, many goods were bought and sold, and fortunetellers, legal experts, herbal doctors, and scribes usually set up tables to offer their services to the general public. Such occasions allowed the illiterate to meet xiucai and others who were literate and willing to offer their services.

MARKET, SHANXI, 1918; PHOTO: WILLIAM LEETE; RESTORATION AND PRINT ©2013 WILLIAM MORSE. USED BY SPECIAL PERMISSION

### Marketing among the *Pingmin*

Most of the handwritten manuscripts I have collected were used in the course of business. They were part of the exchange of services for remuneration and, so, were used by men trying to make a living using their skills and their ability to read and write. These men knew that it was important to attract and to satisfy a customer who had the money or goods to offer in exchange for the services provided. To that end, the men who wrote these *chaoben* were happy to state their abilities or the value of the product they could provide. If they were selling their services from a street stall at a temple fair [*miaohui* 廟會] or village market, they put up a sign or a flag announcing their skills. In addition, they often lauded the products they offered.

Among the fortuneteller's predictions I have bought was one thirty-page booklet titled *Using the Western Calendar as a Guide to Writing (Your Fortune) through the Five Stars* [*Xiyang dili liangtianchi feixie wuxing* 西洋地曆量天尺飛寫五星].<sup>10</sup> It predicts the fortunes of a man named Zeng Bingyan 曾

10 Using the Western Calendar as a Guide to Writing (Your Fortune) through the Five Stars

炳炎. His name is written on the cover, and his seal appears in the margins of several pages. It appears that Mr. Ceng was born in 1871. In 1921, when he was fifty years old, he asked the fortuneteller to predict the next ten years of his life. (This analysis is indicated by his birth date on p. 4 and a phrase on p. 20, “Now you are fifty-one years old” [*Mujin wushiyi sui* 目今五十壹歲]). Thus this booklet contains predictions for 1922 to 1931. The Chinese characters used in Mr. Ceng’s name indicate the strong presence of the fire [*huo* 火] radical. If Mr. Ceng had been born in 1871, a metal [*jin* 金] year, his parents may have wanted him to overcome metal as a determinant of his fate, and so they might have given him a name strong in fire, because fire can melt metal. They perhaps wanted him to exhibit the qualities of fire rather than those of metal.

We can postulate that Mr. Ceng’s parents did not like the qualities of a metal person: “People with metal personalities are spiritual and have strong morals and high standards. They often hold on to the past and have a hard time letting go of ‘what might have been.’ Metal people are disciplined and courageous and feel called to help those in need. The metal element is associated with fame. At their worst, people with dominant metal personalities can be unkind, destructive and merciless.” Perhaps by giving him a name with the fire radical, they hoped their son would have more of a fire personality: “People with fire dominant in their personalities are energetic and expressive. They do not like to be alone and seek out the admiration and attention of others. Many of them are artistic. Fire personalities are also polite and easily able to reach out to others. They love pleasing others and are good at giving compliments.”<sup>11</sup>

Usually predictions were prepared for a cycle totaling sixty years, which was considered the complete cycle during which the ten heavenly stems [*tian’gan* 天干] and the twelve earthly branches [*dizhi* 地支] traverse all the possible combinations and return to their original combination.<sup>12</sup> However, ten-year

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[*Xiyang dili liangtianchi feixie wuxing* 西洋地曆量天尺飛寫五星] is thirty pages and measures  $8\frac{3}{4}$  in (22.22 cm) h  $\times$   $5\frac{1}{4}$  in (13.33 cm) w. I purchased it in Beijing in September 2005.

11 These definitions come from the website Everyday Life, [http://www.ehow.com/info\\_8408372\\_characteristics-earth-water-metal-wood.html](http://www.ehow.com/info_8408372_characteristics-earth-water-metal-wood.html), accessed July 12, 2014.

12 Some aspects of calculating horoscopes in China using traditional methods are in my article: Ronald Suleski, “Collecting Research Materials in Shanghai: A Qing Dynasty Astrologer’s Predictions for the Future,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society China*, n.s., 75, no. 1 (2013). The calendrical system based on the heavenly stems and earthly branches is discussed further in Chapter 9.

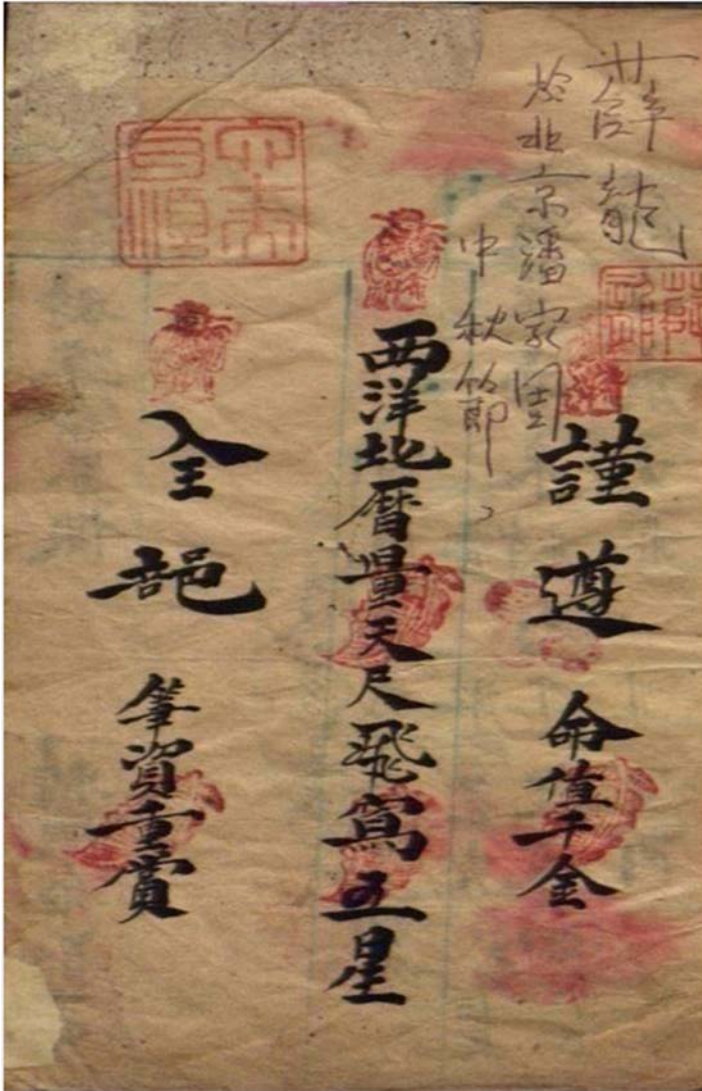


FIGURE 3.7

*Using the Western Calendar as a Guide to Writing [Your Fortune] through the Five Stars [Xiyang dili liangtianchi feixie wuxing 西洋地曆量天尺飛寫五星], Cover. The two square seals are personal seals of the author. The "sutra-style" calligraphy and the other seals in red are those of the fortuneteller who prepared this horoscope. It contains predictions for Zeng Bingyan 曾炳炎, who was born in 1871. The predictions are for 1922 to 1931, and this volume was written in 1921.*

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

cycles were also important in astronomical calculations, and, particularly if Mr. Ceng completed the ten-year cycle by turning sixty, then one can understand why he wanted a set of predictions for that particular cycle.

The predictions made by this fortuneteller indicate that Mr. Ceng was an educated man. He may have worked as a teacher or a writer or in an administrative job. One phrase regarding his future, for example, was “In this time, poems and books [writing] will bring you rewards” [*lidang shishu fagui* 理當詩書發貴; p. 16]. Another phrase is: “Excellent Wenchang will reach the ultimate” [*Miaoxi Wenchang dingdu* 妙喜文昌頂度; p. 20]. Wenchang refers to the Daoist god who assists those working with brushes writing and in intellectual work. A further phrase (half the phrase is given here) is: “On the colorful rock on the riverbank, is Li Bai” [*Caishi jiangbian Li Bai* 彩石江邊李白; p. 28]. Li Bai (701–762) is perhaps China’s most famous poet and was used here as a symbol of literary accomplishment.<sup>13</sup>

The fortuneteller, who referred to himself as an astrologer [*xingshi* 星士] who relied on the stars and calculations with numbers, illustrated his written prediction by phrases that were advertisements for the quality of his work. He wrote these phrases and his text using a distinctive writing style called the “sutra script” or “block standard” [*xingkai* 形楷], in which some strokes are written thickly [made bold] using a heavier stroke of the brush, and he wrote in the right and left outermost margins of the pages. He wrote that he came (or his training came) from Fujian [*minzhuan* 閩傳]. But he calculated this set of predictions in Nanchang 南昌, Jiangxi 江西 Province. On either side of the vertically written title, he used heavy brush strokes to write that his work offered “Respectful Guidance” [*jindao* 謹導]. He reminded the customer that “A Fortune Is Worth a Thousand Dollars” [*mingzhi qianjin* 命值千金]. He continued on the cover by assuring the customer that his booklet was “Complete” [*quanbu* 全部]. And he concluded his quatrain by assuring the customer that as an astrologer he was “an award-winning master” [*bizi zhongshang* 筆資重賞]. I have not been able to find the name of the fortuneteller in this booklet, but it is clear he understood the importance of presenting an attractive and illustrated booklet. Using light aquamarine blue ink, he drew lines or circles on each page, into which he fit his text or one of the six charts of fate [*mingpan* 命盤] that he had prepared. The strong strokes of the characters written in deep black ink contrasted with the various seals done in an accountant’s red ink on many pages. Some of the seals appear to be moths, some are small figures such

13 The deity Wenchang [Wenchang *dijun* 文昌帝君] is discussed in Chapters 2 and 5.



as a Star of Good Fortune [*Luxing* 祿星], and a leaf or feather with the words “Opening Fortune” [*Kaiyun* 開運].<sup>14</sup> The overall effect is colorful and intriguing.

### On the Rounds with a Traveling Merchant

One bound manuscript consists of 114 consecutively numbered pages but lacks its front cover and title page; on an inside cover someone wrote **Invitations and Matching Couplets** [*tieshi duilian* 帖式對聯]. This is one of the *chaoben* I bought in South China with covers (endpapers) of a red-orange color. This type of paper was used from the Ming and Qing dynasties onward in Guangdong 廣東 and other southern provinces. It was treated with insecticide, a mixture consisting of red lead [*hongdan* 紅丹], sulfur, and saltpeter. Its bright color was called “Ever Red” [*wannianhong* 萬年紅]. It was toxic to bookworms and was meant to protect the inside pages of the book.<sup>15</sup> The bulk of this handwritten work consists of the texts for formal announcements, invitations, and congratulatory scrolls that could be prepared for social occasions, such as weddings, birthdays, and funerals. Preparing a booklet such as this was perfect work for an educated person who understood the polite conventions called for during periods of life transitions, when formal announcements needed to be sent out as part of accepted social etiquette. These niceties were widely practiced in China until the advent of the People’s Republic, when they were observed in a modified and simplified form.

This book is dated 1907 [*dingweisui* 丁未歲], which seems an appropriate date for the items inside, especially because of a sample announcement of the return of one’s daughter, dated September 1911 (p. 18). To give a date of 1911 for a sample written in 1907 would have not been amiss, but to use the third year of Xuantong [Xuantong *sannian* 宣統三年, i.e., 1911] after the Republic had been established in 1912 would not have been prudent decision. Thus I accept that 1907 is probably an accurate date. The stamp of the book’s owner, Dong Gongda 董恭達, also uses purple ink (not uncommon in the Republican period) on many pages.

14 This is my best guess, after consulting with several scholars, about the characters written inside the leaf. Construction of a Chart of Fate [*mingpan* 命盤] is discussed more fully in Chapter 5. My thanks to Alister Inglis for help in understanding calligraphic styles.

15 **Invitations and Matching Couplets** [*Tieshi duilian* 帖式對聯], which I bought in Guilin in September 2005, measures 5½ in (13.97 cm) h × 5–7/8 in (14.73 cm) w. See Eyferth, *Eating Rice from Bamboo Roots*, 76. I also discussed this type of paper with Peking University rare book librarian Lü Shuxian 呂淑賢 in 2016.



FIGURE 3.9

*Invitations and Matching Couplets* [Tieshi duilian 帖式對聯], Page 113, *Poem on Seeking Work by Traveling about*. This page shows a poem written by the person who copied the text in 1907. He began by writing: "Conscientiously doing business throughout the five lakes, Braving the sands of the four seas to catch the late winds" [Wuhu jiji taogongye, sihai jiaoyu yanzifeng 五湖寄跡陶工業，四海交淤晏子風]. His ideas are typical of the traveling merchants or itinerant scholars who traveled about the rural countryside seeking income.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

Dong Gongda may not have written the contents of this book, which would have indicated that he wrote as a scribe for others.<sup>16</sup> The darkened coloring of this inexpensive handmade paper indicates it was made for the common

16 It is not always possible to determine from the calligraphy whether a single person copied

people or, more likely, was used by its author for his own reference in meeting requests from others. However, Dong likely wrote two of the final pages, giving us an idea of what sort of person he was. He may have been interested in the text because he was an educated person, as revealed in his two seven-word lines (p. 111):

The scholar, lost in dreams, creates flowers with his brush  
The hermit, sitting in the tower, uses the magpies as a bridge (to greater thoughts).

*xueshi mengzhong huazaibi*  
*xianren loushang queweiqiao.*

學士夢中花在筆  
仙人樓上鵲為橋。

I gather from the word “scholar” that Dong Gongda probably saw himself as one. I also perceived that he may have had wanderlust, to go beyond the boundaries that confined him. This intuition was reinforced when I read the complete seven-word *shi* 詩 [poem] he wrote (p. 113, where he also placed his stamp). Moreover, taking the context of the poem literally, I conclude that Dong Gongda was an itinerant merchant. Such merchants were common in the late Qing period, when many new types of merchandise, such as manufactured goods made in factories like printed cotton cloth, soap, and medicines “imported” from Shanghai and sometimes with a foreign brand, began to be distributed at local markets in inland China. I bought this book in Guilin 桂林 in South China, which was a natural market area for new products from Guangzhou to the south or Shanghai to the east, delivered by merchants plying the waterways and roads of the region.<sup>17</sup>

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the entire contents of a given work. This is because sometimes the same author seems to have written some pages in a different style. We might assume that Dong Gongda got a copy of the book and found it useful, based on his placing his stamp on certain pages. But the two final poems discussed here were clearly added after the main text had been completed.

17 Extensive domestic travel in the course of business was common in China. On itinerant merchants [*xingshang* 行商 or *keshang* 客商], see Chia, *Printing for Profit*, 377–441. The far-flung domestic network of money-changing shops in nineteenth-century China is discussed in Huang Jianhui 黃鑾暉, *Shanxi piaohao shi* 山西票號史 [*History of Shanxi Banks*] (Taiyuan: Shanxi jingji chubanshe, 2002).



FIGURE 3.10

*Training in Lithography.* In this photo from about 1919, orphan boys at a Christian school in China are learning printing by lithography [shiyin 石印]. This technique began to be widely used in the West from the 1800s on, and in China from the mid- to late 1800s on, it was popularly used to augment traditional woodblock printing. The purpose of the training shown in this photograph was to allow the boys to learn a trade by which they could earn an income.

SIDNEY D. GAMBLE PHOTOGRAPHS, DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, DUKE LIBRARY

Dong's poem seems to explain exactly what he was doing to earn his income:

Conscientiously doing business throughout the five lakes<sup>18</sup>  
 Braving the sands of the four seas to catch the late winds  
 With a good reputation and good products we made a good success  
 We help our family, our country, and increase our business.

*Wuhu jiji taogongye*  
*sihai jiaoyu yanzifeng*

18 "Five lakes and four seas" [*wuhu sihai* 五湖四海] was a standard phrase indicating "all corners of the land" or "all over the country." See *Xinshidai han-ying dacidian*, 1631.

*meiming mehuo chengmeili  
xingjia xingguo zixingshang.*

五湖寄跡陶工業  
四海交游晏子風  
美名媚貨成美利  
興家興國自興商

It makes sense that an itinerant merchant would want to keep intact his far-flung network of contacts, and he might do this by sending formal announcements and politely worded notes to the people he knew. He would have found a book such as this useful in his business life. It is equally possible he copied the formal announcements from another source and used the book as a reference when he was called upon, perhaps at the periodic markets he visited, to compose a notice or to write a matching couplet. He may have set up a small table at the market to earn income in addition to sales income from goods.

Another book in my collection, a printed book, makes reference to the difficulties of traveling for business and underscores the pride that someone such as Dong Gongda took in traveling for business. It consists of ten lithograph-printed folio leaves that I bought in Hangzhou in in 2012. The first words on the first page are **Talking about Vocabulary Lists** [*Shuo zazi* 說雜字]. On leaf 6b is written:

Going out, to do business. Run to Nanjing, rush to Beijing. The traveler encounters, slopes and uneven ground, valleys, mountain ranges, sandy beaches, overgrown wasteland, earthen ridges, hollows that are difficult to cross.

*Chuwaiqu, zuo maimai. Pao Nanjing, x Beijing.*<sup>19</sup>

*Zuole xie, tupozi, shuigouzi, shanlingzi, shatanzi, huangdianzi, tukangzi, buwazi.*

出外去，作買賣。跑南京，闖北京。走了些，土坡子，水溝子，山嶺子，沙灘子，荒甸子，土坎子，不凹子。

19 x is a character I cannot find in the dictionary composed of the radical 門 *dou*, with a horse [*ma* 馬] inside. It is probably the character 闖 *chuang*, which has the “gate” [men 門] radical and means “to rush about.”

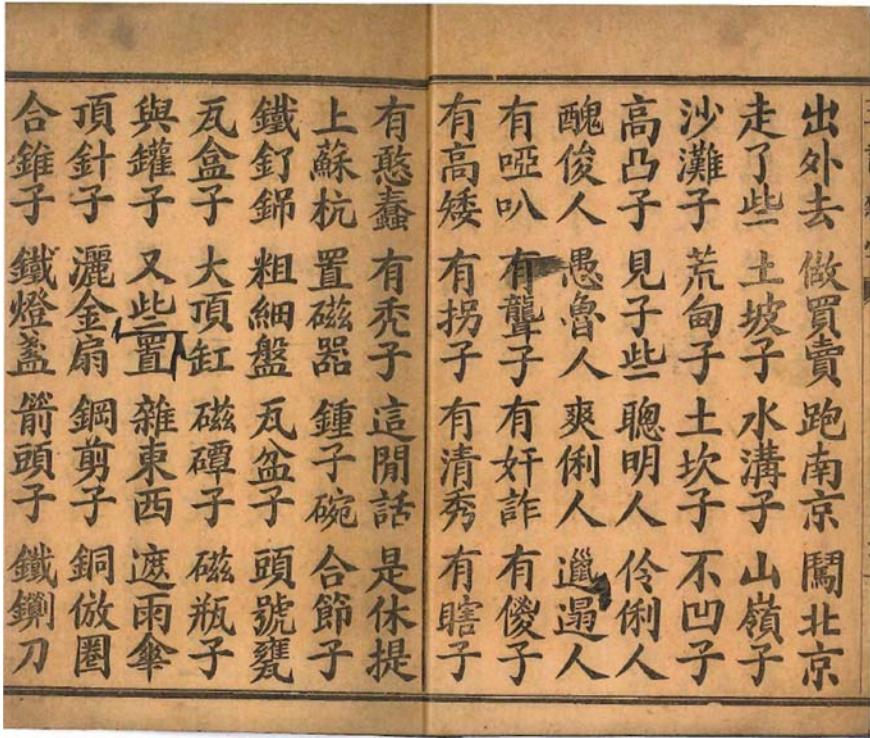


FIGURE 3.11

*Talking about Vocabulary Lists* [Shuo zazi 說雜字], *Leaf 6b, Traveling for Work*. We see rhyming phrases about the rigors of frequent travel for the sake of earning an income. The text reads: “Going out, to do business. Run to Nanjing, rush to Beijing. The traveler encounters, slopes and uneven ground, valleys” [Chuwaiqu, zuo maimai. Pao Nanjing, x (likely miswritten for 闖 chuāng, meaning “to rush about”) Beijing, Zuole xie, tupozi ... 出外去，作買賣。跑南京，闖北京。走了些，土坡子].

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

The descriptions continue. The reference to both Nanjing and Beijing, with Nanjing first, leads me to think this was produced in the early Republic and produced in the south, where Nanjing was a rival capital. Thus judging by the paper used and the lithograph process, the book was written and produced between 1912 and 1927.<sup>20</sup>

20 The book measures  $6\frac{3}{4}$  in (17.14 cm) h  $\times$   $4\frac{3}{4}$  in (9.52 cm) w. Its official title as printed in the folded margin of the page (the fishtail [yuwei 魚尾]) is *Sanyan zazi* 三言雜字 [Three-Character Vocabulary List]. For an explanation of the organization of folio pages and the fishtail used on traditional woodblocks, see Chia, *Printing for Profit*, 43.



FIGURE 3.12

*Yinyang Master.* The title of his advertising banner is “Zhang of the Pudu Hall” [Pudutang Zhang 普度堂張]. Pudu means to liberate or to set free from suffering. The writing on the left-hand side of the banner says: “Explaining yinyang” [Jiaoli yinyang 教理陰陽]. All the other wording indicates that his approach is based on the Daoist principals of trigrams [gua 卦]. He could be defined as a type of fortuneteller.

PHOTO: POSTCARD REPRODUCED BY CHINA YOUTH PRESS [ZHONGGUO QINGNIAN CHUBANSHE 中國青年出版社]

Another book in my collection is *On the Foundation of Marriage* [*Hunyuanjiang* 婚元講], a work discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.<sup>21</sup> This is a handwritten compilation that reveals the context of the work through information written in the margins. In this chapter, I offer some ideas about his “specialization,” if that term can be used for the pre-1950 era, when literate people had a broad notion of their abilities. It was prepared by a man who gave advice on marriage based on the positions of the stars, the eight trigrams, and the effect of the elements on the union of the two parties to the marriage. In that sense, he was a fortuneteller whose calculations could ensure a successful union and future for the couple. But he also talked about the supernatural forces and the spirits that

21 *On the Foundation of Marriage* [*Hunyuanjiang* 婚元講] is sixty-eight pages and measures 7 in (17.8 cm) h × 4½ in (11.43 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in September 2005.

also entered into the lives of human beings, so in that sense he was a yinyang master [*yinyang shi* 陰陽師] who was prepared to write talismans to keep the ghosts and spirits at bay. He offered a number of them (pp. 22, 37–39, and 52–54). A fortuneteller may or may not have offered to write talisman, but a yinyang master surely did. Among the topics addressed in this book are how to make the eight trigrams govern weddings, marriage taboos, unlucky years for a marriage, how to arrange the room for the newly married, and how to place talisman in the room of the newly married. One of the taboos listed is “The maiden cannot marry her father-in-law, As set by all the Stars and Rivers” [*weng gu jinhun, tiangang hekui* 翁姑禁婚 · 天罡河魁; p. 21]. *Tiangang* 天罡 can be seen as the Big Dipper, chief of all the heavenly constellations, while *hekui* 河魁 could be seen as source of all the rivers. In this sense, based on the way the taboo is written, the prohibition in question is demanded by the most powerful heavenly forces.

I consulted with a Daoist monk about this book, asking him whether he thought it belonged to a Daoist ritual practitioner or a yinyang master who used general fortunetelling techniques. The Daoist master thought it was used by a fortuneteller offering advice on weddings, but I tend to see it as a yinyang master’s work.<sup>22</sup> It is hard to date this work but assigning it to the Republican period is probably a safe bet. The self-promotion that we are calling “advertising” begins on the front cover, where the master wrote, “this edition is free of mistakes” [*wu shi* 勿失], and in even bolder characters added, “how to achieve success” [*shumao zhi* 樞懋志].<sup>23</sup>

22 It is not possible to neatly divide and categorize these various approaches of people dealing with the powerful supernatural forces. The Daoist, fortuneteller, and yinyang master may have all been the same person! My goal is to decide on a general proclivity revealed in the work at hand, so as to make a general statement about the person who used the book when giving advice. The Daoist master I consulted was Zhou Xuanyun 周玄雲, who was living in the Boston area in November 2013, when we discussed this text. If it is not possible to say whether the person using this book was a Daoist priest, a yinyang master, or a fortuneteller. Master Zhou suggested he was surely a general advisor [*quandoao* 勸導] to people associated with weddings.

23 The word *shu* 樞 means “pivot,” which is an important element in Daoist thinking. It is a concept in which at the juncture of the pivot or hinge there is a complete harmony and unity, even of opposites. The reference to this concept on the cover of my *chaoben* might have inclined the Daoist master I consulted to see the author of the work in my collection as a Daoist fortuneteller, since this is a philosophical concept of Daoists, rather than as a ghost-centered work, which would be more likely to be used by a yinyang master. On the pivot of the Dao, see Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968): the unity of opposites through the philosophical pivot

On the inside pages, the self-promotion continues. The author wrote, “This book is filled with benefit, each word is worth a thousand cash” [*shishu jie youyi, yizi zhi qianjin* 是書皆有益，一字值千金; pp. 60–62] and “A thousand cash is easy to obtain, but good advice is hard to get” [*qianjin yide, haoyu nanqiu* 千金易得，好語難求; p. 64]. Later, in the upper margins, he wrote “hard to get” [*nanqiu* 難求; p. 66] and “beneficial” [*youyi* 有益; p. 68]. The person who copied and used this book was confident of its value, and he therefore stated his confidence in the upper margins, in order to convince himself or his customer. Perhaps it was part of his sales pitch to the prospective client.

This is the copyist who wrote the phrase mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2: “The *xiucai* [student] studies yin and yang and, in the process, uses a lamp’s worth of oil” [*xiucai xue yinyang, yongyou yideng zhan* 秀才學陰陽，用油一燈盞; p. 46]. He studied hard, but as this *chaoben* demonstrates, he used his knowledge to give advice and to earn income.

### The Doctor’s Personality

In May 2012, I was happy to find in a Hangzhou antiques market a thick (167 pages) string-bound handwritten *chaoben* titled **Internal and External Medical Complaints** [*Neiwaikē yanke zazheng* 內外科眼科雜症].<sup>24</sup> In this collection of mostly medical information, a doctor named He Jinliang 何錦樑 compiled his prescriptions for herbal cures. A date of 1932 is written in the book (p. 12), which seems accurate, judging from the paper used. Tucked inside was a thin printed booklet of eight pages titled **Practical Cures** [*Shiyan liangfang* 實驗良

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is described (in part) as: “Where there is recognition of right there must be recognition of wrong; where there is recognition of wrong there must be recognition of right. Therefore, the sage does not proceed in such a way, but illuminates all in the light of Heaven. He too recognizes a ‘this,’ but a ‘this’ which is also ‘that,’ a ‘that’ which is also ‘this.’ His ‘that’ has both a right and a wrong in it; his ‘this’ too has both a right and a wrong in it. So, in fact, does he still have a ‘this’ and ‘that’? Or does he in fact no longer have a ‘this’ and ‘that’? A state in which ‘this’ and ‘that’ no longer find their opposites is called the hinge of the Way. When the hinge is fitted into the socket, it can respond endlessly. Its right then is a single endlessness and its wrong too is a single endlessness. So, I say, the best thing to use is clarity” (p. 40). The phrase as written on the cover of **On the Foundation of Marriage** could also be translated as “on enabling the pivot.”

24 **Internal and External Medical Complaints** [*Neiwaikē yanke zazheng* 內外科眼科雜症] is 8 in (20.32 cm) h × 5¼ in (13.33 cm) w. Note that the complete title also includes the words “ocular medicine” [*yanke* 眼科]. See note 1.

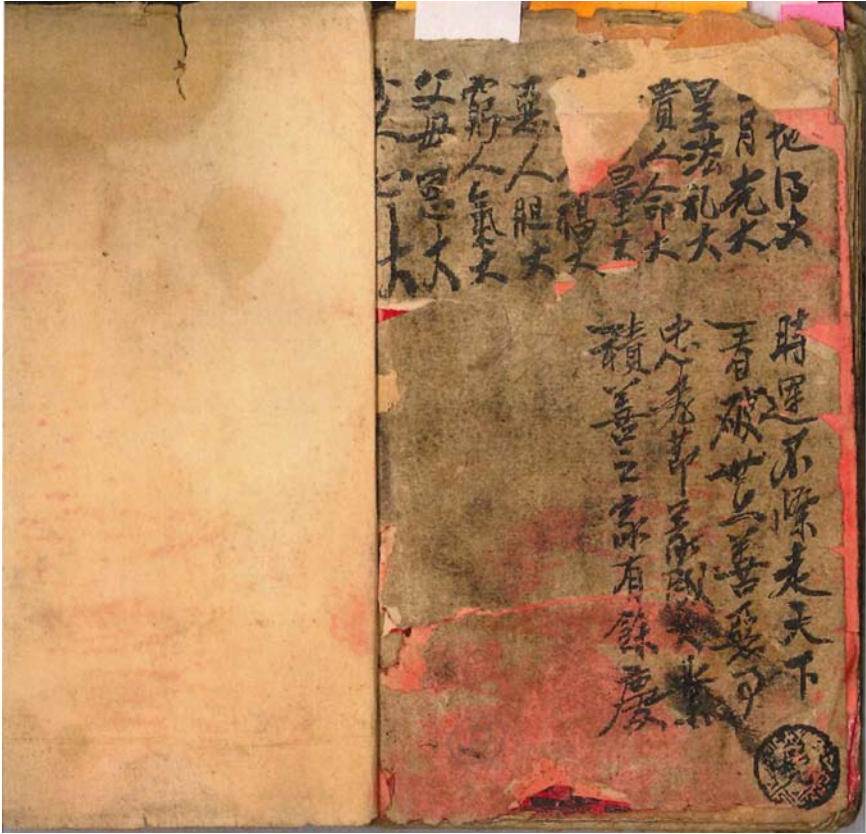


FIGURE 3.13

*Internal and External Medical Complaints* [Neiwaike yanke zazheng 內外科眼科雜症], Page 167, *Simple Truths*. At the top of this page are some aphorisms selected by the author: “The august emperor has lavish ceremonies; the rich enjoy a lot of power. Bad people have a lot of gall; the poor have a lot of gumption” [Huangtai lida, Guiren mingda, Eren danda, Qiongren qida, ... 皇汰禮大；貴人命大；惡人膽大；窮人氣大...].

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

方], provided free by the Shanghai United Friendship Society [Shanghai lianyishe 上海聯誼社] in 1945. It offered simple remedies for many medical complaints and invited the poor and opium addicts to contact the Society. Thus we can assume Doctor He practiced between 1932 and 1945 in the area of Shanghai.

Doctor He referred to his prescriptions as “secret” [*mifang* 秘方]. In each case, he described the condition of the patient, then listed his prescription, which was often to be prepared in the form of a pill [*wan* 丸] or a soup [*tang* 湯] or served with tea [*cha* 茶]. He wrote about tuberculosis of the lymphatic glands, anxiety and depression, knife wounds, and boils and sores, among many

other complaints. One gets the impression from this work that he was a busy and an experienced medical practitioner. On the final page (p. 167), he wrote some aphorisms that he found apt: “The august emperor has lavish ceremonies; the rich enjoy a lot of power. Bad people have a lot of gall; the poor have a lot of gumption. We have heavy obligations toward our parents; the common people have big hearts” [*Huangtai lida* 皇汰禮大; *guiren mingda* 貴人命大; *eren danda* 惡人膽大; *qiongren qida* 窮人氣大; *fumu enda* 父母恩大; *xiaoren xinda* 小人心大]. His reference to the emperor as a symbol of the highest social position in 1932 some twenty years after the imperial system had disappeared indicates the hold of late-Qing thinking among people in Republican China.<sup>25</sup>

The common people living in rural areas in the early twentieth century had many medical complaints. The poor sanitation led to the prevalence of eye and skin diseases. Digestive disorders were also frequent. As industrialization and urbanization increased in the Republican period, industrial accidents often befell workers. They had their limbs mangled in machines or crushed in railway accidents. Some who still had a queue [*bian* 辮] even after the downfall of the Qing could get it caught in whirring belts and wheels on the factory floor. Foreign bodies in the eye, severe burns, and scalds were also common. Dr. He's prescriptions covered a wide range of complaints.<sup>26</sup>

Dr. He was kept busy not only because of his medical practice but also because he was involved in activity centered in *zhuang* 庄, usually translated as “small village.” It is possible that Dr. He lent money to farmers in these villages. The word *zhuang* was often used for businesses in pre-1950s China, so he also might have been running a chain of businesses, pharmacies, or pawnshops (which could have had *zhuang* as part of their name). On one occasion, he needed to contact the people in his network of clients or employees, so he and three cohorts [Baoren 葆仁, Wen yuan 文元, and Wenxiao 文孝] collected small amounts of money from a number of the *zhuang*. The place names in the list Dr. He kept (p. 34) are hard to locate with any certainty. Yichang 宜昌 could be the same as the city near Wuhan 武漢, while the *zhuang* near Nengren 能仁 could be in the vicinity of Hefei 合肥 in Anhui 安徽. That would comprise a wide, but

25 One could say that the decision of the Japanese occupation authorities in Manchuria to place the former emperor Puyi 溥儀 on the throne as the emperor of Manchukuo in 1934 was a reflection of the strength of this idea among many people in Asia at the time. The phrase itself no doubt dates from an earlier time, when there still was an emperor. It seemed appropriately evocative to the author of this text.

26 A thorough review of common medical conditions was recorded by a British doctor working in Hengyang 衡陽 and Tianjin 天津 from 1899 to 1922 in *Peake in China: Memoirs of Ernest Cromwell Peake* (London: British Library, 2014).

not unlikely geographic network, all located in “central China.” We know what was done with the money, however; on the same page, Dr. He wrote, “Today I went to pay my taxes. I must remember to say a prayer at the local temple” [*Jinri yaoqu wanqiangliangx. Xuyao jizhe jishe eryi* 今日要去完錢糧口。須要記着祭社而已].

Our intrepid Dr. He engaged in yet another activity. He was actively interested in religious Daoism, as revealed most clearly in his writings (p. 45). He first writes of a ritual intended to keep ghosts away, titled “Shooting Swords at Ghosts” [*Guishen jianshe fa* 鬼神剪射法].

First put on a cap with the eight constellations and seven stars. Wear a ceremonial robe with the nine realms of emptiness [*jiu kong* 九空] and the eight trigrams. Take up the spirit sword and go to where you will encounter the spirits. Take up the ghost sword and go to where you will encounter ghosts. Take up the spirit stars sword [*shenxing jian* 神星劍]. Cut down the spirits and ghosts with your sword. I petition Laozi. Promptly, promptly, decree in accordance with the statutes and ordinances. [This is an] edict!

*Toudai badou qixing guan. Shenchuan jiukong bagua mangpaoyi. Shenjian shenshouqu. Gujian guishouqu. Shou shenxingjian. Zhanduan shenguijian. Wo feng Taishang laojun. Jiji rubling. Chi!*

頭戴八斗七星冠。身穿九空八卦蟒袍衣。神剪神收去。鬼剪鬼收去。授神星劍。斬斷神鬼剪。我奉太上老君。急急如律令。敕!<sup>27</sup>

Dr. He wrote another Daoist ritual on the same page, one that asks the follower to be equally active in carrying out the ritual. It was called “Backing Away from Earth to Establish the Law” [*Tuitu shefa* 退土設法].

On an auspicious day, go to the East, then first step back to retreat from the East. From the *jiayi* symbol of wood. Second, retreat from the south and the *bingding* symbol of fire. Third, retreat from the west and the *gengxin*

27 *Jiji rulung* [急急如律令] indicates that this is a ritual incantation addressed to the deities. It is usually translated as “Promptly, promptly, decree in accordance with the statutes and ordinances!” It is a standard way of concluding Daoist incantations [*zhou yu* 咒語]. See Zhang and Wu, *Daojiao fuzhou xuanjiang*. See also Miura Kunio 三浦國雄 in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (London: Routledge, 2008), 1:117. More discussion of Daoist incantations and their standard wordings is in Chapters 8 and 9.

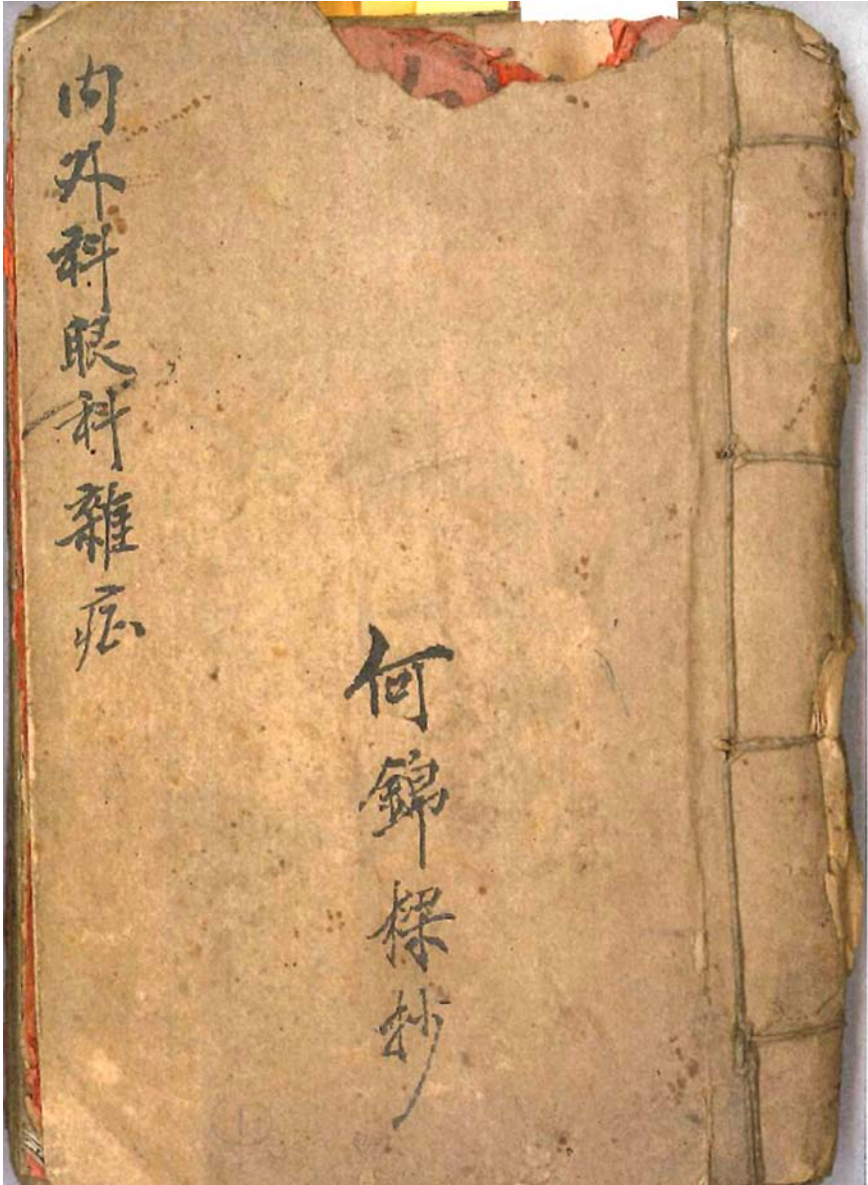


FIGURE 3.14

*Internal and External Medical Complaints* [Neiwaike yanke zazheng 內外科眼科雜症], Cover. The complete title also includes "ocular medicine" [yanke 眼科].

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

symbol of metal. Fourth, retreat from the north and the *renkui* symbol of water. Fifth, retreat to the center with its *xusi* symbol of earth. Earth is for all. Grandmother Earth, Son Earth, Grandson. Where there is earth we retreat from earth to where there is no earth. Retreat from the Five Directions and the bad forces. I petition Laozi. Promptly, promptly, decree in accordance with the statues and ordinances This can be recited seven times.

*He x yang zhi ri, qu dong fang. Yi, tui dongfang, jiyimu. Er, tui nanfang bingdinghuo. San, tui xifang gengxinjin. Si, tui beifang renquishui. Wu, tuizhongyang xusitu. Tu gong tu. Potu zitu, sun. Youtu tuitu, wutu. Tuiwufang eqi. Wo feng Taishanglaojun. Jijirubvling. Chi!*

嚇口陽之日，出東方。一，退東方甲乙幕。二，退南方丙丁火。三，退西方庚辛金。四，退北方壬癸水。五，退中央戊巳土。土公土。婆土子土孫。有土退土無土，退五方惡氣。我奉太上老君。急急如律令。敕！<sup>28</sup>

This is a purification ritual. Each direction has its own forces of good and evil. It is necessary to retreat from the evil forces lurking in each direction, following the Chinese directional order of east, south, west, north, and center. Once in the center, call upon the highest deities to set up a pure zone. In the Qing and Republican period, it was considered perfectly natural for a medical practitioner to be interested in Daoism as well. The doctor was seen as an educated person with full literacy and a wider world view than the typical person. Dr. He no doubt saw his involvement with Daoism as natural, because it was in the spirit of healing both the body and the spirit. This holistic view of existence was generally accepted. Both the herbal doctor and the ritual specialist were interested in helping their fellow human beings. They were not constricted by an assumption of their highly specialized, narrower “professional” pursuits, as would be common in the present.

28 See Zhang and Wu, *Daojiao fuzhou xuanjiang*, 10–11, in their discussion of the “Incantation to the Five Directions to Protect the Spirit” [*Wufang weiling zhou* 五方衛靈咒]. I am grateful to Dr. Zhou Donghua 周東華 of Hangzhou Normal University for a helpful discussion about the Daoist rituals presented in this section.

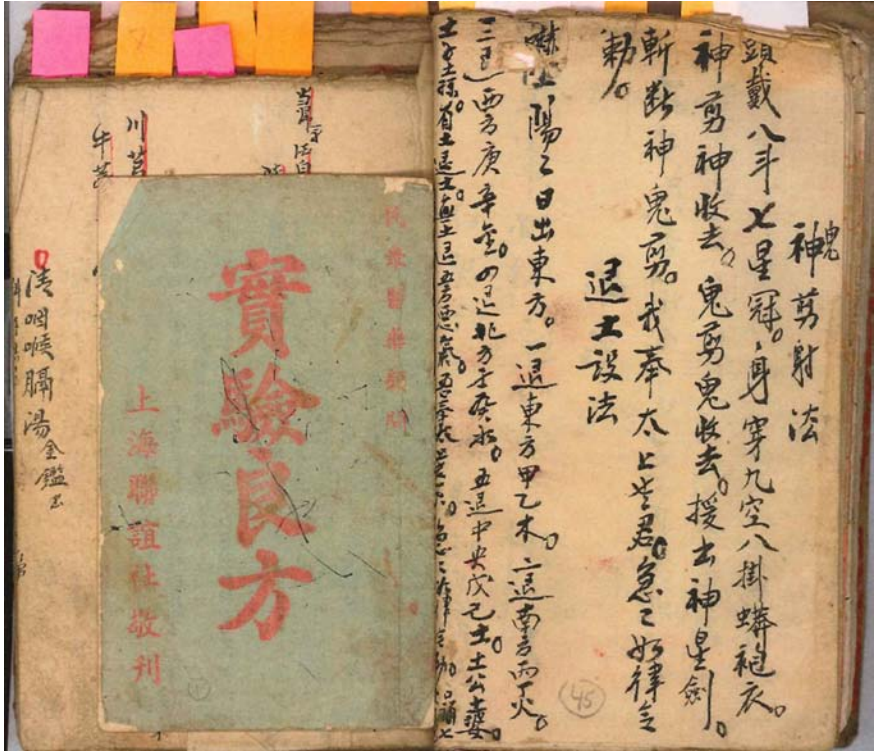


FIGURE 3.15

*Internal and External Medical Complaints* [Neiwaik yanke zazheng 內外科眼科雜症], Page 45, *Daoist Ceremonies*. On this page, Dr. He wrote about how to conduct Daoist ceremonies to expel evil. Tucked inside this book was a thin printed booklet, seen on the left-hand side of the photo, of eight pages titled “Practical Cures” [Shiyan liangfang 實驗良方] provided free by the Shanghai United Friendship Society [Shanghai lianyishe 上海聯誼社] in 1945.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

### Conclusion: Reading into Texts

It appears that every time a person picked up a writing brush and wrote words in these *chaoben*, they were committing to paper something about themselves. For example, the quality of their calligraphy allows us to estimate the amount of formal schooling they had and the amount of time they spent practicing how to write characters correctly and neatly. It is not uncommon to find *chaoben* with poorly written characters, where the balance of the character or the line of each stroke indicates a student of relatively little formal education. At the same time, regardless of the subject matter, many *chaoben* show that the person who wrote the text had spent a number of years writing with a brush. The number of characters used, some of great complexity,

also indicate a person who was able to spend a lot of time perfecting his writing skills. Some handwritten texts that show a lot of nonstandard “popular” [*su* 俗] characters or texts with a “mistaken” character with the same sound as the intended character, which indicates a person who struggled to produce the standard characters. Most likely, this is the mark of a limited formal education.

In one way or another, many of the people who prepared *chaoben* took the opportunity to reveal something of their personality or set of values. Through the textual material they included, as in the case of **Various Words Offered to the People**, they were straightforward in listing the values and actions they expected to be adopted by young men in order to lead a moral life. Their instructions were extremely practical and taken from the rough-and-tumble economic strata that called for hard physical labor. I refer to the values they espoused as conventional morality. This is not meant to criticize or dismiss their words but, rather, to state that, without intellectual or philosophical elaboration, these values were generally accepted among the common people of China at the time.

The literate men involved in writing *chaoben* wished to express themselves through literate skills such as writing poetry. Many of the *chaoben* I have collected contain poetry, often at the end of the volume, composed by the author or copyist of the volume. I characterize these poems as conventional or commonplace, again, not as a criticism but, instead, to say that they are not filled with obscure literary illusion, as was sometimes favored by highly educated literati. The poems used standard phrases to follow standard poetic rhyme and meter. At the same time, the poems illustrate the viewpoint of its author, such as the phrases “Man is fated to be poor” and “What he must do is endure hardship.” If I had a conversation with Mr. Guo, I feel as if I already know how he looked at the world.

The *chaoben* writers also felt free to write in the margins of their texts. The *xiuca* who wrote in **On the Foundation of Marriage** about burning a lot of lamp oil in the course of his studies told us exactly how he felt about them: they required a lot of effort but had a lot of value. He wrote about the value of his studies later, where he mentioned “a thousand cash” [*qian qian* 千錢], a standard phrase used to indicate a lot of money. Every time they wrote something of themselves, including the astrologer who in **Using the Western Calendar as a Guide to Writing (Your Fortune) through the Five Stars** called himself “an award-winning master,” we can appreciate the self-image of the *chaoben* writer. These people were proud of their literacy, their ability to read and write, and the skills they offered to the public. They felt comfortable with this form of marketing or self-promotion. Even when their economic position,

as educated people who needed to offer their services to the general public in order to earn money, was not always solid, their social position as educated people was assured.

By including the “professional” material of a specialized nature that they sold to the public to earn an income, along with something “personal” that reflected their own opinions, observations, values, or interests, the *chaoben* writers display their private or personal interests, especially in the example of Dr. He in his **Internal and External Medical Complaints**. He filled his *chaoben* with many pages of medical discussions and prescriptions but also showed that Daoist practices also had a place in his life. His factual medical observations about the medical cases he encountered are very different from the symbolically constructed religious worlds he presented in writing about religious Daoism. Shanghai in the 1930s was a driven, demanding, and dangerous urban environment for those who lived and worked there. Dr. He illustrates how he coped with life at a challenging time.

We can harvest the full richness of these handwritten texts by thoughtfully reading into them the stories they contain. They were not produced in a vacuum. They were not the fanciful creations of a person with leisure to slowly compose texts. Just the opposite, they were concretely linked to the everyday, workaday world of the common people. They held information the common people needed to know. Yes, they held information the *chaoben* writer was offering for sale to customers or clients. But in doing so, the *chaoben* writer made little attempt to hide or disguise his own personality, values, or worldview. The comments in the marginalia suggest to us the individuality of the writer and we can imagine the impression he made on the people meeting with him. The interaction between the copyist, the *chaoben* with the information it held, and the client can then take on a nuance and vitality as we reconstruct the scene in our minds. When we form this reconstruction based on a thoughtful consideration of the information given in this book, we can bring alive with some accuracy the common people of China in the pre-People’s Republic period and their relationship to these *chaoben*.

## Teacher Xu: Entering a Classroom in Late Qing China

徐老師：在一所清末的小學課堂內

### Introduction

This is the story of Teacher Xu. We know this story because of a set of teaching materials Teacher Xu left behind that were preserved by his student. Teacher Xu was not a member of China's elite but, rather, a typical schoolteacher living at the end of the Qing dynasty, when the time-honored and traditional approach to pedagogy was still very much in force. He must have been a lively teacher, with a charismatic personality and a touch of humor, which he brought into the classroom. He seems to have been deeply committed to his students and was concerned about their well-being. All these qualities are reflected in the teaching materials, the "text" he used.

Teacher Xu was one of the common people in China. He made his living using his knowledge of writing and his own education to work as a teacher of boys (who were most likely to be students) most likely ages seven to sixteen. He imparted basic reading and writing skills and the intellectual culture they had inherited as Chinese. Some of the boys may have hoped to continue their studies and to take the provincial-level examination that would lead to a government-awarded degree. But when the traditional educational system was abolished in 1905, and when new elementary schools using new-style printed textbooks were adopted, Teacher Xu's traditional texts and classroom style began to fall out of favor. The old-style education did not disappear in China after 1906, especially in the countryside, though ambitious students and their parents knew that the modern age called for a different set of skills and a less traditional worldview.

The teaching materials we have that allow us to compose a portrait of Teacher Xu consist of 102 pages of handwritten information that Teacher Xu decided one day to have copied and bound together with string. He no doubt had other texts and materials in either handwritten or printed form that he used in the classroom, but these are the materials that came into my possession.

I bought the bound text used by Teacher Xu at the Panjiayuan market in Beijing in September 2005, when I had just begun to collect handwritten texts offered by the used booksellers. The price was not high, because most

people were not interested in these old texts of uncertain date and unknown provenance. I thought about the text and the meanings of the information I found there, and the result is this chapter about Teacher Xu.

### Schoolteachers in the Late Qing

I estimate that Teacher Xu lived between 1840 and about 1910. This assumed date of his birth is based information given in his text. My method of calculating the dates given here is outlined at the end of this chapter. These estimates allow me to create a logical chronology for the life of Teacher Xu and his students.

As a teacher in a traditional-style school in the late Qing dynasty, assuming that he taught between about 1865 and 1905, Teacher Xu had likely received some formal education and had likely studied for the lowest formal degree, the *shengyuan*, offered by the county government. Had he passed the examination, Teacher Xu would have been a *xiucaí*. In earlier times, he might have wanted to continue his studies in order to take the higher-level government examinations; passing those exams could lead to appointment as a government official. Being a government official brought with it high social status and the opportunity for a financially secure future. By the end of the Qing, however, the number of *xiucaí* wanting to take the higher-level government exams exceeded available government posts, so even if he passed all the examinations, it is unlikely that Teacher Xu would have been offered a government job. It is also possible that Teacher Xu took the first exam but was unable to pass the next-level examination, even though he had studied hard, had a good knowledge of Chinese history and literature, and could boast of good calligraphy. It was an established custom in China that some scholars spent much of their lives preparing for the examinations and taking them repeatedly until they passed or gave up trying.<sup>1</sup>

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1 On the many years that students spent trying to pass the examinations as an established practice in China, see Hilde De Weerd, *Competition over Content: Negotiating Standards for the Civil Service Examinations in Imperial China (1127–1279)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), 11, 376, 379. A useful and thoughtful consideration of the traditional examination system in China is Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*. Broad coverage of the Qing exam system with interesting details is in Yang et al., *Zhongguo kaoshi tongshi*, 3: 349–375. See also the useful glossary in Marianne Bastid, *Educational Reform in Early Twentieth Century China*, trans. Paul J. Bailey (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies University of Michigan, 1988), appendix 3.

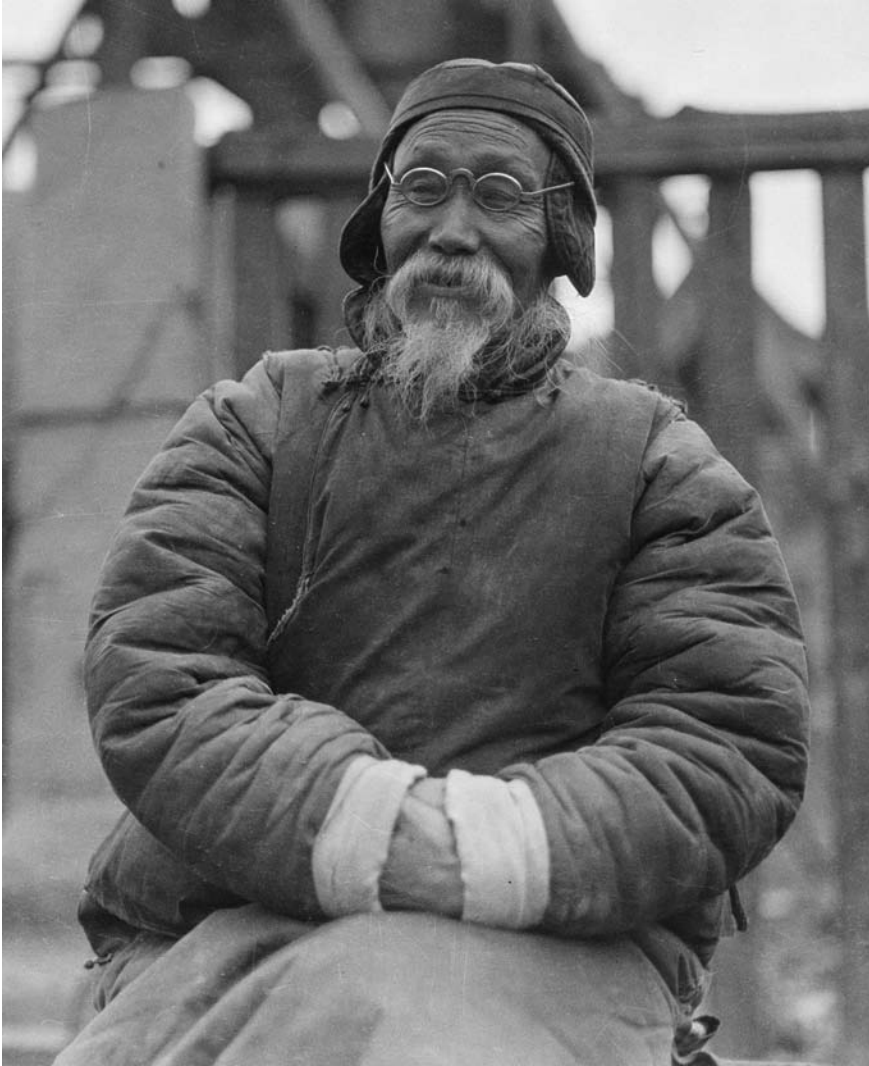


FIGURE 4.1

*Storyteller.* Men such as this made a living by reciting historical stories and romances, usually from sources that had been circulating for generations, in a practice known as *pingshu* 評書. Because these men could read and write, they often also worked as schoolteachers or in any of the other lines of work requiring some literacy. But unlike highly educated elite scholars, these men were *pingmin*, who earned money from the crowds of people who stopped to listen to their stories in the public marketplace or at a local temple courtyard. The photo was taken about 1919.

SIDNEY D. GAMBLE PHOTOGRAPHS, DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, DUKE LIBRARY

Nevertheless, those who had studied for the exam and had actually taken it considered themselves intellectuals, and they were also considered intellectuals by the general public. These men advertised their status as educated people by wearing a scholar's gown and skullcap in public. People who saw them did not know who had passed the examination and who had not, and the gown and cap elicited general respect from people encountered on the street. In a society where the majority of the people could not read or write well, the person who had received some formal education and could read and write was given general respect.<sup>2</sup>

However, the practical problem for most graduates of how to earn a living remained. Chinese society at the time had about a 30 percent rate of literacy, meaning that the majority of people could not easily read or write beyond writing their own name and recognizing some basic words.<sup>3</sup> As mentioned in previous chapters, educated men turned to professions that took advantage of their knowledge of texts. Some became herbal doctors [*langzhong* 郎中], fortunetellers, ritual masters, and legal advisors. Some were scribes who could write letters for people and the matching couplets used at weddings and other ceremonies. Many educated men worked as teachers in the local schools and academies that existed in almost all cities and often even in villages.

In the Qing dynasty, there was no nationally approved curriculum supervised by higher-level authorities and no controlled set of teaching materials. Of course, through custom and centuries of use, everyone was aware of the foundational texts used in elementary education [*qimeng* 啟蒙]. Classics such as the *Lunyu* 論語 [*Analects of Confucius*] or the words of *Mengzi* 孟子 [*Mencius*], often complemented by the *Sanzijing* 三字經 [*Three-Character Classic*] were the standard texts. Elementary-school students memorized the texts, learned to recognize and write characters from them, and learned about

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2 It has been estimated that very few of those who took the higher-level exams were able to pass. Because of this, for the common people, the question of passing or not passing was not important because simply having studied for the exams conferred status. Benjamin Elman researched the likelihood of passing the examinations and concluded that 1–5 percent of the candidates passed the exams. They came in various levels and types, so computing this number from available records is quite a task. For several estimates, see Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy*. One can calculate a 5 percent pass rate from John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China, A New History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 101–107. Education under the “traditional” Qing system is placed in the context of Chinese society at the time in Richard J. Smith, *The Qing Dynasty and Traditional Chinese Culture* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

3 Chapter 1 discusses literacy in pre-1950s China. See also Chapter 1, note 36.

Chinese history, literature, and common morality from their teacher's comments on the texts. A broader set of texts and written materials dealing with philosophy, literature, policy making, and history had become sanctioned as standard texts over centuries of use, overseen and approved by the authorities in the capital at Beijing, and these were the basis of the higher-level examinations. Schools at the local level were rarely supervised by any higher authorities, except for the people who hired and paid them.<sup>4</sup> Thus teachers at local levels

4 *Qimeng* 啓蒙 was used to indicate elementary education. An excellent discussion of the various texts used in the private academies and schools in traditional China is Ōsawa Akihiro 大沢晃彦, "Keimō to kyogyō no aida: dentō Chūgoku ni okeru chishiki no kaisōsei 啓蒙と挙業のあいだ：伝統中国における知識の階層性 [Between Elementary Education and Official Office: The Class Basis of Knowledge in Traditional China]," *Tōyō bunka kenkyū* 東洋文化研究 [*Research on Asian Culture*], no. 7 (March 2005). I have acquired some works in this category for my own collection. A handwritten manuscript of twenty-four consecutively numbered pages is titled **Basic Primer** [*Gyemongpyon* 계몽편 啓蒙篇] because it was a basic Chinese-language classical text with Korean-language *hangul* 한글 markers added to help Korean students understand the phrases written in Chinese characters. The markers were *hangul* phrases such as *hago* 하고 and *ira* 이라 (a sentence ending), so students could pronounce all of the text in Korean and it would sound more like a Korean-language work. This work is 9½ in (24.13 cm) h × 6–1/8 in (15.74 cm) w, that I bought in Seoul in September 2005. This work is also discussed in Chapter 2. The text appears to be extracted from the *Lunheng* 論衡 [Discourses Weighed in the Balance], a text from the Eastern Han period (25–220CE) written by Wang Chong 王充. For example, the first phrases (as pronounced in Chinese) are *shangyoutian, xiayoudi. tiandizhijian, yourenyan* 上有天，下有地。天地之間有人焉 [Heaven is above, earth is below. Between heaven and earth is man]. A portion of an early English translation of Wang's works is available in Alford Forke, trans., *Lun-Heng, Part II, Miscellaneous Essays of Wang Ch'ung; Translated from the Chinese and Annotated* (1911, repr. New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1962), available online at Open Library.org, <https://archive.org/stream/lunheng02wang#page/n5/mode/2up>, accessed May 17, 2014. A note on the *Lunheng* is in Michael Loewe, ed., *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide* (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China, 1993), 309–312. A lithographed text in my collection titled **Standard Elementary Education** [*Zhengyi qimeng* 正義啓蒙] (Shanghai: Guangyi shuju, 1916) is two volumes bound as one (vol. 1 is sixteen folio leaves, vol. 2 is fifteen folio leaves) that I bought in Guilin in September 2005. The book discusses classical phrases taken from the *Analects of Confucius* and how to write *baguwen* 八股文, the "eight-legged" essays that were once used as part of the official government examinations. By 1916, when this book appeared, the traditional form of education had been abolished, yet clearly many schools were still teaching the curriculum. A further text in this category in my collection is a woodblock book of two parts bound together titled **Characters for Elementary Education** [*Zhengmeng ziyi* 正義字義]. This title was brushed in, but the title on each woodblock sheet is *zi yi* 字義. Part 1 [*shangpian* 上篇] is fifty-one folio leaves, part 2 [*xiapian* 下篇] is 30+ folio leaves. It is 9½ in (24.13 cm) h × 6 in (15.24 cm) w, and I bought it in Shanghai in January 2013. This is a



FIGURE 4.2

*Teacher Xu's Classroom in Manchuria.* The classroom is cold, so students wear fur-lined hats and heavy padded robes. They wear long queues [bian 辮], the Manchu hairstyle required during the Qing dynasty. Young students stand with their back to the teacher in order to loudly and clearly recite the passages they have memorized.

PHOTO FROM R. VAN BERGEN, *THE STORY OF CHINA* (NEW YORK: AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY, 1902, 1922)

could determine their own sequence of introducing materials to students, and they could introduce other materials they found relevant.

Although given general respect by society and their students, teachers at the local level were not paid much. Often their pay consisted of some cash, in addition to food, free lodging, and possibly some free meals. In the *chaoben Riches Bestowed* [*Qianjinfu* 千金賦] (see Chapter 1), a schoolteacher during the early Republican era described his modest pay, given to him in both currency and

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dictionary that goes well beyond what would have been considered an appropriate level for elementary education. The very pliant quality of the bleached paper and the sharp printing indicate this is a quality volume most likely from the late Qing period.

grain. He recorded using the income to buy some coal, chalk, and a newspaper subscription.<sup>5</sup> At that time, 40 yuan per month (equal to about USD\$20) was adequate to meet all basic needs for a single individual or a small nuclear family in Fengtian 奉天 (present-day Shenyang 瀋陽).<sup>6</sup> Thus with the clues given in his *chaoben*, we can fairly safely assume that this teacher lived in south Manchuria during that period. His cash income, when combined with the food he was also given, allowed him to meet all his basic expenses for rent and food. By teaching at three schools, our teacher earned more than carpenters or skilled laborers. That income, combined with the “status” given to his profession, must have made him feel that he was an upstanding resident of the city.<sup>7</sup>

### Teacher Xu Orders a Set of Teaching Materials to be Prepared

Teacher Xu lived and taught in or near the city of Panshi 磐石 in Jilin Province.<sup>8</sup> Panshi is south of Jilin city, located on a major route that ran south through Liaoyuan 遼源 to Fengtian, the largest city in south Manchuria. (The city is 374 miles, or 602 km, northeast of Chaoyang, mentioned above in this chapter.) A city had been located at the site of Panshi for at least a thousand years. It received the name Panshi during the Ming dynasty in 1384, when a government garrison was set up there. In the late Qing, the city was enjoying a renaissance of sorts, with increasing numbers of people moving into the area and with lively and profitable markets. In 1902 it was designated the county seat for Panshi county.

We do not know the dates for the next part of the story, but the story can begin to take shape based on some educated guesses. In about 1883, when he was forty-three years old, Teacher Xu took some materials that he had to

5 The discussion in the notes to Chapter 1 discuss the probable location of where the teacher worked, Chaoyang 朝陽, and the currency in which he was paid.

6 For comments on the cost of living in Fengtian in the 1920s, see Ronald Suleski, “A Note on Currencies in Warlord China,” in *Civil Government in Warlord China: Tradition, Modernization and Manchuria* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), xiii–xvi. Comments on some of the salaries received by teachers under the traditional system are in Ōsawa, “Keimō to kyogyō no aida,” 33, 43.

7 As stated earlier, I assume that this teacher also worked as a yinyang master for extra income.

8 The teacher discussed above who told us about his income lived in Chaoyang, Fengtian. However, Teacher Xu, the subject of this chapter, lived in Panshi, Jilin. Both locations are in Manchuria, Northeast China.

have them copied neatly and bound together in a single volume that would be convenient to use in the classroom. (See Calculating the Dates of this Book at the end of this chapter for a discussion of how the dates were calculated.) He went to the Panshi marketplace to locate a shop or a person to copy the materials for him. He found a shop called the Zhizhoutang 志周堂 [Hall of Great Purpose], which used as its trademark Translucent Jade Disk [*Bi jin ming* 璧津冥]. The work of the copyist was well done, in a clear and well-spaced script in the standard [*zhengkaishu* 正楷書] style. Although at this time paper made from bamboo was the type most commonly produced in China, in this case the copyist used handmade paper probably made from rice, which had not been strongly bleached and was a very light brown color. Each leaf was 9¾ inches (24.76 cm) high and 17½ inches (45.08 cm) wide, folded in half, with the open edges being bound with string. The paper was of medium quality, neither the best nor the worst, with a pliant, almost clothlike softness. The final copy was bound in the five-binders style [*wuzhenyan dingfa* 五針眼訂法] of Korean-style books. Chinese string-bound volumes usually have four holes in the paper along the binding edge, with the binding string inserted through the holes. Korean-bound books, in contrast, use five holes. Many Koreans resided in this area of southern Jilin, and this indicates that the person who bound the book, if not also the copyist, was most likely Korean.<sup>9</sup>

Information on shops that offered copying services has been difficult to find. Yet in the culture of late Qing and early Republican China, in which a vibrant manuscript culture continued to exist in spite of the provenance of printed matter that was inexpensive and easily available, it would be logical to assume that such services were offered, either by shops or by individuals. I assume these services would be located inside a bookseller's shop. This service might have been offered by shops that offered seal carving [*kezidian* 刻字店], because a person able to write calligraphy well with a brush was needed to inscribe the text of the seals before they were carved. We can also assume that scribes were available near government offices in order to make copies of government documents and to help clients with the paperwork that those dealing with government bureaucrats might need. In the Ming dynasty, there was a lane in Beijing called Assistant's Lane [Chashou hutong 插手胡同], but by the Qing, its name had been changed to Copyist's Lane [Chaoshou hutong

9 The five-hole style is discussed in *Traces of Jiki and Korean Movable Metal Types* (Cheongju, Korea: Cheongju Early Printing Museum, 2003), 75. Because of the large number of Koreans living in Jilin, it is possible that binding materials using five holes was a common practice even among Chinese in the area.

抄手胡同].<sup>10</sup> About 1910, reflecting the desire to institute a republican form of government, a National Assembly [Zhongyiyuan 眾議院] building was built on this land. Obviously, this became an area where government documents and communications could be copied by hand. Most likely, petitions and responses to government communications could also be written for those who were not able to write themselves. After 1928, when the city was named Beijing and the Guomindang had moved its capital to Nanjing, the National Assembly building was used by the University of Legal Administration [Fazheng daxue 法政大學]. In 1938 the building was again used as the National Assembly under the administration set up by the Japanese occupying the city. Later in 1941, it became the Legislative Yuan [Faxueyuan 法學院]. Although the lane still exists in Beijing as Chaoshou hutong, I have not been able to find specific information about any shops in the area currently offering copying services and did not see any when I visited the area.

Not only have I been unable to find references to copyist's shops in the late Qing, but the Chinese scholars with whom I have discussed this problem are not even sure what terms were used to refer to these shops. It has been suggested that copyists were referred to as "writing servants" [*yongshuren* 傭書人], and someone who was willing to copy materials would simply put up a sign with his name on it.<sup>11</sup>

10 In the early Qing, this section of the city was known as the Elephant Stables [Xiang suo 象所], and a small bridge nearby was called the Elephant Bridge [Xiang qiao 象橋]. Elephants had been gifts to the Chinese Emperor in the 1870s from the King of Siam (present-day Thailand), and for a time they were adopted as part of imperial parades. The stables were just to the west of the former Xuanwu Gate [Xuanwumen 玄武門]. Today the gate exists in name only and the former stable land is home to the New China News Agency [Xinhua tongxun 新華通訊].

11 These comments are based on my discussion with Professor Zhang Zhicheng 張志成 of the Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication [Beijing yinshua xueyuan 北京印刷學院], in July 2011. The school has a museum of printing in China. We know of the case of Hundred Volumes Zhang [Baiben Zhang 百本張] in the Qing dynasty (thanks to Wilt Idema for suggesting this topic). Hundred Volumes Zhang would take a list of opera librettos to a nearby temple fair [*miaohui* 廟會], where customers could select a title from his list. Hundred Volumes Zhang would copy the text and then deliver it to them. See Cui Yunhua 崔蘊華, "Baiben Zhang yu zidishu shufang 百本張與子弟書書坊 [Hundred Volumes Zhang and His Booklet Shop]," *Minzu wenhua yanjiu* 民族文化研究 [Research on Ethnic Cultures], 95, no. 4 (December 2004). Mention of small stalls selling low-priced books at the temple fairs at Huoguoqi 護國寺 and Longfusi 隆福寺 in Beijing in the mid-Qing, and the availability of handwritten texts for sale in Liulichang 琉璃廠, are mentioned in Li Wenzao 李文藻 (1730–1778), *Liulichang shusi ji yijuan; houji*

**龔佛平太史詩文潤例**

碑誌 二百元駢散同 傳記 一百元  
 壽序 一百元短序減半 誄文 一百元短  
 誄減半 題跋 三十元至百元 牋啟  
 四十元短章減半 詩詞 五七言律每  
 首四元 古風排律每首十二元 百韻  
 五排一百元 詞中令四元長調十二元  
 聯語 二元 交稿日期 碑誌傳記題  
 跋一月 壽序誄文牋啟詩詞三日至七日  
 聯語隔日

又乞文諸君如有因便乞書者除碑誌另議外酌  
 定筆墨費如左

屏條 四尺每條一元 五尺一元五角 六  
 尺二元 七尺二元五角 八尺三元  
 對聯詩條 每件五角不論大小字數 潤  
 資先惠友好酌減二成

地址本市阜內宮門口東廊下十六號龔宅  
 琉璃廠榮寶齋代收

民國二十六年一月蒯若木洪鑄生代訂

FIGURE 4.3

*Advertisement for Copying Services.* In this advertisement, Mr. Gong explained the full range of texts he could prepare: birthday congratulations [shouxu 壽序], poems [shici 詩詞], matching phrases [lianhua 聯話], and other items [qita 其他]. The shop offered delivery in three to seven days [san ri zhi qi ri 三日至七日]. The advertisement appeared in *Beiping lüxing zhinan* 北平旅行指南 [Guide to Visiting Beiping]. Mr. Gong's advertisement is on page 294.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

However, a guidebook to Beiping 北平 from 1935 features an ad for just such a service, listed under the calligrapher's name. In the advertisement, Mr. Gong 龔 offered to write birthday congratulations, scrolls of poems, or matching phrases. He could be contacted at his home inside the Fucheng Gate, Palace

yijuan 琉璃廠書肆記一卷;後記一卷 [On *Liulichang Booksellers in One Volume; A Final Volume*] (repr. Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1925), see leaves 2–5. Comments on the kinds of materials that were copied and the people who copied them in the past are in Zheng Rusi 鄭如斯 and Xiao Dongfa 肖東發, *Zhongguo shushi* 中國書史 [A History of Chinese Books] (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1996), 218–227. The sale of books and pictures are almost always mentioned as items for sale at the temple fairs. One example is Zhong Chunming 仲春明, “Zhongguo de miaohui shichang 中國的廟會市場 [China's Temple Fair Markets],” *Shanghai jingji yanjiu* 上海經濟研究 [Shanghai Economic Review], (May 1987).

Gate Entrance, at the Eastern passageway no. 16 [benshi Fuchengnei gongmenkou donglangxia shiliuhao gongzhai 本市阜成內宮門口東廊下十六號龔宅]. Customers could also place orders at the Rongbao Studio [Rongbaozhai daishou 榮寶齋代收] in Liulichang 琉璃廠. This piece of information confirmed my assumption that bookshops served as contacts for the copying business, or that copying was one of the services they could provide.<sup>12</sup>

Mr. Gong's advertisement gave the full range of texts he could prepare: birthday congratulations [*shouxu* 壽序], poems [*shici* 詩詞], matched phrases [*lianhua* 聯話], and so on. The shop offered delivery in three to seven days. He could furnish standard poetry in five- or seven-line verses, each poem 4 Chinese dollars, as well as written scrolls of poems, 50fen (cents) apiece regardless of the size or number of characters. The shop did not have a generic name, such as "copy shop;" rather, Mr. Gong simply described his services.

The copy shop in Panshi to which Teacher Xu brought his materials in 1880 likewise did not clearly state its line of business in its name. It was simply named Zhizhoutang, which was written on the front cover by the company. The company's stamp, which was embossed on the front cover and on one of the inside pages (p. 9), included Panshi, allowing us to determine the city in which the company was located.<sup>13</sup>

On the front cover of the book was the title **Three Items for Mr. Xu** [*Xu shi sanzong* 徐氏三種]. The title, which was both impersonal and descriptive, first made me wonder about how the materials had been produced and why, and it proved to be the key to my attempt to reconstruct the story of Teacher Xu. Mr. Xu seemed unlikely to write such a title for materials he had copied himself, whereas it was a natural title for a shop that had prepared and bound the materials for a customer.

12 *Beiping lüxing zhinan* 北平旅行指南 [Guide to Visiting Beiping], Ma Zhixiang 馬芷屏 ed. (1935). This copy is incomplete, and the book title is written by Wu Peifu 吳佩浮 (b. 1874), a warlord who retired in Beijing in 1932 and died there in 1939. Mr. Gong's advertisement is on p. 294.

13 It appears the copyist began to copy the *Thousand-Character Classic* and, after the preface, inserted two extra leaves of paper (four pages). As is still the practice with paid calligraphers, they supply the customer with all copies of their work, or they provide several versions of their work, expecting the customer to select the version they prefer. In the case of this book, one of the items presented to Teacher Xu, although in a hand different from that of the main copyist, is the medical prescription (discussed below) that appears after the preface but before the text of the *Thousand-Character Classic*.

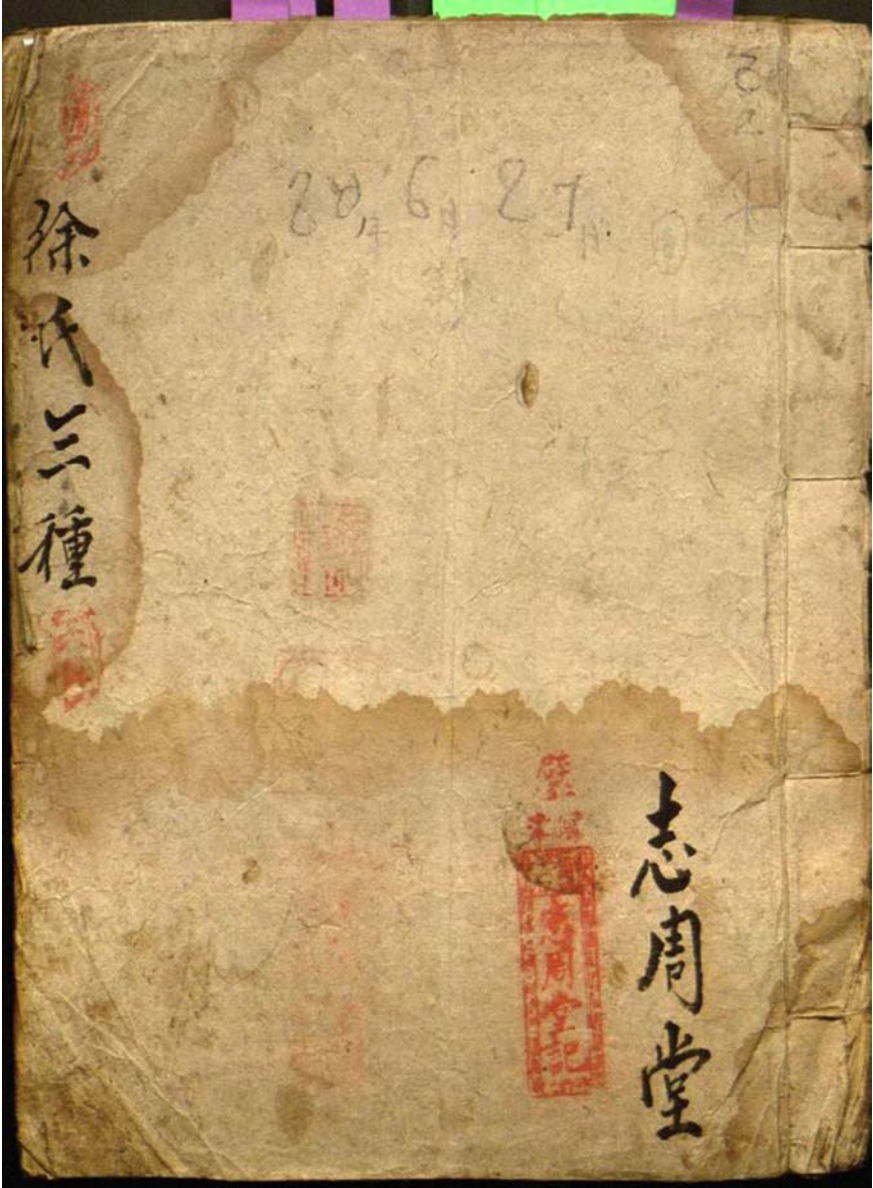


FIGURE 4.4

*Three Items for Mr. Xu* [Xushi sanzong 徐氏三種], Cover. The five-ring string binding shown here is a style used by Koreans. The copy shop placed its seal and trademark on the cover.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

### The *Thousand-Character Classic*

The biggest single project Teacher Xu requested was a copy of the *Thousand-Character Classic* [*Qianziwen* 千字文], which makes up the bulk of the text, from pages 2–100 (according to my consecutive numbering of the pages). Teacher Xu most likely wanted to have a copy of the *Thousand-Character Classic* for use as a teaching aid and for his reference. Universally recognized in China, this text was originally prepared in Chinese from an earlier Mongolian version in the early sixth century, during the Liang 梁 dynasty (502–557), by the scholar Zhou Xingsi 周興嗣 (d. 521 CE). The text uses four-character phrases that rhyme to introduce ideas about moral precepts, traditional values, natural phenomenon, and the structural and cultural traits of Chinese society.<sup>14</sup>

Over the centuries, the work became a standard primer for Chinese students. It has been used as one of the basic readers for elementary education since the Qing dynasty.<sup>15</sup> It was also one of the texts whose phrases could be used as part of the traditional civil service examinations. The text of this famous work begins with the words:

[At the beginning] The sky was dark and the earth was brown;  
The universe was formed from a vast wilderness.

*Tiandi yuan (xuan)*<sup>16</sup> *huang*  
*Yuzhou honghuang.*

- 
- 14 Printed editions of the *Thousand-Character Classic* are ubiquitous in China today. Some are adapted as children's picture books, while others contain examples of the fine calligraphy for use in improving one's own calligraphy. A version containing Chinese and English is Evelyn Lip, *1,000 Character Classic* (Singapore: SNP, 1997). The *Thousand-Character Classic* was one of the most popular texts used in traditional-style elementary education. See Ōsawa, "Keimō to kyogyō no aida," which mentions this title in many of the examples recorded. Since this publication was so widely available, why didn't Teacher Xu simply purchase a printed version?
- 15 The *Thousand-Character Classic* is listed as among the most common texts in the traditional system by many Chinese writers, as recalled in Tanaka Kenji 田中謙二, "Kyū Shina ni okeru kodōmo gakujuku seikatsu 旧支那における児童の学塾生活 [School Life for Elementary Students in Old China]," in *Tanaka Kenji chosakuji* 田中謙二著作集 [*Collected Works of Tanaka Kenji*] (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 2000), 2: 93, 98.
- 16 Scholars believe that the correct character is 玄 [*xuan*, darkness], but the transmitted character has been 元 [*yuan*, originally]. This phrase was written again on the back cover of Teacher Xu's copy, probably by a student using this copy. Perhaps Teacher Xu had been discussing this point with the student.

天地元 (玄) 黃  
宇宙洪荒.

The text includes moral teachings:

Our bodies and hair;  
Encompassing the four elements and five constant virtues.

*Gaici shenfa*  
*Sida wuchang*.<sup>17</sup>

蓋此身髮  
四大五常.

Respect what your parents have nourished.

*Gongwei jüyang*.

恭惟鞠養.

Do not impair or injure your body.

*Qigan huishang*.

豈敢毀傷.

Women should cherish purity and chastity.

*Nümu zhenjie*.

女慕貞潔.

Males should emulate the talented and capable.

---

17 According to the classical philosophy of the four elements [*sida* 四大], the four essential elements are earth, water, fire, and wind. Confucian thinking designated the five constant virtues [*wuchang* 五常] as benevolence [*ren* 仁], righteousness [*yi* 義], propriety [*li* 禮], wisdom [*zhi* 智], and truthfulness [*xin* 信].

*Nanxiao cailiang.*

男效才良.

Teacher Xu's copy of the *Thousand-Character Classic* contains annotations of each couplet, so it would make a useful reference as a teaching text. The text and its annotations were written in a clean hand by the professional copyist, who was able to produce consistently clear script in a uniform style. This is a fairly long text, consisting of both the text and an extensive commentary on each statement. Teacher Xu must have spent a lot of time as he introduced each statement to the students, explaining the new characters, and maybe having the boys memorize the text as the class proceeded through it. The commentaries were a guide for Teacher Xu's own explanations to the students. He may have asked them to copy the commentaries as well.

### A Recipe for Chinese Medicine

The second item Teacher Xu asked Zhizhoutang to copy was a prescription or a recipe for some Chinese medicine [*hanfang* 漢方]. This recipe (p. 3) was inserted between the preface and the text of the *Thousand-Character Classic*. Following the recipe, the copyist added three leaves of paper (pp. 4–9), then repeated the Zhizhoutang stamp, and began the text and commentaries of the *Thousand-Character Classic*.

The recipe was a list of natural ingredients, with the required amounts. Among the ingredients listed were: domestic ginseng [*lucan* 潞參], 5 fen (a fen 分 is the smallest unit of measurement, equaling only a few ounces, or a "pinch."); bamboo leaves [*zhuye* 竹葉], 5 fen; anther (a medicine extracted from flowers) [*huafen* 花粉], 5 fen; brown sugar [*chitang* 赤糖], 4 or 5 fen; ashes [*yanhui* 烟灰], 5 fen; Korean ginseng [*gaolishen* 高麗參], 5 fen; hot wine [*shaojiu* 燒酒], 1.5 to 2 jin; and chocolate vine [*mutong* 木通], 5 fen. The resulting mixture must have had an interesting taste, a bit sweet and a bit spicy. The recipe included a few other ingredients (not clear from the text) and instructed:

Cook this repeatedly for x hours over seven days and then take it for three or four days. After three days, the body will xx [illegible]. Then who would be unable to sleep!

*zhu erwang x shi, x qitian, baohaoqian sansitianhao, housantian shen x fa, kong bunengshui jinghu.*

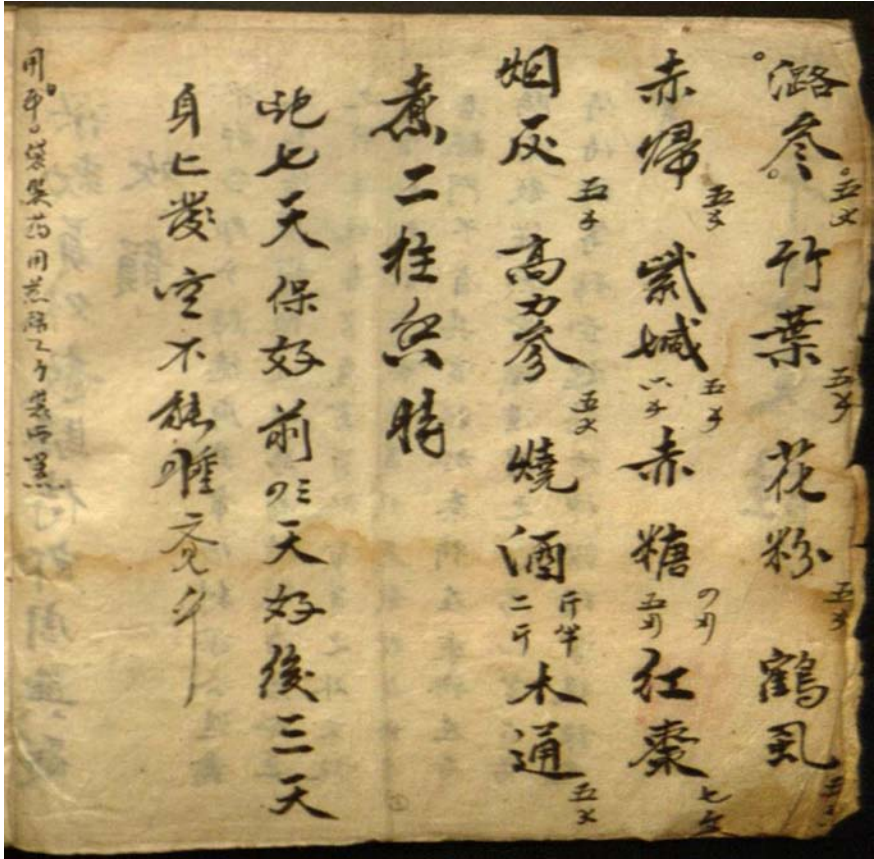


FIGURE 4.5

*Three Items for Mr. Xu* [Xushi sanzong 徐氏三種], Page 2, *Medical Prescription*. This recipe was for an herbal sleeping medicine. Educated people such as Teacher Xu were presumed to have some medical knowledge. He may have offered it to clients who requested medical advice, or he might have planned to use it for himself.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

煮二往口時，口七天，保好前三四天好，後三天身口發，空不能睡竟乎。

It appears this was medicine for obtaining a good night's sleep. It might have been for Teacher Xu's personal use or perhaps recommended by a friend who learned that Teacher Xu was having trouble sleeping. It might just as easily have been a recipe that Teacher Xu recommended to others when he offered them medical advice. It was not uncommon for educated *xiucai* to earn income on the side as medical consultants or herbal doctors. Because they were able to read medical texts, and people with no formal education considered *xiucai*

knowledgeable in all matters involving writing and books, ordinary people, the *pingmin*, felt comfortable asking educated people for medical advice.<sup>18</sup>

### Having Fun with a Riddle

Because he liked to interact with his students, Teacher Xu wanted to use a riddle [*miyu* 謎語] as an instructional tool and as a class activity that would interest the boys and engage them in a group activity. So he asked for a riddle to be copied into his book, and that became the third item for Mr. Xu along with the *Thousand-Character Classic* and the recipe for Chinese medicine.

The riddle he chose was a type known as “find the four words” [*dasizi* 打四字]. It consisted of four lines, each of which gave a clue to forming another word, and the secret word revealed the moral of the sentence. The new word was constructed by combining parts of two of the characters in the sentence. In Teacher Xu’s example, the keyword was “valuables” [*bei* 貝], which occurred in each sentence and was part of each of the newly constructed words. The first line of the riddle read: “This person could not take care of his valuables” [*conglaizhe, bei bukexing* 從來者, 貝不可行]. Combining the words “person” [*zhe* 者] and “valuables” [*bei* 貝] yields the new word “gamble” [*du* 賭], meaning the person who is not mindful about his valuables will gamble them away.

The second line reads, “They allowed their valuables to be put in jeopardy” [*zhi yinlingbei, luanfangcun* 只因令貝, 亂方寸], and the newly created word is “greedy” [*tan* 貪], meaning “they became greedy,” formed by combining the words “allowed” [*ling* 令] and “valuables” [*bei* 貝]. The third line reads, “They scattered the valuables they had” [*youkan, yiri fenbeile* 有看, 一日分貝了], with the new word “poor” [*pin* 貧], meaning “they became poor.” The fourth line reads, “It was as if they were guarding the valuables” [*yiran, shige xubeiren* 依然,

18 I am grateful to Dr. Ming Wong (Huang Ming) 黃明, a doctor of both traditional Chinese and Western medicine in Boston who reviewed this recipe and wrote to me: “This prescription could help the patient to have better energy, a clearer mind, and to sleep better. From this prescription, we could see that the patient must be a male, forty to sixty years old” (e-mail communication, September 17, 2012). My assumption that Teacher Xu was forty-three years old in 1883 when he had these materials copied puts him within the typical age range for this type of prescription according to Dr. Wong. Dr. Wong also expressed observations about emotions and ghosts, mentioned in Chapter 9.

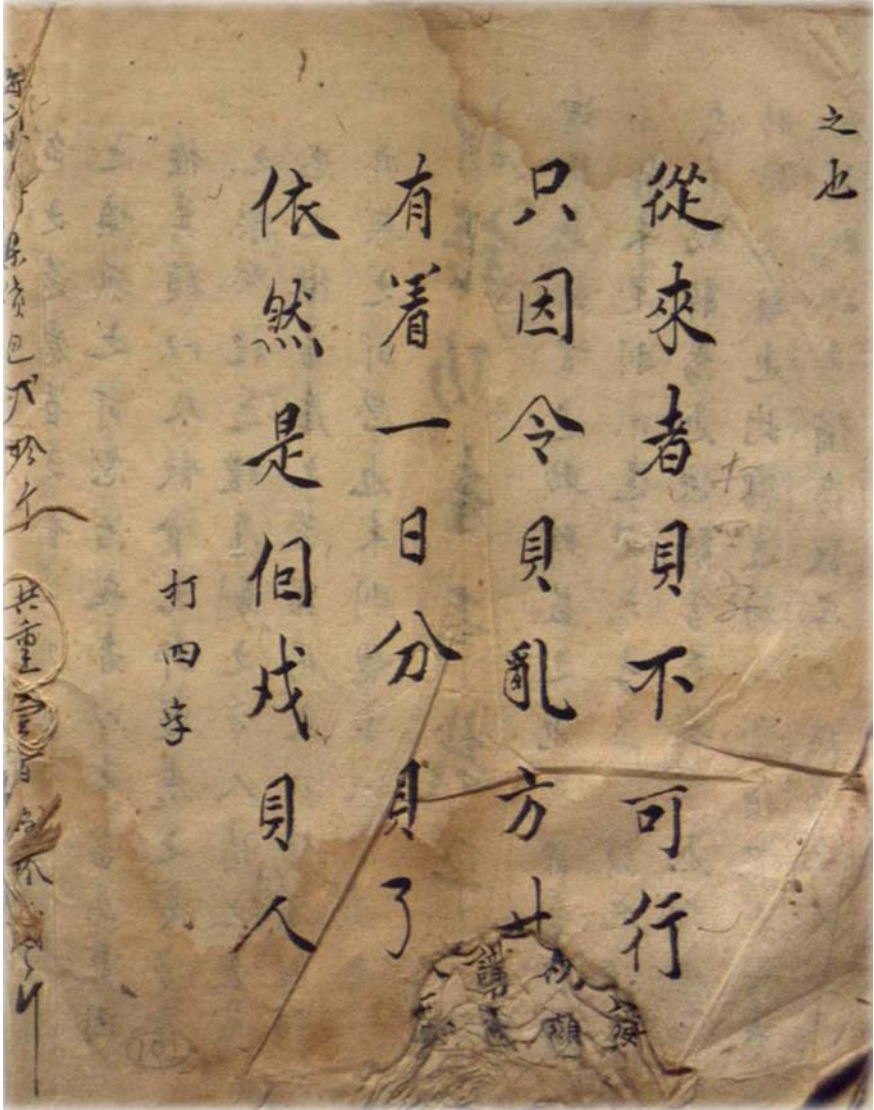


FIGURE 4.6

*Three Items for Mr. Xu* [Xushi sanzong 徐氏三種], Page 101, *A Favorite Riddle*. This shows the riddle [dasizi 打四字] that Teacher Xu used in class with his students. It challenged their ability to recognize and manipulate written characters, while also teaching a moral lesson. The key character to solving the riddle was the word bei 貝 ["valuable" or "precious"]. It would be combined with another character to form a new word.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

是個戍貝人], resulting in the new word “steal” [zei 賊], meaning “they turned to thievery in an effort to acquire valuables.”<sup>19</sup>

If we look carefully at this riddle, we can see that the characters to be combined are next to each other, and each line contains the key character 貝 *bei*. To an adult, this might be quickly apparent, but for the ten- or eleven-year-old boys he was teaching, the lines must have been a challenge to untangle, and solving the riddle likely gave them a sense of accomplishment. We can guess that Teacher Xu assigned the unraveling of each line to a different group of boys and had them compete to see which group could uncover the secret word and its meaning the most quickly. He might then have told each group to keep their findings secret and then had each group challenge the other boys to see which individuals from the other groups might be able to uncover the meanings of the other sentences. After the meaning of each sentence and all the new characters were discovered, Teacher Xu might launch into a lecture about the morality involved in the story. This activity could easily have taken up an hour or more of class time, with the chance for a hearty back-and-forth among the students. Teacher Xu must have enjoyed playing this word game with his students, knowing that, along with the new characters they might learn, the game also conveyed a lesson in morality.

Indeed, combining a lesson in conventional morality with whatever other instruction was taking place was a pervasive practice in premodern China. Regardless of the topic at hand, every opportunity was taken to insert words encouraging observance of the tenants of the widely accepted moral norms. Because of a broad assumption in Chinese society that most texts contained a moral instruction for the reader, Teacher Xu's switch from the fun of solving the riddle to talking about the moral lessons to be drawn was quite acceptable if not expected.

### Jottings on the Final Pages

On the final pages, inside and outside the back cover of the bound book he had had produced, Teacher Xu wrote down some notes that reveal more about

19 Interesting points about riddles in China, both traditional and contemporary, are in Wang Fan 王仿, ed., *Zhongguo miyu daquan* 中國謎語大全 [*Collection of Chinese Riddles*] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1983), 1–16, 544–556. Examples of more sophisticated riddles with contemporary subject matter are in Yu Hongnian 于洪年, *Zhongguo miyu jicheng (shang)* 中國謎語集成, 上 [*Collection of Chinese Riddles, vol. 1*] (Ji'nan: Mingtian chubanshe, 1985).

the man and the role of this text in his life. For example, we know that he was a teacher from the fact that, on the inside cover (p. 102) he wrote the names of six of his students. His favorite must have been Wang Jūfu 王聚福, an eleven-year-old who was originally from Pingding 平丁 County in Shanxi Province. He wrote Wang's address as Jilin Province, Henan Road, Hexingyin Department Store [Hexingyin baihuodian 和興陘百貨店]. We might infer that the boy lived with his parents above their general store. If this were the case, we can guess that young Wang Jufu did not come from a wealthy family, but that his parents were shopkeepers, and they lived in the same building as the shop. Modern readers might hear the words "department store" and have in mind a large building stocked with ordered shelves of goods. But this was not usually the case in late Qing or Republican China, where modest shops could easily adopt a grand name. Even in the People's Republic of China, many small shops cluttered with soft drinks, candy, and cigarettes call themselves "supermarkets" [*chaoshi* 超市], even though in physical size they are more on the order of a large kiosk.

Teacher Xu also wrote down the names of some of his other students and added comments about their personalities or their "fate." We could take these characterizations as a psychological insight that Teacher Xu had about each boy. But it is more likely that because he was literate, ordinary people likely saw Teacher Xu as someone who was able to analyze people and tell things about the future. In other words, the *pingmin* often believed that educated people were versed to some degree in fortunetelling. Many *xiucai* did turn to fortunetelling as a way to earn some income, and they copied and consulted the fortunetelling manuals available. Thus Teacher Xu might have been predicting the future of his students as much as he was characterizing their personalities.

Teacher Xu characterized his student Wang Kemin 王克敏 as optimistic and gifted, writing: "the sun and moon are bright, fortune and blessings" [*riyue-guang, fuxiang* 日月光, 福祥]. He considered Dong Yongfa 董永發 happy-go-lucky and fortunate [*hanlaishuwang, lutian* 寒來暑往, 祿滇].

Teacher Xu added his own motto to the page: "Seize the day and you will succeed" [*Zhiri gaosheng* 指日, 高陞]. It is a good motto for the students, but Teacher Xu did not necessarily intend to let the boys see his comments about them, and the motto might reflect more the character of Teacher Xu, who was an active and outgoing person.

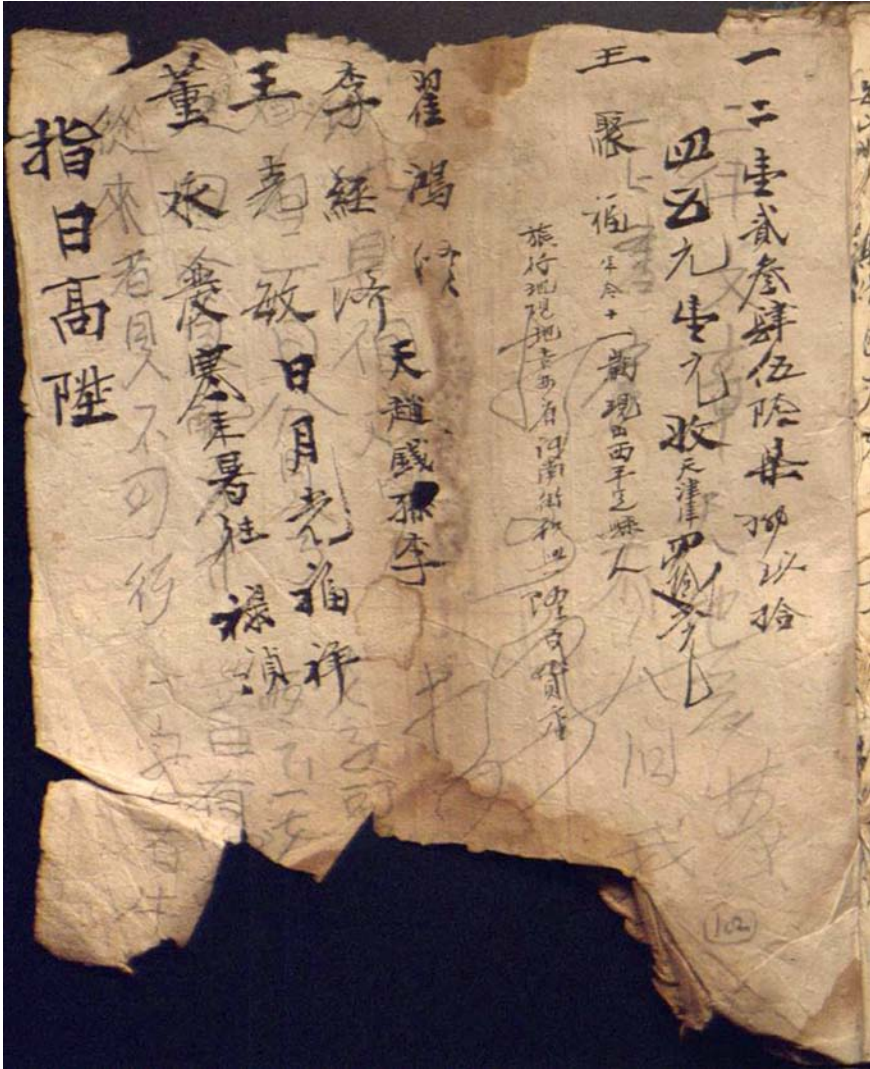


FIGURE 4.7

*Three Items for Mr. Xu* [Xushi sanzong 徐氏三種], Page 102, Student Names. On this page, Teacher Xu wrote the names of some of his students, along with a comment on their fortune. He also wrote his motto, "Seize the day and you will succeed" [Zhiri gaosheng 指日，高陞], meant to encourage himself and his students.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

## Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to examine **Three Items for Mr. Xu** and to set it in a plausible context. By making a series of logical assumptions, we can estimate generally when the texts were copied and the role they played in a typical Chinese class at the time. By extrapolating from clues in the materials, we can make other reasonable guesses about Teacher Xu, who commissioned the texts to be compiled, as well as his personality and his approach to teaching and to his students.

My overall assumptions about the book are as follows: the book was copied in about 1880, when Teacher Xu was about forty years old. This I consider was the first generation of the book's life.

At some point, after using the book in class, perhaps in 1883, when he was forty-three years old, Teacher Xu gave the book to one of his favorite students Wang Bingming 王秉鳴, who proudly practiced writing his name on the back cover. He wrote his name five times, one of which is incomplete because the last character of his name is missing. I assume that in 1883 Wang was about twelve years old, a typical age for studying the *Thousand-Character Classic* and being able to solve the riddle in the text.

From his writing of the names of several of his students, along with some comments about their personalities and their future, I surmise that Teacher Xu had a caring and attentive relationship with his students. The riddle indicates that he could make the lessons fun for the students. It would not be unusual for a teacher who felt close to his students to make a gift of one of their class texts to one of his favorites. Wang must have treasured the book and his memories of Teacher Xu. He may have read the book many times out of nostalgia. Wang's possession of the text between 1883 and 1920 was the second generation of the book's life.

I think that Wang Bingming 王秉鳴 kept the book for more than thirty years, during which time he grew older and became bald. It is possible he did not continue his formal schooling and thus found rereading the text useful and interesting. The book then passed to another young student. Whether Wang gave the book to the student or he died and the book was left behind are both possibilities. We have only one specific date in the book: when the young student wrote the date he received the book on the cover in pencil, June 27, 1920. That was the third generation in the life of the book.

That student wrote another comment on the inside of the front cover that seems to link Wang to the book. He must have seen "old" Mr. Wang lovingly reading the book, so the student wrote: "This is the book that retired bald-headed Wang used to read so earnestly" [*Wang yuanwai san, tulaorenjia, ta*

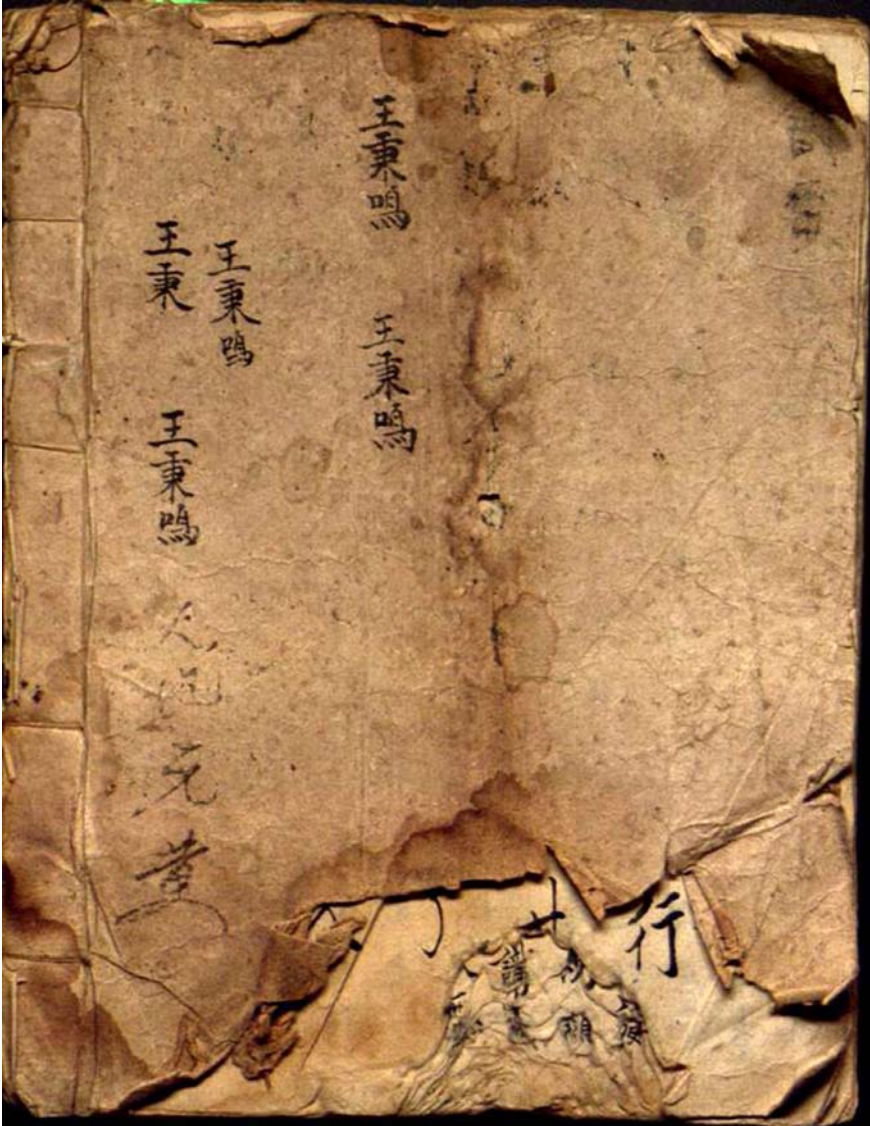


FIGURE 4.8

*Three Items for Mr. Xu* [Xushi sanzong 徐氏三種], Page 103, *Favorite Student*. The student Wang Bingming 王秉鳴 practiced writing his name five times, but in one of them he did not complete it. I assume Teacher Xu give this text to young Wang, which is why he wrote his name on the back page.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

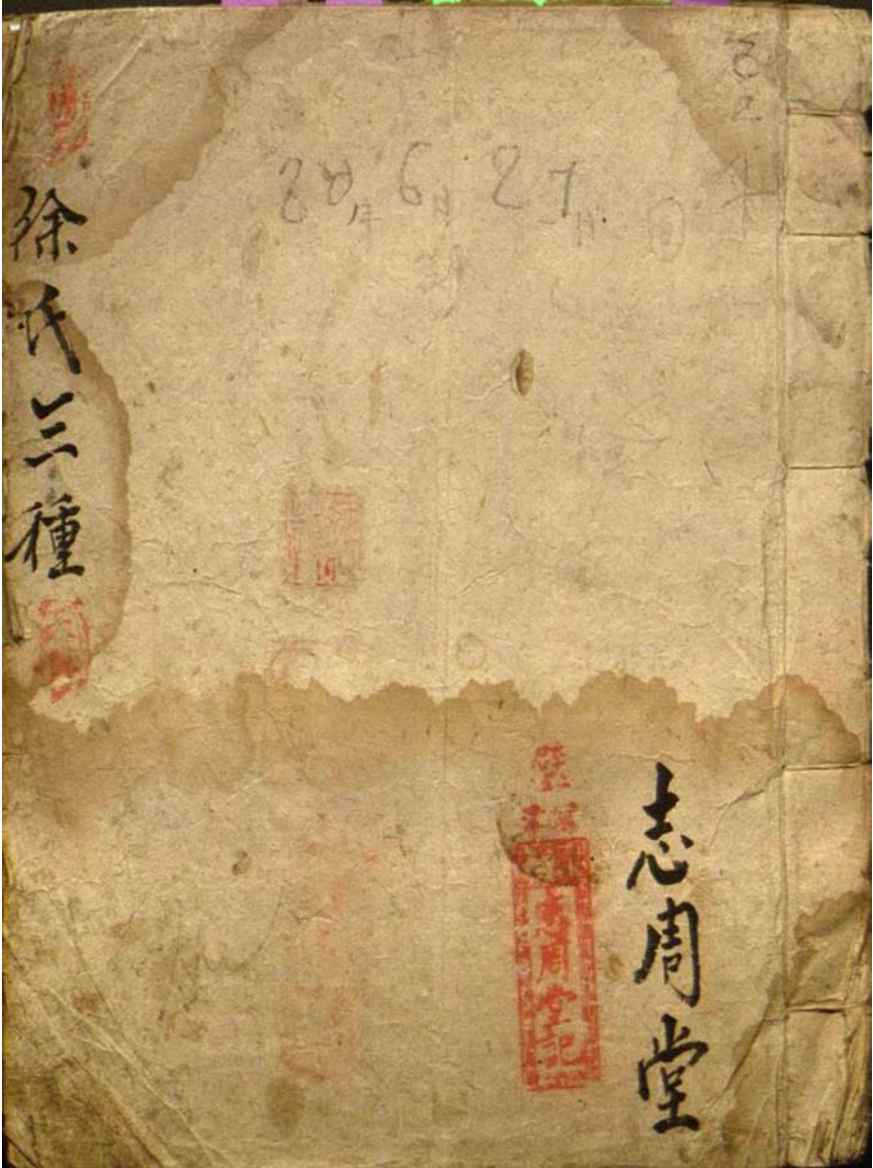


FIGURE 4.9

*Three Items for Mr. Xu* [Xushi sanzong 徐氏三種], Cover, Showing Date of 1920. I assume that June 27, 1920, was the date that the bald-headed Wang Bingming 王秉鳴 gave this book to a young student, who wrote the date in pencil on the cover.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

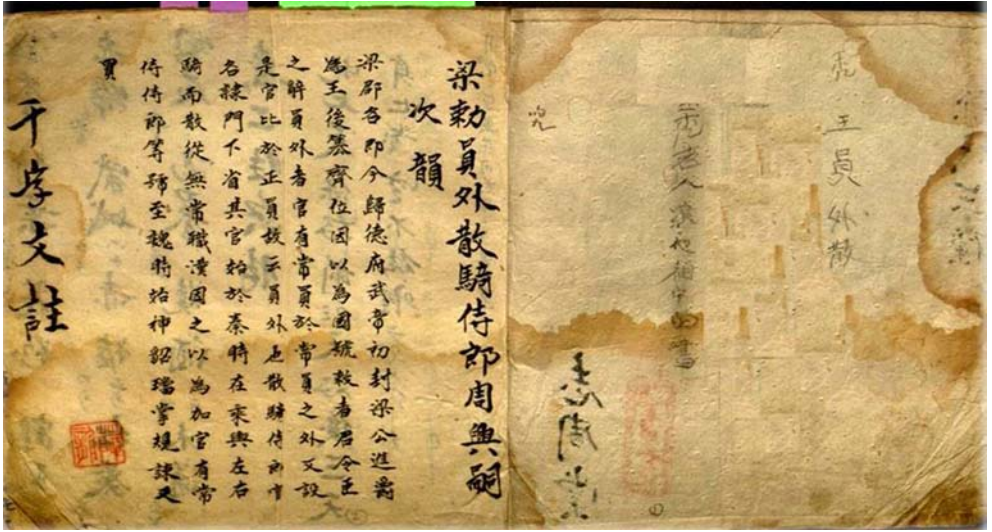


FIGURE 4.10

*Three Items for Mr. Xu* [Xushi sanzong 徐氏三種], Pages 1 and 2, Bald-Headed Wang. The student who received this text in June 1920 wrote the phrase on page 1: "This is the book that retired bald-headed Wang used to read so earnestly" [Wang yuanwai san, tulaorenjia, ta kanzhong de shu 王員外散，秃老人家，他看中的書].

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

*kanzhong de shu* 王員外散，秃老人家，他看中的書]. The young student used the designation "retired official" [*yuan waisan* 員外散] to refer to bald-headed Wang, a phrase that was explained in some detail on the very next open page he looked at. On that page (p. 2), the first line of the preface to the *Thousand-Character Classic* reads, "Rhymed prose by the retired official with imperial appointment Zhou Xingsi" [*Liang chiyuan waisan qi shilang Zhou Xingsi ci yun* 梁勅員外散騎侍郎周興嗣次韻] (underlining added). This was followed by a paragraph explaining the term "retired official." Our young student noticed the phrase and was aware of its meaning, so he proudly used it in his own description of bald-headed Wang.<sup>20</sup>

Judging from the handwriting of the boy in 1920, he could have been about twelve to fifteen years old. If he had been born in 1908 and was twelve years old in 1920, he could have been fifty-eight years old in 1966, when the Cultural Revolution erupted in China. That was not a good time to hold on to old texts

<sup>20</sup> Some young student, possibly this boy, also did some scribbling in pencil on the inside back cover (p. 102), writing over the notes on students that Teacher Xu had written. I believe private elementary schools still used traditional texts in the curriculum in China's provincial cities in 1920.

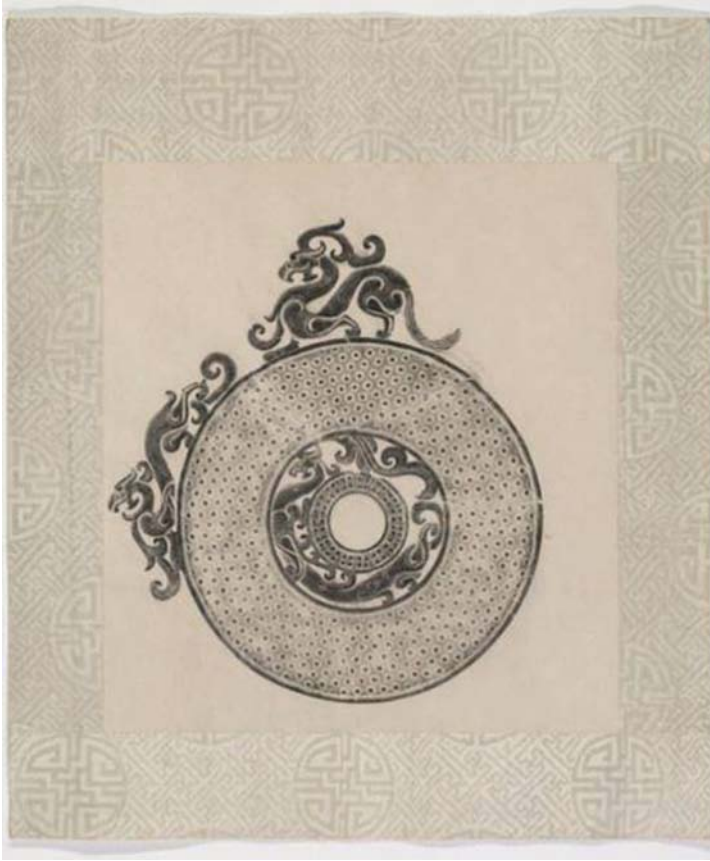


FIGURE 4.11

*Translucent Jade Disk, Trademark of the Copy Shop.* The translucent jade disk [bi jin ming 璧津冥] was the trademark used by the Hall of Great Purpose [Zhizhoutang 志周堂] in Panshi 磐石, Jilin 吉林 Province, which copied Teacher Xu's materials for his textbook.

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because they were criticized as reflecting feudalistic thinking and values. Given the tenor of the times, it is possible that he hid the book. Sometime after the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976 and possibly after he died, the book was found by his relatives. They passed it on to a used book dealer (or to a paper recycler, who then sold it to a used book dealer). As mentioned earlier, many of the *chaoben* sold in flea markets and old book markets in China nowadays (2018) were obtained in this manner by the book dealers.

This last explanation is pure guesswork because we have no way of documenting this phase of the book's life. However, this seems like a plausible



FIGURE 4.12

*An Image of Teacher Xu? The man in this photo was actually named Teacher Liu [Liu laoshi 劉老師]. But his hearty and welcoming smile may be reminiscent of Teacher Xu [Xu laoshi 徐老師]. The photo was taken about 1918.*

SIDNEY D. GAMBLE PHOTOGRAPHS, DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, DUKE LIBRARY

and unremarkable explanation for how the book ended up in Beijing, where I bought it at Panjiayuan in September 2005 during the Midautumn Festival. I own the book, now in the fourth generation of its life cycle.

Perhaps the most important point of this chapter is that these materials need to be respected because they were created by *pingmin*. These cultural

artifacts were used in their daily lives. This bound volume was used by Teacher Xu in the performance of his profession as a teacher and to earn a living. It was used by Teacher Xu's students to learn valuable skills, which would help them to become productive adults with a degree of formal education that could increase their standing in society. When we first view these items, they may not seem to have a clear context. But they are part of a larger and culturally rich milieu. They were part of the lives of ordinary people in China in the late Qing and early Republican period. In order to understand them fully, not only their materiality but the contexts in which they were actively used by living people, we need to bring them to life, to animate them by making them props in an ongoing human drama—because that is what they were. In analyzing **Three Items for Mr. Xu**, I have created a story that is logical and plausible and that helps bring the *chaoben* and their owners to life.

### Calculating the Dates of This Book

The dates in this chapter regarding the lives of the protagonists and the book's creation and transmission were calculated as follows. Based on the different handwriting in the book and the one clear date of 1920, I tried to reconstruct the book's life cycle. Certainly, the stamp of the copy shop on the cover with the name of Panshi in Northeast China was also important in establishing the context of the place where it was produced.

Based on how an elementary class was organized in the late Qing period, it was clear that these materials (except for the drug prescription) would be useful in classroom instruction. If the teacher was a member of the educated population, perhaps a *xiuca*, it would be evident why he asked to have the prescription copied down, because, as stated above and in other chapters, many holders of the lowest-level government degree earned income by acting as herbal doctors. They were literate and were looked up to by many people in society, who would have considered it natural for them to give medical advice and pass along prescriptions.

To estimate the time frame of the creation of the book and Teacher Xu's life, I took the one clearly written date of 1920 on the inside front cover and calculated back three generations, considering roughly thirty years as a generation. A new generation begins when young adults marry and have a child. I assumed in my calculations that these were poor people, not high on the economic ladder, so marriage occurred late for males (late twenties or early thirties), which was when a child was born. Using this imprecise calculation, I calculate that Teacher Xu might have been born about 1840. I assume that he had the book



FIGURE 4.13

*Selling Mantou.* The man in the foreground is selling mantou 饅頭, a steamed bread that is popular in Manchuria and North China. Considered an affordable and filling food, it can be filled with ground meat, vegetables, or sweet red bean paste. The photo was probably taken in Beijing around 1918.

SIDNEY D. GAMBLE PHOTOGRAPHS, DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, DUKE LIBRARY

bound in 1880. Judging from the paper used and the materials inside, this date seems reasonable. I assume that Teacher Xu was forty-three years old in 1883, when he gave the book as a memento to twelve-year-old Wang Bingming 王秉鳴, the boy who became bald-headed Wang. Under the old system, students in Chinese elementary classes were usually between seven and sixteen years old, so I selected twelve years old as the most typical age for students in the elementary private schools.<sup>21</sup>

The third generation of the book's life began in 1920, when bald-headed Wang, or someone else, gave the book to a student. I assume the date of June 27, 1920, was written by a student around age twelve when he received it. Judging from the handwriting in pencil, I guess that this student was of elementary-school age. If he was twelve years old in 1920, then he had been born in 1908. Wang Bingming 王秉鳴, the bald-headed man who might have given the book to the young student might have been born in 1871, and his baldness at age forty-nine was noticeable to the boy.

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21 These are commonly accepted dates for the ages of elementary schoolchildren in traditional China. They are repeatedly cited by Ōsawa, "Keimō to kyogyō no aida."

## A Qing Dynasty Astrologer's Predictions for the Future

### 清朝算命師對未來的占卜

#### Collecting Materials\*

In January 2012, I was in Shanghai and naturally sought out several markets where I hoped to find research materials like those I have been collecting since 2004. Every Sunday, the Confucius temple in Shanghai holds a book fair in the main courtyard of the temple grounds, so that was an obvious place for me to explore. The majority of books for sale were produced in China after liberation in 1949, especially in the late 1970s and 1980s, when book publishing expanded after the Cultural Revolution concluded. Publications from the Cultural Revolution era seem to sell well in Shanghai and Beijing because they evoke nostalgia for a simpler time, especially among people who do not remember the period very well.<sup>1</sup> Middlebrow novels, biographies of emperors or classical heroes, and translations into modern Chinese of classical

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\* I thank two colleagues at Suffolk University in Boston, Yang Xi 楊曦 and Zheng Da 鄭達, for their help and advice with this chapter. A version of this chapter was published as: "Collecting Research Materials in Shanghai: A Qing Dynasty Astrologer's Predictions for the Future," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society China*, n.s., 75, no. 1 (2013): 139–161. This version reflects additional study after that version was published, especially of fortunetelling methods.

1 My analysis of the people who buy materials from the Cultural Revolution period, from the vantage point of 2012, follows. Those now in their seventies and eighties who were adults and thus most strongly affected by the political activities during the Cultural Revolution, remember the period vividly. They do not want to buy these materials. Young people now in their teens or twenties do not remember the Cultural Revolution, so for them it has no special resonance, especially since the Chinese government does not allow a thorough discussion of those events. People in their forties to sixties, who were youngsters in the ten years from 1966 to 1976, seem to have some nostalgia for those years, when life was simpler. Bad was bad and good was good. Every young child was dedicated to some public good, symbolized by wearing a red armband. If granny or your teacher cried, it was because they were still part of Old China, when probably they had committed sins. At the book fairs in China I have attended, people in their forties to sixties are the most active in buying, selling, and collecting Cultural Revolution materials. The much younger and the much older tend to avoid browsing through those materials.

stories published since the 1980s constituted a majority of the works on sale. Under a cold, cloudy, and threatening sky, the temple grounds were filled with rows of long tables covered with old books and magazines, rolled-up posters, stamp albums, and how-to books on cooking and travel.<sup>2</sup>

Happily, for me, one or two of the booksellers had small piles of old-fashioned books, sometimes bundled together in plastic bags. The materials I seek are often found in small bundles because that is how they are acquired by the urban booksellers. Merchants who buy old items, and sometimes those who collect trash from rural households, gather together the unwanted written materials they find and sell them to a network of used booksellers. Among many rural families, the old books once belonged to a grandfather or an elderly aunt and were kept in the bottom of a trunk or even on the shelves of a stable or workroom. It is not unusual to find signs that a goat or perhaps a rat has taken a bite out of the paper. The younger people, who cannot easily read the traditional complex characters and cannot understand the unpunctuated classical Chinese text, discard these materials after the death of their elderly relative.

Although the booksellers circulate old books toward the larger cities, which have more active book markets, the materials tend to circulate within the same geographic area. For example, the book markets in Beijing tend to have materials from regions in North and Northeast China, such as Liaoning and southern Jilin, Hebei, Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Shandong. In Shandong I found a number of old books in Ji'nan and Qufu, the birthplace of Confucius, all of which seem to have originated in Shandong. A few years earlier, books I found in Guilin all seem to have come from within Guangxi Province. It is exciting to find materials that can be identified as coming from the region where they were acquired.

On January 8, 2012, the day of my visit to the Shanghai Confucian Temple in Shanghai, I bought a number of interesting materials. The book that I describe in this chapter is a handwritten horoscope. It lacks a complete title page, so I call this work **Astrologer's Predictions 1899**, and it measures 9½ inches

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2 In the flea markets and book-selling neighborhoods in China's cities, I have been surprised that each market contains several stands selling Cultural Revolution items. They are always filled to overflowing with those materials. When someone enters the shop hoping to sell the owner a piece of Cultural Revolution memorabilia, the item in question is carefully examined, often using a magnifying glass, to establish its authenticity. This is perhaps because the inexpensive items from those days are easy to reproduce, especially the Mao badges that often didn't show much wear or tear.

(24.1cm) high by 5¼ inches (23.5 cm) wide, giving it the typical oblong shape of traditional Chinese books. The paper is handmade and unbleached, leaving it a yellowish or tan color, and it was cut using traditional methods as shown by the fuzzy upper and lower edges, rather than the sharp cuts that would have been made by a machine. Each sheet is folded in the middle, and the sheets are bound along the right-hand margin. The pages are bound with paper twine. Because of the low quality of the paper and the use of twine to bind the pages, I conclude that this book was intended to be used by the common people of the time. They would have accepted the matter-of-fact presentation of the fortuneteller's horoscope on inexpensive paper without any trappings of refinement in the calligraphy or artisanal workmanship in the paper and binding. They are exactly the people whose lives I want to better understand.<sup>3</sup>

This thin book has eleven sheets of paper, folded to make twenty-two individual pages counting the front cover as page 1. I purchased this book as part of a bundle of three works of similar size and composition. I paid RMB 200 (roughly US\$30) for all three, which I thought was slightly higher than the market price, but I did not feel like bargaining and thought that the seller would appreciate what I paid, and he did.

### An Astrologer's Predictions: The Mechanics

The work I bought that pleasant Sunday morning was produced by a fortuneteller who was an astrologer. He used a solar calendar closely related to the twenty-four solar terms [*jieqi* 節氣] and based on the heavenly stems and earthly branches [*tiangan dizhi* 天干地支] system of combining symbols to calculate periods of time.<sup>4</sup> He combined that with a method of classifying the elements according to the ideas of yinyang and five elements [*yinyang wuxing* 陰陽五行] to produce calculations that also included the power of stars and the deities associated with them. He then might have compared his two sets of calculations, resulting in an august and accurate chart of fate [*ziwei mingpan* 紫薇命盤] (pp. 2 and 3 in the *chaoben*). That chart had all the elements laid out in a logical manner to predict the fate of its subject. The front cover of the book, which would have been a folded sheet that I would have numbered

3 In my collection at present are six other horoscopes organized in roughly the same style. The title pages(s) can contain some information about the person whose future is being predicted, but even that information usually omits the place name where the study was written. In many cases the first few pages have fallen away from over-use.

4 This system is explained in Chapter 9 and referenced in the notes below.



FIGURE 5.1

*The Sunday Used Book Market in Shanghai. The market is held at the Confucian Temple [Wenmiao 文廟]. It begins early (7:00 AM) and ends early (about 3:00 PM). The photo was taken in 2012, when I bought some chaoben for sale under the eaves seen in the background.*

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

pages 1 and 2, had fallen off sometime in the past, so the first page I have was probably the first inside page of the actual book. (It ought to have been numbered page 3, but I count it as page 1.) The front cover is the page most likely to be handled roughly, so it is not unusual for it to be missing from these bound works. Had it been intact, the front cover and inside page might have provided crucial information about the work, such as its title, the studio or temple name of the astrologer, and, on the inside cover, possibly the name of the client for whom the work was written or the name of the astrologer and the date the work was produced. Unfortunately, this particular *chaoben* had none of that information.

The phrase “year 14” [*shisi nian* 十四年] is written horizontally across the top of page 1. I believe this is incomplete since it represents only the second-half of the original two-page title pages of the *chaoben*, and if we were able to read the entire phrase, it would be “twenty-fourth year of the Guangxu emperor;”

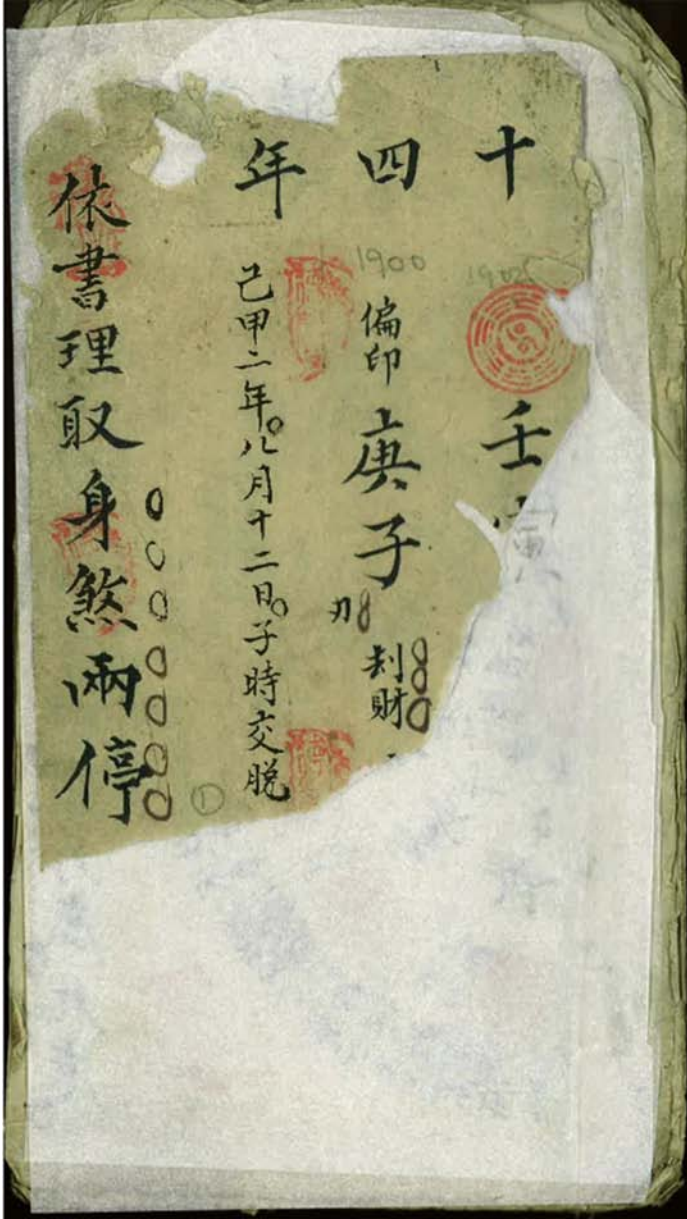


FIGURE 5.2

*Astrologer, Cover.* The actual cover had fallen off because of use, leaving only this half, originally tucked away inside the horoscope. Basic information about the horoscope had to be reconstructed from what remained. I surmised it was “Twenty-fourth year of the Guangxu emperor” [Guangxu 24 nian 光緒二十四年], that is, 1898, the year in which the subject of this horoscope was born.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

that is, 1898. It appears the subject of this horoscope was born late in the solar calendar year of 1898, so that when the year changed a few months later, the infant gained a year and was suddenly listed as two years old. The fact that the subject is two years old in 1899 is given on page 8.

The first remaining page of this *chaoben* presents a summary of the subject's major fate indicators. We begin at the right-hand margin and read the vertically written text leftward. This second half-page of the two-page front cover contains all sorts of truncated phrases. We find the term *renyen* 壬寅, which, according to later information, represents the stem-branch combination of the day the subject was born. We then see the term *gengzi* 庚子, which represents the hour of the subject's birth. Above the *gengzi* is the term *pianyin* 偏印 [partial sign], which refers to the heavenly stem that follows it; below are the terms *ren* 刃 [blade] and *jiecai* 劫財 [unpredictable fortune], which refer to the earthly branch written just above it.

We then find the sentence *jijia liangnian, bayue sihsiri, zishi jiaotuo* 己甲二年，八月十二日，子時交脫 [The changes in fortune will take place on August 12 of the *ji* 己 and *jia* 甲 years, in the hour with a *zi* 子 character]. In the Chinese calendar, each year is given a two-character designation based on the system of ten heavenly stems and twelve earthly branches, as mentioned above. Every few years, a year containing either the *jia* or the *ji* character appears, and the astrologer calculated that these would be years of a change in fortune for the subject of this book. According to this work, the subjects' fate would change gradually from the most negative to a bit less negative, to slightly positive, to the most positive. Then it begins to swing back the other way, with changes every six years.<sup>5</sup>

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5 The method used by the fortuneteller to calculate our subject's fortune in this work seems to have involved a combination of two popular approaches. The first was to determine the basic yinyang symbols and their related signs under which the subject was born. The resultant eight hexagrams are based on the year, month, day, and hour of the subject's birth, which are the four pillars [*sizhu* 四柱] upon which one's life is founded. Each of these is connected to one of the calendrical calculations based on the traditional system of ten heavenly stems and twelve earthly branches. It is a system that indicates one's destiny in life, one's situation on any given day or month, and how to find the most successful occupation. The fortuneteller then linked these results to an astrological system, sometimes called Determining Fate [*piming* 批命], which depended on detailed knowledge of the Chinese symbolic calendar and astrology in which the influence of all the elements considered result in an outline of the subject's fate in the future. This explanation is modified from that found in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese\\_fortune\\_telling/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_fortune_telling/), accessed April 3, 2012. The basic information that a fortuneteller might take into account in constructing a horoscope is enough to fill a thick volume. See Yang

The final phrase on page 1 is on the extreme left, *Yishuliqu, shensha liangting* 依書理取，身煞兩停 [According to the theory of the documents, the body and the baleful force is of equivalent strength]. This might indicate the idea of the subject's ability to survive the vicissitudes of life. Indeed, the commentary for each year tends to evaluate the health of the subject and the dangers that might be encountered, part of the prediction of critical moments in the subject's future. According to the calculations of He Wumeng, this baby was born in the *wuxu* year [*wuxu nian* 戊戌年; i.e., 1898], in the *guihai* 癸亥 month (December), on the *renyin* 壬寅 day of the fifth of the month, and at the *gengzi* 庚子 hour. The hour was from 11:00 pm to 1:00 am, between December 4 and December 5, so the child was born around midnight.<sup>6</sup>

By Chinese calculations, when the child was born, he was one year old. A few months later, the new year began, and the baby became two years old. Exactly how to calculate the subject's age seems to have bedeviled the astrologer, who was never sure what age to assign to his subject, as seen in the discussion below. I conclude that the horoscope was written in 1899, probably after the child had passed his 100-day anniversary, considered the time when mother and child could begin to meet other people beyond the family.

According to the astrologer, 1902 would be a crucial year for the young child whose fortune was being written and who would then be about age five, meaning he would be more likely to survive childhood illnesses and grow to adulthood. In 1902 the negative influences of the *ji* year in which the child was born would begin to give way slowly to the more positive influences of the next *jia* year, which would arrive in 1904. The horoscope for 1904 (p. 10) lists the child as "seven and eight years old," which reflects the idea, I believe, of the child being given an additional year of age shortly after being born because of the quick arrival of the new lunar year.

This book begins its commentary in 1899, when the child was two years old. Detailed horoscopes are given beginning (on p. 8) with 1900 and continuing with year-by-year predictions until 1955, when the subject would have been

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Chang 楊昶 et al., ed., *Zhuantong wenhua, quanshu* 傳統文化，全書 [*Traditional Culture, Complete*] (Harbin: Heilongjiang kexue zhishu chubanshe, 2012), 576.

6 For guidance in how this horoscope was calculated by the astrologer I benefited from the expertise of two scholars. He Wumeng 何無夢 at Duke University and Shao Yunfei 邵韻霏 at the University of Chicago. Their understanding of the methods of fate prediction used and their clear explanations were of great help. He Wumeng calculated the date of birth of this child. On the power of the baleful stars in these calculations, see Ching-lang Hou (Hou Jinlang) 候錦郎, "The Chinese Belief in Baleful Stars," in *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion*, ed. Holmes Welch and Anna Sidel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 193–228.



FIGURE 5.3

*Astrologer, Pages 2 and 3, The Chart of Fate. Using all his calculations, the fortuneteller made an overall determination about how the stars and the elements would interact to influence the life of the subject of this horoscope. It was so colorful and intriguing that I bought it at the used book market.*

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

fifty-eight years old. It is not unusual for a cycle of predictions to cover sixty years. The sixtieth year is known as a complete cycle [*huanli* 還曆], when all the possible combinations of the heavenly stems and earthly branches used to designate years have been completed, and the grand cycle begins again. The sixtieth-birthday celebration is of special importance because of this and might have called for a new set of predictions for the upcoming years. Therefore, ending the predictions at this point, when he was fifty-eight, did not mean that the subject would die but, rather, that a new set of predictions should be obtained.

When I first glanced through the book at the temple fair, I was struck by the two-page spread (on pp. 2 and 3) of a large circle constructed by the fortuneteller to be used as a guide to determining the subject's fortune. The circle, called the chart of fate [*mingpan* 命盤], has five concentric rings. In the center of this circle, the "hub" is a listing of the eight trigrams, which form the basis of traditional Chinese philosophy. The trigrams are based on eight sets of three lines each, with unbroken lines being elements of *yang* 陽, roughly considered positive elements, while broken lines are said to represent *yin* 陰, which are negative aspects. But only two of the trigrams represent pure yin or pure yang. Rather, most are combinations of both. It is not clear whether these trigrams are meant to apply precisely to the reading of the elements in the circle or are more a decoration for the center of the ring.

The innermost ring contains the twelve earthly stems that appear in the year designations of the lunar calendar. For example, to read one of the "spokes" in the ring, the reader can locate the designation *shen* 申 in the innermost circle that constitutes ring 1 (roughly at the two o'clock position). Proceeding outward from ring 1, rings 2 and 3 is a larger box with the term *guanlu* 官祿 [official fortune]. This indicates good fortune in one's career or occupation. In traditional Chinese thinking, to achieve an official position with government rank was a sure path to good income and social status, so the phrase has only positive connotations. Ring 4 has a red seal inside this box that says *qiang* 強 [strong], meaning that years with this stem in their designation will be years of good fortune. Also in that box is written *tianquan* 天犬 or *tiangou* 天狗 [heavenly dog], which refers to the negative element, a star, that will need to be overcome. Folk beliefs in Chinese astrology say that the heavenly dog must be beaten back in order for the good fortune to take place. Conversely, the heavenly dog was seen by some as a protective star.<sup>7</sup>

7 This is only one of several methods of calculating fortunes. For explanations of some of these methods, see Peter Shen, *The Traditional Art of Chinese Fortune Reading* (Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia: Pelanduk Publications, 1998); Richard J. Smith, *Fortune-Tellers and Philosophers: Divination in Traditional Chinese Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991). Many of the elements taken into account by the astrologer are enumerated in Wu Kang 吳康, ed., *Zhonghua shenmi wenhua cidian* 中華神秘文化辭典 [*Dictionary of China's Mysterious Culture*] (Haikou: Hainan chubanshe, 2002), esp. 493–539. An example of a chart of fate similar to the one in the astrologer's book discussed in this chapter appears in Yabuuchi Kiyoshi 藪内清, *Chūgoku no tenmon rekihō* 中国の天文曆法 [*Chinese Astrological Calendars*] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1969), 190. It is based on a Tang-dynasty formula developed by Zheng Chuhui 鄭處誨 an official who received a *jinsi* 進士 [presented scholar] degree in 834. His appoint-

The overall positive aspects of this stem designation are listed in the outermost ring 5, which gives a number of influences and star deities that preside within this *shen* designation. The influential element is *huayin* 化印 [using the seal]. This is a positive sign because the seal on a document can produce good results, meaning that decisions will be made and the good fortune will come into effect. Next are several star deities: the evening star Venus [Changgeng 長庚], when seen in the West is brighter than the others; courier horses [*yima* 驛馬], means this star has the power to effect change; the god of constellations [*bazuo* 八座] brings brightness and clarity; the god of literature [Wenchang 文昌], officially known as Wenchang dijun 文昌帝君, brings a successful professional career. Thus by identifying the earthly stem in each year designation in the innermost ring, the subject of this study can read outward to discover which forces will determine his fate for the year with the *shen* designation.<sup>8</sup>

The other decorations are the various red seals and stamps left by the fortuneteller, such as the seal for “strong” mentioned above. In this chart, some rings are marked *ruo* 弱 [weak]. Some seals are in the form of a cartoon-like scholar figure. More important for our purposes are the seals in the shape of a leaf on the pages with the chart and on every page over the year prediction. This seal has the term *guangde* 廣德 [wide virtue]. This might be the studio name or the trademark of the astrologer who prepared this set of predictions. Such trademarks used in this manner were not registered or controlled, so it is almost impossible to trace it back to its owner.

### An Astrologer’s Predictions: Telling the Future

This person is presumed to be male because commissioning an astrologer to prepare this prediction of the future must have been expensive and (unfortunately) few families would consider their daughter’s future to be of sufficient import to predict. Her future would be tied to that of the family of her betrothed as soon as she joined his household. Most likely, the subject of this prediction

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ments show a steady progression of high bureaucratic office, first at the national level at the Imperial Court, and later as a representative of the central government in regional areas.

8 Explanations of many of the symbols used by the astrologer are in E.T.C. Werner, *A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology* (Taipei: Cave Book, 1961). Highly detailed instructions for constructing a chart of fate are in “Ziwei mingpan 紫薇命盤 [August and Accurate Chart of Fate],” <http://baike.baidu.com/view/6066456.htm>, accessed April 3, 2012. These symbols are also discussed in Wu, *Zhonghua shenmi wenhua cidian*.



FIGURE 5.4

*Baking Pancakes.* Flatcakes, or pancakes made with wheat flour, are especially popular in Manchuria and North China, where wheat is widely grown. They are usually fried in oil, flavored with onions, and possibly filled with ground meat. Fried egg pancakes [jian bing 煎餅], for instance, are a popular breakfast food. The photo was taken about 1918 in Beijing.

SIDNEY D. GAMBLE PHOTOGRAPHS, DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, DUKE LIBRARY

would be expected to take over the family business or eventually control its assets, so his probable future was important to the family, and the prediction was no doubt eagerly read by all adults in his household.

The astrologer most likely considered all the signs of this child—such as the year, month, day, and time of day of the child’s birth—and then compiled the astrological chart (pp. 2–3). He then prepared an overview of the child’s strengths and general prognosis (pp. 4–5). He wrote that the child was born under the sign of water [*ren* 壬]. This indicates bounty, but, if it is not controlled, water can overwhelm with its excess. Fortunately, there is also the earth element [*wu* 戊] in his set of heavenly and earthly signs for the child since the year of birth (1898) was a *wuxu* year, and earth is able to control water. The good combination of elements means that the child can even “control the flooding of the three rivers” [*kesai sanjiang zhi yi* 可塞三江之溢]. This strong position allowed the astrologer to anticipate that this child would be successful regardless of whether he undertakes an official career [*dang guan* 當官] or goes into business [*cong shang* 從商]. As a youth, the boy is predicted to be “intelligent and with a delicate beauty” [*congming junxiu* 聰明俊秀] and, as an adult, to “stand out from the crowd” [*wanzhong chaoqun* 萬眾超群].<sup>9</sup>

The astrologer’s conclusion was that the boy would find his fortune, not in an official career, but in the world of business. It seems likely that the astrological chart led the fortuneteller to opine that this child would be embroiled in some struggles in life (“gathering the wind and the clouds” [*fengyun zhihui* 風雲之會]) but would be able to overcome these difficulties. Both parents were projected to live long and fruitful lives, and the family was expected to flourish.

### Year-by-Year Predictions

Year-by-year predictions on this subject are on pages 8–21. In most cases, the astrologer used phrases from poetry or analogies from nature to convey his meaning. For example, for 1906, when the boy would be nine years old (on p. 10), the astrologer wrote, *zhinian fengchui songxiazi yuda xingfeihua* 只年,

9 Traditional Chinese beliefs considered all forces in the natural and cosmological worlds interdependent. The stars in the skies became associated with Daoist deities, who could determine the fate of humans living on earth. This highly integrated concept, based on an examination of classical texts, is set forth in Lu Xishen 呂錫深, *Daojiao yu minzu xingge* 道教與民族性格 [*Daoism and National Character*] (Changsha: Hunan University Press, 1996).

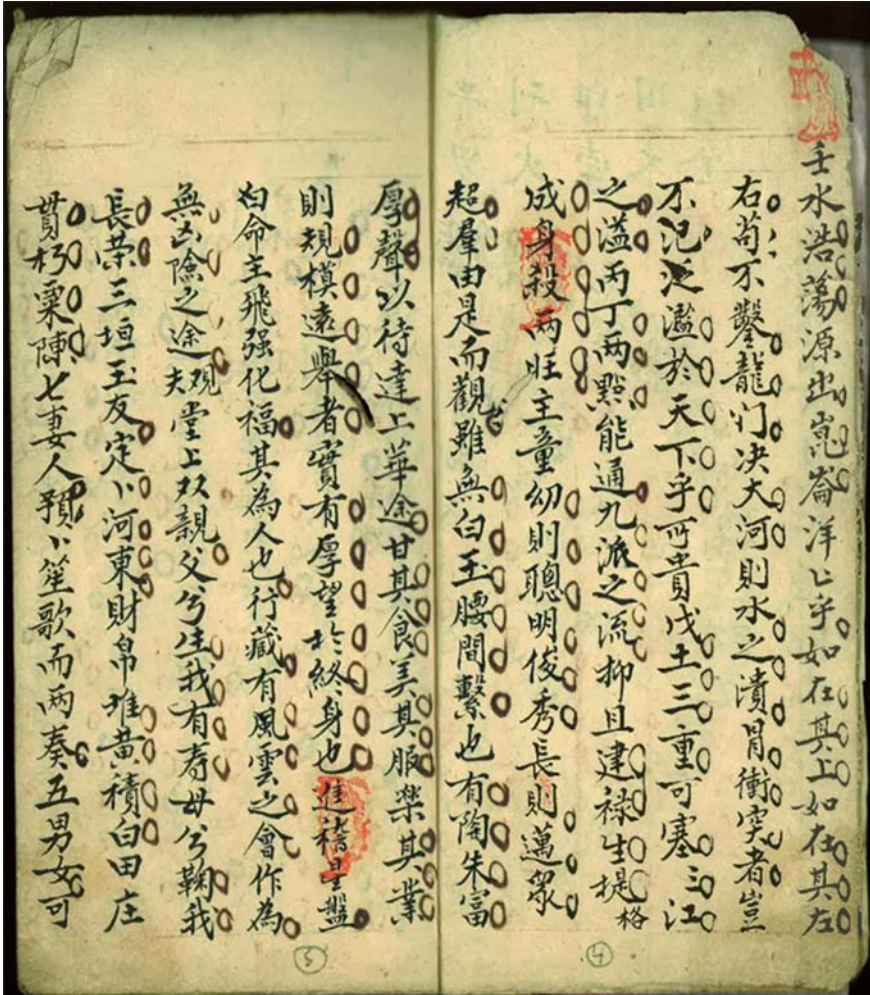


FIGURE 5.5

*Astrologer, Pages 4 and 5, The Character of the Child.* On these beginning pages, the astrologer said the baby had been born under the water sign, but among the elements influencing his fate was also the influence of the earth, with the result of a good balance of elements. The astrologer wrote that this child could be expected to be successful regardless of whether he undertakes an official career [dang guan 當官] or goes into business [cong shang 從商].

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風吹松下子，雨打杏飛花 [In this year, the winds cause the pines to bend and the apricots to fall], the meaning of which indicates a natural progression of the seasons. For 1935 and 1936, when the subject would be thirty-eight and thirty-nine years old, respectively (p. 17), the astrologer advised that, when helping others, he should be careful how he helped them so as to avoid later difficulties.



FIGURE 5.6

*Poor Boys Reading.* Until the 1960s, poor children in Asia who wanted to read comic books or children's books, could approach a street-side book stall, where they could pay a few coppers [qian 錢] to "rent" a book for a short time. Ideally the boy discussed in this horoscope would be inclined to practice reading when he had free time, even if his family did not have many books at home. Photo of boys reading rented books outdoors in Shanghai in the late 1930s.

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He expressed this by using the phrases *gejiang ren, jiaodu* 隔江人, 叫渡 [People separated by a river, call out to cross], and *chuanren yao xiaoxin* 船人要小心 [People on boats must exercise caution].

The emphasis the astrologer placed on analogies related to water was striking and was likely because the child was born under the water element. But it could also have been because this family was engaged in the river and coastal shipping trade along the east-central coast of China, south of Shanghai near Wenzhou 温州. This idea seemed evident from the analogy for 1940, when the subject would be forty-three years old (p. 18). The fortuneteller indicated this would not be a good year for the subject, writing, *ming Wenzhou dafeng hanqin* [illegible character] *lei* 茗温州大颱漢寢 [illegible character] 雷 [it will be as if a bad typhoon strikes Wenzhou with flashing thunder and lightning]. I then began to notice the frequent use of water and river analogies, such as this phrase for the year that the subject would be forty-nine years old (p. 19): *shun-feng jiangshang, youyangfan; buliao jiangxin you shitan ye* 順風, 江上, 有揚帆;



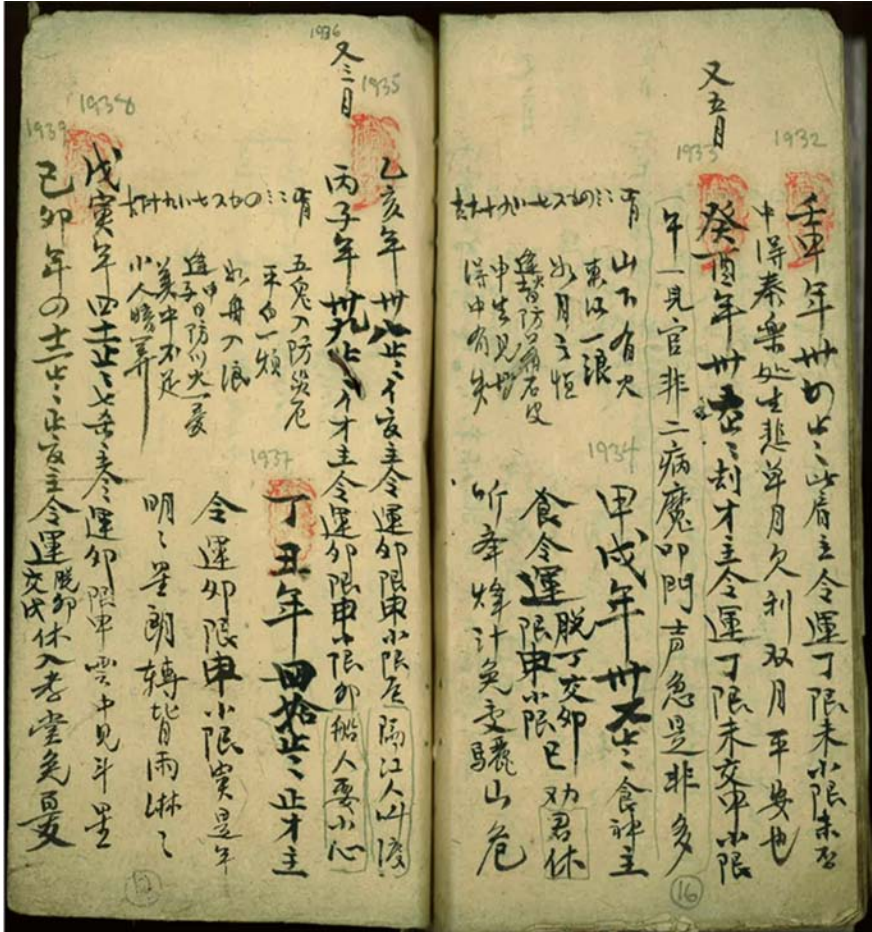


FIGURE 5.8

*Astrologer, Pages 16 and 17, Adult Interactions.* On page 17, for 1935 and 1936, when the subject would be thirty-eight and thirty-nine years old, the astrologer advised that when helping others, one had to be careful in how they are helped so as to avoid later difficulties. He expressed this by using the phrases "People separated by a river, call out to cross" [Gejiang ren jiaodu 隔江人，叫渡] and "People on boats must exercise caution" [Chuanren yaoxiaoxin 船人，要小心]. Note the continuing use of water analogies.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

Wenzhou is a well-known port city, and its inhabitants are known as entrepreneurial people who not only engage in trade but also are willing to travel far afield for the sake of their business. Water and coastal shipping play a critical role in the fortunes of the city and its people. The mighty Ou 甌 River, the largest in the region, flows into the city from the west and is joined by the Nanxi 楠溪 River flowing down from the north. Wenzhou Bay dominates the city to its

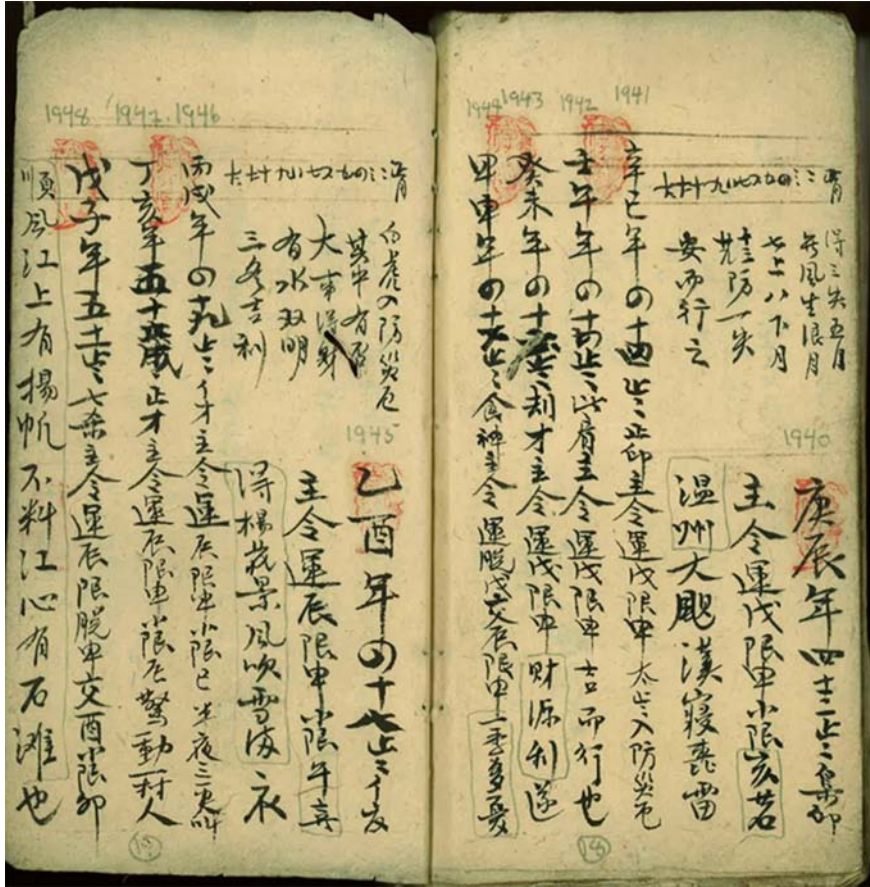


FIGURE 5.9  
*Astrologer, Pages 18 and 19, Large Forces Enter His Life. The early 1940s are covered on page 18. In 1940, when the Japanese forces occupied Shanghai, our subject was forty-three years old. The fortuneteller indicated this would not be a good year for the subject, writing: "It will be as if a bad typhoon strikes Wenzhou with flashing thunder and lightning" [Ming Wenzhou dafeng hanqin x lei 茗温州大颱漢寢口雷]. This phrase suggests the subject was in Wenzhou, a few hundred miles south of Shanghai, and indicates that his family was engaged in river-borne and coastal trade by ship.*

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

east and greatly affects its weather. Could these be the "three rivers" poetically referred to by the astrologer? Moreover, Wenzhou is in the path of many powerful typhoons that spawn in the South Pacific. Thus the astrologer's reference to typhoons at Wenzhou would not have been lost on any resident of the city. This strong connection in the region to waterborne shipping is indication that the subject's family was engaged in business, possibly in river and coastal shipping.



FIGURE 5.10

*Zhou Enlai as a Boy of Twelve. My point is that the 1911 Revolution in China that saw the fall of the old government and establishment of the Republic of China, did not affect families or children who were away from the areas where heavy fighting took place. In 1911 Zhou Enlai 周恩來, who later served as premier of the People's Republic from 1949 until his death in 1976, was a student living with relatives and studying in Shenyang 瀋陽. He was the same age as the subject of this horoscope, who I assume was in the Wenzhou area and was not directly in the events of 1911. Thus the prosaic predications made by the astrologer for our subject's boyhood years.*

WEB PHOTO



FIGURE 5.11

*Japanese Destroyer off the China Coast.* Photo shows the Japanese destroyer Ikazuchi (いかにずち雷) off the China coast in the 1940s. Its guns are pointed landward toward the Chinese coastal settlements. During World War II, the subject of the horoscope may have found a way to work with the Japanese in the exchange of smuggled goods along the coast between the Japanese-controlled areas and the “Free China” areas held by the Nationalists [Guomindang 國民黨].

WEB PHOTO

By all accounts, Wenzhou society evolved differently from that in most other parts of China. Because of the many mountains surrounding the city, overland transportation to the inland areas, such as the provincial capital at Hangzhou, was difficult and not highly developed. A train line from Wenzhou to Hangzhou was only opened in 1993! This made river and coastal transport quite important. Wenzhou residents were willing to travel as much as they needed in order to find work and secure an income, often in river and coastal shipping. They had an entrepreneurial spirit, and the businesses they formed were generally small in scale, organized with funds and labor from their family. Local government influence was not strong, allowing the people in Wenzhou to exercise ingenuity in their social and commercial matters. It is logical therefore to suggest that the male whose life is covered in this horoscope came from a family involved in small-scale shipping and trading.<sup>11</sup>

11 These characteristics of Wenzhou residents were so pronounced by the 1980s and 1990s, when commercial and economic development was encouraged by the Chinese government, that economists refer to it as the Wenzhou model, a complex of local values and the resultant pattern of commercial development. These characteristics are elaborated on in Jianjun Zhang, “State Power, Elite Relations, and The Politics of Privatization in China’s Rural Industry: Different Approaches in Two Regions,” *Asian Survey*, 48, no. 2 (2008). See

### Were the Predictions Accurate?

When these predictions were prepared in 1899 for the newborn child, no one knew whether they would be accurate. Given the general and allusive nature of each prediction, the forecasts could be interpreted to fit a variety of circumstances. Because we do not even know the identity of the subject of these predictions, we have no way of knowing whether they were accurate or useful for the subject of the study. However, we do know something of the history experienced by the people who lived in and near Wenzhou during that half-century, so it is possible to judge, in a very general way, the accuracy of the predictions. For example, we know that in 1911 a series of uprisings broke out that culminated in the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1912 and the establishment of the Republic of China. At that time, our subject was thirteen and fourteen *sui* 歲 (“years old” by traditional counting) and seems not to have been affected in any particular way by these events. Many Chinese were not directly or immediately affected by that great political change. Our subject’s fortune for 1912 does not indicate any disruption of normal life.

The Japanese occupation of parts of China that began in earnest in 1937 affected a greater number of Chinese. However, the predictions for our subject’s life during the war years show only the usual pattern of swings from good to bad, but not any traumatic events. This made me look at Wenzhou during the war years in order to try to judge how severely our subject’s life might have been affected. Japanese military forces occupied Shanghai, about 300 miles north of Wenzhou, in 1937, but they never occupied or fully controlled Wenzhou. From 1938 to 1940, they heavily bombed Wenzhou in an effort to disrupt the river traffic there and to blockade the port with sunken ships. They patrolled the coast and had a garrison on one of the islands in Wenzhou Bay.<sup>12</sup>

But, as the war continued, shipping through Wenzhou flourished, because the Japanese needed some of the goods that could be taken from the Chinese countryside to the city, and even Chinese forces in the countryside could use goods obtained in Shanghai. Wenzhou was on the border between

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also the concluding section of Bin (Henry) Wu and Wang Huiyao, “Going Global of Chinese Private Enterprises: Wenzhounese Model and Its Impact on Home Development” (paper presented at the Globalization of Chinese Enterprises Conference, Harvard University, October 9–10, 2008), <http://www.ccg.org.cn/ccg/ccgen/2011/0721/590.html>, accessed April 12, 2012.

12 From 1938 to 1942 the Japanese Imperial Navy conducted air raids on Wenzhou harbor in order to disrupt shipping, to sink ships and blockade the harbor, and to assert their ability to do so.



FIGURE 5.12

*Three-Antis Political Campaign.* This political campaign was directed against people who ran small to medium-size businesses. They criticized business owners as capitalists who harmed the proletariat workers. In this photo, a man who ran a pharmacy is being denounced and criticized by a Chinese Communist Party cadre. The photo was taken in Guangzhou 廣州.

WEB PHOTO

Japanese-occupied eastern China and the unoccupied inland regions nominally under the control of the Guomindang 國民黨 [Nationalist] forces of “Free China.” Smuggling was brisk, involving both the Chinese Nationalist forces and the Japanese military. Much of the smuggling was carried out by Chinese (perhaps by our subject?) sailing small wooden boats along the coast like those used in the river trade. Some of the Chinese smugglers in the Wenzhou area earned high income from the trade. Perhaps, given that context, the fortuneteller’s predictions for the war years should not be surprising. For example, in 1942 our subject was forty-four years old, and his fortune was predicted to be generally good because all the heavenly forces aligned well (p. 18).<sup>13</sup>

13 An overview of Wenzhou during World War II and the flourishing of river and coastal smuggling that brought large fortunes to some Chinese in the area is given in R. Keith

The event that spared virtually no Chinese was the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. At that time, the land reform campaigns against property owners to redistribute their wealth to landless peasants had already started in areas under communist control. The Five-Antis [*Wufan* 五反] campaign was launched in January 1952 against business owners, who were classified as being part of the exploiting capitalist and petty-bourgeois class. If the subject of these predictions was the son of a small business owner who may have had some boats and warehouses in order to engage in river and coastal shipping near Wenzhou, then the family was surely the target of criticism by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadres and the masses. Could the astrologer writing at the turn of the century fifty years earlier have foreseen these events? We can look at the predictions for 1952 to 1955 (p. 21).

For 1952, when the subject was fifty-five years old and the anti-business campaigns in China were at their height, the subject's fortune was given as *zhinian, yunzhong guanxingdou; mengli, dakongquan* 只年, 雲中觀星斗; 夢裡, 打空拳 [This is a year in which nothing can be accomplished, as if one sits on the clouds looking at the stars or raises one's fist while in a dream]. We know from historical records that those accused by the authorities were given no opportunity to defend themselves or to justify their years of work to build a business, and justice was defined by the authorities in charge. The subject's position as a scapegoat and target of continuous criticism seems to be reflected in this prediction.<sup>14</sup>

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Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness; Refugees during the Sino-Japanese War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 263–272.

- 14 The Five Antis campaign was designed to target the capitalist class. The CCP had very vague guidelines as to who could be charged, and the campaign became an all-out war against the bourgeoisie in China. An estimated 20,000 cadres and 6,000 trained workers began spying on the business affairs of their fellow citizens. The media encouraged compliance with the government's policies. As many as 15,000 trained propagandists were working in Shanghai by late 1951. In February 1952, parades of anti-capitalist activists went door-to-door to visit business leaders, creating immense psychological pressure. Shanghai ward offices were set up to receive criticism letters from any employee. Some big companies voluntarily offered 1,000 confessions a day to try to protect themselves from the government. The victims of the Antis campaigns (including the earlier Three Antis campaign against government cadres and bureaucratic waste) were mostly terrified and humiliated, some were killed, and others were sent to labor camps around China. Hundreds of thousands of people committed suicide (though it is debatable whether many of them did so voluntarily) as a direct result of these campaigns. Eventually, the CCP revealed that it would no longer protect private business and that Chinese capitalists would receive

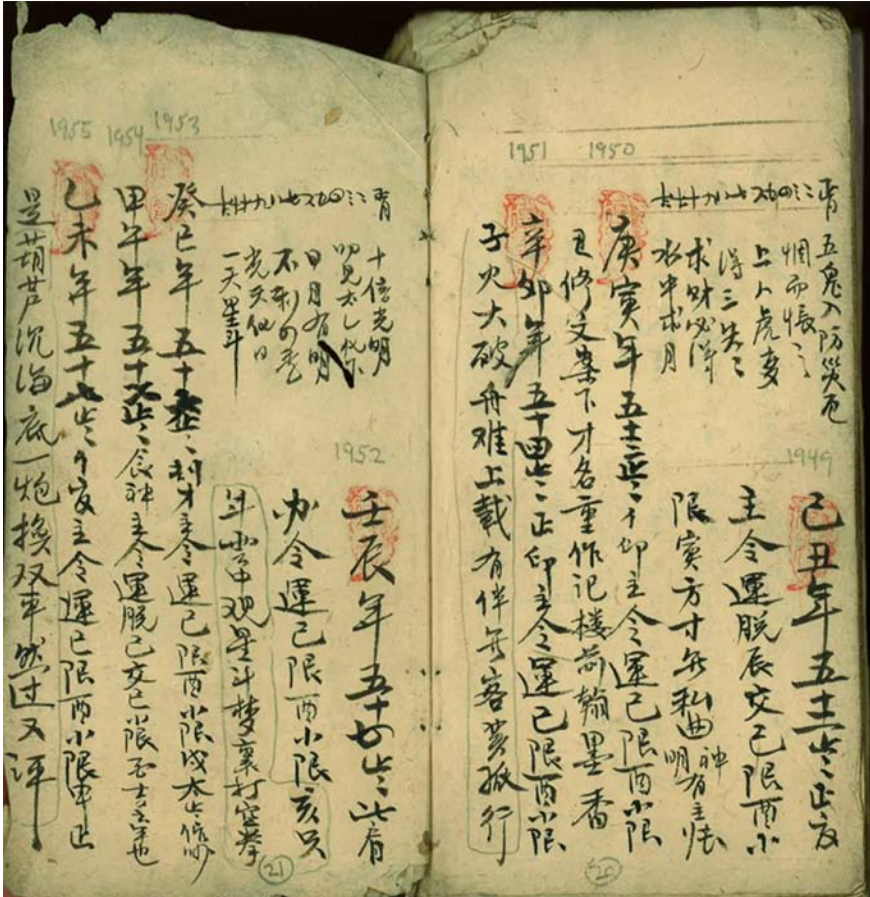


FIGURE 5.13  
 Astrologer, Pages 20 and 21, *The Three-Antis Political Campaign*. Predictions for 1952, when our subject was fifty-five years old, were on page 21. The astrologer wrote: "This is a year in which nothing can be accomplished, as if one sits on the clouds looking at the stars, or raises one's fist while in a dream" [Zhinian, yunzhong guanxingdou; mengli, dakongquan 只年，雲中觀星斗；夢裡，打空拳]. This seems to reflect our subject's helplessness in the face of harsh government criticism under the political campaigns then underway.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

Such attacks continued against peasants until all land was claimed by the government and eventually transformed into people's communes. Privately owned businesses were likewise expropriated by the government. For the

treatment no better than foreign capitalists. This description is modified and taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three-anti/five-anti\\_campaigns/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three-anti/five-anti_campaigns/), accessed April 8, 2012.

subject of these predictions, the astrologer's final comment was written to follow 1955, when the subject was fifty-eight years old (p. 21): *Zhengshi, hulu chenhaidi; yipao huanshuangche; ranguo youping* 正式, 葫蘆沉海底; 一炮換雙車; 然過又評 [Sink a gourd to the bottom of the ocean; Place a cannon on two chariots. You will be criticized for either]. An empty gourd is light in weight and has air trapped inside, so it is not possible for it to sink to the bottom of the ocean. One cannon on two chariots refers to a move in Chinese chess in which one piece is sacrificed. You will be criticized whatever you do, so you cannot win. The prediction indicates total failure and the impossibility of success, which is likely the position our subject would have been in during the 1950s.<sup>15</sup>

### Conclusion: Evaluating the Document

The importance of the handwritten book discussed in this chapter can be appreciated from two broad perspectives. The first is to view the document as if it were a photograph from a time past. The photograph is static and one-dimensional. It lacks specific information about the people who took the photo or appear in it. We do not know the precise year, date, or place of the photo. Nevertheless, it is a concrete image of a moment in the lives of the people associated with the photograph or, in this case, the fortuneteller's book. The information given in it leads us to believe it was written in 1899, to infer that the geographic area in which it was written was the east coast of China, south of Shanghai, and to form an impression of the person whose life was laid out in the text as a member of a family involved in inland river or costal ocean transport.

Photographs, especially those taken with the convenient box cameras of the pre-World War II era, were used a great deal by people who did not leave a detailed written record of their lives. Those people usually took photos of ordinary scenes that had some meaning in their lives. In a similar vein, this fortuneteller's book was not produced by a literary scholar, and most likely

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15 Among the American scholars who have examined these large-scale government movements was Gordon Bennett, *Yundong: Mass Campaigns in Chinese Communist Leadership* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). For an explanation of how the Chinese government prevented business owners from controlling and expanding their own businesses, see Toby Ho, "Managing Risk: The Suppression of Private Entrepreneurs in China in the 1950s," *Risk Management: An International Journal*, 2, no. 2 (2000). Unfortunately, this article fails to capture the passion and frustration felt by small business owners at the time.



Photo by Mr. Afong]

[Hong-kong.

## A CHINESE FORTUNE-TELLER.

FIGURE 5.14

*Qing-Era Fortuneteller.* The hairstyles, with the Manchu-imposed queue, indicate that this photo was taken during the Qing dynasty. The photo was taken outside, indicating that this fortuneteller wanted to be available to passersby and was offering his services to the general public. The fortuneteller's name was Li Banxian 李半仙 [Li "Almost an Immortal"]. Among the services he advertises, in the center vertical line, are using Trigrams to Determine Your Fortune [Guaming tongcan 卦命同參]. In the line on the left is a phrase often used in religious contexts: "Sincere requests will be answered" [Chengqiu biying 誠求必應], which indicates not just a calculation of fate but an approach to the deities. The photo was taken by Lai Afong 賴阿芳 (1839–1890), who ran a successful photographic studio in Hong Kong from 1895 to the 1940s.

THE PHOTO APPEARED IN C.J. CORNISH, *THE STANDARD LIBRARY OF NATURAL HISTORY* (NEW YORK: THE UNIVERSITY SOCIETY, 1907), 136

its recipient was a person whose work did not involve intellectual or literary pursuits. In lieu of a written record of the subject's life story, we have this fortuneteller's guide, which was no doubt important to the adult who paid for it to be written, most likely the subject's parents. It is equally likely to have been consulted frequently by the subject as he grew up, which is one reason the title page fell off. For the common people of China who were not fully literate in the early 1900s and, so, could not leave a written record, this book acts as the photograph they might have taken if they had had a box camera (which were hard to obtain in China in 1900).

In many ways, looking at a photograph from the past is frustrating, because it can rarely provide all the detailed information we would like to have about it. However, they leave us with very specific and accurate images, and we should appreciate this astrological guide for the information it does tell us.

The second perspective from which to appreciate these handwritten books is to see them as cultural objects created by the common people of China to reflect an aspect of their daily lives. This point of cultural specificity is most likely reflected in the imagery chosen by the fortuneteller to convey his sense of how the subject's future should be viewed. The fortuneteller chose many images dealing with water and boats, partly because the subject was born under the water sign, but equally because this writing was produced in an area of China where waterborne traffic and communication was prevalent and where the winds and rain of the regular typhoons had an impact on the life and health of the people. This is recurring imagery that, when placed in the context of the reference to Wenzhou, gives it added meaning.

Regardless of how accurately we are able to reconstruct the milieu in which this fortuneteller's predictions were constructed and circulated, we should respect the work as a cultural artifact that reflects the culture of the people who created it. Some might say that the accuracy of the predictions in this horoscope is not important, but I doubt that many people would say that about other horoscopes. Certainly, the people in the late Qing who paid to have the book written counted on the accuracy of its predications. When this single work and its specific references are combined with other examples from the same region and historical period, we can begin to get a fuller idea of the people of that time and place.

## Constructing the Family in Republican China: Shandong 1944

構建民國時期的家系：1944 年山東

### Introduction\*

The text being considered here is a cultural artifact created by two members of the common people of China during the late Republican period, who decided to record a chronological listing of their family tree. Most likely, in the back of their minds was some formal idea of how a family genealogy [*jiapu* 家譜] should be constructed. But in preparing their own record, they went beyond the typical formulaic styles of genealogical construction to include information they found relevant to their story that made the picture of their relatives more complete. For example, in one of the ways that they ignored the formal rules of most family genealogies in China, they included information on their female family members as well as some infants who had died relatively soon after birth. These instances are discussed below. Further, they called upon their living memories of family members to a greater degree than in more formal genealogies. By doing so, they gave more comprehensive detail about the recent generations of their family than in the earlier entries recorded by their ancestors. This point is also discussed below.

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\* I am grateful for assistance offered by two colleagues: Li Yunjie 李雲傑 and Li Donglin 李棟琳, both then at Suffolk University Boston. An earlier version of this chapter, based on a presentation made in Beijing in the spring of 2010, was published as Ronald Suleski 薛龍, “Minguo shiqi de pingmin wenhua: yiben jaipu de gushi 民國時期的平民文化：一本家譜的故事 [Popular Culture in China’s Republican Period: The Story of a Family Genealogy],” *Hangzhou shifan daxue xuebao* 杭州師範大學學報 [*Journal of Hangzhou Normal University*], 34, no. 3 (May 2012). An English-language version was published as “Constructing the Family in Republican China: Shandong 1944,” *Frontiers of History in China*, 8, no. 4 (December 2013). Although some published genealogies in China list as many as one hundred generations, the majority, such as the genealogy under discussion in this chapter, are far more modest in their coverage and record in detail only recent generations. See Wang Heming 王鶴鳴, *Zhongguo jiapu tonglun* 中國家譜通論 [*On Chinese Genealogies*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2010), 311. This is an extremely comprehensive work that comments on many of the points discussed below. An excellent collection of sources is also in Taga Akigorō 多賀秋五郎, *Chūgoku sōfu no kenkyū* 中國宗譜の研究 [*Research on Chinese Genealogies*], 2 vols. (Tokyo: Nippon gakujutsu shinkōkai, 1982).

The cultural artifact they created followed the process of defining the world from a local perspective to create their own understanding of the culture in which they lived. As mentioned in earlier chapters, in that process the distant historically determined elements were transformed by the common people in ways that meaningfully influenced their everyday lives. People always engage in this reinterpretation because the culture that people embrace is intimate and deeply relevant to them. Cultural symbols or values that are too distant (in historical time) or too abstract (in conceptual terms) lose their power for ordinary people in everyday life. In the case considered here, the family genealogy was copied and brought up to date, with the goal of solidifying the sense of family continuity at a time of personal and national upheaval. It was 1944, Japanese troops were occupying much of China, and the country was at war.

This chapter places the brief family genealogy in the context of the times in which the copy considered here was written. If only the specific information given in this record were listed, the view of the family would be thin and lifeless. But reading into the information and understanding its significance allows a more vibrant and completely understandable picture of the family and of their place in society to emerge, particularly for the one hundred years of the recent four generations of the family. The Republican-era values and norms about family structure that they absorbed from their neighbors and relatives determined how they recorded the information they collected about their family, while their own energies and determination to do a credible job determined the amount of information they added to this genealogy.

### The Genealogy

In March 2009, I visited Yingxiongshan wenhua shichang 英雄山文化市場 [Hero Mountain Cultural Market], in Ji'nan, Shandong Province. The name "Hero Mountain" was chosen to mark the defeat of the Nationalist forces in September 1948 and to honor the Chinese Communist soldiers who died in the battle to liberate the city. The weather was still cold, but it was dry and bright. This antiques market was one of the first to be set up in Shandong, and, at that time, it was more a flea market than an antiques/cultural market, as the current marketing (2017) calls it. Local merchants at the market had individual stalls from which they sold everything from household items, such as pots and pans, to local handicrafts, including pipes, and some food stalls hawked local produce. One merchant, who sold household items, used tools, and miscellaneous items from a farmer's workshop, had some cartons filled



FIGURE 6.1

*Hero's Market.* This is the Hero's Mountain Culture Market [*Yingxiongshan wenhua shichang* 英雄山文化市場] in Jinan 濟南, Shandong 山東 Province, in 2015. It commemorates the heroes of the Communist forces over the rival Nationalists in the civil war before the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949.

PHOTO FROM PLANET EARTH TRAVEL LTD

with old books and a few piles of string-bound pamphlets with rough and yellowed paper. Upon examining them, I found that several were handwritten. I purchased a family genealogy of only thirteen pages.

This *chaoben* looked like a Republican-era work, which turned out to be the case. The paper was pliable and appeared to be handmade, flecked with bits of bamboo; the mark of the filtering screen was clearly visible. It was light brown and had probably never been bleached white. The paper was inexpensive and could have been locally produced but still felt soft; and it took the ink well without spreading. The book had been bound with rough hand-twisted twine.

On the first few pages, one of the authors had written notes about the Tang 唐 family, whose family tree constituted the main contents of the book. The pieces of information in the first few pages, which at first appeared to be random notes, proved useful in putting the genealogy in a broader context and in helping me come to some conclusions about the Tang family.



FIGURE 6.2

*Tang Family Genealogy* [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Cover. This thirteen-page genealogy was written in 1944, probably in Shandong Province. Did military action cause the deaths of the two people who died in 1944, as shown on page 2? This chaoben has no title, so I assigned it the title *Tang Family Genealogy*. As informal, though important, texts the chaoben often had no formal title.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

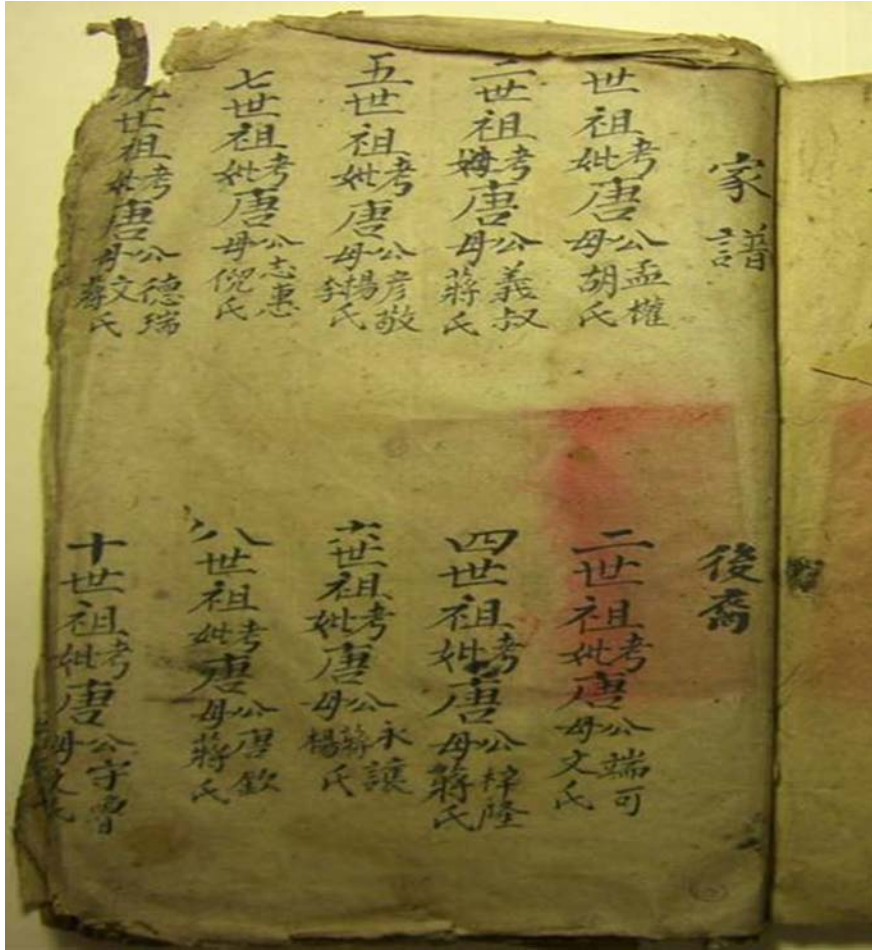


FIGURE 6.3

*Tang Family Genealogy* [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Page 10, *Generational Listings*. This is the beginning of the chronological listing of the family. The first generation began in about 1420, during the Ming 明 dynasty.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

Nothing was written on the “cover page.” The authors did not give this work a title, so for convenience I have titled it **Tang Family Genealogy** [*Tangshi jiapu* 唐氏家譜]. The basic chronology of the Tang family covered twenty-one generations (pp. 10–13). The first few pages (pp. 1–4 and 9) contained notes about particular family members and some dates. Pages 5–8 were blanks that had been bound into the book, which was not unusual in *chaoben*. In this case, the authors might have hoped to locate more information relating to the genealogy and so included the blanks to add it.

The entries for each generation of the family (pp. 10–13) followed a brief and standard format.<sup>1</sup> Only one entry was made for each generation for the first through to the seventeenth generations. A typical entry read:

Fourteenth-generation ancestors: deceased father, Tang, the gentleman Shijun, *hao* [honorific] name Tianxu; deceased mother, Tang, mother surnamed Jing.

*Shisishi zu: kao Tanggong Shijun, hao Tianxu; bi Tangmu Jing shi.*

十四世祖：考唐公世俊，號天序；妣唐母經氏。<sup>2</sup>

The handwriting led me to conclude that this *chaoben* was the work of two individuals who I assume were father and son. Writer no. 1, whose handwriting was elegant, wrote information about the early generations of the Tang family, from the first through the twentieth generations (pp. 10–12). I assume that he was the older of the two writers and was knowledgeable about the historical material on the earlier generations. Writer no. 2 appeared to be the younger writer. He knew more about his siblings and cousins still living, who were members of the twentieth and twenty-first generations. He added information to pages 12 and 13. Writer no. 2 appears to be the person (judging by handwriting) who added most of the specific information about the birth and death of some members of the two most recent generations in the notes on the beginning pages.

The multiple entries for the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first generations confirmed that the Tang family followed the practice of using the same character in generational cohorts, meaning that all males of the same generation shared a character in their given name. In the eighteenth generation, that character was *cheng* 承; in the nineteenth generation, the character was *ji* 繼; in the twentieth generation, it was *zu* 祖 (e.g., Tang Zushi 唐祖仕,

1 It is 9½ in (24.1 cm) h × 5½ in (14 cm) w.

2 Although family histories were common in China, they did not have a single system of organization. A handwritten history in my collection titled *Precious Mirror of the Li Family* [*Lishi chuanjia baojian* 李氏傳家寶鑑] was prepared in 1907 by Li Yaguang 李亞廣. This record of 144 pages contains fairly detailed entries for all the generations, including additional paragraphs on the family property and business interests of family members. The volume of 144 pages is 6¼ in (15.9 cm) h × 5–1/8 in (13 cm) w, was purchased in Beijing in January 2008. The word “mirror” in the title indicates a work that the family could use for self-reflection.

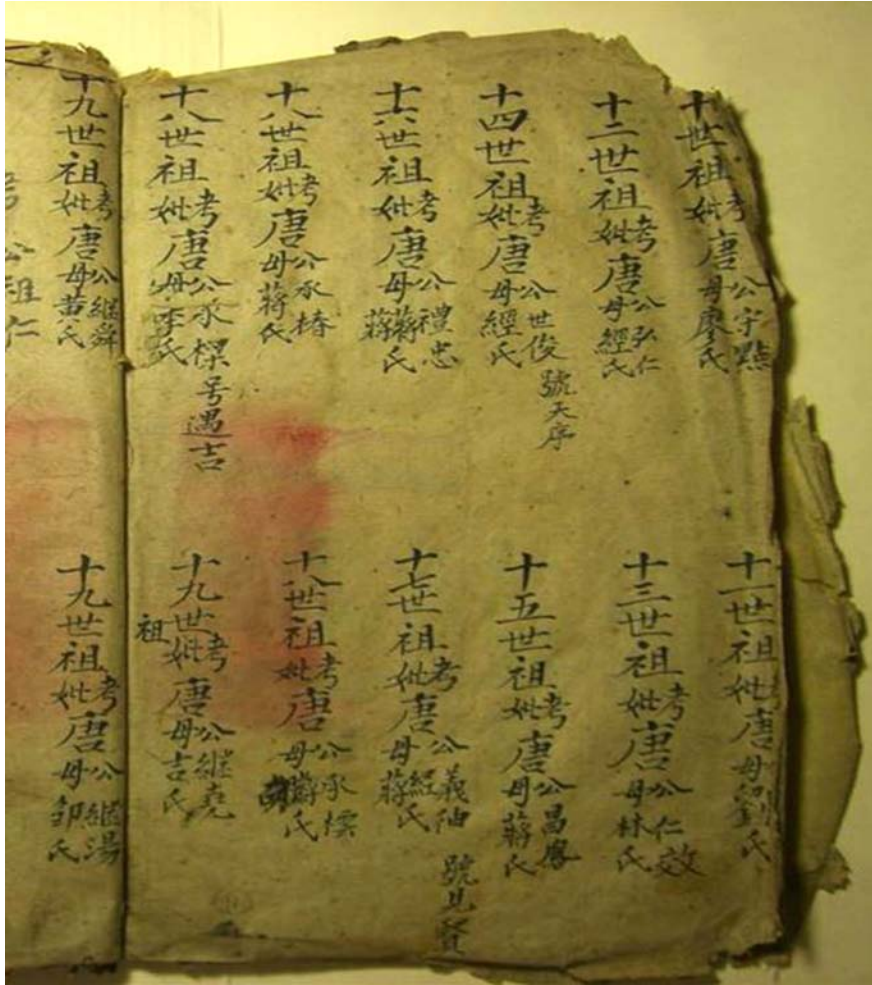


FIGURE 6.4

*Tang Family Genealogy* [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Page 11, A Sample Listing. Reading from right to left on page 11, the third set of entries is for the fourteenth generation, which dates from 1745. This entry reads: “Fourteenth-generation ancestors: deceased father, Tang, the gentleman Shijun, hao name of Tianxu; deceased mother, Tang, mother surnamed Jing” [Shisishi zu: kao Tang gong Shijun, hao Tianxu; bi Tang mu Jing shi 十四世祖：考唐公世俊，號天序；妣唐母經氏]. This basic format is used throughout the genealogy.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR



FIGURE 6.5

*Tang Family Genealogy* [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Pages 11 and 12, Two Writers. The calligraphy on these two pages shows the hands of two different writers. Writer No. 1 wrote all the entries on page 11, but on page 12 Writer no. 2 began to add his own information.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

mentioned below); and in the twenty-first generation, it was *rong* 榮. As discussed below, the same practice applied for the female members of the family.<sup>3</sup>

As mentioned in earlier chapters, the writers of most *chaoben*, including genealogies, were so strongly rooted in their locality that they did not think to indicate the name or place where the booklet was written. They did not

3 For a discussion of the use of generational names [*zibei* 字輩], see Xu Jianhua 徐建華, *Zhongguo de jiapu* 中國的家譜 [Chinese Family Genealogies] (Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 2002), 40–49. See also the discussion of sequencing characters in Wang Heming, *Zhongguo jiapu tonglun* 中國家譜通論 [On Chinese Genealogies], 341–345. The use of generational names in the present to strengthen family unity is mentioned in Eyferth, *Eating Rice from Bamboo Roots*, 212–213. A discussion of the interesting information that can be derived from the prefaces and commentaries of printed family genealogies in China from the past and present is in Zhu Bingguo 朱炳國, ed., *Jiapu yu difang wenhua* 家譜與地方文化 [Genealogies and Local Culture] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 2007). For examples of creatively using family genealogical records to extract historical information see Michael Szonyi, *The Art of Being Governed: Everyday Politics in Late Imperial China*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

think the information they were preparing would circulate widely, so they often did not think it was important to record even their own name. Such is the case for the genealogy examined in this chapter. The two persons writing this account of their family had such concrete images in their minds of their relatives and the surrounding landscape that they never thought to write in the name of their village or city, or the province where their lives were being played out.

### Searching for Specifics

The Tang family genealogy had no information on when or where it was written. But the miscellaneous notes at the beginning contained some dates, so it was possible to date both when it was written and the likely dates covered by the family tree.

On page 1, Writer no. 1 entered the names of a man and his wife, giving their birth dates: The man, Tang Chengliang 唐承樑, was born in June 1822, the Daoguang 道光 reign period. The entry gives the year, month, date, and time of birth, so that the eight trigrams used to predict one's fate could be constructed. His wife, surnamed Li 李, was born in the preceding Jiaqing 嘉慶 reign period, with no year of birth given. The Jiaqing period ended in 1820, thus we can assume that she was only few years older than her husband. It was not unusual in China for an older girl to be brought in to help a family, especially in the case of poorer families, and to be considered betrothed to a younger son. When the son reached puberty, the two were officially married. In the entry on page 11, where their names are given in the chronological genealogical record, the couple was considered part of the eighteenth generation. Thus, if we consider each generation as twenty-five years long and count backward, we can date the first generation to 1420, during the reign of the Yongle 永樂 emperor of the Ming dynasty.

Writer no. 1, a member of the twentieth generation, was born in 1895 and thus was about forty-nine years old in 1944—the most recent date mentioned in the text. I therefore assumed that the genealogy was written at about that time. This led me to surmise that the couple he listed as the first piece of information were his grandparents, who were members of the eighteenth generation. Thus, the grandfather of Writer no. 1 was Tang Chengliang 唐承樑.

Writer no. 1, by this calculation, had grown up at a time when he would have received a purely traditional education, which accounts for the quality of his calligraphy. He might have been a *xiucai*, though the genealogy does not indicate that.

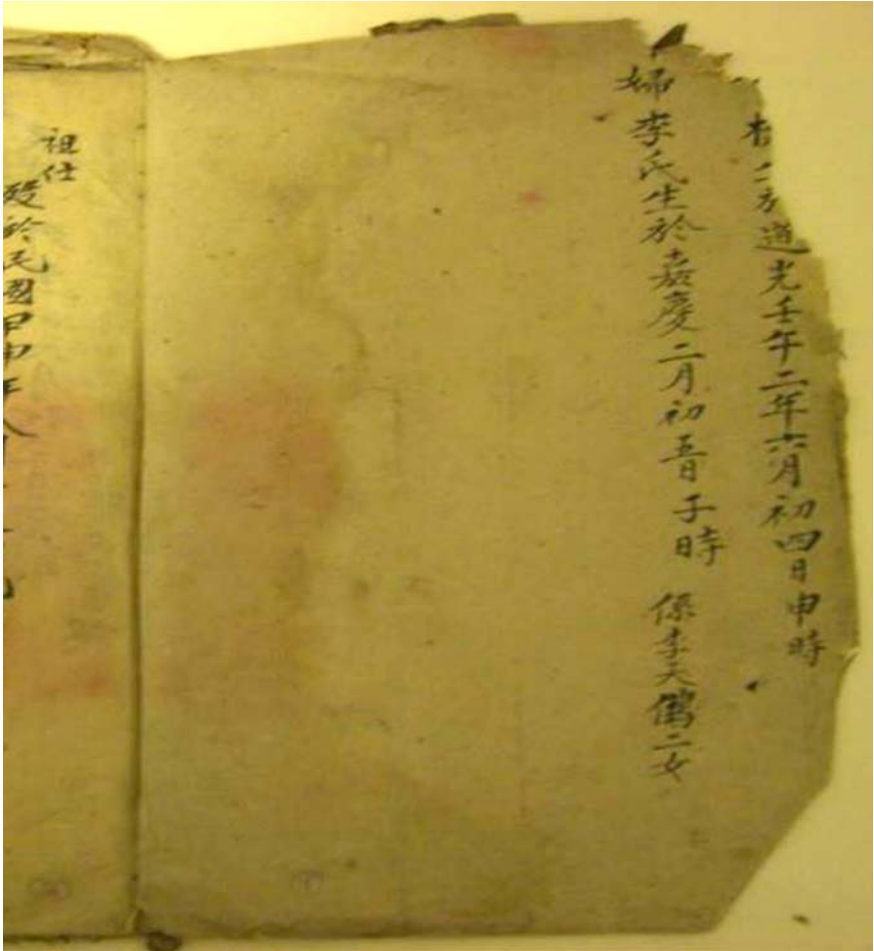


FIGURE 6.6

*Tang Family Genealogy* [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Page 1, *The Death of Writer No. 1's Grandparents*. The husband, Tang Chengliang 唐承樑, was born in June 1822, in the Daoguang 道光 reign period. His wife, surnamed Li 李, was born in the preceding Jiaqing 嘉慶 period, with no year of birth given. Since the Jiaqing period ended in 1820, we can assume that his wife was few years older than her husband. The entry on page 11, where their names are given as part of the chronological genealogical record, indicates that this couple was considered members of the eighteenth generation.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

Writer no. 2 wrote in a less elegant hand, putting more pressure on the brush and producing heavier, thicker strokes. The difference in the two writing styles is most clearly seen in the way they wrote the character for their surname, Tang 唐. Writer no. 1 used delicate flowing lines, while Writer no. 2's style was less uniformly well-constructed. Based on their handwriting, I hypothesized that Writer no. 1 was the older of the two and had received a better education, while Writer no. 2 was younger and his education had placed less emphasis on calligraphy. Writer no. 2, however, supplied the critical information that helped me to date this work. On page 3 he wrote of the deaths, in close proximity, of two Tang family members. They were Tang Zushi 唐祖仕, who died in August 1944, and his wife, surnamed Zhang 張, who died in October 1944. Their deaths were also recorded by year, month, date, and time of day. Their chronological entries (p. 13) indicate that they were members of the twentieth generation. By my calculation, in 1944 they would have been forty-nine years old, the same age as Writer no. 1.

I assumed that these deaths in close proximity might have been due to some unfortunate events. It was wartime, and anti-Japanese guerrillas harassed the Japanese military forces occupying North and East China. Regular though sporadic violence took place throughout North China during those years. The Japanese were worn down by the continual sniping and unexpected attacks by Chinese resistance forces. In the early 1940s, the Japanese responded to these attacks in Shandong through their extreme policies of the Three-All Policy [*sankō sakusen* 三光作戰] of Kill All, Loot All, Destroy All [*satsukō* 殺光, *shōkō* 燒光, *sōkō* 搶光], coupled with the policy of Exterminate All [*sōtō sakusen* 掃蕩作戰]. The Chinese resistance had its fighters disguised as ordinary people, which led the Japanese to target ordinary people in their military attacks. Japanese attacks were ruthless and resulted in the wonton destruction of property.<sup>4</sup>

During the warmer months of 1944, as the occupying Japanese tried to maintain their control over widespread areas of Shandong, military activity

4 The fierce anti-Japanese resistance by the Chinese in Shandong from the late 1930s to the 1940s is recounted in Li Zhuanmei 李傳梅 et al., *Jiaodong fenghuo* 膠東烽火 [*The Beacon Fire in Eastern Shandong*] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2005). A detailed review of Japan's extreme policies in Shandong is in Li Enhan 李恩涵, "Rijun zai Shandong de 'saodangzhan' yu 'sanguang zuozhan' (1937-1945) 日軍在山東的'掃蕩戰'與'三光作戰' [The Japanese Army's Military Sweeps and Kill All Policy in Shandong between 1937 and 1945]," *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院近代史研究所季刊 [*Journal of the Institute of Modern History at the Academia Sinica*], 24, no. 2 (1995). The brutal policies of the Japanese military in Shandong and North China are recounted in Itō Hideko 伊東秀子, *Chichi no igen: sensō wa ningen o 'kyōki' ni suru* 父の遺言：戦争は人間を'狂気'にする [Father's Last Words: War Makes People Insane] (Tokyo: Kadensha 花伝社, 2016), 188-196.

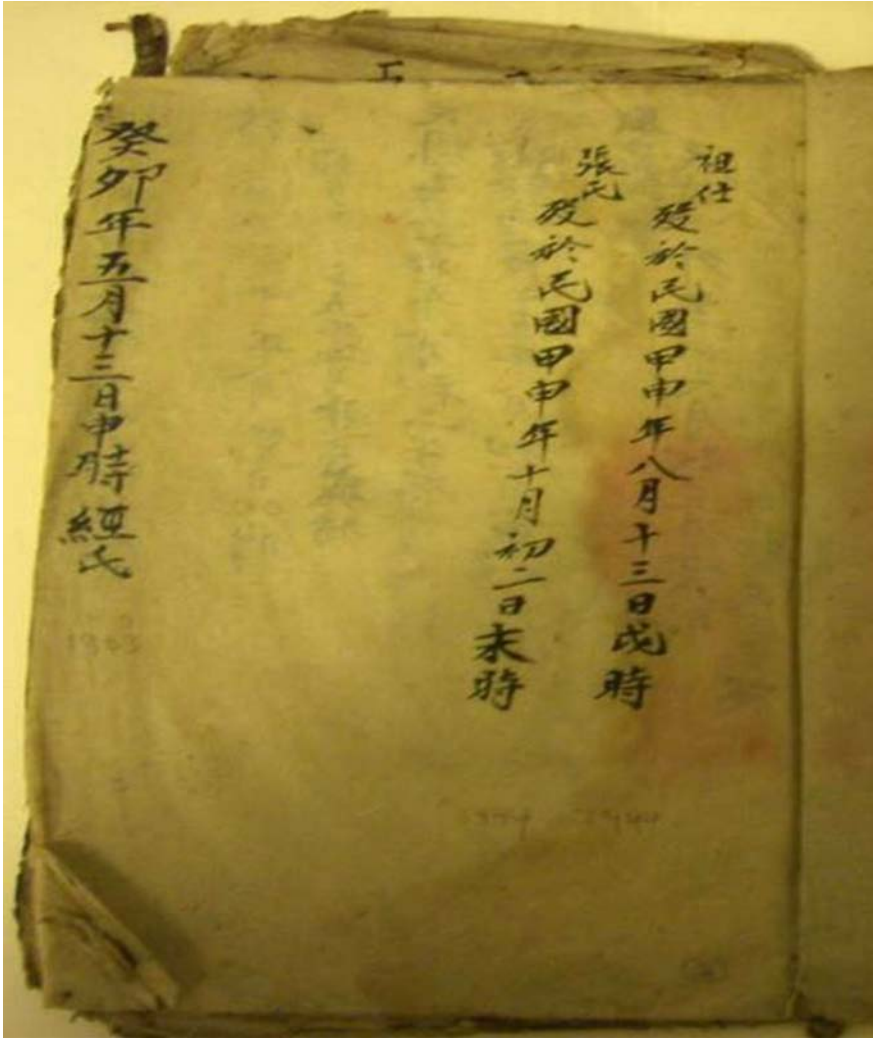


FIGURE 6.7

*Tang Family Genealogy* [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Page 2, Death of Writer No. 2's Parents. On page 2, Writer no. 2 wrote of the deaths, in close proximity, of two Tang family members Tang Zushi 唐祖仕, who died in August 1944, and his wife, surnamed Zhang 張, who died in October 1944. It appears that they were the parents of Writer no. 2, who added entries to the family genealogy after their deaths.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR



FIGURE 6.8

*Japanese Soldiers Attack a Private Home.* In this photo, Japanese soldiers stand at the ready with bayonets fixed. After they break open the door, they will rush inside and likely bring death to the people covering there. The location of this photo is not clear, but it appears to be North China. Could it be that the parents of Writer no. 2 died because of such an attack?

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expanded. Large numbers of Japanese troops landed at Qingdao and moved through the province to the frontlines in inland neighboring provinces. Anti-Japanese guerrilla units continually launched attacks against the Japanese. Among the areas in which active military maneuvers by both sides were taking place was the northeastern area of Shandong, near Weihaiwei 威海衛. Proving that the two deaths recorded in this genealogy were related to this military activity in 1944 would be impossible. They may have died because of an accident, or illness.

Regardless of the manner of their deaths, they had a great impact on Writer no. 2. That is why he was able to write the exact date and time of death for both of them. All of this leads me to believe they were his parents. If he was a member of the twenty-first generation, born in 1920, he would have been about twenty-four years old at the time his parents died. At that age, he was able to recall some information about the nineteenth generation, that of his grandparents, who were born in 1870. In 1944, they might still have been alive

and would have been about seventy-four years old. Writer no. 2 would have been able to supply even more information about the twentieth generation, his parents' generation, his aunts and uncles, who were born around 1895 and were about forty-nine years old. He also knew about the siblings and cousins in his own generation, who were in their late teens or early twenties in 1944. It is not surprising that he would have added all six entries on the siblings and cousins in the twenty-first generation to the genealogy.<sup>5</sup>

However, it was Writer no. 1 who added three entries for the eighteenth generation of his own grandparents, seven entries for the nineteenth generation of his parents, and three entries for the twentieth generation. On page 1 of this compilation, Writer no. 1 noted the exact time of birth, including year, month, day, and time, for his two grandparents. His detailed entry as to time of birth for these two members of the eighteenth generation, but not for the other two eighteenth-generation entries he wrote, further confirms that Tang Chengliang, who was born in June 1822 and his wife, surnamed Li and born in the Jiaqing period, were the grandparents of Writer no. 1.<sup>6</sup>

After his parents' deaths, Writer no. 2 penned the final entry for the twentieth generation, when he recorded his parents' names on the final page (p. 13) of the genealogy. As stated above, my supposition is that his father, Tang Zushi, was Writer no. 1, who began writing the genealogy but was interrupted by his death. Probably in a state of shock, his son, Writer no. 2, added the remaining entries to bring the chronology up to date by listing the adults in the twenty-first generation, to which he belonged. He did not list any children, who would have

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- 5 Sporadic and repeated military actions took place in Shandong from May to August 1944, as members of the Chinese Eighth Route Army attacked Japanese forces garrisoning the area. Heavy fighting took place in many parts of the province, including the Bohai Military District, the northeastern section of coastal Shandong Province. See *Bohai kenqu geming jinianguan 渤海墾區革命紀念館 [Revolutionary Memorial in the Bohai Reclaimed District]* <http://www.baik.com/wiki/%E6%B8%A4%E6%B5%B7%E5%9E%A6%E5%8C%BA%E9%9D%A9%E5%91%BD%E7%BA%AA%E5%BF%B5%E9%A6%86>, accessed August 7, 2017. The Japanese were frustrated by the situation and retaliated against the Chinese local population, which might be how the parents of writer two died. The war in Shandong around 1943 and 1944 is discussed in Sherman Xiaogang Lai, *A Springboard to Victory: Shandong Province and Chinese Communist Military and Financial Strength, 1937–1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), especially 177–184.
- 6 When family histories were being compiled in China, information for the family history was sometimes gathered by word of mouth, especially when the clan met, perhaps at the New Year, to worship their ancestors. See Xu, *Zhongguo de jiapu*, 80–81. A long discussion with some concrete examples of orally transmitted family histories in China is in Wang, *Zhongguo jiapu tonglun*, 30–40.

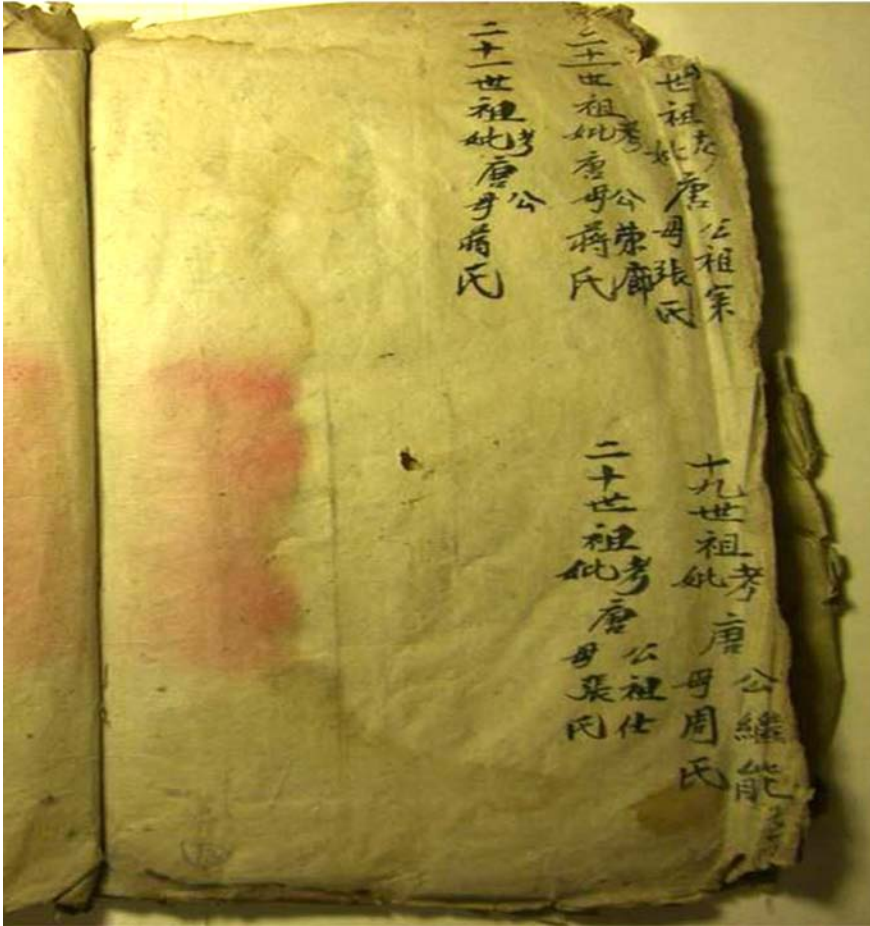


FIGURE 6.9

*Tang Family Genealogy* [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Page 13, *The Final Page*. The entry at the lower-right-hand side of this page shows entries for the parents of Writer no. 2. At the top of the page, the final entry, Writer no. 2 followed the standard format by listing his wife by her surname but did not add his own name.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

made up the twenty-second generation, but since they were either children or in their teens or early twenties at the time this genealogy was written, that would not have been surprising.<sup>7</sup>

7 Families with a written family history had a responsibility to periodically update the genealogy. See Lai Xinxia 來新夏 and Xu Jianhua 徐建華, *Zhongguo de nianpu yu jiapu*

### Surveying the Family's History

The Tang family in this genealogy was evidently proud of its lineage, as indicated by the faithful recording of its generations since the Ming. The family did not feel the need to claim descent from a mythical figure in the historical past, as some families did. Rather, the Tang family record began in 1420, with the couple who presumably were the founding members of this branch of the Tang family. The family appears to have been at least locally prominent, as shown by the fact that many of the heads of household took on a *hao* name. The *hao* designation could have been used as a marker of some accomplishment, such as an indication that the bearer had passed a government examination and was thereby promoted to the ranks of the local elite. At the very least, because the *hao* could have been selected and used by the man in question without any formal investiture of its use, the *hao* indicated a pretention to join the ranks of the locally prominent. Use of the *hao* was first adopted in the fourteenth generation of the Tang family (1750s), then used in the seventeenth generation (1830s), the eighteenth generation (1850s), once in the nineteenth generation (1870s), and once in the twentieth generation (1895).

Writer no. 1, Tang Zushi, possessed basic information about the Tang family lineage for the first to the seventeenth generations. In 1944, he likely could recall members of the generation before his own, who would have been ninety-nine years old by that year and had probably passed away. But relying on his own memory he was able to give three entries for members of the eighteenth generation, his grandparent's generation. He also wrote seven entries for his parents' generation (1870) and three entries for his own generation (1895) before his death.

At that point, his son, Writer no. 2, took over, adding three more entries for his father's generation and all six entries for his own generation.<sup>8</sup> In the final

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中國的年譜與家譜 [*Chinese Chronologies and Genealogies*] (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1997), 154–155. Prominent families had set time periods for updating the family history. See Hilary J. Beattie, *Land and Lineage in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 114, 119.

8 It was not unusual for the compiler of the family history to record a more detailed listing for the relatives in his own generation, as can be seen in the text under discussion here. In my collection is a handwritten genealogy prepared in 1742 by Zhao Xing 趙星 from Quwo 曲沃 County in Shanxi Province. It is simply titled **Family Registry** [*Jiabu* 家簿] and consists of only seven pages. He has basic listings for five past generations, but for his father's generation (generation six) and his own (generation seven), he lists several uncles (along with the surname of their wives and the number and sex of their children), and he lists his three



FIGURE 6.10

*To Write or Not to Write?* This photo captures what I imagine as the thoughtfulness and hesitation of Writer no. 2 as he contemplated adding his name as the final entry in his family genealogy. In fact it is a photo of the famous Chinese reformer Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929).

WEB PHOTO

entry in the chronology on the last page, the son wrote an entry for himself and his wife. But he left his own name blank out of fear of having it written in the long record of the Tang family while he was still living.<sup>9</sup> So he wrote the entry in the style of all the others, including his wife's surname, Jiang 蔣, but not his

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brothers along with their wives and children. This work, bound in twine, is 15½ in (39.4 cm) h × 10 in (25.4 cm) w. It was written in 1742 and was purchased in Beijing in April 2009. The rare book expert Shum Chun (Shen Jin) 沈津, then at Harvard, confirmed that the paper was consistent with materials dating to the time of the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor.

9 It was not the rule that only deceased members of the family were listed in a genealogy. Moreover, different families had different rules about which family members to include in the genealogies. For example, some families did not include a child who died before age eight. See Lai and Xu, *Zhongguo de nianpu yu jiapu*, 158. Some families only included deceased members. See Liu Liming 劉黎明, *Citang lingpai jiapu: Zhongguo chuantong xueyuan qinzu xisu* 祠堂靈牌家譜：中國傳統血緣親族習俗 [*Ancestral Halls, Spirit Tablets, Genealogies: Chinese Practices in Familial Lineages*] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin

own, but from elsewhere in the text it is clear that his surname was Tang 唐 and his generational name was Rong 榮.

Another aspect of the Tang family history reinforces the conclusion that the family was locally prominent: many heads of household took more than one wife. It is possible in some entries the first wife died, and the man remarried, but it is more likely that taking a secondary wife was a sign of the relative wealth of the family head. Multiple wives were listed in seven entries, covering the dates between the fifth generation (1530s) and the twentieth generation (1895). There is no correlation between the *hao* and having multiple wives, since only one man who used a *hao* had two wives recorded.<sup>10</sup>

By using the incidence of the *hao* designation and the taking of secondary wives as indications of the family's financial standing, we can surmise that in the 1500s the family began to amass wealth. The family's social and financial position may have been shaken by the victory of the Qing in 1644, the time of the tenth through the twelfth generations, for which no secondary wives or *hao* are noted. Such markers of pretention to elite status disappeared subsequently. As fiscal and social stability returned during the time of the thirteenth generation (1720s), the fortunes of the Tang family recovered, and some men in the family once more took the *hao*, beginning with the fourteenth generation (1745), and secondary wives, beginning with the sixteenth generation (1795). The family continued to prosper through the twentieth generation (1895), with Tang Zuren 唐祖仁 being the last to take two wives, probably in the early years of the Republican era.

### Women in the Tang Family

As an established and proud family, the Tang sons found wives from among many other families in their vicinity, and Tang daughters were often married to boys in the families in this network and left to live with them. We can conclude this because Writer no. 2 jotted down information (p. 9) about his sisters and

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chubanshe, 1993), 168. It was recognized that war or natural disasters could add a sense of urgency to the need to update a family history. See Xu, *Zhongguo de jiapu*, 77.

10 Some families recorded secondary wives and concubines in the family history. For a discussion of this point, see Ouyang Zongshu 歐陽宗書, *Zhongguo jiapu* 中國家譜 [*Chinese Family Histories*] (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1993), 100, 156–157. Nevertheless, the handling of concubines in the family history always posed a question. Some families had a rule that a concubine with no children would not be recorded in the genealogy, while other families had no such stipulation. See the discussion in Wu Qianghua 吳強華, *Jiapu* 家譜 [*Genealogies*] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2006), 133–136.



FIGURE 6.11

*A Scribe in Harbin.* The photo, which was on display at the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Harbin [Haerbin sheng Sufeiya jiaotang 哈爾濱聖索菲亞教堂], shows a typical scribe in Republican China, here seen consulting with a client. The church had been trashed during the Cultural Revolution and its inside was stripped bare of the original ornate architectural fixtures and all its religious items. In 1997, it became the Harbin Municipal Architecture and Art Museum [Haerbinshi jianzhu yishuguan 哈爾濱市建築藝術館]. When I visited in 2011, it was being used for an exhibition of photographs and items from Harbin's pre-1949 past.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

cousins, probably from his own generation, who had left the family quarters to marry (see more on this below). Following the genealogical style, because they were female he wrote down only their surnames, though such girls were not usually recorded in the genealogy.<sup>11</sup>

11 This was not always true. See Xu, *Zhongguo de jiapu*, 29–30.

Concerning the marriage of Tang sons, the Tang family had a particularly strong connection with the Jiang 蔣 family, from which Tang sons found wives on eighteen occasions over the Tang family's history, lasting hundreds of years; the first Jiang daughter married a Tang in the third generation (1470s) and the last one was recorded in the twenty-first generation (1920s). Other ongoing intermarriage relationships were with the Jing 經 family, four times between the twelfth generation (1695) and the twenty-first generation (1920s); three marriages were made with the Li 李 family between the eighteenth generation (1845) and the twenty-first generation (1920s); and wives for Tang sons came from the Hu 胡 family in the first generation (1420s) and again in the eighteenth generation (1845). In its earlier history, the Tang family had found wives in the Wen 文 family twice between the second generation (1445) and the tenth generation (1645) and from the Yang 楊 family twice in the fifth and sixth generations (1520–1545). Note that just because the surnames are similar for a number of wives does not necessarily indicate that all of these women came from the same branch of another family. These surnames are all fairly common and do not by themselves indicate descent from the same branch of a family. But neither should the recurrence of a few select surnames over the course of centuries be dismissed as coincidental. Rather, it was more likely the mark of long continuing interfamily relationships.<sup>12</sup>

Forty-three marriages are listed in the genealogy, so other surnames also appear for Tang wives. The surnames that appear only once include Lin 林, Ji 吉, Huang 黃, Zhou 邹, Liu 劉, Liao 廖, Wang 王, and Zhou 周.

The genealogy lists the names of six Tang daughters who were married into other families in the vicinity (p. 9). Writer no. 2 most likely listed the information about these girls because he still considered them important relatives even though they had married into other families. Perhaps they were his own sisters or cousins whom he had played with as a child. He listed five Tang daughters who married into the Jiang 蔣, Li 李, and Zhou 周 families. Daughters from families with these surnames had married into the Tang family in past years.

Two of the girls who thus married into other families may have been servant girls or “adopted” daughters raised by the Tang family. While still children they may have acted as servants or “babysitters” and so became well-known to Writer no. two. One such girl, surnamed Jiang 蔣, was sent to the Jing 經

12 Useful comments on the relations developed between families through marriage over many generations are in Keith Hazelton, “Patriline and the Development of Localized Lineages: The Wu of Hsiu-Ning City, Hui-chou, to 1528,” in *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China*, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and James L. Watson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 158–160. See also Beattie, *Land and Lineage in China*, 104–105.

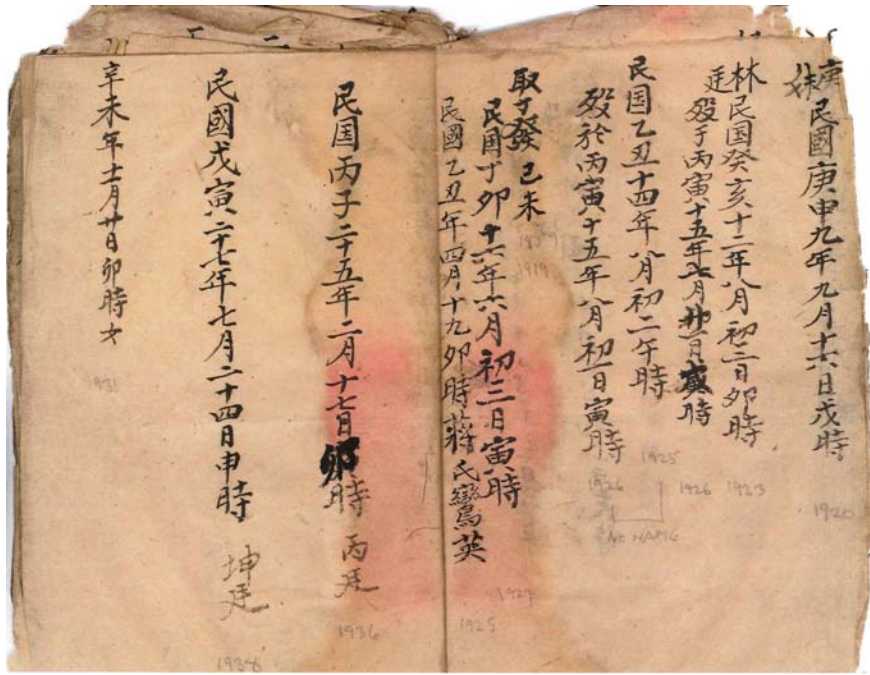


FIGURE 6.12

*Tang Family Genealogy* [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Pages 3 and 4, *Females in the Tang Family*. Family genealogies were usually circumspect about listing females, because the sense of patrilineal authority was so strong. Wives and concubines were listed by their surname only. But in this case Writer no. 2 listed the females, probably cousins and sisters, whom he knew because they grew up together. Children who died very early, were not even named. This entry, in the upper-left-hand corner of page 4, reads, “1931, November, 20th day, the mao hour [between 5:00 AM and 7:00 AM], female” [Xinweinian shiyiyue nianri maoshi nv 辛未年十一月廿日卯時女].

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

family. The Jiang and the Jing families had, over the years, married many of their daughters into the Tang household. The second girl was surnamed Bin 賓 (unclear character), and she was sent to the Zhang 張 family. Two Zhang girls had married into the Tang family in the twentieth generation (1895). It is likely that these two girls were the same age as members of the Tang family’s twenty-first generation, including Writer no. 2. This means they were twenty-four years old in 1944 when the genealogy was written.

Writer no. 2 recorded birth dates for seven female relatives in his generation, four of whom had already died. The girls who died before their first birthday were not given names, including a baby girl called Younger Sister Geng [Gengmei 庚妹] because she had been born in the *gengshen* 庚申 year, 1920. Another girl who died before her first birthday and not given a name was born



FIGURE 6.13

*A Commercial Street.* This could be the commercial street in a walled market town. We see the brick of the wall in the background. Shops are all open to the street, which is made for foot traffic, rather than vehicles. The hanging lanterns indicate a holiday and were probably being used for advertising and were for sale. The people's robes appear to be heavy and padded, so the weather must be cold. The ground appears to be dusty and dry, so this is a North China scene. It is possible the Tang family lived in a similar environment.

PHOTO: STREET SCENE, WILLIAM LEETE, 1919; RESTORATION AND PRINT ©2008 WILLIAM MORSE. USED BY SPECIAL PERMISSION

on August 2, 1925, and died on August 1, 1926. A third girl, who may have been stillborn, was listed simply as “female” [nǚ 女] with a date of November 2, 1931.

The three named girls listed shared the generational character 廷 *ting*. For boys, the generational character was the first character of the given name. But for girls, the generational character in this family was the second character of the given name. One of the named girls had already died: Linting 林廷, who was born August 3, 1923, and died July 22, 1926, just shy of her third birthday. Two other girls were still alive: Bingting 丙廷, born in 1936, and Kunting 坤廷, born in 1938, making both of them under age ten when these entries were written (according to my estimation), so they may have been still living at home with their parents at the time and were known to Writer no. 2.<sup>13</sup>

13 There was no set regulation on whether the generational character had to be the first character or the second character of the given name. See Liu, *Citang lingpai jiapu*, 158. In the **Family Registry** mentioned above in the notes written by Zhao Xing, he and his three



FIGURE 6.14

*Street Scene in Manchuria.* In this typical street scene, taken in Manchuria in the late Qing dynasty, a grandfather appears to be buying some sweet treats for his grandchildren. The shop in the background is called *Qiantaihao* 乾泰號 [Heavenly Peacefulness Company], perhaps a pharmacy or a money-changing/pawnshop.

PHOTO FROM THE T.C. CHAMBERLIN COLLECTION AT BELOIT COLLEGE

### The Family's Home [*guxiang* 故鄉]

One question that remains is: Where did the Tang family live? Because I purchased the genealogy in Ji'nan from a local dealer, I assume it came from somewhere in the area, that is, somewhere in Shandong. The list of the girls who had married into other families included the village where each of them went. The names of these villages were not those of market towns but, rather, those of smaller villages [*cun* 村]. Of the seven villages named by Writer no. 2, two of their names are found online as being in the northeastern tip of Shandong, east of Weihaiwei 威海衛: Miaotou 廟頭 and Zhangjiawan 張家灣. A third village listed in the genealogy as Lijia Cun 禮甲村 was not found in Shandong,

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brothers had single-character [*danming* 單名] given names, but each name included a "sun" [*ri* 日] radical. His name was Xing 星, and his brothers were named Min 旻, Yu 昱, and Jing 景.

though a modern-era village called Li Cun 禮村 is in present-day Shandong, in the general area of the other two villages. The village names that could not be located as being in Shandong online were Changwu 長屋, Zhubiantian 竹邊田, and Shenwucun 深塢村. Although geographical research has not provided conclusive evidence so far, I assume that the Tang family in this genealogy lived in the northeastern tip of Shandong east of present-day Weihai 威海.<sup>14</sup>

### Summary and Concluding Remarks

At first glance, the Tang family genealogy I bought in Ji'nan appeared to have little specific information about when and where it was written. Miscellaneous notes about the family at the beginning obscured the fact that the main body of the text was a chronological genealogy later in the pamphlet. Both of these points are typical of the *chaoben* produced in China between 1850 and 1950. They were written for specific purposes, in this case as a “complete” record of the writer’s branch of the Tang family from its first-generation founder until 1944. Because it was a personal document that the writer did not imagine would be read outside the family, it did not occur to him to list the place, date, or his own authorship of it.

But a careful reading reveals many details. The Tang family had a long history stretching back to 1420. It had once had presumptions to higher social status, as could be seen by the repeated use of the *hao* adopted by some Tang men over the generations and by the number of Tang men who took secondary wives, whose names were also recorded in the genealogy. These two status markers also indicated the family’s changing financial fortunes over the centuries. The family began to amass wealth, or strive for higher status, in the 1500s, when both the frequency of the *hao* and of secondary wives increased. But the family suffered after the Manchu invasion of the mid-1600s, and it was not until nearly a century later, from 1720 onward, that they began to regain their sense of social standing and again used the *hao* and accepted secondary wives. The standing of the family continued to improve throughout the 1800s and into the early twentieth century. It was no doubt the sense of wishing to preserve the family’s

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14 The printed maps of Shandong available today usually do not show small rural villages. One way to discover the place names of all the villages mentioned by the writer of this genealogy is to consult the old local gazetteers [*difangzhi* 地方志] for the counties in this part of the province, where the villages surrounding the county seat [*xianshi* 縣市] might be listed. If all of the place names could be located, we would be able to see the geographic spread of their kinship and intermarriage networks.

continuing sense of holding a social position that compelled Tang Zushi, Writer no. 1, to write the family genealogy.

His son, Writer no. 2, must have been shocked at the passing of both parents in 1944. I estimate he was in his mid-twenties at the time, a member of the twenty-first generation of that branch of the Tang family, and he decided to complete and update the genealogy that his father had begun. He added some entries about his grandparent's (nineteenth) generation, two entries about his parent's (twentieth) generation, and a number of entries about his own (twenty-first) generation. He wrote down the specific date and time of both parents' deaths on page 2, then wrote the entry for his parents in the chronological section on page 13.

The son also wrote about a number of girls in the Tang family who had been sent to marry into other families. His record indicates that several Tang girls, and two possibly adopted or servant girls who had most likely been raised by the family, married into other families that over the centuries had built up a marriage-exchange relationship with the Tangs.<sup>15</sup> In particular, the relationship with the Jiang family survived for centuries. Other families as well were part of this intermarriage network. Probably most of the young women recorded by the son were about the same age as he was at the time, in their mid-twenties, and from his own generation.

Writer no. 2 also wrote about the girls in his generation who had died or still lived at home. The death of four young girls between 1926 and 1931 indicates the high birthrate as well as the high rate of infant and child mortality.

The son wrote the names of the villages to which each female had been sent. More research is needed on the names of these villages, but the indications are that the network of families that took part in the marriage exchanges was in villages in the upper northeastern part of Shandong, east of present-day Weihai. The fact that all these place names were of villages or small communities lends strength to the idea that the Tang family was based in a village or in a small market town and that its marriage-exchange relationships were with other families based in villages or small towns. Although as a clan they were striving for higher social position, in fact they were more like rural local gentry whose status was close to that of the common people.

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15 I assume that Writer no. 2 was recalling the girls with whom he grew up or whom he remembered living nearby who were treated as relatives. Yet these girls did not have the Tang surname, and they were sent to other villages to marry. Therefore, I conclude they were likely adopted or servant girls who were released from service upon reaching a marriageable age.

Finally, the son wrote the last entry in the genealogy, for himself and his wife. He wrote a standard entry, including only his wife's surname (without her given name). But he could not bring himself to brush in his own name, perhaps because an entry in the family genealogy generally (though not always) indicated a deceased person, whose final record was added along with those of earlier deceased ancestors. So he left his name blank, leaving the final entry incomplete. We do not know the name of Writer no. 2, the son.

The handwritten genealogy discussed here illustrates the attitude toward family construction, as shown by this family in the Republican period. By most accounts, the practice of keeping a family history, which was not uncommon in the Song, flourished in the Qing and Republican periods, when the manuscript discussed in this chapter was written. Moreover, all social and economic classes in China seemed to appreciate the value of having a written genealogy. It helped them to identify themselves in relation their family as well as to society in general. The 1944 genealogy discussed here represents the typical mental construct of a preferred family structure; the family was ideally conceived of as a long-lasting patrilineal line of descent, as seen in the full names of all male heads of household recorded, while, as mentioned several times above, only the surnames of their wives were entered in the official family record.<sup>16</sup>

The line of descent of the Tang family gave only the barest of information for each generation: one entry for one male name and his wife. The formal entries lacked any information as to the date of birth or death. But when the father and son, members of the twentieth and twenty-first generations, began to make entries based on their own memories and knowledge of family members, they include several for the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first generations, covering the years from roughly the 1870s to 1944. Clearly, in their minds, the family was composed most importantly of the relatives they knew or had known: the relatives who were within living memory. They did not wish to confine themselves to selecting just one entry for each generation, when the vibrant family members of the most recent generations were still real in their own minds.

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16 The point that the value of having a written family history was appreciated by people in all socioeconomic classes in China is commented on in Michael Szonyi, *Practicing Kinship: Lineage and Descent in Late Imperial China* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 35. Possibly one impetus for Writer no. 2 to carry on with finishing the family genealogy was the feeling that because of its perceived importance to the family, failure to keep the genealogy current was considered unfilial. See Ouyang, *Zhongguo jiapu*, 28, 83–84. He had recently lost both parents, thus being a filial son was likely strongly on his mind.

Research indicates that, for many Chinese in the Republican period, and probably also for those in the present day, the relatives they have known during their lives are the most important. In the Republican period, families carefully honored deceased relatives they had known in life, while giving more perfunctory obeisance to deceased relatives of earlier generations. The importance of calling upon one's own memory when drawing a picture of the extended family is illustrated by this genealogy. Generations within memory of the living writers (the eighteenth through the twenty-first generations) received several entries, in contrast to the earlier "historical generations" (the first through the seventeenth generations), which had only one entry per generation.<sup>17</sup>

The multiple entries given for the four most recent generations also reflect the fact that each household included a number of children. The Tang family in Shandong held the traditional view of how an ideal family should be constituted. Although the Tang family may have been scattered geographically, it was more likely that the relatives of the more recent generations lived in close proximity. They lived, in other words, according to the tradition of maintaining an extended family. By writing out in brush and ink the basic record of its family genealogy, the Tang family affirmed its acceptance of the traditional family structure. At the same time, the written genealogy was a way of documenting its success with that model over a long period. The genealogy the family lost or discarded, which ended up in the market in Ji'nan, has allowed us to appreciate its respect for its long-recorded history.

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17 The important point that people were most concerned with the relatives they actually knew is made in Eyferth, *Eating Rice from Bamboo Roots*, 62–65. The gradual loosening of psychological ties between the living and the departed is mentioned in Wei-Ping Lin, *Materializing Magic Power: Chinese Popular Religion in Villages and Cities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 33. This is a realistic view, instead of assuming that the Chinese honored all their ancient ancestors with the same fervor or compassion with which they remembered relatives whom they had known as children. Earlier scholars both Chinese and Western implied that the Chinese lumped together all ancestors as equally important to the living. For example, see S. Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom* (New York: John Wiley, 1853), 2: 268–269. A more recent overview seems to make the same assumption, see C.K. Yang, "The Role of Religion in Chinese Society," in *An Introduction to Chinese Civilization*, ed. John T. Meskill (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1973), 648.

## Mr. Bai and Mr. Qian Earn Their Living: Considering Two Handwritten Notebooks of Matching Couplets from China in the Late Qing and Early Republic

老白老錢寫對聯兒

### Introduction

This chapter explores two *chaoben* that I bought in China in the spring of 2012. They were written between the end of the Qing dynasty, around 1880, and the early years of the Republic, about 1913. They were both written by literate men whose daily life was very close to the common people in terms of their life expectations and their modest incomes. The men, who had received some formal education and had the ability to read and to write, took advantage of those abilities to earn income by preparing couplets of congratulatory poems that were, and still are, a big part of the social and celebratory life of the Chinese. By attempting to draw inferences and make logical assumptions from the information in these two *chaoben* and the manner in which the information was presented, I suggest the ways in which they can reveal something about the lives, the worldview, and the economic standing of both men. By looking carefully at the contents of what they wrote, we see that these *chaoben* can also be used to reconstruct something about the communities in which both men lived and worked.

The bulk of the content in both *chaoben* is matching couplets. Many literate men in this period could regularly earn extra income by offering to write matching couplets, celebratory rhyming phrases that were demanded on many social occasions, such as New Year festivities and weddings. Many handwritten booklets containing sample phrases are available in the used book markets in China. The volume of *chaoben* available in markets attests to the popularity of matching couplets and the ubiquity with which literate men turned to this custom as a way to earn income. In addition to introducing matching couplets, this chapter takes us to the village and city streets where ordinary people lived and worked. Rhyming couplets captured the values and the images of the common people of that era and we can use them to symbolically construct the world as they knew it and as they thought it should be.

### Mr. Bai

Once, while visiting China, I came to know a man whom I named Mr. Bai 白, a common Chinese surname. *Bai* means “white” or “blank,” which seems appropriate. I did not meet him in person, because he lived in China in the early years of the twentieth century and has long since passed away, but I bought a *chaoben* he had kept for himself, and by reading it I came to know many things about his life.

I bought his *chaoben* at the Panjiayuan antiques market in Beijing in May 2012. Because of where I bought it, I assume that Mr. Bai lived in North China, since most of the handwritten materials collected by dealers and sold at Panjiayuan come from North or Northeast China. Mr. Bai used browned and unbleached inexpensive handmade paper, and he wrote using a Chinese-style writing brush. From his acceptable but mediocre calligraphy, I assume that he received some formal education but did not complete his education and most likely never received even the lowest-level degree awarded by the county officials where he lived. He was literate and could write many characters, but at the same time he was not sure how to correctly write all the characters he wanted to use, so he sometimes wrote out commonly used characters in the *chaoben* for his own reference. His text, in other words, contained notes to himself in the margins that used basic characters and phrases that he wanted to remember correctly. One example was: *fu, lu, shou, shanxing* 福祿壽, 三星 [blessings, advancement, long life, the three stars] on page 22. The pages were formed by a larger sheet of paper being folded to make two pages, with the open ends bound along the right margin. I call this work **Mr. Bai's Notebook** [*Bai xiansheng zhi chaoben* 白先生之抄本], whose final size after each sheet of paper had been folded in half is 6 in × 7¼ in (15.2 cm × 18.4 cm).<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Bai evidently decided that one way he could earn a living was by working as an elementary-school teacher or tutor in the village or small town where he lived. The world in which Mr. Bai lived had been shaken by a drastic reform carried out in 1905 by the Qing government. That reform abolished the classical education system, most likely the system under which Mr. Bai had begun his studies, and declared that all the standard texts that had been used for centuries to educate students were no longer accepted as the core texts for the educational curriculum.<sup>2</sup> Instead, a new system based on the educational

1 See Suleski (Xue Long 薛龍), “Wan-Qing Minguo shiqide minjian chaoben.” At the time this article was published, I had not yet discovered Mr. Bai's *chaoben*.

2 The classical style of essay writing, called *wenyanwen* 文言文 [literary style], remained

models used in the West and in Japan, which used graded textbooks on geography, mathematics, world history, civics, and so on, was adopted, including a system of schools organized around elementary education in six grades and higher education based on a middle school and upper-middle school pattern. It seems likely that this unexpected change interrupted Mr. Bai's education. He could easily have felt unprepared to enter the new system so suddenly imposed on the country, and he was lost as to how best to proceed with his own studies.<sup>3</sup>

Although his own education and calligraphic ability were limited, compared to most people Mr. Bai would have been considered educated because he could read and write, and in the countryside where he lived, he could still be a teacher or a tutor for young students who sought to acquire a basic ability to read and write even if their parents did not have the money to enroll them in a modern-style local school. In the society in which he lived, which, as discussed earlier, had a literacy rate of perhaps 30 percent, Mr. Bai's ability to read and write already exceeded that of the majority of the population.<sup>4</sup>

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popular, however, and continued to have social and economic relevance. Mr. Bai's writing followed a version of the classical style of prose. It was the style of writing he was teaching to his students, as later pages in his notebook reveal.

- 3 The impact of these educational reforms is discussed in Elizabeth R. Vandervan, *A School in Every Village: Educational Reform in a Northeast China County, 1904–1931* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012). See also Bastid, *Educational Reform in Early Twentieth-Century China*. Many communities in China began to establish new-style schools earlier than 1905; see Situ Xing 司徒星, *Kaiping xianzhi 開平縣誌 [Gazetteer for Kaiping County]*, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), esp. the section on Kaiping history from 1573 to 1999. For an excellent narrative on the impact of educational changes on the life of an individual, see Henrietta Harrison, *The Man Awakened from Dreams: One Man's Life in a North China Village, 1857–1942* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005). Comments on the lingering effects of the 1905 educational reforms even into the 1930s are made in Lin Chih-hung (Lin Zhihong) 林志宏, "Shibianxia de shibian: Keju feichu he zhishi jiecheng de dingwei (1900s–1930s) 世變下的士變：科舉廢除和知識階層的定位 [Change for Scholars in a World of Change: Abolishing the Higher Examination and the Position of the Intelligentsia]," in *Shenfen, wenhua yu quanli: Shizu yanjiu xintan 身份文化與權力：土族研究新探 [Identity, Culture, and Influence: New Research on the Scholarly Class]*, ed. Gan Huaizhen 甘懷真 (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2012), 387–424.
- 4 Some villagers in South China in the area of present-day Hong Kong report that in 1911 (when Mr. Bai was active), 55 percent to 67 percent of adult men in rural villages considered themselves literate. See Hase, *Custom, Land and Livelihood in Rural South China*, 18. My suggestion is that since these men could write their names and a number of characters and could make out basic written texts, they believed they possessed adequate literacy for their needs. I think this was likely true for many rural dwellers in China. It is not evident

Mr. Bai first wrote down a number of well-known poems (pp. 1–9) taken from the standard collection *Tangshi sanbaishou* 唐詩三百首 [*Three Hundred Poems of the Tang Dynasty*]. He knew that if his pupils could read and recite some of these poems, their parents and relatives would be pleased with Mr. Bai's teaching. The poems also show the continued respect given to classical forms of education in China even after the educational reforms declared them obsolete.<sup>5</sup>

He followed this section by writing in his notebook a story that he could teach to his students. It would give them some historical knowledge, since he could explain the background of the story. He wrote (p. 9) the story “Taigong diaoyu 太公釣魚 [Taigong Goes Fishing].” According to the story surrounding this tale, the historical background Mr. Bai would no doubt explain to his students was that in ancient days an official known as Jiang Taigong 姜太公 had helped the king of the Zhou 周 dynasty (1046–256 BCE) establish his kingdom. Finally, at the age of eighty, Taigong was named prime minister, an award for his long-lasting loyalty. It is said that when he went fishing, unlike other people, who used a curved hook on which to ensnare the fish, Taigong used a simple straight hook. When people pointed out to him that a straight hook would not catch many fish, Taigong replied that, when the fish he was trying to catch swam by, it would bite the lure on the hook, and Taigong would catch it. This story is still used in modern Chinese and Korean classes to teach children the virtue of patience, the idea that you cannot achieve your goal until the time is ripe. At the same time, the tale conveys an underlying sense of optimism, that persistence and hope will be rewarded. I like to think that Mr. Bai selected this story to teach his students because it reflected Mr. Bai's own personal sense of optimism and perseverance.

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whether these men could or could not read a book or a newspaper with full comprehension. Even if they could read, they might not be able to write. Still, if they could meet all their basic needs using written material as necessary, we should call them literate. Many land contracts are presented in Hase's book in a form of bureaucratic Chinese based on the classical style. If the villagers could read and understand those contracts, I would label them literate. For an excellent collection of various types of land contracts, including photographs and complete texts, see Zhang Deyi 張德義 et al., *Zhongguo lidai tudi qizheng* 中國歷代土地契證 [*Chinese Historical Land Documents*] (Baoding: Hebei daxue chubanshe, 2009).

- 5 This collection of poems from the Tang dynasty (618–907) was compiled around 1763 by the Qing scholar Sun Zhu 孫洙 (1722–1778). At the time Mr. Bai was teaching students in the early 1900s, it was widely used in schools and academies. The collection continued to grow in popularity throughout the twentieth century. Copies of this collection are still widely available in Chinese communities.

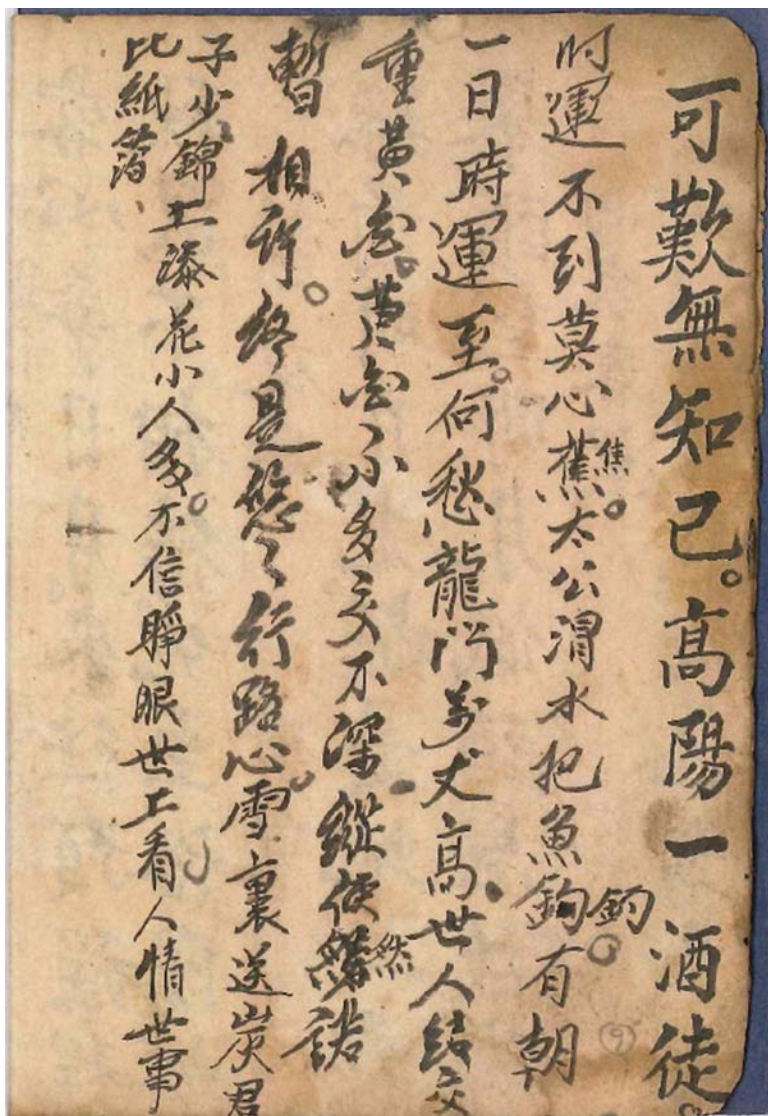


FIGURE 7.1

*Mr. Bai's Notebook* [Bai xiansheng zhi chaoben 白先生之抄本], Page 9, *The Story of Taigong* 太公. Here Mr. Bai was teaching his students the story of Taigong, an official in ancient China who has become a deity. Taigong was best known for fishing with a straight hook. When asked why, he replied, "When the fish who wants to be caught comes by, I will catch him." Mr. Bai added his own comments to the story in order to prepare his students for the real world of adult life. He said in part: "People make friendships, and often money is involved. But when you don't have much money, you won't have many friends" [Shiren jiejiao zhonghuangjin, Huangjin buduo jiaobushen 世人结交重黄金，黄金不多交不深].

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According to other popular versions of the story, Taigong came to the attention of the Zhou dynasty King Wu 武 (r. 1046–1043 BCE) and his father because of Taigong's practice of fishing with an unbent hook. When asked why, Taigong replied, "When the fish who wants to be caught comes by, I will catch him." As mentioned above, this was seen as a thoughtful strategy in governance and military matters as well as an example of optimism and perseverance. Another philosophical lesson was that a person might have an implicit purpose in his actions other than the obvious ones, and we must look beneath the surface when trying to understand the motivations of others.<sup>6</sup>

The story as Mr. Bai copied it continued with some of his own commentary:

The time of good fortune will no doubt arrive, so there is no need to worry. Taigong went fishing in the Wei River. One morning his luck arrived, so why worry even if the Dragon Gate appears to be a thousand meters high?

*Shiyunbudao, moxinjiao. Taigong weishui, bayudiao. Youzhaoyiri, shiyunzhi, heqiulongmen, wangegao.*

時運不到，莫心焦。太公渭水，把魚釣。有朝一日，時運至，何愁龍門，萬戈高。

Mr. Bai's simple classical style was close to vernacular speech, and it rhymed, so it could be more easily memorized.

In continuing his short essay, Mr. Bai talked about "affairs of the world" [*shishi* 世事]. In that section, he wanted to warn his students to be cautious as they dealt with others. He indicated that people had self-serving natures and could not be counted on in times of trouble. The point was that decent people were few, but petty people were numerous [*junzi shao, xiaoren duo* 君子少，小人多]. This may have reflected another side of Mr. Bai's personality, in which he felt some bitterness, perhaps because his own education and prospects for

6 The story is paraphrased here in both versions given, neither of which is a literal translation of Mr. Bai's simplified classical style. On the story of "Taigong Goes Fishing" (here titled *Jiang Taigong diaoyu* 姜太公釣魚), see *Zhongguo lishi wenhua changshi tongdian* 中國歷史文化常識統典 [*Encyclopedia of Popular Knowledge on Chinese History and Culture*] (Kunming: Yunnan jiaoyu chubanshe, 2010), 124. Many lessons can be drawn from this story. For example, another lesson is the that some people are willing to be caught. Further, my partner, who was raised in South Korea, said some Koreans joke that the lesson of this story can be used as an excuse for doing nothing (Jonghyun Lee, personal communication, July 2012).

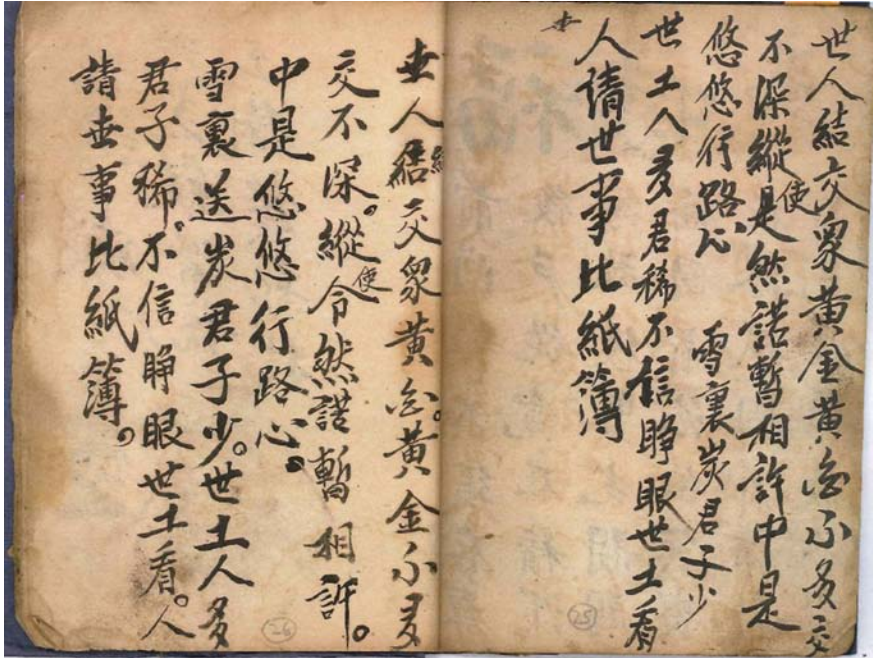


FIGURE 7.2

*Mr. Bai's Notebook* [Bai xiansheng zhi chaoben 白先生之抄本], Pages 25 and 26, *Student Calligraphy*. Mr. Bai asked two of his students to copy the Taigong commentary. They did so on these two pages, using their still-developing calligraphic skills and occasionally missing a phrase or word.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

the future had been interrupted. He was also giving his students a lesson in applying common sense and telling them to avoid being misled as they entered the adult world. Because he was a member of the common people, all of Mr. Bai's actions, I argue, were aimed at the realistic application of his skills and his lessons to the real world of people and commerce and work.

The story of Taigong is followed by:

People make friends, and often money is involved. But if you don't have much money, you won't have many friends. This might cause you to worry, and for a while you will hold on to the friend, but in the end people part ways. Very few people will send you coal during the snows of winter, and even worse [lit. "to add flowers to the brocade"] many petty people will surround you. If you don't believe me, just look at the ways of the world. Human feelings in this world are as thin as paper.

*Shirenjiejiao zhonghuangjin, huangjinbuduo, jiaobushen. Zongshi rannuo, zanxiangxu, zhongshiyouyou, xingluxin. Xueli songtan, junzishao, jinshang tanhua, xiaorenduo. Buxin zhenyan, shishangkan, renqing shishi, bizhibo.*

世人结交重黄金，黄金不多交不深。縱使然諾暫相許，終是悠悠行路心。雪裏送炭君子少，錦上添花小人多。不信睜眼世上看，人情世事比紙薄。(p. 9)<sup>7</sup>

Mr. Bai taught this story to some of his students. He then asked two of them to copy the final portion of the essay in the pages of his notebook. They did so, occasionally omitting or miswriting a character, but Mr. Bai kept their assignment in his notebook (pp. 25 and 26). I wonder if one of those young students was named Jiang Wen 姜文, because that student—in not very good handwriting—twice wrote his name later in the notebook (on pp. 41 and 43). Another person at a beginning level of calligraphy, possibly another student of Mr. Bai, also wrote his name in the notebook: Yang Keming 楊克明 (p. 43). These are the only two names of living people who appear in the notebook. I wonder if Mr. Bai's surname was actually Jiang 姜. Was the boy Jiang Wen 姜文 his son? Was this the reason he selected the story of “Taigong Goes Fishing,” since Taigong's surname was also Jiang?<sup>8</sup>

Another likely way for Mr. Bai to earn an income was to offer to write various congratulatory and ceremonial couplets for people. Although the majority of the Chinese population could not fully read or write such couplets, it was considered necessary to have these paper banners hung at all important occasions. They are often written on red paper, with the first banner hung on the viewer's

7 Mr. Bai's version is based on a Tang poem composed by Zhang Wei 張謂 (d. 777?), which had the generic title “Tichang anbi zhuren 提倡安壁主人 [Questions for the Master of the An Wall].” The first two lines of Mr. Bai's version are taken from this poem, and they rhyme. The phrase “to give added luster” [*jinshang tanhua* 錦上添花], which I have sarcastically translated as “even worse,” is a well-known Chinese idiom. See *Hanyu chengyu cidian* 漢語成語詞典 [*Dictionary of Chinese Idioms*] (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987), 306.

8 Taigong is the honorific title given to Jiang Shang 姜尚. Some sources say that, as a god, he grants titles to Daoist deities; some sources suggest placing his tablet on the roof beam as a new house is being constructed to ensure blessings; other sources say his tablet should be placed in the marriage chamber of newlyweds because he will represent the personality of the husband, which should be one of patience and perseverance. On Jiang Taigong 姜太公, see Yi Baoqun 奕保群, ed., *Zhongguo shenguai dacidian* 中國神怪大辭典 [*Dictionary of Chinese Spirits and Ghosts*] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2009), 221–222. See also Shi Xiaojin 史孝進 et al., ed., *Daojiao fengsu tan* 道教風俗談 [*Talking about Daoist Customs*] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 25–27.

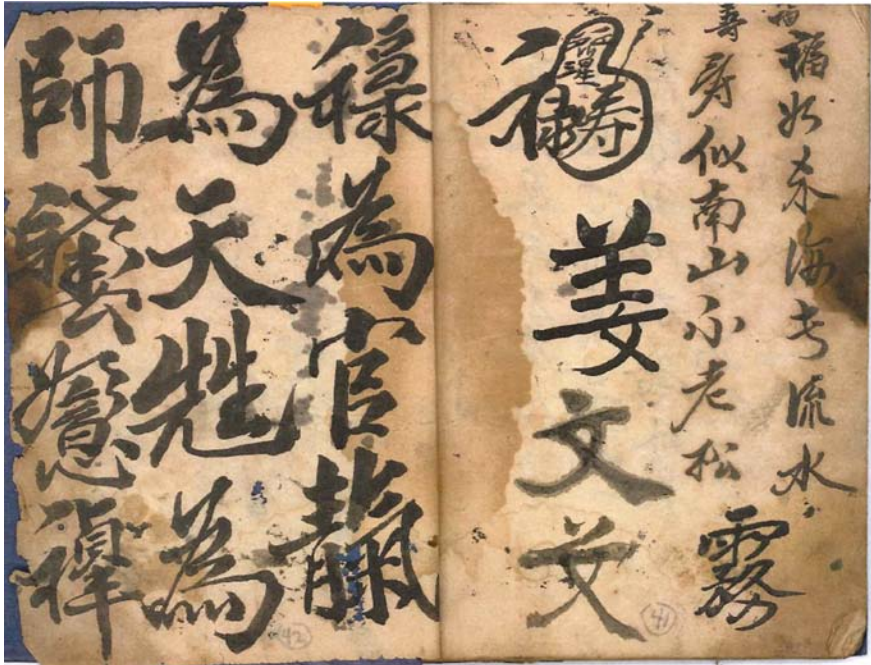


FIGURE 7.3

*Mr. Bai's Notebook* [Bai xiansheng zhi chaoben 白先生之抄本], Pages 41 and 42, *A Boy's Name*. This messy writing, which is characteristic of the chaoben prepared by Mr. Bai, includes the name of a boy, Jiang Wen 姜文. It appears to have been written by a child—was this the name of one of his students or the name of his son?

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

right while the matching second line is hung on the viewer's left. They are considered matching pairs because the phrases used in the first line complement those used in the second line. Welcoming the lunar New Year is the most festive time of the year in China, and it continues to be the general practice that a matching couplet written on red paper is hung on either side of the front gate. When written to celebrate the New Year, these are called "spring couplets" (*chunlian'er* 春聯兒 in the northern dialect). They express sentiments having to do with new growth, with welcoming, and with flowering and abundance.<sup>9</sup>

9 Hanging red New Year's couplets on the sides of the gate or front door continues to be widely practiced in China and Chinese communities worldwide. Modern almanacs usually contain sample texts for couplets. In more traditional times, people could hang couplets to commemorate important family events, such as a wedding, the birth of a son, or the birthday of an elder. But in contemporary China, these occasions are usually not noted by a new couplet at the gate, possibly with the exception of weddings, when hanging new couplets painted on



FIGURE 7.4

*Mr. Bai Writing Celebratory Scrolls.* Writing matching poetic couplets [duilian 對聯] was a sure way for Mr. Bai to earn money. The new year was an especially busy time, because every house wanted poetic phrases written on red paper to paste at their front gate, and weddings were other occasions when it was necessary to hang banners on red paper.

THIS IMAGE IS TAKEN FROM SHI XIAOJIN 史孝進 ET AL., ED., *DAOJIAO FENG SU TAN 道教風俗談 [TALKING ABOUT DAOIST CUSTOMS]* (SHANGHAI: SHANGHAI CISHU CHUBANSHE, 2003), 55

bright red paper is still favored. Couplets for the New Year outnumber those for any other occasion. Indeed, many modern almanacs only contain samples for the New Year, weddings, and death. For an example, see Zhang Ming 張明, ed., *Zhonghua minsu wannianli 中華民俗萬年曆 [Chinese Popular Customs, Ten-Thousand-Year Calendar]* (Zhongzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 2005), 383–404. The important role of these couplets at the New Year is also explained in H.Y. Lowe 盧興源, *The Adventures of Wu: The Life Cycle of a Peking Man*, trans. Derk Bodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 2: 140–147. On preparing matching couplets for the New Year, see Tun Li-ch'en 敦禮臣, *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking*, trans. Derk Bodde (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1965), 98–100. This book is a translation of *Yanjing suishiji 燕京歲時記 [Annual Customs of Yanjing]*, originally published about 1902.

Mr. Bai knew he would receive many requests to prepare New Year couplets to be hung on the front gate. In his *chaoben*, he called this category simply *mentou* 門頭 [front gates]. He devoted several pages (pp. 12–24) to forty-eight examples of New Year couplets that he could offer his customers, in four-, five-, and seven-word-per-line versions.<sup>10</sup> For example, a couplet to welcome the New Year, one that Mr. Bai particularly liked as indicated by his circling it in red in his notebook, read: “The wind arises and the flowers sway, Spring arrives and the birds can fly” [*Fenglai huaziwu; Chunru niaonengfei* 風來花自舞; 春入鳥能飛; p. 18]. In this couplet, the first phrase in the first line, “wind arises” [*fenglai* 風來], is matched by the first phrase in the second line, “spring arrives” [*chunru* 春入]. The next phrase in the first line contains an adverb-noun phrase, “and the flowers sway” [*huaziwu* 花自舞], matched by the phrase in the second line, “the birds can fly” [*niao neng fei* 鳥能飛]. Matching couplets of this sort are appreciated by the Chinese even today. Mr. Bai did not compose any of the couplets he sold or the texts he taught to his students. He copied them from other texts, either from printed books or *chaoben* of other teachers like himself. Many of the phrases in the couplets were taken from classical poetry.<sup>11</sup>

Another couplet that Mr. Bai especially liked under the category of spring couplets, and probably thought would be popular with his customers, read: “In the spring, falling rains open the early flowers; In the autumn, under clear skies the last leaves float down” [*Chunqian, youyu, huakaizao; qiuhou, wushuang, yeluochi* 春前有雨花開早; 秋後無霜葉落遲; p. 12]. This couplet speaks to the inevitability of spring’s coming and going, a process that takes place “sooner or later” [*chizao* 遲早], which are the last characters of each line, completing the complementary matching of both phrases.<sup>12</sup>

10 As do modern almanacs. However, see Zhang, *Zhonghua minsu wannianli*, which gives samples texts in four-, five-, six-, seven-, and eight-word versions on pp. 389–398. Comments on how these have been used in rural villages are in James Hayes, “Specialists and Written Materials in the Village World,” in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. David Johnson et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), esp. 83–84.

11 Most of the phrases used in the matching couplets come from classical poetry. The poetic phrase used here comes from a Tang-dynasty poem by Song Zhiwen 宋之問 (656–712), “Chunri furongyuan shiyan yingzhi 春日芙蓉園侍宴應制 [Writing Poems in the Lotus Garden],” in *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 [*Complete Poems of the Tang*], *juan* 52:2.

12 The Baidu website <http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/595719417.html>, accessed March 2014 and August 2017, suggests that portions of this couplet, specifically *Chunqian, youyu, huakaizao* 春前有雨花開早 was part of a widely circulated saying [*yanyu* 諺語] in North China. It also suggests the original *locus classicus* for the phrase was a Han-dynasty lyric poem [*yuefu* 樂府] “Kongque dongnanfei 孔雀東南飛 [Peacocks Fly Southeast].” We should not assume that Mr. Bai consulted literary texts in order to come up with these

In selecting the categories of couplets that he would offer to write for people, Mr. Bai must have thought about the community in which he lived, determined which members of that community might ask him to write a couplet, and thought about the occasions when they were likely to ask for his help. Thus the section of his notebook devoted to sample couplets for his reference actually reveals much about Mr. Bai's village or his immediate community, the life events that were important to them, as well as the types of people who lived in his village and were likely to request a couplet from him. (The couplets are written on pages 10–40, meaning that the majority of pages in this notebook are devoted to texts for couplets.)

As seen below in more detail, Mr. Bai prepared multiple sample couplet verses, divided into categories. We can assume that the categories in which Mr. Bai had a large number of readymade samples were those from which he assumed a larger number of customers would order a couplet. Conversely, some categories had only one or two sample texts, so we can assume that Mr. Bai did not count among his likely customers people associated with those categories of activities or needs. By keeping in mind the number of sample couplets in each category, we can further predict the types of people likely to be ordering couplets from Mr. Bai. The same holds true for Mr. Qian, discussed below.

We can assume that Mr. Bai tutored students, and he must have expected that the parents of these students were likely to ask him for a couplet at some point, to celebrate a holiday or to announce the fact that their child (probably a son) was a student. Mr. Bai wrote out twelve sample couplets as general felicitations (pp. 13–16 and 39–40). Because this notebook shows that Mr. Bai's calligraphy was not especially polished or refined, we can surmise that the people who lived in Mr. Bai's community were probably not wealthy and had little formal education. Even so, the couplet texts that Mr. Bai selected to offer his potential customers expressed the values of the educated, literate, Confucian elite. Naturally, one would want to present to the outside world an image of a properly ordered family that endorsed the most established (and conventional) cultural values. This point becomes clear in the discussion that follows.

Always expressing a positive idea, some of his samples honored the practice of reading or reciting texts [*dushu* 讀書, pp. 14 and 15, five examples] and the

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lines, because none of his customers expected him to compose original poetry for a scroll but, rather, all assumed that he copied phrases from widely circulated books, as did other writers of celebratory scrolls at the time and today. I thank Zhou Donghua 周東華 of Hangzhou Normal University [Hangzhou shifan daxue 杭州師範大學] for good suggestions as I translated some of these couplets.

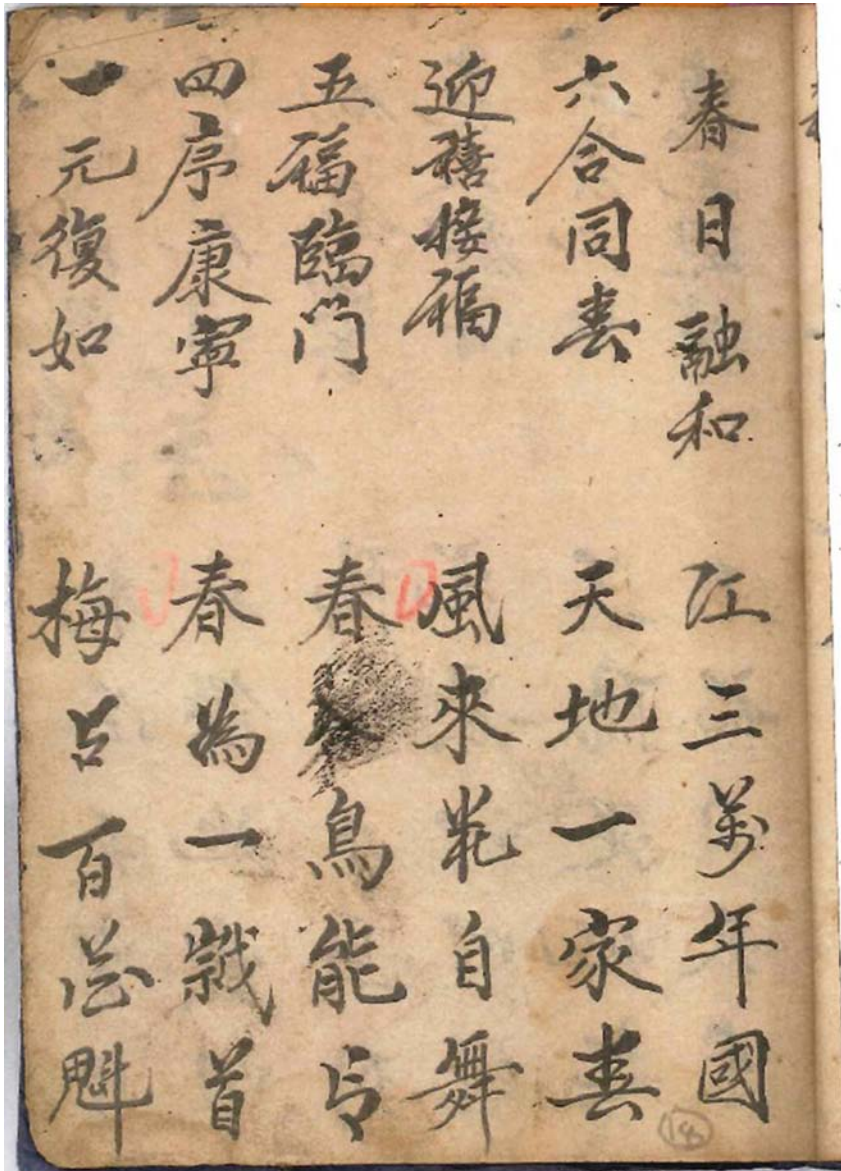


FIGURE 7.5

*Mr. Bai's Notebook* [Bai xiansheng zhi chaoben 白先生之抄本], Page 18, *An Ode to Spring*. This page shows a duilian that Mr. Bai especially liked, as indicated by the red circles he added at the beginning of the phrase, in the third and fourth vertical lines in the bottom half of the page. It reads: "The wind arises and the flowers sway, Spring arrives and the birds can fly" [Fenglai huaziwu; chunru niaonengfei. 風來花自舞；春入鳥能飛]. Spring [chun 春] indicates the new year, which, according to the lunar calendar, arrives in late January or early February.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

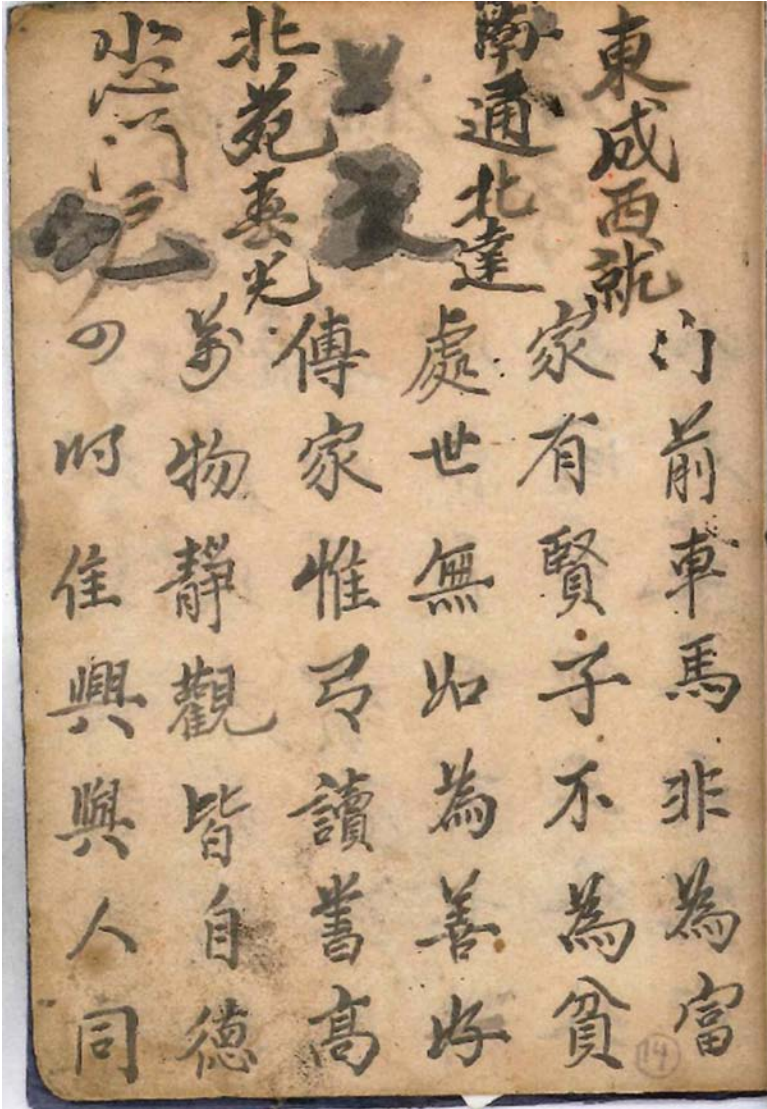


FIGURE 7.6

*Mr. Bai's Notebook* [Bai xiansheng zhi chaoben 白先生之抄本], Page 14, *Expressing Acceptable Sentiments*. On this page, Mr. Bai wrote sample verses that his customers could select to show their neighbors that they were a good family, according to conventional Confucian morality. Mr. Bai wrote: "In front of the gate, having a horse and carriage does not indicate wealth; To have a worthy person in the family means it will never be poor" [Menqian chema feiweifu; jiyou xianzi buweipin 門前車馬非為富；家有賢子不為貧]. For poor families who could never afford a horse or carriage, this couplet expressed suitable and accepted sentiments about their righteous behavior. These are the first and second vertical lines in the bottom half of the page.

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place of poetry and writing [*shishu* 詩書]. He wrote: “In front of the gate, having a horse and carriage does not indicate wealth; To have a worthy person in the family, means it will never be poor” [*Menqian chema feiweifū; Jiayou xianzi buweipin* 門前車馬非為富; 家有賢子不為貧; p. 14]. This phrase could appeal to a family with a low income and perhaps a gate that was small and not imposing, but the family could claim it had a son, so its future was assured. A similar example was: “In the world, nothing is as fine as goodness; Within the family, the highest principle is to study” [*Chushi wuru weishanhao; Chuanjia weiyin dushugao* 處世無如為善好; 傳家惟引讀書高; p. 14]. With this phrase, a family could imply it was paying a teacher to tutor a son, even if its own home was not magnificent. Finally, a third example expressing the idea of a well-ordered family adhering to the prevalent Confucian-inspired values often repeated by elite members of society: “On heaven and earth, poems and books are the most important; Within the family, filial sons come first” [*Tiandijian shishu zuigui; Jiatingnei xiaodi weixian* 天地間詩書最貴; 家庭內孝弟為先; p. 15].

I assume that Mr. Bai lived in a somewhat isolated rural area or felt part of a local community with few people of high social status. In other words, most people were members of the *pingmin*, as he himself was. Two of the couplets Mr. Bai wrote in his notebook seem to particularly reflect his own realistic and workaday view of life and the community in which he lived. He wrote “Donkeys and horses bring prosperity every year; Cattle and lambs increase daily” [*Luoma niannianyi; Niuyang ririzeng* 驢馬年年益; 牛羊日日增; p. 39]. Certainly, a household that relied on some animals for its income would appreciate a couplet such as this. Further, this is one of the indications that Mr. Bai’s village was in North China or perhaps in Northeast China, which, unlike South China, had more open, flat land that could support pens and pasture to keep animals. Evidence that some businesses operated in Mr. Bai’s vicinity is provided by his preparation of six examples of poems for commercial enterprises [*shengyi tongyong* 生意通用; pp. 36 and 37], but the texts were all of general nature and do not indicate what type of businesses might have ordered the scrolls.

Along the top margin of many pages, Mr. Bai wrote felicitous characters that people were likely to want written on festive occasions. Among these words (p. 15) were *fu* 福 [blessings], *shou* 壽 [long life], and *kangning* 康寧 [good health]. People might want them to be written on a piece of red paper to be placed horizontally [*hengpi* 橫批] above the gate where the two celebratory scrolls were hung or on a diamond-shaped sheet of paper that could be pasted on the front gate itself or over a doorway. (Some of these often-used characters expressing good wishes are on pp. 15, 16, 22, and 24.) One characteristic of Mr. Bai’s notebook is that many pages contain additional information that seems

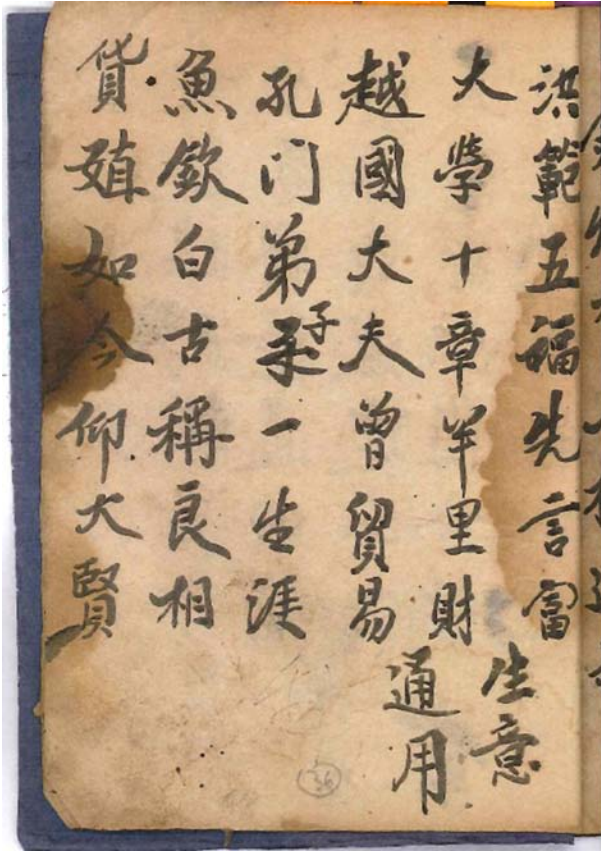


FIGURE 7.7

*Mr. Bai's Notebook* [Bai xiansheng zhi chaoben 白先生之抄本], Page 36, *Scrolls for Merchants*. It appears that Mr. Bai's community did not have many commercial establishments, and therefore he did not prepare many sample phrases for shop owners. The lack of businesses might indicate that Mr. Bai lived in a large village rather than in a small town. At the bottom of the page, Mr. Bai wrote "For use by all businesses" [Shengyi tongyong 生意通用] and then added three couplets (vertical lines 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6). The couplet on vertical lines 3 and 4 reads: "Gentlemen all over the country, increase commerce; Students from Confucian families, have excellent careers" [Yueguo dafu, cengmaoyi; Kongmen dizi, yishengya 越國大夫，曾貿易；孔門弟子，一生涯]. Note that for the fifth character of the first line, Mr. Bai wrote ceng 曾 [at one point], but this is probably a mistake for zeng 增 [to increase]. Mr. Bai often made errors of this sort.

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to have been added after the main text had been prepared. This indicates that his notebook was a working document used in the course of earning his living. It was not a notebook buried in a pile of other materials he had on his table but one that he consulted often and relied on to find the characters he needed in order to prepare matching couplets.



FIGURE 7.8

*Laborers and Merchants in the Street.* In this scene, a street vendor has set up shop to sell light meals. A group of laborers or merchants can be seen congregating. They are sitting near the town wall, and they have queues as required by the Manchus and wear padded clothing, which indicates the weather is cold.

PHOTO: SOUTH GATE, TAIGU 太谷, SHANXI 山西, 1916; PHOTO: WILLIAM LEETE; RESTORATION AND PRINT ©2015 WILLIAM MORSE. USED BY SPECIAL PERMISSION

These jottings, such as the extra characters that turn up on many pages, make the notebook look messy. Mr. Bai appears to be a man who was not very careful about neatness or precise order. In fact, he seems to have been an active person who quickly wrote down characters on whatever page was open at the time for reproduction later. Perhaps, at the time, he was talking to a customer or saw the character correctly written somewhere, so he quickly copied it into his booklet. I extrapolate from this, based purely on my imagination, an image of Mr. Bai as not elegantly dressed, wearing an ill-fitting, even a soiled, long gown and skullcap [*guapimao* 瓜皮帽] of the kind commonly still seen just after the fall of the Qing. The pages of his manuscript are worn, and the paper is often discolored from being handled by Mr. Bai as he consulted the book. The notebook he created is not neat, elegant, and precisely organized. It is, rather, a text quickly produced and then added to as new ideas came into Mr. Bai's head.

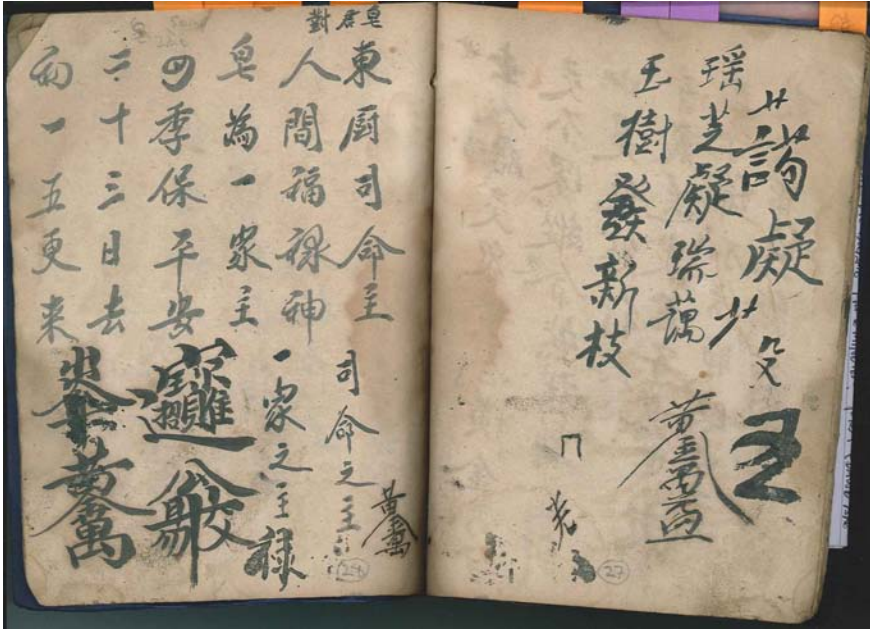


FIGURE 7.9

*Mr. Bai's Notebook* [Bai xiansheng zhi chaoben 白先生之抄本], Pages 27 and 28, Messy Pages. These show the messy format of the notebook that Mr. Bai prepared for his own use, with haphazard writing all over the page, such as some combined characters on the bottom half of both pages. The jumbled organization of some pages indicates that Mr. Bai worked quickly, jotting down ideas and information as they came to him.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

Mr. Bai's village probably did not have too many homes with large courtyards or with more than one gate. He had the category of New Year *duilian* for the "main gate" [*chongmen dui* 重門對; pp. 17 and 18, six examples]. He also had a category of couplets for the "rear gate" [*houmen* 後門對, which Mr. Bai wrote in a simplified style as 后门對]; pp. 23 and 24, six examples]. This indicates that enough families had rear gates that Mr. Bai expected some requests for couplets for these gates as well. If he was living in a rural area with agriculture and animal husbandry, then the gate to the pen behind the main family home or courtyard where the animals were kept would be referred to as the rear gate of the family. Thus even a family of little or only moderate means might have both a front and a rear gate on their property.<sup>13</sup>

13 This pattern of a family compound with a front gate that also had a rear gate for the animal pen or threshing ground behind the compound in a village community in Shandong in the

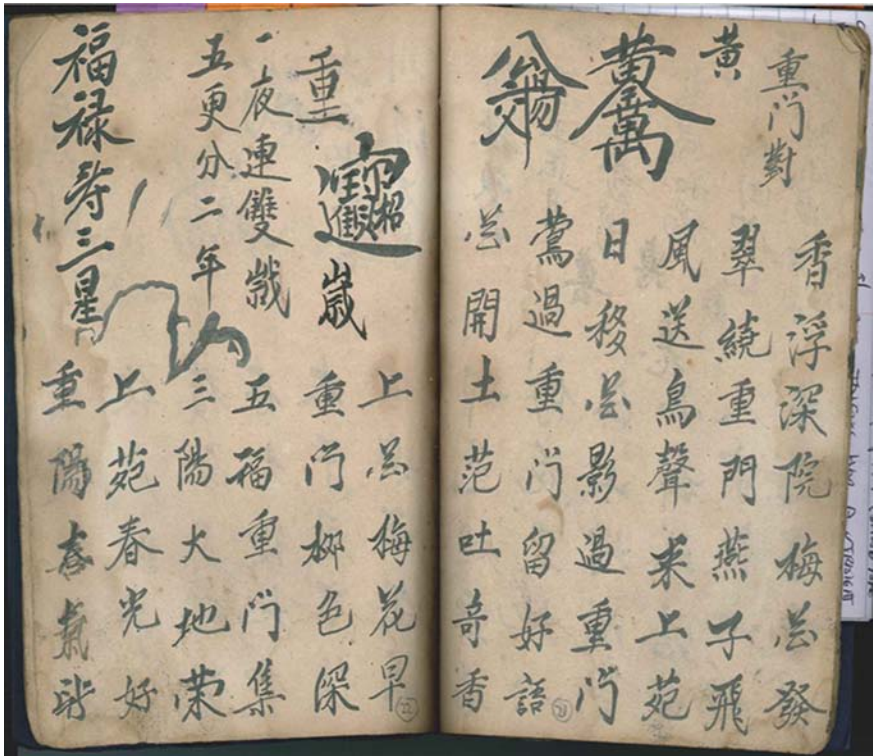








FIGURE 7.10

*Mr. Bai's Notebook* [Bai xiansheng zhi chaoben 白先生之抄本], Pages 21 and 22, *Combined Characters*. On the top half of these pages are examples of some combined characters [hetizi 合體字] that were popular symbols for celebratory scrolls, especially for the New Year's holiday.

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On happy occasions, the Chinese also write celebratory characters that are not used in ordinary writing. The result, which combines several characters into one, looks complicated as well as picturesque. These usually celebratory characters have no pronunciation of their own. Mr. Bai wrote several of these characters in his notebook to help him remember how they should be written. This indicates that Mr. Bai's formal schooling was not extensive. A fully educated and literate member of society would not need that written clue, especially since these characters are referred to by the combination of each of the characters that goes to make them up. For example, the character for

late 1800s is mentioned in Ida Pruitt, *A China Childhood* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2003).

“Bringing in wealth and treasures” is made up of the characters for those words [*zhaocai jinbao* 招財近寶]. In Mr. Bai’s own handwriting, the combined character appears as  (on p. 22). This seems to be the most popular combined character in the present day, and an example online is . Mr. Bai also wrote “ten thousand liang (a unit of weight equivalent to 1.76 ounces) of yellow gold” [*wanjin wanliang* 萬金萬兩], which appears in his handwriting as  (on p. 21). A standard representation of the character online is: . This phrase is sometimes modified to read “ten thousand ounces of yellow gold” [*huangjin wanliang* 黃金萬兩], as in example above and in Mr. Bai’s calligraphy  (p. 27). He also wrote “easily acquire silver” [*gongping jiaoyi* 公平交易]  (on p. 21).<sup>14</sup>

A death in the family was another event that called for a ceremonial banner. Unlike the typical celebratory banner written in black or gold ink on red paper, funeral banners were written in black ink on white paper. Red and gold are the colors of marriage and celebrations in China, but black and white are the colors of mourning. Mr. Bai may have hoped for commissions to write this type of banner, so he wrote a few sample phrases (on pp. 10 and 11, eight examples) for his own reference and to offer his customers. He wrote six examples of eulogistic funeral couplets, all in seven-word formats. An example: “At the end, we are only required to keep three years of mourning; Yet we always keep in our hearts a deeper emotion” [*Zhenzhongshun, jinsannianxiao; Zhuiyuanchangcun, yipianxin* 真終順, 盡三年孝; 追遠常存, 一片心, p. 10]. These are expressions of condolences still in use today. The three years of mourning referred to the Confucian exhortation to observe three years of mourning (actually twenty-seven months) after the death of one’s parents. Common people did not have the means to withdraw from society or to curtail their daily activities in order to express mourning, and even busy officials who wanted to follow the custom in its strictest form were often asked by the government to return to normal duties after only a few months of active mourning.

Mr. Bai’s village probably had a number of small temples or shrines to the deities whose powers would protect the local community. The deities he specifically listed in his notebook were largely folk gods, such as the kitchen god [*zaojun* 皂君, p. 28, four examples]. Year-end celebrations of the kitchen

14 Combined characters are explained and several examples given in Zhang Daoyi 張道一, *Meizai hanzi: chuantong minjian meishuzi* 美哉漢字: 傳統民間美術字 [*Beautiful Characters: Traditional Popular Artistic Characters*] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2012), pt. 1, 14, 103–106; pt. 2, 82. These elaborate characters were originally used by merchants to decorate their shops. See *Shiyong Zhongguo fengsu cidian* 實用中國風俗詞典 [*Practical Dictionary of Chinese Folk Customs*] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2013), 405.

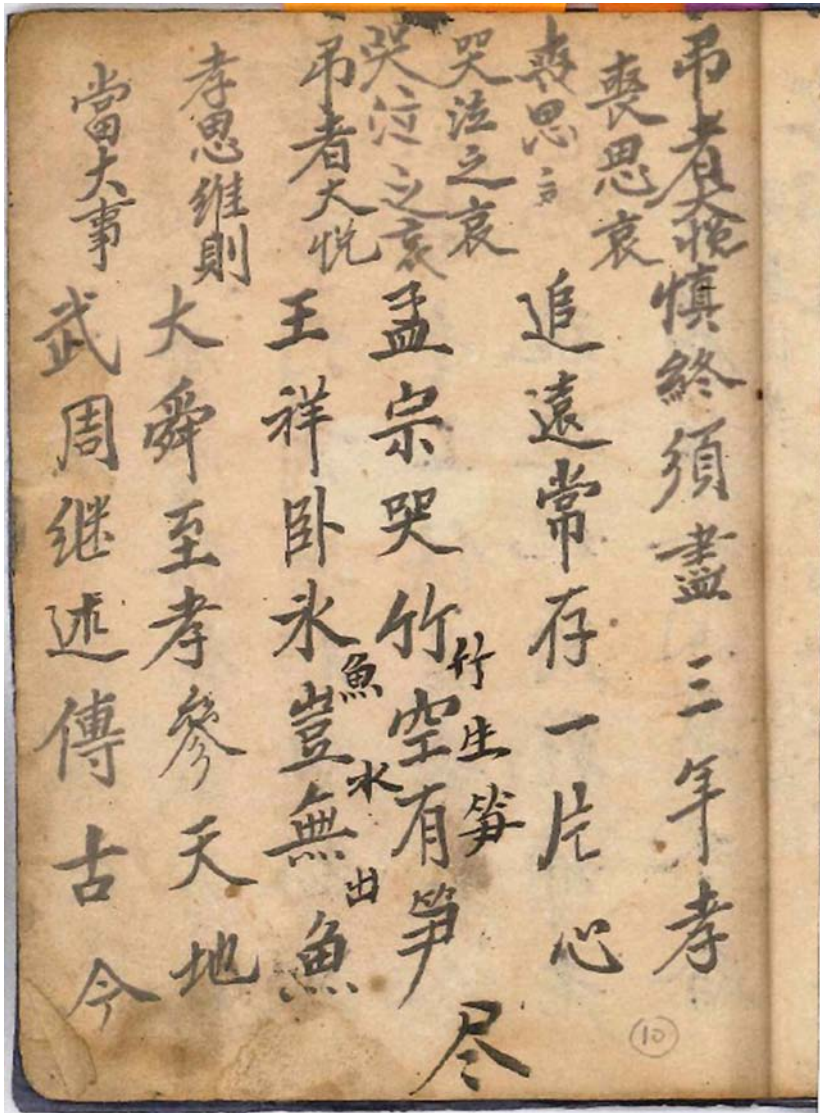


FIGURE 7.11

*Mr. Bai's Notebook* [Bai xiansheng zhi chaoben 白先生之抄本], Page 10, *Funeral Inscriptions*. Funerals were commemorative times when the couplets were written in black ink on white paper. On page 10 in the first and second long vertical lines, Mr. Bai wrote: "At the end, we are only required to keep three years of mourning; Yet we always keep in our hearts a deeper emotion" [Zhenzhongshun, jinsannianxiao; Zhuiyuanchangcun, yipianxin 真終順，盡三年孝；追遠常存，一片心]. Accepted custom called for three years of mourning following the death of a parent, but the practice was not always followed, especially by the common people who did not have the luxury of retiring from work for a three-year period.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

god were popular in all parts of China. In late December, the kitchen god would leave his post near the household's stove and rise to the heavens to report to the Jade emperor [Yuhuang dadi 玉皇大帝] on family events. In hopes of securing a favorable report, the family would celebrate with sweetmeats and would perhaps rub sugar candy on the image of the kitchen god.<sup>15</sup>

Equally popular at the local level throughout China was worship of the Dragon King of the Well [Jinglongwang 井龍王, p. 32, four examples]. In a basically agricultural economy that had little rain, as in North China, water was vital. When water became scarce, local officials joined with village and city residents to propitiate the gods of water and beseech them to send rain.<sup>16</sup> Another deity worshiped in the drier flat lands of North and Northeast China was the King of Horses [Mawang 馬王, pp. 38–39, three examples]. He was worshiped by the wagon drivers who transported goods and crops over long distances. If Mr. Bai's village was on a transportation route that utilized horses and mules, we might expect that the wagon drivers to frequent the King of Horses shrine before embarking on a long journey. The Manchus who lived in Northeast China and in North China especially honored the King of Horses.<sup>17</sup>

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- 15 Many rural villages, such as the one I hypothesize where Mr. Bai lived, had no temples or very few temples in the Republican period. Comments on this situation are made by Thomas DuBois, "Village Community and the Reconstruction of Religious Life in Rural North China," in *Religion and Chinese Society, vol. 2: Taoism and Local Religion in Modern China*, ed. John Lagerwey (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004), 2: 847–852. Popular worship of the kitchen god around the time both Mr. Bai and Mr. Qian (discussed below) were alive is in Tun, *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking*, 98. Lowe, *The Adventures of Wu, Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking*, 98; see also 2: 22–23, 145–146. A description of this deity is in Zhang, *Daojiao shenxian xinyang*, 508–510; Kubo, *Dōkyō no kamizami*, 271–273. For a text-based approach to this subject, see Robert L. Chard, "Rituals and Scriptures of the Stove Cult," in *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion: Five Studies*, ed. David Johnson (Berkeley: Chinese Popular Culture Project, 1995), 3–54.
- 16 Both Daoist and Buddhist temples might be dedicated to the dragon kings. On praying for rain, see Snyder-Reinke, *Dry Spells*. A hand-copied text in my collection titled **Ceremonies for the Dragon Kings** [*Longwang fashi* 龍王法事] addresses many Buddhist dragon kings. Dated 1902, *renyin nian* 壬寅年, it is 9 in (22.86 cm) h × 5¼ in (13.33 cm) w and was purchased in Beijing in January 2010. This has thirty-four pages of handwritten text calling on many dragon kings for help. A concise overview of dragon king worship is *Longwang* 龍王 [Dragon King], <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%BE%99%E7%8E%8B/28349>, accessed in August 2012, August 2017. This work is also discussed in Chapter 8.
- 17 The King of Horses was also known as Chief of the Horses [Mayuanshuai 馬元帥] and Pasture and Water Brilliant King of Horses [Shuicao mamingwang 水草馬明王]. See Chen Bali 陳巴黎, *Beijing dongyuemiao* 北京東嶽廟 [*Beijing's Temple of the Eastern*

Throughout the dry northern lands, fire was an ever-present danger. Thus Mr. Bai's community contained a temple to the fire god [*huoshen* 火神; p. 33, five examples]. In the populated capital city of Beijing in dry North China, even the imperial court sent officials to worship at the altar of the fire god on behalf of the entire community. The god's charge was to protect against fire.<sup>18</sup>

In premodern China, diseases resulting from a lack of basic sanitation and an unclear understanding of personal hygiene led to many afflictions that were brought under widespread control only in the twentieth century. Among such diseases was trachoma, a viral disease characterized by excessive inflammation and itching of the eye. Both adults and children easily contracted trachoma while Mr. Bai was alive, and many communities turned for help to the Buddhist Deity of Clear Sight [Yanguang 眼光]. Even several widely visited temples in present-day Shanghai contain altars dedicated to the Deity of Clear Sight because trachoma continued to be prevalent in China in the 1950s. Mr. Bai also wrote couplet to this deity (p. 39, one example).<sup>19</sup>

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*Peak*] (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 2002), 75–76. Worship of the King of Horses is mentioned in Tun, *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking*, 55; Lowe, *The Adventures of Wu*, 2: 209–210. See also “Xingyeshen xinyang; Maluolu yunshuye 行業神信仰：馬騾驢運輸業 [Popular Beliefs in the Gods of Transport; Horses, Mules and Donkeys in the Transport Industry],” [http://www.sanching.org.tw/joinus\\_3/eq\\_detail.php?idno=75/](http://www.sanching.org.tw/joinus_3/eq_detail.php?idno=75/), accessed August 1, 2012. On the Manchus in Northeast and North China, especially honoring the King of Horses, see Guan Zhiwei 關志偉, ed., *Jilin Manzu fengsu* 吉林滿族風俗 [*Customs of the Manchu in Jilin*] (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 2006), 310–311.

- 18 The fire god is titled Virtuous Perfected Ruler of Fire [Huode zhenjun 火德真君]. On the imperial court dispatching officials to worship at the Fire God Temple in Beijing near the Houhai 後海, see the pamphlet *Huoshenmiao* 火神廟 [*Fire God Temple*] (Beijing: Beijing Huode zhenjunmiao, 2010). See also Lowe, *The Adventures of Wu*, 1: 210; Kubo, *Dōkyō no kamigami*, 268–270.
- 19 On writing scrolls to various deities and spirits, see Clifford H. Plopper, *Chinese Religion Seen Through the Proverb* (New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1969). The book was originally published in Peking in 1924, reprinted in Shanghai in 1935. Other titles of the Deity of Clear Sight are: Holy Mother of Clear Sight [Yanguang shengmu 眼光聖母], Clear-Sighted Bodhisattva [Yanguang pusa 眼光菩薩], Buddhist Bodhisattva of Clear Sight [Foyan pusa 佛眼菩薩], and Auntie Clear Sight [Yanguang niangniang 眼光娘娘]. In theological terms, this deity could also open one's eyes to the truth of Buddhist teachings. She is still worshiped in Shanghai, see Ding Changyun 丁常雲 et al., *Yinciyangdian yu Dongyue xinyang* 飲賜仰殿與東嶽信仰 [The Yinci Hall and Belief in the Emperor of the Eastern Peak] (Shanghai: Shanghai zishu chubanshe, 2004), 160. I saw her altar in the Shanghai City God Temple in January 2013, where she resides in the Cihang dian 慈航殿 [Hall of the Vehicle of Compassion]. See the pamphlet *Shanghai chenghuang miao* 上海城隍廟 [Shanghai City God Temple] (Shanghai: Shanghai chenghuang miao daoguan, n.d.). She has her own

Mr. Bai's community also worshiped the Grandfather of Heaven [Laotianye 老天爺, p. 30, three examples].<sup>20</sup> Mr. Bai suggested worshiping the Grandfather of Heaven with the couplet "He institutes the wind, clouds, thunder, and rain; He ties together the sun, moon, stars and daybreak" [*shifeng, yun, lie, yu; xiri, yue, xing, chen* 施風, 雲, 雷, 雨; 繫日, 月, 星, 晨; p. 30]. Yet another deity popular among the people was the deity who could quell troublesome ghosts and so keep misfortune away. He was called the Middle Chief [Zhongkuiye 中魁爺; p. 31, two examples] whose image was often pasted on one of the front gates, along with that of a god of wealth [*caishen* 財神].<sup>21</sup>

These deities whose altars were part of Mr. Bai's community were not (except for Laotianye) the highest deities in the Daoist or Buddhist pantheon but, rather, were popular religious figures who were close to the laboring populations of rural villages. They had a direct relevance to the occupations and efforts of the village people to feed themselves, earn a livelihood, and protect their families. Minor god's temples and shrines could be ornate but were usually not grand or impressive and rarely consisted of multiple buildings or large courtyards. But they probably saw a steady stream of individuals on most days who

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hall within the Yunfeng Temple [Yunfengsi 藝峰寺]. See "Yunfengsi jingchu jieshao 藝峰寺景初介紹 [Introducing the Yunfeng Temple Area]," at <http://www.chinanews.com.gj/kong/news/2007/12-23/1112350.shtml>, accessed on August 1, 2012. See also Nara Yukihiko 奈良行博, *Chūgoku no kichijō bunka to dōgyō: Shukusai kara shiru Chūgoku minshū no kokoro* 中國の吉祥文化と道教: 祝祭から知中国民衆の心 [*Chinese Festival Culture and Daoism: Understanding the Heart of the Chinese People through Their Celebrations*] (Tokyo: Myōseki shoten, 2011), 139. See also Kubo, *Dōkyō no kamigami*, 216.

20 Laotianye is the popular name for the Jade emperor. In Mr. Bai's community this must have been the way most people referred to the Jade emperor. Connection between the two titles is in Anne S. Goodrich, *Peking Paper Gods: A Look at Home Worship* (Nettetal: Steyler, 1991), 18. This deity is associated with the term God on High [*shangdi* 上帝]. See <http://baike.baidu.com/view/668871.html>, accessed August 1, 2012. See also Zhang, *Daojiao shenxian xinyang*, 223–226; Kubo, *Dōkyō no kamizami*, 129–131.

21 Zhongkuiye is said to be fierce and active, able to subdue and drive away evil spirits and ghosts. When given the name Zhongkui, he acts as a door guard, and his image will be pasted on the left side of the gate (as seen when approaching the home). A book of his adventures is Chan Kok Sing (illus.) and Geraldine Goh (trans.), *Adventures of the Chinese Ghostbuster* (Singapore: Asiapal Books, 2008). See also "Zhong Kui Hometown," at [http://en.comelv.com/comcontent\\_detail110/&FrontComContent\\_list.html](http://en.comelv.com/comcontent_detail110/&FrontComContent_list.html), accessed August 1, 2012. Many illustrations of this are in Shen Hong 沈泓, *Zhongguo jingshen: minjian tuxiangzhong de xinyang huanying* 中國精神: 民間圖像中的信仰幻影 [*The Chinese Spirit: Popular Imagination as Reflected in Folk Images*] (Beijing: Zhongguo caifu chubanshe, 2013), 79–94. A full-length study of this deity is idem, *Zhong Kui wenhua* 鐘馗文化 [*The Culture of Zhong Kui*] (Beijing: Zhongguo wuzi chubanshe, 2011).

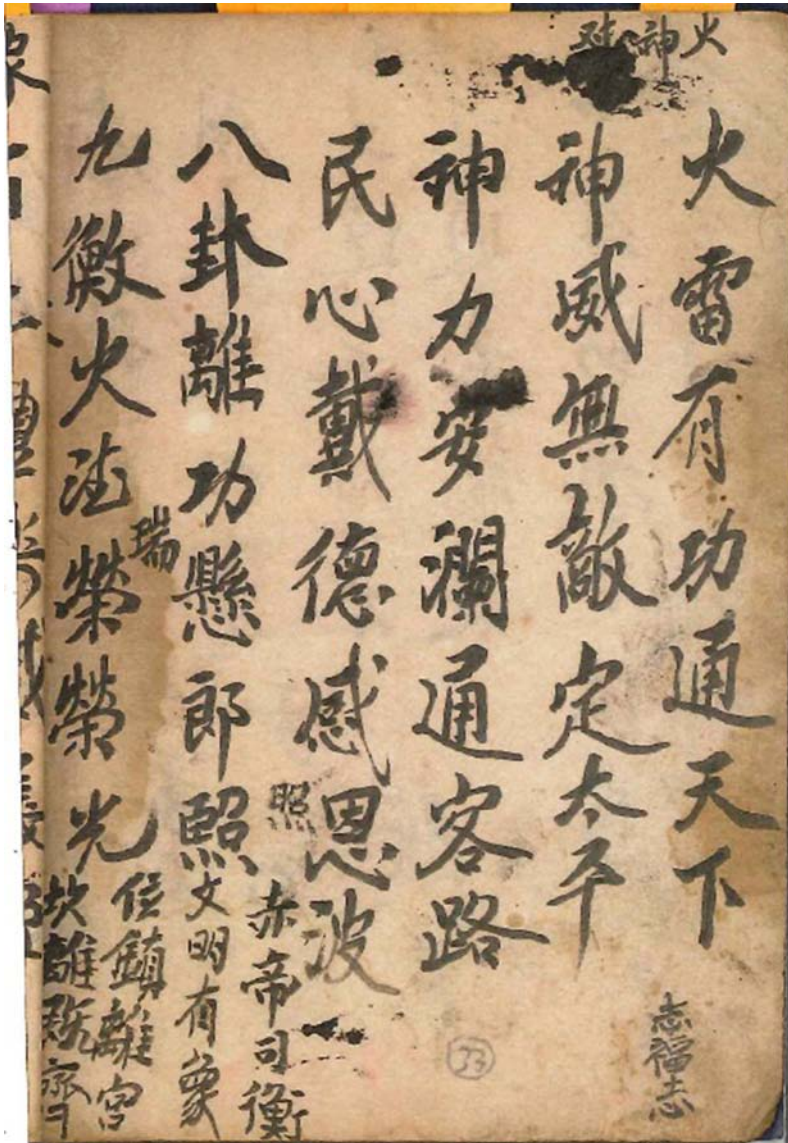


FIGURE 7.12

*Mr. Bai's Notebook* [Bai xiansheng zhi chaoben 白先生之抄本], Page 33, *Honoring the Fire God*. Mr. Bai prepared sample honorific phrases that might be purchased by the religious temples in his vicinity. These extolled the deities of popular religion, often claimed by both Buddhists and Daoists. Among them was the fire god [huoshen 火神], whose role was to protect against fire. In Buddhist thinking, fire was a cleansing element that could burn away ignorance and cravings. This was one of the virtues of the fire god, who was officially called the Virtuous Perfected Ruler of Fire [Huode zhenjun 火德真君].

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

would stop by to burn incense and ask for protection. Mr. Bai had couplets for each of the deities in his community.

Around the time Mr. Bai was writing his notebook, printed versions of couplets, including couplets that could be used at temples for various deities were available. The virtue of Mr. Bai's notebook for this study is that, in his book, he selected couplets only for the deities that were in his community because they were the only temples that might pay him to write a couplet. Thus we have an idea of the specific deities that were honored in Mr. Bai's community.<sup>22</sup>

On page 39 of his handwritten notebook, Mr. Bai gave future readers a great gift. He wrote what he must have thought was a clever couplet: "China's president is Yuan Shikai; The Republic's general is Li Yuanhong" [*Zhonghua zongtong Yuan Shikai; Minguo dudu Li Yuanhong* 中華總統袁世凱; 民國都督黎元洪]. If he lived in a rural village, Mr. Bai was showing off his knowledge of faraway national events by preparing this couplet. It is not likely anyone in the village would order such a couplet for their gateposts, but it helps to date this text fairly precisely.

The revolution that toppled the Qing dynasty unfolded in the final months of 1911. In those months, Li Yuanhong was appointed Commander of the Military Government of Hubei Province.<sup>23</sup> In the popular mind, he continued to carry this heroic title with him into the events of the following two years. The Hubei regional government was important because the first capitulation of Qing troops took place in Hubei province, and the new "government" that quickly formed to fill the power vacuum that suddenly emerged was considered an especially heroic and nationalistic (pro-Chinese, anti-Manchu) body. Yuan

22 An example of New Year and religious couplets that were likely available to Mr. Bai is the book titled *A New Collection of Regular and Commercial Couplets* 共和普通商用對聯新編 [*Gonghe putong shangyong duilian xinbian*], ed. Master of the Qingyunxuan (n.p., 1915). I bought it in Changchun, Jilin Province, in December 2012. It is two volumes bound together, vol. 1 of nineteen folio pages, vol. 2 of twenty-three folio pages.

23 Li Yuanhong received his appointment as Commander of the Military Government of Hubei on October 17, 1911. See Zhu Ping 朱平, *Minguo fan'er* 民國范兒 [*The Pattern of the Republic*] (Haikou: Nanfang chubanshe, 2012), 154. See also Lan Xiaoli 蘭曉麗 et al., ed., *Li Yuanhong dazhuan: Cong pinhanshusheng dao shouyidudu* 黎元洪大傳; 從貧寒書生到首義都督 [*Li Yuanhong: From Poor Student to Leading Military Governor*] (Wuhan: Huazhong kejidaxue chubanshe, 2011), see the chronology on p. 308. See also Edward J.M. Rhoads, *Manchus and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861–1928* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000). Li Yuanhong became interim vice-president on February 20, 1912, and vice-president of the Republic on October 7, 1913. I believe Li Yuanhong's title as military commander was popularly ascribed to him even after 1912.

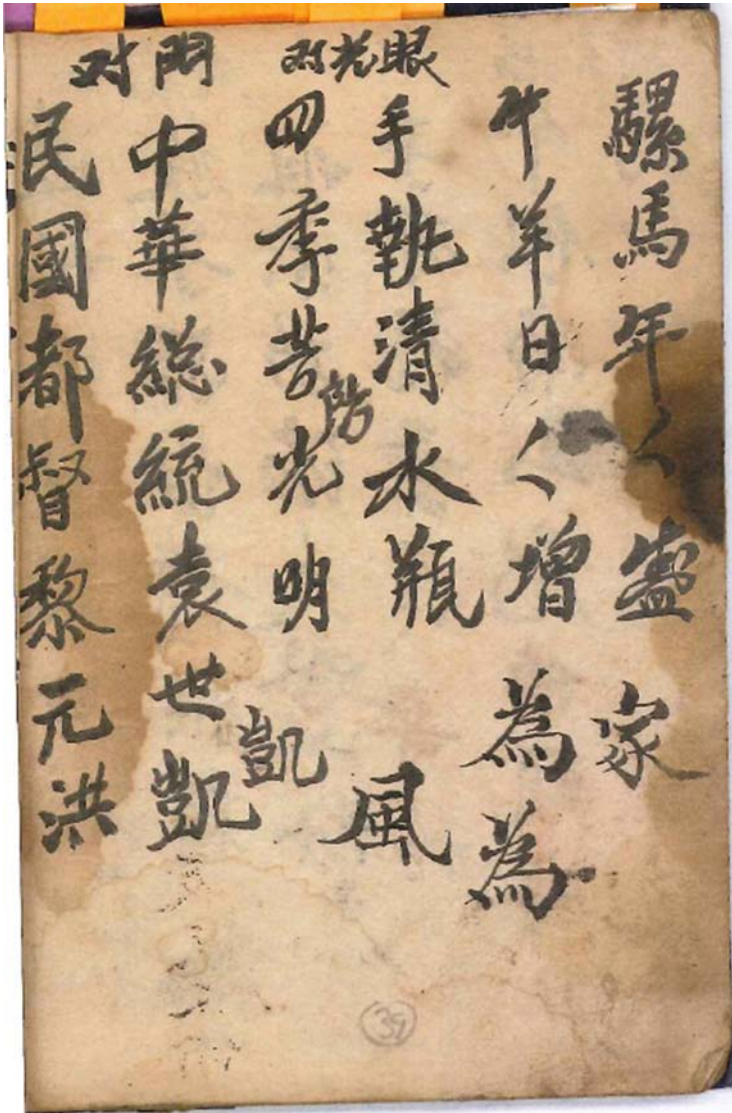


FIGURE 7.13

*Mr. Bai's Notebook* [Bai xiansheng zhi chaoben 白先生之抄本], Page 39, *Phrase Written in 1913*. Mr. Bai prepared a phrase that no one was likely to order for a scroll because it fell outside the accepted phraseology. But it allowed Mr. Bai to show that, as a person with some formal education, he was better informed about world events than most people in his community. He wrote: "China's president is Yuan Shikai. The republic's general is Li Yuanhong" [Zhonghua zongtong Yuan Shikai. Minguo dudu Li Yuanhong 中華總統袁世凱；民國都督黎元洪]. This phrase indicates that this booklet was probably written early in 1913, about a year after the birth of the Republic of China [Zhonghua minguo 中華民國].

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Shikai had been a Qing general in North China, but by the end of 1911 he had switched sides and joined the cause of the Revolution. He was named president of the new Republic of China in March 1912. He kept that title until December 1915.<sup>24</sup>

Based on these historical events, it seems most likely that Mr. Bai wrote his couplet in 1912 or the early months of 1913, when many ordinary Chinese who heard of these events still felt the thrill of having brought down the Qing dynasty, and so they liked to refer to their hero Li Yuanhong by his military title. With this notebook, Mr. Bai has given us a view of his attempts to earn a living by tutoring students and selling celebratory matched couplets in his small rural village in North China in literally the first years of the Republic of China.

### Mr. Qian

One way to better understand Mr. Bai and the context of his life is by comparing and contrasting his work with that of another man doing similar work at roughly the same time. A month after I bought Mr. Bai's notebook in Beijing, during my trip to China in the spring of 2012, I bought a similar handwritten book of couplets at a shop in Hangzhou, and the owner told me he had brought the book from his hometown of Kaiping 開平 in Guangdong Province. The second book was written by another man, whom I named Mr. Qian 錢. This character means "money" or "cash," and I use it for him because he was a successful writer of *duilian*.<sup>25</sup>

Mr. Qian used a better quality of handmade paper for his book than Mr. Bai. Though still not of the highest quality of paper available, his paper had been bleached and so was whiter, though just as pliable as the inexpensive paper used by Mr. Bai. Mr. Qian had acceptable calligraphy, indicating that

24 Yuan Shikai was appointed interim president of the Republic [*Linshi dazongtong* 臨時大總統] on February 15, 1912. Most likely, Mr. Bai did not have access to the latest national news. Indeed, few people at the time in China had regular access to the latest news. Many examples are given in Jane E. Elliott, *Some Did It for Civilization, Some Did It for Their Country: A Revised View of the Boxer War* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2002).

25 Kaiping, which I believe was the hometown of Mr. Qian, is located southwest of Guangzhou (Canton). From the 1800s on, many Kaiping residents went abroad, and most of them sent money back home, which boosted the local economy. Some gazetteers for Kaiping County are in *Ming-Qing shike wenxian quanbian* 明清石刻文獻全編 [*Complete Texts of Stone Inscriptions and Documents from the Ming and Qing*] (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2003). On Kaiping, see series 5, 2: 673–693.

most likely he had more formal schooling than Mr. Bai and perhaps was even a *xiuca*. His calligraphy was good enough that he was likely to receive requests from educated or socially well-positioned people. Unlike poor Mr. Bai in North China, Mr. Qian in South China appeared to live in a larger and economically and culturally more vibrant community, where he had numerous potential customers for his couplets. He seems to have been familiar with the protocols of the educated and moneyed social elite.<sup>26</sup>

Mr. Qian's manuscript was neatly written out, with no mistakes and no corrected characters. The pages are not smudged and do not appear to have been roughly handled, as if Mr. Qian could quickly refer to the text he wished to copy and then proceed in an orderly manner to write the characters. The sixty-two pages in his book, measuring 6¾ inches (17.1 cm) × 4–7/8 inches (12.4 cm), are not complete—the cover and earliest pages are missing, but the intact pages are well prepared and the only calligraphy is that of Mr. Qian; unlike Mr. Bai, he did not have friends or students writing in his book. One could surmise that he was an orderly and organized person.

In Mr. Qian's notebook, the first category is devoted to New Year couplets. On pages 1–7, Mr. Qian prepared seventy-six examples of New Year couplets, in four-, five-, and seven-words-per-line versions. (Mr. Bai did not always label his couplets in neat categories, so I am unable to definitively compare the numbers of samples in each category with those written by Mr. Qian; in general Mr. Bai prepared a smaller number of *duilian* in each category.)

An equally good source of income for Mr. Qian must have been the couplets he prepared for weddings. He prepared twenty-five sample couplets for weddings, divided into six different categories, such as “Couplets for weddings and new households” [*xinhun jian xinju* 新婚兼新居; pp. 48 and 49, ten examples], “Elder brother officiates at wedding” [*xiong zhu hun* 兄主婚; p. 54, five examples], and “Father deceased, mother alive, grandfather officiates at wedding” [*wufu youmu er zuzhuhun* 無父有母而祖主婚; p. 55, two examples]. Mr. Qian's selection of sample couplets show that his clients were punctilious about family relationships and asked for couplets appropriate to their specific circumstances. In general, we can guess that those with a higher social standing and more wealth, Mr. Qian's assumed customers, were more specific in

26 North China is considered a poorer part of the country, where rainfall is low and agriculture is difficult. In contrast, because of its abundant rainfall and mild temperatures, South China has long been a wealthier area of the country where food was more abundant for everyone. Many wealthy merchant families lived in the south. Contrasts between these two regions of China are in Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China*.

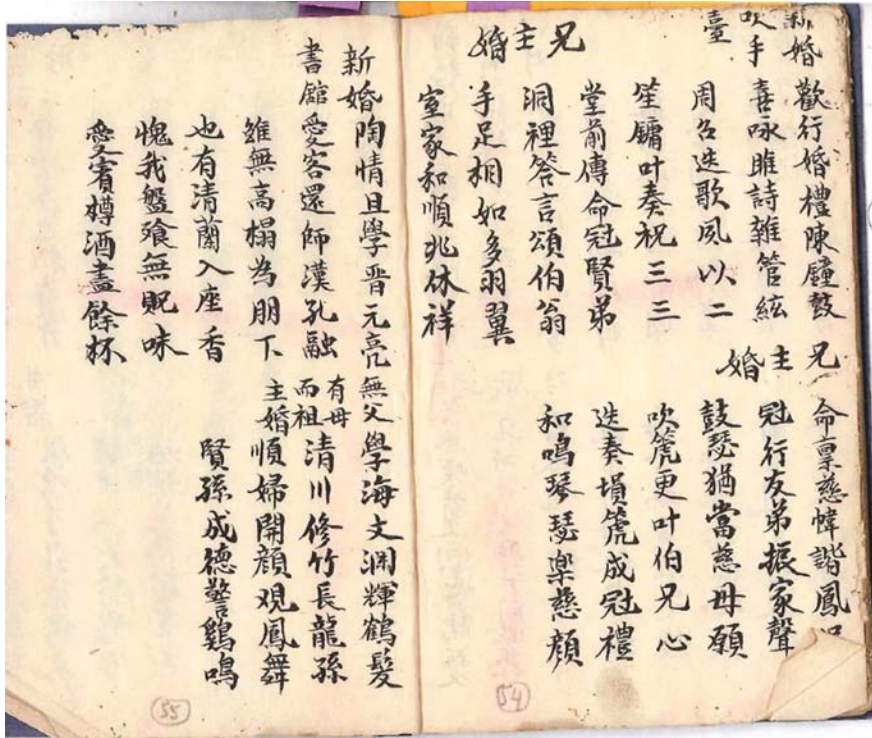


FIGURE 7.14

Mr. Qian's Notebook [Qian xiansheng zhi chaoben 錢先生之抄本], Page 54, A Wedding Couplet. The first two vertical lines on the top half of the page read: "Carry out the wedding ceremony, sound the bell and drum; Happily sing out the poems, with flutes and strings" [Huanxing hunli, chen zhonggu; Xiyongju shi, zaguanxian 歡行婚禮，陳鍾鼓；喜咏睢詩，雜管絃]. Mr. Qian expected to regularly receive orders for celebratory scrolls to be hung at weddings. He also expected that many of his clients would be spending lavishly to make the wedding a festive occasion.

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acknowledging and honoring the complicated set of familial relationships within their kinship network than were the *pingmin*, who had lower income and social status. The relatively well-off wanted to use important family occasions to enhance or reinforce their social position. The wedding proceedings in these more affluent households might include musicians, for whom Mr. Qian could offer sample texts for couplets celebrating the musicians, under the category of "musicians at the wedding" [*xinhun chuishoutai* 新婚吹手臺; p. 54, two examples]. One of these couplets reads, "Carry out the wedding ceremony, sound the bell and drum; Happily sing out the poems, with flutes and strings" [*huanxing hunli, chen zhonggu; Xiyongju shi, zaguanxian* 歡行婚禮，陳鍾鼓；喜咏睢詩，雜管絃; p. 54].

In addition to these standard categories of social events that most likely guaranteed orders for couplets, three other categories of couplets given prominence in Mr. Qian's book show that he lived in a community with a number of large and financially comfortable families. The first category that indicates large and wealthy families consists of a large number of samples Mr. Qian prepared for people wishing to decorate their homes with couplets. On thirteen different pages, Mr. Qian was prepared to offer seventy samples of texts, divided into twelve categories. The large number of sample texts and the multitude of categories indicate that the people he catered to resided in large homes, with several gates and courtyards within their walls, many of whom owned farm land and animals, who would pay to have couplets put up throughout their compound. These houses not only had a main gate and a back gate but sometimes also had inner gates they wanted decorated, so Mr. Qian prepared sample texts for the category of "New Year, Inner Gates" [*xinchun langmenkou* 新春廊門口, p. 8; eight examples]. Parents who lived with their children could be given a separate courtyard with its own gate, which could be decorated with couplets in the category of "parents' gate" [*fumu menkou* 父母門口; p. 13, seven examples].<sup>27</sup>

Among established gentry families in South China, several males in each family were likely to be well educated, and some of these families established private libraries within their compounds with collections of woodblock printed books, paintings, and calligraphy. They might want a couplet for their personal collection of treasures from the category "couplets for the library" [*shuguan-dui* 書館對; pp. 31–33, twenty-four examples]. (These sample texts were not intended for commercial book sellers, a separate category mentioned below.) If a new library within the family compound was organized at the time of the wedding for one of the sons, a couplet could be prepared from the category "new marriage, library" [*xinhun shuguan* 新婚書館; p. 55, three examples]. Wealthy families likewise were known to maintain a clan hall in honor of their ancestors, in the category of "couplets to worship the ancestors" [*zucidui* 祖祠對; pp. 43–45, sixteen examples]. Four of the examples (pp. 43 and 44) contain texts that are fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen characters long in each line. Examples of that length could be written out on two scrolls, or they could be carved into the wooden pillars supporting the roof, thus becoming permanent celebratory texts, rather than the texts written on paper, which might be changed

27 For examples of the wealth of southern merchants, see Yi Wen, *Shang zhi Jiangnan* 商之江南 [*The Commerce of Jiangnan*] (Shanghai: Shanghai yuandong chubanshe, 2009). This is a bilingual edition that includes photos of the homes of well-to-do merchants and the connected courtyards of that architectural style.

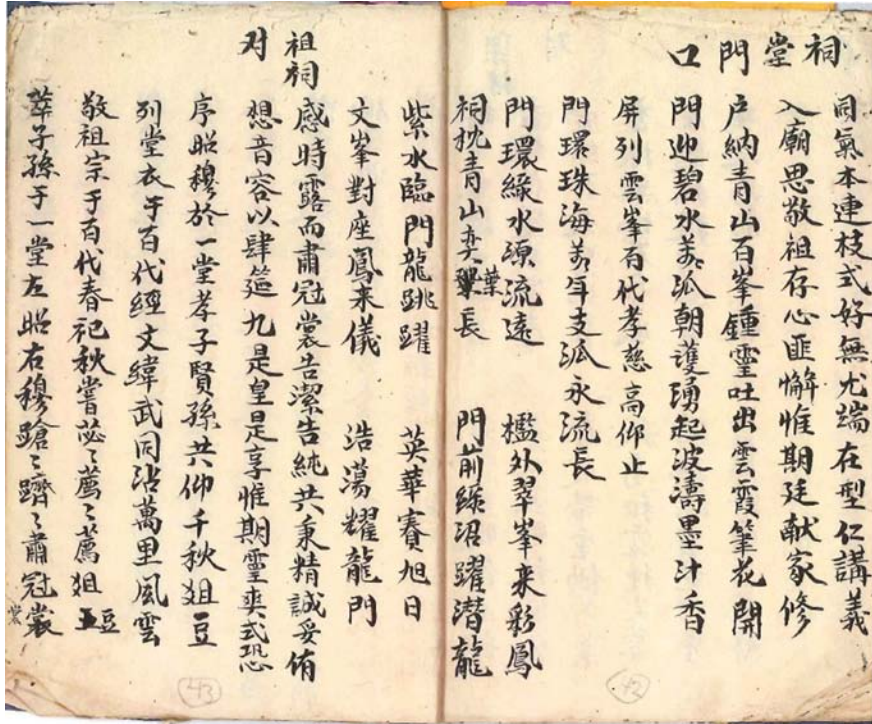


FIGURE 7.15

*Mr. Qian's Notebook* [Qian xiansheng zhi chaoben 錢先生之抄本]. Pages 42 and 43, *Clan Temple Scrolls*. Clan temples are especially prominent and have been well-maintained in South China, where I think Mr. Qian was working, so he prepared sample rhyming couplets to be hung in a family-run clan temple. At the top of page 42, he wrote "For Family Halls" [Citang menkou 祠堂門口], and at the top of page 43, he wrote, "Scrolls for Ancestor Temples" [Zuci dui 祖祠對].

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

from time to time. The main entrance to the ancestral hall might receive a couplet in the category "worship hall entrance" [*citang menkou* 祠堂門口; p. 42, five examples].

Because such families lived in rich agricultural country with abundant rainfall and wet-rice agriculture, they needed sluice gates for regulating water flow to the fields, and this formed its own category of celebratory couplets (couplets for sluice gates [*zhamentui* 閘門對]; p. 23, four examples). Categories for other important buildings associated with rich family compounds were the shed where firewood was kept, "couplet for firewood room" [*chaifangdui* 柴房對; p. 22, two examples], the chicken coop [*jilan* 雞欄; p. 22, one example], and the cowshed, "couplet for the cowshed" [*niulandui* 牛欄對; p. 18, eight examples].

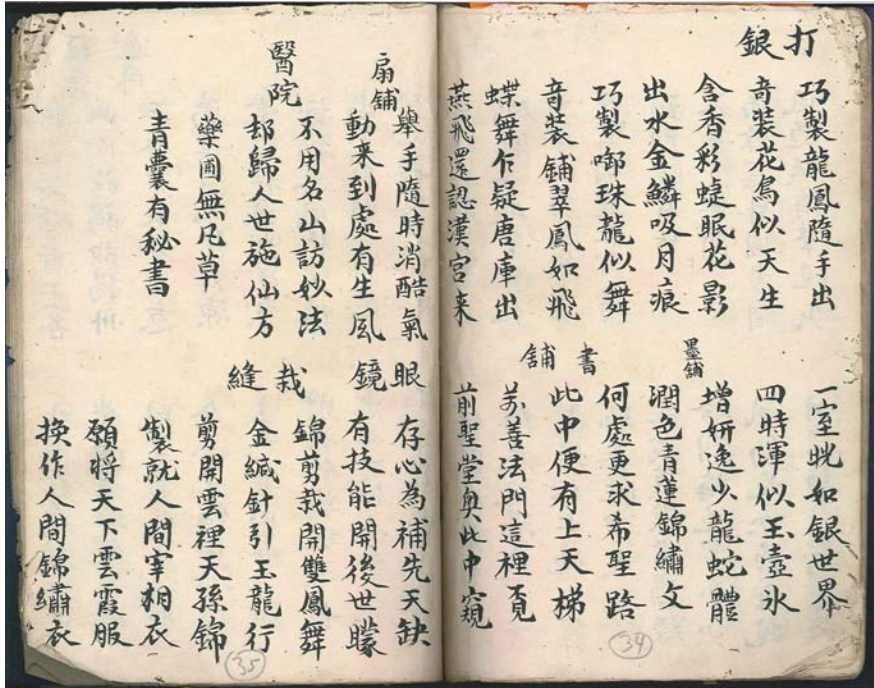


FIGURE 7.16

Mr. Qian's Notebook [Qian xiansheng zhi chaoben 錢先生之抄本], Pages 34 and 35, *Scrolls for Shops*. Mr. Qian prepared sample phrases for a variety of businesses. On page 34, he listed a few for silver ingot-casting shops [dayin 大銀], ink shops [mopu 墨舖], and bookstores [shupu 書舖]. His samples on page 35 were meant to appeal to owners of fan shops [shanpu 扇舖], medical clinics [yiyuan 醫院], eyeglass shops [yanjing 眼鏡] and tailors [caifeng 裁縫].

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

What poetic language might one use to celebrate the animals? An example suggested by Mr. Qian's was: "Cows and pigs all cry out abundance; chickens and dogs bring prosperity" [*niuzhu jiechangsheng; Jiquan jinxinglong* 牛豬皆昌盛; 雞犬盡興隆; p. 18]. Other couplets honor the kitchen god, under the category "couplets for the kitchen" [*chufangdui* 廚房對; p. 22, three examples].

Mr. Qian's community was economically vibrant. It supported a number of businesses, each of which was a potential customer for a celebratory couplet. Mr. Qian dutifully prepared sample couplet texts for each type of important business so that he would be prepared when requests for couplets were received. A general category was first prepared for those "used by all businesses" [*shengyi tongyong* 生意通用; pp. 36 and 37, sixteen examples], much as Mr. Bai had done. But because Mr. Qian was more specific in the sample texts he prepared, by examining the texts he prepared and the business categories he listed,

we can get an accurate picture of the economic activity surrounding Mr. Qian in Kaiping County.

Among the thriving businesses were silver casting shops [*dayin* 打銀; p. 34, five examples]. People brought in silver or other precious metals, which were melted into ingots in the shape of small bars or a boatlike shape called *yuanbao* 元寶, used as money or kept safely hidden away.<sup>28</sup> Silver casting shops, along with the local pharmacies [*yaocai* 藥材; p. 41, six examples] were among the most likely to request congratulatory New Year couplets. A pharmacy might order a New Year couplet saying: “Within the jar is heaven, to cure everyone; Within the almond grove, there is nowhere without the spring winds” [*huliyoutian jiehuayu; Xinglinwudi buchunfeng* 壺裡有天皆化育; 杏林無地不春風; p. 41]. The jar [*hu* 壺] refers to the pharmacist’s pottery jars in which herbs were kept. The almond grove [*xinglin* 杏林] refers to a place that supplies many of the herbs used in traditional Chinese medicine.

The other businesses in the community, for each of which Mr. Qian had several examples ready, were the Chinese ink shops [*mopu* 墨舖; p. 34, one example] selling the ink sticks and paraphernalia used for writing and painting, bookshops [*shupu* 書舖; p. 34, two examples], fan shops [which were important in the hot climate of South China; *shanpu* 扇舖; p. 35, one example], medical clinics [*yiyuan* 醫院; p. 35, two examples], shops selling eyeglasses [*yanjing* 眼鏡; p. 35, one example], tailors [*caifeng* 裁縫; p. 35, three examples], pawnshops [*dangpu* 當舖; p. 38, three examples], florists [*huazuo* 花座; pp. 38 and 39, four examples], rice shops [*mipu* 米舖; p. 39, four examples], oil shops [*youpu* 油舖; p. 40, two examples], cloth-dyeing shops [*ranfang* 染房; p. 40, two examples], and metalworking shops [*datie* 打鐵; p. 40, two examples], some of which probably made cookware [*guo* 鍋] and farm tools. Other shops produced and sold wine and spirits [*jiuchang* 酒廠; p. 53, four examples]. In anticipation of requests from merchants, Mr. Qian prepared sample couplets for the fishermen and the boat people who regularly transported goods by waterway [*chuanjia yong* 船家用; pp. 38 and 39, four examples]. Unlike Mr. Bai, who lived in a small community, Mr. Qian is most likely to have lived in a city or market center with many businesses.

28 After the silver had been cast into such ingots, they could be kept in the silver shop’s storehouse under lock and key, as explained by Richard Yan-ki Ho in “Chinese Banking in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of Piaohao (票號)” (lecture delivered at the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University, October 17, 2012). On money shops holding cash deposits, see Huang Jianhui 黃鑒暉, *Shanxi piaohao shi* 山西票號史 [A History of Shanxi Banks] (Taiyuan: Shanxi jingji chubanshe, 2008), 216–217.

However, he did not include any listings for fortunetellers, ritual specialists, scribes, legal advisors, or the local schools. These exceptions indicate that the services offered by many licentiates were not recognized as small businesses with a storefront operation. The people in these categories could just easily set up a booth at a local temple fair, including local school teachers, who could offer these services as a sideline occupation, or those who were otherwise literate and offered a variety of these services as needed by the local *pingmin*.

Mr. Qian's community also hosted a larger number of temples or religious altars than did Mr. Bai's. Mr. Qian believed that these altars were a good potential source of income because couplets for them were likely to be requested, so he prepared eighty-five sample couplet texts for religious sites. Temples representing the most popular deities seemed likely to generate the most requests: for example, the Goddess of Mercy [Guanyin 觀音; p. 24, seven examples] and the Empress of Heaven [Tianhou 天后; p. 29, four examples], which referred to Mazu 媽祖 who is widely worshiped by communities in South China, especially those with ties to fishing and the sea.<sup>29</sup> Temples dedicated to these deities were often fairly large so as to accommodate the large number of worshipers who came to pay their respects. Sample texts were also prepared for the kitchen god (p. 14, eight examples) and the earth gods [*tushen* 土神; p. 15, eight examples]. Equally common were the Heavenly Officials who confer blessings [*Tianguan-cifu* 天官賜福; p. 16, seven examples]. This category of deities often refers to the Three Officials, who are in charge of heaven, the earth, and water.<sup>30</sup> Sample texts were prepared to honor gate gods [*menguan* 門官], well gods [*jing-shen* 井神; p. 22, four examples], and gods of the community altars [*shetan* 社壇; p. 30, seven examples]. Gods of the community altars seem to have been more widely worshiped in South China than in the north.<sup>31</sup> The Gods of the

29 On the importance of Mazu in Hong Kong, where she is referred to in Cantonese as Tin Hau, see P.H. Hase, ed., *In the Hearth of the Metropolis: Yaumatei and Its People* (Hong Kong: Joint, 1997), 111–119.

30 On the Three Officials, see Chapter 1; their ranking is discussed in Chapter 8. Also see *Beijing Baiyunguan: Tianxia daojiao diyi conglin* 北京白雲觀：天下道教第一叢林 [*Beijing Baiyunguan; The Most Important Daoist Monastery*] (Beijing: Baiyunguan, ca. 2010), a bilingual edition with photos. See also Zhang, *Daojiao shenxian*, 240–244; for individual titles of the Three Officials, see Kubo, *Dōkyō no kamizami*, 156–158; Goodrich, *Peking Paper Gods*, 305–308.

31 On the importance of local altars and their greater presence in South China, see David Johnson, *Spectacle and Sacrifice: The Ritual Foundations of Village Life in North China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 325; David Faure, *Lineage and Village in the Eastern New Territories, Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1986), 74–

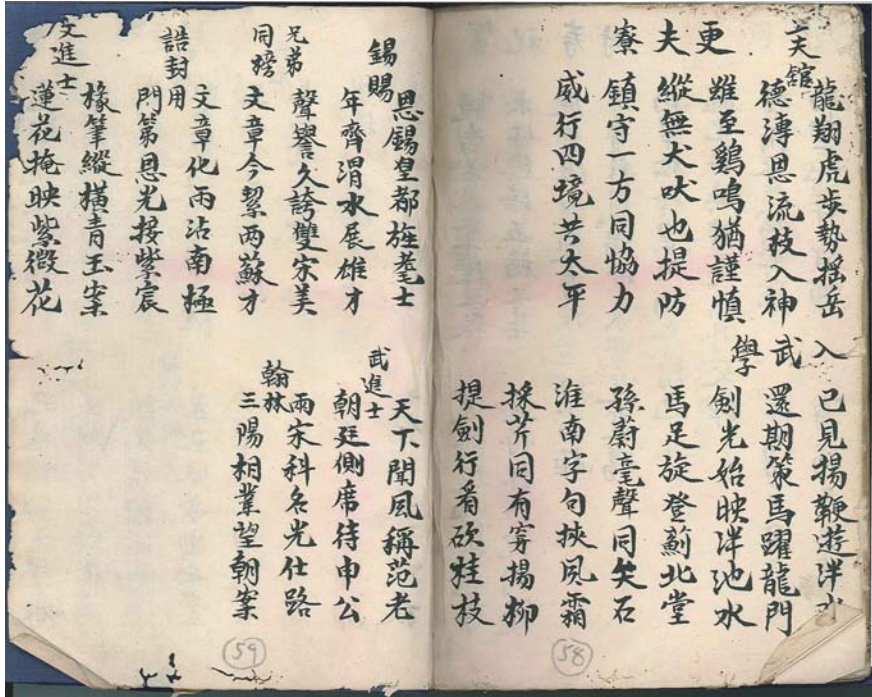


FIGURE 7.17

Mr. Qian's Notebook [Qian xiansheng zhi chaoben 錢先生之抄本], Pages 58 and 59. Scrolls to Honor Scholarly Accomplishments. Mr. Qian offered matching couplets to honor academic achievements. On page 58, he listed many sample phrases for students who were beginning study to receive a military degree [Ru wuxue 入武學]. For those studying for various higher degrees or who were locally prominent, he had sample phrases such as "presented scholar" [jinshi 進士] degree on page 59 and on the extreme left of the page samples for a civil degree [wen jinshi 文進士] and, at the bottom of that page, for a military degree [wujin 武進] and for promotion to the Hanlin Academy 翰林.

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Empyrean [Yuanxiao 元宵] share the same name as the Lantern festival celebrated every January 15 on the lunar calendar. Mr. Qian prepared many sample texts for celebrating the Lantern festival [pp. 25–28, twenty-three examples]. He prepared couplets for the important Jade emperor (p. 29, two examples). Entrepreneurial Mr. Qian also had a large category of sample couplets to be

80; Zhao Shiyu, "Town and Country Representation as Seen in Temple Fairs," in *Town and Country in China: Identify and Perception*, ed. David Faure and Tao Tao Liu (Oxford: Palgrave, 2002), 49; Kenneth Dean, "Transformations of the She (Altars of the Soil) in Fujian," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie*, 10 (1998): 45.



FIGURE 7.18

*Merchant Runners Carrying Copper Cash.* Shops in China needed cash for their transactions. Silver ingots [yinding 銀錠] were used for expensive transactions calculated in high denominations [liang 兩] while copper cash [qian 錢] was used for everyday transactions calculated in lower denominations. The photo shows people carrying money, called “runners” [benpaozhe 奔跑者, zousizhe 走私者], who work for a money-changer [piaohao 票號] or a pawnshop [dangpu 當舖]. The metal currency was heavy, so they carried it on their shoulders. It also is early in the morning, which would have been the safest time for the runners to carry the cash.

PHOTO: CARRYING CASH, FENYANG 汾陽, SHANXI 山西, 1916; PHOTO: WILLIAM LEETE; RESTORATION AND PRINT ©2015 WILLIAM MORSE. USED BY SPECIAL PERMISSION

used for any other deities who were honored [*shenqian dui* 神前對; pp. 19–21, twenty-four examples].<sup>32</sup>

32 The Gods of the Empyrean is also the festival of the first of the Three Officials [*Sanguan*], who rule over the three periods of the year, so a visit to a local temple was also part of the celebrations for many people at that time of year. See Kenneth Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cultures of South China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 88–89. This first deity [*Shangyuan* 上元 or *Tianguan* 天官] rules from the first moon to the end of the sixth, according to Goodrich, *Peking Paper Gods*, 309. Note the similarity between these three deities and those of the Three Officials mentioned above. This has caused people to

Perhaps the clearest indication of Mr. Qian's ability to interact with the highest social strata of his community, and his confidence in getting requests from the elite, is the number of sample couplets he prepared and categorized according to the social occasions at which they would be displayed. For example, students who had passed the county-level government exams to become *xiucaí*, could choose from the category of "those now entering the academy grounds," literally written as those who could now wander near the pool on the grounds of a Confucian academy [*youpan yong* 遊洋用; p. 56, four examples]. Those who received higher-level degrees after examinations taken in the capital might have been awarded a civil degree [*wenxue* 文學; p. 56, one example] or a military degree [*wuxue* 武學; p. 56, one example].<sup>33</sup> People might exchange gifts on these occasions and present a couplet from the category of "bestowing a gift" [*xici* 錫賜; p. 59, one example].

Candidates who passed one of the higher-level imperial examinations in the capital usually were offered a government appointment either there or in a provincial office. Names of successful candidates were announced on a list [*bang* 榜] posted in the capital. Mr. Qian had a category of couplets for "two brothers who had both passed the exam" [*xiongdi tongbang* 兄弟同榜;

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conflate these two sets of deities, and today the *Sanguan* are sometimes interchangeably called the *Sanyuan*. See the basic explanation in Zhu, *Zhongguo daojiao gongguan wenhua*, 284–286. Conflation of the two is mentioned in Zhang, *Daojiao shenxian xinyang*, 242; Kubo, *Dōkyō no kamizami*, 158. A handwritten book of forty-seven pages in my collection is titled **Repentances to the Supreme Three Primes to Forgive Sins** [*Taishang sanyuan youzui fachen* 太上三元宥罪法懺], in three volumes. The text is 9¾ in (24.76 cm) h × 8¼ in (20.95 cm) w and was purchased in Beijing in March 2009, though it originally came from Hengyang 衡陽 in Hunan. It is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. This text contains the phrase "Tianzungyan zhengyue shiwuri, shangyuanguan 天尊言正月十五日, 上元官 [To Revered Heaven on the fifteenth day of the first month, [to the] Shangguan," 4. This shows the conflation in which the beginning of the first *yuan* [*yuanxiao*] on January 15 is also addressed to the First Yuanguan 上元官. Following the phrase is a list of thirteen honorary titles for this deity (pp. 4–6).

- 33 Kaiping was proud of the number of its residents who had attained a formal education and a government-issued degree. For example, in 1802 the country gazetteer recorded two *juren* [recommended scholars], seven *gongsheng* [holders of a purchased degree], four *jiansheng* [imperial academy scholars], one *jinshi* [presented scholar], and eleven *shengyuan* [licentiates]. In 1843 some fourteen men of educated status were recorded, including two *wusheng* 武生 [military degree] and a *xiangbin* 鄉賓 [local distinguished person]. For these examples, see *Ming-Qing shike wenxian quanbian* 明清石刻文獻全編 [*Complete Texts of Stone Inscriptions and Documents from the Ming and Qing*]. Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, series 5, 2: 2003, 684 and 688. 2003. A thorough discussion is in Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China*.



FIGURE 7.19

*A Prosperous Commercial Street in South China. The photo shows a clean and orderly commercial street in Hangzhou 杭州, taken about 1919. The street is paved and has a lot of foot traffic as well as electricity. This street was most likely typical of the community in which Mr. Qian [Qian xiansheng 錢先生] earned a living by writing felicitous scrolls for individuals and merchants.*

SIDNEY D. GAMBLE PHOTOGRAPHS, DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, DUKE LIBRARY

p. 59, one example]. The *crème de la crème* were candidates who were “first in the examination” [*zhuangyuan* 狀元; p. 60, one example]. Candidates who placed second were also honored as “eye of the list” [*bangyan* 榜眼; p. 60, one example]. Candidates who placed third were known as “selected talent” [*tanhua* 探花; p. 60, one example]. All three were usually appointed to the prestigious Hanlin 翰林 Academy in Beijing. Some candidates “took the examination and upon investigation [of the results] were awarded a degree” [*qianlie jianhou rupan* 前列鑑後入泮; p. 60, two examples]. Similarly, cases might occur in which an “elder brother is an academy scholar, and a younger brother is awarded a military degree” [*xiong jiansheng di wuxue* 兄鑑生弟武學, p. 60, one example].<sup>34</sup> Within the educated and official hierarchy, military degrees were considered somewhat second class, but among the general population they were respected as official recognition of achievement.

Degrees could be obtained by other means as well. The emperor might confer a degree conferred for “individual merit” [*engong* 恩貢; p. 61, one example]. A degree might be given in recognition of a “tribute [money or gifts] paid to the Imperial Court” [*en nagong* 恩納貢; p. 61, one example]. Western scholars refer to these as purchased degrees, in the sense that they were awarded after a “tribute payment,” but the process was not automatic and purchasers first had to prove that they were qualified to become a member of the elite by dint of their own accomplishments or the status of their family, tracing back three generations. Some were awarded degrees because they were “especially sent by their prefecture to take the imperial examination” [*ba gong* 拔貢; p. 60, one example]. Receiving an “appointment to the prestigious Hanlin Academy” in Beijing was sufficient reason for a congratulatory couplet (p. 59, one example). Some were appointed as “alternate [accessory] senior licentiate” [*fu gong* 副貢; p. 61, one example]. Mr. Qian was aware of all these categories and wanted to be prepared in case someone in this category of achievement approached him for a couplet.<sup>35</sup>

34 This was true not only in traditional China but Korea. The differences between the two sets of exams and their resultant career tracks are discussed in Eugene Y. Park, *Between Dreams and Reality: The Military Examination in Late Choson Korea, 1600–1894* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

35 For comments on the status of a Hanlin scholar, see Kaizuka Shigeki 貝塚茂樹, *Chūgoku no rekishi* 中國の歴史 [Chinese History] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1994), 3: 9–10. On the status of a *jinshi*, see *ibid.*, 2: 49–50. A useful and thoughtful consideration of the examination system in China is Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*. For broad coverage of the examination system with See also the useful glossary in Bastid, *Educational Reform in Early Twentieth-Century China*, appendix 3.

The local elite in Kaiping county engaged in various courtesies, such as presenting a couplet to welcome a notable visitor [*xiangbin* 鄉賓; p. 60, one example] or when an “honorary title was conferred by the emperor” [*gaofeng dui* 誥封對; p. 59, one example], or even when someone wished to present a couplet to “honor the prefectural governor.” Evidently, his clientele included people with enough wealth and status to be on the list of those welcoming the government’s chief representative in the province [*he xunzhengting* 賀巡政廳; p. 61, one example].

This section of Mr. Qian’s notebook indicates that he was writing at a time when the Qing examination system and subsequent conferring of degrees according to that examination system were still in place. I estimate Mr. Qian was writing sometime in the late Qing dynasty, perhaps between 1880 and 1906. The absence of references in Mr. Qian’s suggested couplets (as could be found in writings done during the Taiping rebellion) to civil unrest or the difficulties of military life indicates that he was writing after the Taiping rebellion had ended, post-1880. In 1905 the examination system, with its attendant awards and celebrations, was abolished, which ended the need for couplets celebrating degrees and honors associated with it. Thus we conclude Mr. Qian was writing while the Qing dynasty was still in power.

### Conclusion: What the Notebooks Reveal

It is instructive to compare the notebook of Mr. Bai with that of Mr. Qian. The differences in the two manuscripts these men prepared throw into sharp relief their different communities and expectations. Both were working at a time (roughly between 1880 and 1913) when most of the traditional values and social practices sanctioned throughout the Qing, if not earlier, were still in place, and the custom of hanging matching couplets, or presenting them as gifts, was widely practiced. Both men thought they had enough formal education and literacy to earn income by providing matching scrolls to those who requested them, so they prepared a notebook of sample poetic texts, divided into categories based on where the scrolls would be hung or which occasion was commemorated. This was one fairly sure way for a literate man who had some formal education and some facility in calligraphy to earn income.

Because I bought Mr. Bai’s book in Beijing, I assume he lived somewhere in North China or southern Manchuria. Mr. Bai’s book was written on low-quality paper and bound with twisted paper twine. The writing inside was all over the pages, in margins and formerly blank spaces, as if on many occasions Mr.

Bai wanted to write down something quickly and chose the first empty space he could find on the page that was most convenient. The pages have distinct smudge marks where it appears someone repeatedly leafed through the book, those seem to have been heavily used. The calligraphy in his *chaoben* was acceptable, reflecting much practice. However, Mr. Bai often appeared unsure about how to correctly write some characters, so he wrote for his own reference many standard characters that a customer might request and likely assume he would know how to write. Occasionally he miswrote a character, which was then crossed out. Such extra characters or phrases appear on various pages throughout the notebook as notes to himself. These characters may have been intended for one of the horizontal papers that were sometimes hung above the two *duilian* or for a diamond-shaped piece of paper to be pasted on the gates.

Mr. Bai allowed others to write in his notebook. The calligraphy of several different people appears in this book: the two students who copied the story related to “Taigong Goes Fishing”; a scholar, possibly a friend or even Mr. Bai’s former teacher, who wrote a couplet in elegant calligraphy; and the name of Jiang Wen probably written by a boy. It is possible that, even if the bulk of the text that I attribute to Mr. Bai was written by him, several of the occasional characters written as notes were later added by someone else. It is not always possible to identify how many writers were responsible for most of the text in this book or whether one person wrote most of it. I conclude that Mr. Bai wrote most of the basic text, including a number of standard poems in the beginning pages that I surmise he used to tutor his students, the story of Taigong, the sample couplets, and the marginal notes of additional characters and phrases.

But if I am mistaken, then Mr. Bai is actually a composite of one or two people who were responsible for this notebook. Even if that is the case, the materials represented in the notebook, the categories of couplets, and the status of the religious deities mentioned do reflect the limited expectations and the smaller community in which Mr. Bai, whether a composite or a single person, lived.

I posit that Mr. Bai’s formal education at a traditional local academy/school was interrupted in 1905, when a new system of public schools modeled after the Western system of elementary, middle, and upper-middle schools, with a curriculum based on printed textbooks each covering a particular subject, such as mathematics, geography, or chemistry, was announced. The traditional local school curriculum, which was privately funded and in which subjects such as calligraphy, Confucian values, and the Classics formed the basis of the curriculum, did not disappear overnight but continued to operate in China,

especially in rural areas, well into the 1930s. In many communities in China, some disruption occurred, as schools reorganized and began to insist on higher school fees to cover the cost of textbooks and the hiring of new teachers able to teach the new subjects. It is plausible that Mr. Bai was a victim of this disruption in his formal education, which might account for his need to write notes to himself on how to correctly compose a number of characters that he should otherwise have known. After 1905, the study of the core of classical texts was no longer a path to success in government-sponsored examinations that would allow someone to climb the ladder of education and status to attain appointment as a government official. The new system meant that to obtain a job as a government bureaucrat or as a schoolteacher, one needed to first graduate from elementary and higher school and then from a university or college. Government jobs were awarded upon success in civil service examinations or through one's network of personal contacts [*guanxi* 關係]. Many people were discouraged by this change in the system or did not have money for the new schools and decided not to enter them, possibly including Mr. Bai.

I assume that the categories of couplets Mr. Bai was prepared to offer, as shown in his notebook, reflect the major categories of people and religious sites in the community where he lived. Mr. Bai might have thought that his customers would most likely come from people who lived nearby, therefore from only a subset of his community. I believe that Mr. Bai lived in a small and fairly poor community in North China that lacked large religious temples and had few businesses. His decision to write the couplet announcing that Yuan Shikai was president and Li Yuanhong the military chief indicates that he lived in a small and possibly isolated community, in which the information on the couplet could be taken as news because the local people did not otherwise have recent news of major political events.

It appears that Mr. Bai's community included only a few people who had houses with both a front and rear gate. The few deities whose altars were in his community were generally folk gods or relatively minor deities in the Daoist pantheon, though they were popular, such as the kitchen god and the Dragon King of the Well. For example, larger urban centers likely had alters to honor the Emperor Guan [Guandi 關帝] or the city god [*chenghuang* 城隍], but it appears these deities did not have a worship site in Mr. Bai's community.

Among the other deities honored in Mr. Bai's community were the King of Horses, worshipped by those who transported goods; the fire god, who protected against disastrous fires; and the Buddhist Deity of Clear Sight, who was widely worshipped where trachoma was frequently found. Mr. Bai's community also worshiped the important Grandfather of Heaven and the Protector

Against Demons [*Zhongkuiye* 鐘馗爺]. These deities were often revered by the common people and their communities.<sup>36</sup>

Mr. Bai also earned income as a teacher or tutor for elementary school-age students. Like many people who preferred the old curriculum even after the new system of schools was put in place, he offered the traditional curriculum of classical poetry, morality tales, and calligraphy. His students, judging from the two pages on which they copied the commentary on the story he had taught them, “Taigong Goes Fishing,” shows that they were young and still fairly inexperienced in writing with a brush, probably between the ages of eight and twelve, the common age of students in the beginning years of the traditional curriculum.

In sum, I conclude that Mr. Bai struggled with his own limited education to work as a teacher of young children and was prepared to offer congratulatory or celebratory couplets to the community as a way to earn extra income. His selection of the story of Taigong shows a degree of optimism in the idea that perseverance pays off, but his comments on the venal side of people shows that he was aware that the sincerity of all people cannot be accepted at face value. By teaching these stories to his students, he was trying to educate them for the broader adult world they would eventually enter, and at the same time he wanted them to accept some of his own values, in a cautious and measured way.

Mr. Qian’s book offers a strong contrast to Mr. Bai’s lack of confidence in his own abilities and to the poor and isolated community in which Mr. Bai lived. We know neither how Mr. Qian earned his income nor his station in life. Like Mr. Bai, he may have tutored students. He had neat though not outstanding calligraphy, the result of years of practice. He may have been a meticulous person who wanted to be ready for all eventualities, so he was prepared for a large quantity of requests for couplets from a wide variety of people. He apparently expected to some of those requesting couplets to be well-to-do,

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36 To be fair to Mr. Bai, as mentioned in the text it must be pointed out that Mr. Qian’s community also had temples to many of the same popular folk deities as in Mr. Bai’s community. In Daoist temples, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy is often referred to as the Perfected Vessel of Compassion [*Ziheng zhenren* 慈航真人]. Mr. Bai did not provide sample texts for any Buddhist deities, which suggests that no established Buddhist temple was in his vicinity; rather, only smaller temples dedicated to the gods of popular religion. This indicates a rural area or a community inhabited exclusively by *pingmin*. Mr. Qian used the standard appellation Guanyin for sample couplets in his *chaoben* (p. 24, seven examples). See Zhang, *Daojiao shenxian xinyang*, 551–553; Goodrich, *Peking Paper Gods*, 158–160.

living in large compounds with inner courtyards. The social occasions for which they might require couplets also showed that Mr. Qian's contacts were at the highest levels of his local society, including those who had passed their imperial examination and received an appointment to high office. The paper on which Mr. Qian wrote his sample couplets had been bleached white, indicating a more expensive grade, and it was bound with cotton string.

The categories of business in Mr. Qian's locality indicate that his was a thriving, moderate to large community with some manufacturing (of farm implements and liquor). The degree of commercial activity was sufficient for at least one silver casting shop. His community had altars dedicated to the major deities of Daoism (such as the Jade emperor), Buddhism, and the folk god accepted by both Daoists and Buddhists, Mazu (媽祖), the Holy Mother Queen of Heaven. The major deities honored in these temples were popular in South China, and they often had many lesser deities housed with them, so each of these temples might have been substantial and composed of several buildings. Mr. Qian expected to receive business from those temples. If Mr. Qian lived in Kaiping County in Guangdong, where the bookseller told me this notebook had originated, then he lived in a thriving community, bolstered by agriculture and trade. The extent of comfortable courtyard homes and Mr. Qian's awareness of the active religious life of his community are indicated by the sample couplets he prepared for display on an open veranda in a gentry home and for the community altar, where many community members regularly gathered.

The sample couplets that Mr. Qian prepared reveal the extent of the community where he lived and the level of social interaction that he enjoyed. Mr. Qian, like Mr. Bai, would be expected to be asked for couplets to celebrate the New Year [*xinchun* 新春], or weddings [*xinhun* 新婚] or birthday celebrations of an elder's longevity [*zhushou* 祝壽], so we should not be surprised to find many example couplets in these categories. Every community had people who wanted couplets to honor an ancestor [*zhuzu* 祝祖], or to announce mourning for a death [*sangjia* 喪家], and even Mr. Bai expected to receive orders for those kinds of *duilian*. Mr. Qian, however, lived in a community of greater social complexity, whose needs for the proper expression of social transitions through written couplets exceeded those in Mr. Bai's small village, as the wider categories of sample couplets attest.

Mr. Qian's community had a prominent and active elite, and he was well-connected enough that he might expect to be asked to provide a couplet for those occasions. He was known to people who celebrated their son's passing a government exam or receiving a higher degree or appointment to the prestigious Hanlin Academy in Beijing. He was aware of people who received their

degree through paying tribute to the emperor or through special consideration by the emperor. Some men being “awarded an imperial title” might need a couplet to celebrate that honor, and Mr. Qian had an example ready. He even expected to be asked to provide a couplet to welcome the visit of the provincial governor. The people who requested these *duilian* would have been from the most well-heeled strata of the community, most likely either landed gentry or large merchants. Mr. Qian must have assumed that some people in that social strata would approach him to write a couplet on their behalf and had appropriate samples ready.

To summarize, these two handwritten notebooks have striking contrasts. They indicate that Mr. Bai was not well practiced in his calligraphy or in his ability to recall the important characters he needed to know in order to correctly write the matching couplets that would be requested of him. Being a bit sloppy or disorganized in his approach to life, he copied down those characters whenever he ran across an example in which they were written correctly. His local community in North China was small and isolated and was composed of a limited range of economic strata and few businesses. Mr. Bai must have struggled to earn a good living by trading on his status as a literate man who had some degree of formal education.

I characterize Mr. Qian as a confident and organized person who must have been pleased with his neat and practiced calligraphy. His community seems to have boasted a number of economic and social elite families, and Mr. Qian had access to those families. The many such families who lived in large compounds with several gates, the range of local businesses, and even the larger temples in town all seemed likely to approach him for matching couplets on important occasions.

When we, as scholars and readers, encounter handwritten materials such as the two *chaoben* discussed here, we need to read into the text and consider the implications of the written material and its presentation. If we can date the book or place it in a geographic area, we need to reconstruct the social and economic environment in which it was prepared. It is equally intriguing and fun to hazard a reconstruction of the circumstances of the person who wrote the material, to understand why he decided to compile the notebook, how he used the book in daily life, and the major social and cultural values that influenced his understanding of the material and its role, and indeed his own role in the community where he lived. I have attempted to do this for the two manuscripts discussed in this chapter. At each point, I have identified an aspect of interest and have suggested a logical interpretation of it that seems to be supported by the written material or by our current understanding of the likely place and times in which the book was used by living human beings. It

is possible that I am mistaken on some points or many points in this analysis, but on each point I have made a logical and informed guess that should be consistent with all the other analytical guesses and assumptions in this chapter. The result is a story of two men who shared cultural values and lived at roughly the same time yet lived in two rather different communities and whose own expectations and opportunities were quite dissimilar.

Collections of texts for *duilian* were ubiquitous in China in the late Qing period. Printed texts of sample couplets are readily available in Chinese-language bookstores today. Almanacs widely sold during the New Year festival usually contain a selection of suggested couplets. These might be considered “mass-produced” couplets or general couplets suitable for use by a wide range of people. It appears that most contemporary Chinese do not observe as many social occasions needing a couplet nor do they carefully classify family occasions strictly by familial relationships. Rather, the greatest use of matching couplets nowadays is to celebrate the New Year, followed by weddings, at which couplets in red are a big part of the decorations. Almanacs contain samples of couplets for birthdays to honor an elder, as well as for funerals, when the couplets appear on white paper in place of the celebratory red paper.

In traditional China, the use of matching couplets on hanging scrolls was common. I have found that in the handwritten notebooks I have acquired dating from the late Qing and early Republican era, many include lists of sample couplets, usually divided into broad categories. I have seen them in notebooks otherwise containing religious information, sample letters, or sample contract forms. The two examples of notebooks focusing on couplets considered in this chapter are not unique in that sense. Being able to write elegantly with a brush a pair of hanging scrolls with a matching couplet was a sure way for a literate and educated person to earn some income as much as it was, indeed, one of the signifying marks of literacy.

At present, the antiques and flea markets in China offer a variety of old *chaoben*. However, very few scholars in or outside China use these materials as a way of uncovering the lives of ordinary people. Almost no libraries collect them but, like the stereopticon slides of the Victorian era, they can give us an intriguing and somewhat three-dimensional, multifocused view of China's *pingmin* culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

## The Troublesome Ghosts: Part 1

### 妖魔，第一部

#### Introduction

Most of the *pingmin* [common people] who lived in China in the late Qing and the Republic (from 1850 to 1949) knew that many deities and ghosts had the power to affect their daily lives. Temples and shrines to these supernatural beings dotted the countryside and were an ever-present sight in all the villages, towns, and cities throughout China. Their images were frequently encountered, whether as statues in an incense-filled shrine or in printed representations pasted on the gates of homes to ensure protection, and all major festivals of the Chinese calendar contained references to the gods or the ghosts that populated both heaven and earth.<sup>1</sup>

Almost all premodern societies organized their belief and value systems around their perceptions of the world of spirits, gods, ghosts, and demons. These were powerful forces that had abilities far beyond those possessed by mere human beings. When large phenomena such as unexpected storms or thunder were encountered, or when smaller maladies such as a severe headache or sudden vomiting occurred, troublesome events that did not seem to have a clear or immediate cause, it was widely assumed that the influence of the superhuman forces was in play.

Because these forces were all-pervasive and not always predictable in their actions, they elicited both awe and fear among human beings. The big issues for China's *pingmin* were how to approach these powers, how to demonstrate one's respect for them, and how best to avoid their displeasure. Over the centuries in China, a large body of literature emerged to describe these powerful forces.

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1 The great number of religious believers, who exceeded the secular Confucians, is characterized by Benjamin Elman as follows: "In a sea of 100–300 million imperial subjects, Ming-Qing Confucian literati never outnumbered the pious adepts of Chinese religion, Buddhism, or Daoism: vast numbers of each mind-set accommodated the imperial system to the greater society that supported it." See Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China*, 2. Thoughtful views on the Chinese supernatural and their relation to deities are expressed in Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 35–48.

Prepared by literate authors and published in woodblock texts, many volumes of writings have been handed down through the generations that discuss and explain the mysterious forces that toyed with human existence.

At the same time, an even more widespread body of popular assumptions existed about these mysterious all-powerful spirits. The common people passed down stories about their own encounters with the gods and ghosts. Some of the popular assumptions might eventually make their way into the printed literature, but the *chaoben* discussed in this book are an excellent source, virtually a first-hand source, for glimpsing how China's common people actually felt about supernatural beings, how they described them, and how they attempted to control them. These *chaoben* about gods and ghosts were used by the common people when they had to encounter the more powerful realm of the spirits.

Scholars usually define the beliefs and practices of the Chinese *pingmin* in regard to the perceived suprahuman forces as "popular religion." Chinese popular religion consisted of identifying a number of deities drawn from the Buddhist and Daoist pantheons of "organized religion," then expanded to include all sorts of frightening and "unknowable" powers lurking about but usually ready to interfere in the lives of human beings. Given the pervasiveness of the perception among the people of the existence of so many spirits, gods, and ghosts, it was not surprising that many *chaoben* dealing with this aspect of popular culture appear in the flea and antiques markets of China.

At the top of the celestial hierarchy as perceived by the common people were the spirits associated with the power of nature and the passage of time through millennia. So powerful and extensive were these phenomena that they had an almost philosophical, ethereal existence. Just below them was a wider category, what I call the middle rank of spirits who carefully watched over human beings, to record their good deeds and transgressions to keep a register of human actions. People approached these deities in great numbers to ask for their help in preventing catastrophes and dangers or to forgive sins of the past and bring blessings in the future. The middle rank of deities could also be called upon for help, because they interacted with the lower rank of spirits, the ghosts and demons who were waiting to trouble the common people as they went about their daily activities. The middle rank of deities was stronger than the troublesome ghosts, and when sincerely asked for help they could marshal the spirit generals [*shenjiang* 神將] and ghost soldiers [*yinbing* 陰兵 or *shenbing* 神兵]; the spirit of a dead soldier who had been wandering around] to chase away the evil spirits.

Some of the middle-ranking deities were even prepared to enter the gates of Hell if necessary to rescue an unfortunate sinner. Some middle-ranking deities changed their appearance from that of a deity [*shen* 神] to that of a

ghost [*gui* 鬼] in order to deal with demons [*mogui* 魔鬼] and goblins [*dousha* 斗煞, *yaogui* 妖鬼] who vexed and harassed the common people.<sup>2</sup> For many of China's common people, so many of these deities could be beneficial or harmful, either god or ghost, that approaching the gods was something not to be done lightly and always with signs of ritual respect, such as burning incense or setting off firecrackers. This aspect of the changing nature of the deities is discussed below in this chapter and Chapter 9.

The spirits at the bottom of this hierarchy were the troublesome ghosts considered closely in Chapter 9. They caused everything from a headache and a feeling of lethargy to violent vomiting and irrational behavior. They could be driven away by a ritual specialist, such as a Daoist master [*daoshi* 道士] or a yinyang master. They could also be chased away by the afflicted people themselves, if they knew how to confront the troublesome ghost and how to scare it away.

Using the *chaoben* that I collected, this chapter and Chapter 9 trace how people in China once regularly approached the deities and ghosts. It presents an overview of the rankings of some deities. And it shows, through their own writings and instructions, how the common people conceived of the troublesome ghosts that bedeviled them in everyday life. In this chapter I attempt to reconstruct the popular views of the common people in China during the late Qing and Republic on the mysterious beings and natural forces that impinged on their daily lives. Although buttressed in places by printed sources and scholarly studies, as far as possible I use the *chaoben* I have collected to accomplish this goal.

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2 Confucians regularly debated the differences between spirits and ghosts. The standard phrase was “ghosts and spirits” [*guishen* 鬼神], as used (apparently) by Confucius himself. An overview of these debates with original insights is offered in Koyasu Nobukuni 子安宣邦, *Kishinron: Juka chishikinin no deskuru* 鬼神論：儒家知識人のデ イスケル [*On Ghosts and Spirits: The Discourse among Confucian Intelligentsia*] (Tokyo: Fukutake shoten, 1992). Special talisman designed to summon the power of spirit generals are in the *chaoben* in my collection titled *Cao Suosen* 曹鎖森, as on the cover. This book is 9 in (22.86 cm) h × 5 in (12.7 cm) w, has seventy-seven pages, and was purchased in Shanghai in 2014. See p. 18 for summoning General Ding [Ding *jiangjun* 丁將軍], and p. 19 for summoning General Xu [Xu *jiangjun* 徐將軍].

## The Deities of Religious Daoism

### *Higher-Ranking Deities*

Religious Daoism in China offers the Chinese people a panoply of deities who influence the existence of human beings in various ways. Each deity has an honorific title, often several titles, attesting to their attributes and powers. These deities are called gods. These are the deities represented as statues, sometimes in paintings, in Daoist temples. They are honored with incense and are given treats of fruits and flowers by the common people who honor them at the temple. When especially honored or when invited to descend from their otherworldly thrones into a temple to participate in a ceremony, they are welcomed by exploding fireworks often accompanied by clouds of incense smoke and sometimes the chanting of religious works by the officiating religious specialists. During the ceremonies, they are often asked for their favor or blessing or intercession in some matter. Both the religious specialists and the common people can join in requesting the intercession. As the ceremony concludes, they are thanked and sent away skyward by the clashing of cymbals, fireworks, and incense, all symbols of celebration and honor.

The Daoist deities are all ranked in a hierarchy that roughly resembles the official government bureaucracy of premodern China. Many deities carry the appellations of emperor [*di* 帝], lord [*dijun* 帝君], prince [*gong* 公], or duke [*jun* 君]. These titles descend in rank, so, by knowing their titles, we can judge their relative position within the hierarchy. The exact hierarchy of the deities varies somewhat, depending on the particular school of Daoism honoring them, and it has been modified over time. Since the Qing dynasty, a standard hierarchy has been widely accepted in China, and it continues to be used in popular religious Daoism as practiced in Chinese communities around the world today.<sup>3</sup>

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3 The hierarchy I use in this chapter follows a scroll of Daoist deities I bought near Baiyunguan in Beijing in 2014 titled “Daojiao quanshen tu 道教全神圖 [Chart of All the Daoist Deities].” This follows the same hierarchical ranking as that used by Baiyunguan. See *Beijing Baiyunguan*, which describes the Baiyunguan grounds and deities and is offered free to visitors. The textual explanations show that the hierarchical ranking mentioned here is followed by the temple. This hierarchy of deities is not followed in all Daoist temples or by all schools of religious Daoism. This point is mentioned again below in relation to the Jade emperor, who is considered the highest deity by many of the common people. For a history of the Baiyunguan in the late Qing and Republic, see Vincent Goossaert, *The Taoists of Peking, 1800–1949: A Social History of Urban Clerics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

At the pinnacle of the typical hierarchy used today sit the Three Pure Ones [*Sanqing* 三清]. These deities are involved in the most basic responsibilities of human existence in the universe. They seem to sit at the highest reaches of Daoist imagination, almost unmoving and never falling into temptation or under the influence of any other phenomenon. Their titles can be translated as celestial worthy or lord [*tianzun* 天尊]. First is the Universal Lord of Primordial Being [Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊], who created the physical heaven and earth. In philosophical terms, this was the energy [*qi* 炁] that gave expression to the *dao* 道. Second is the Universal Lord of Numinous Treasure [Lingbao tianzun 靈寶天尊], who divides time into epochs, of which the millennia during human existence is only a small part. The third of these highest deities is the Universal Lord of the Way and Its Virtue [Daode tianzun 道德天尊]. This is Laozi, well known as the philosopher who taught humans about Daoist thinking. He is popularly titled the Most Ancient Noble [Taishang laojun 太上老君]. He came to earth in the form of a man to teach the about the Dao.<sup>4</sup>

The teachings of Laozi were and continue to be known and respected in China. A relatively short text probably composed in the Song dynasty, *Taishang ganying pian* 太上感應篇 [Folios of the Most High on Retribution], has been generally interpreted as the work of Laozi. It is being widely reprinted and distributed by Daoist temples all over China even now. These are printed versions, and so far I have not found any *chaoben* copies of this work, perhaps because the position of Laozi is so exalted in the heavenly bureaucracy that the common people hesitated to approach him and thus did not often follow the custom of copying one of his texts in order to gain merit.<sup>5</sup>

Daoist masters living among the common people, however, were sometimes bold enough call upon Laozi for help. A *chaoben* I bought in June 2014 is titled **Secret Text for Summoning the Snake** [*Shechuan miben* 蛇傳秘本]. One would not guess from its title that this work involved Laozi. In this case, one of the highest deities would be summoned to an altar by a very common person through the help of a Daoist ritual specialist, in a colorful and possibly

4 In Chinese, each of these deities has several honorific titles. Their titles are translated in English in different ways by different scholars. The English translations used in this chapter are taken from many sources, so are not consistent with any particular English-language work. The word for “energy” [*qi* 炁] is often written in this way by Daoists. It is equivalent to the more common way of writing it, 氣.

5 For a complete translation into English, with the Chinese original, see Li Xinjun 李信軍, ed., *Taishang ganying pian* 太上感應篇 [*Treatise on Sympathetic Response, (Spoken by) the Supreme*] (Beijing: Baiyunguan, 2008). Incantations by a Daoist master regularly invoke Laozi. Most scholars doubt that this was written by Laozi, and many doubt that Laozi actually existed.

unostentatious way. Deities can easily transform themselves into other forms, and a snake was a popular form for some deities to take. Foxes and rodents were other forms encountered. On the one hand, most common people did not treat Laozi as just another of the exalted deities and did not seem to view him as a deity to be negotiated with. On the other hand, his name was regularly invoked in the ritual exhortations of Daoist specialists to quickly bring into force an incantation for assistance, as discussed below.<sup>6</sup>

The bulk of the twenty-nine-page work consists of incantations calling on Laozi for assistance. On pages 3–4 and 9–18, ten incantations [*zhouyu* 咒語] are addressed to Laozi 老子 by his official title Taishang laojun. They are all titled “respectfully submitted” [*fuyi* 伏以] and they all end with the words “I petition” [*wufeng* 吾奉], and the standard phrase used to conclude Daoist incantations and ritual petitions to the deities, “Promptly, promptly, decree in accordance with the statues and ordinances” [*jiji ru lilin* 急急如律令].<sup>7</sup>

They are addressed to Laozi, who brought Daoist teaching to earth, but whose form, according to the text, is now that of a snake [*she* 蛇]. This can be seen on page 8, where the following phrase appears: “Master Lao’s present form is the snake; go deep into the mountain district” [*laojun xianshen shi she; songgui shenshan, difu* 老君現身是蛇；送歸深山，地府]. This phrase makes up the middle section of a stylized Daoist character with a “rain” element at the top [*yu* 雨], a “ghost” at its base [*gui* 鬼], and a final element at the bottom, “hidden” [*cang* 藏]. Daoist specialists thought the rain element represents a call to the god of thunder [Leigong 雷公] discussed below. The snake deity is addressed as Great Spirit of the Southern Snake [Nanshe dashen 南蛇大神] seen in the incantation on page 11.

The incantations on these pages appear to be standard forms of incantations to be used as reference material by the Daoist masters who wrote them down. Because they are standard incantations, some have places where the name of the specific petitioner and the date of the petitions can be inserted. (We see this in the incantations on pp. 15 and 18.) Writing information as reference

6 **Secret Text for Summoning the Snake** is 6¾ in (17.14 cm) h × 7¼ in (18.41 cm) w, with twenty-eight pages. I bought it in Beijing in June 2014. For examples of deities who could be called upon to protect humans, to relieve suffering and sickness, and who took the form of a fox, snake, rodent, etc., see Huang Qiang 黃強, “Wuxi yu shouhu fuzhuling: Guanyu Dongbei diqu wuxi de Huxian Xinyang 巫覡與守護輔助靈：關於東北地區巫覡的胡仙信仰 [Mediums and Protective Spirits: On the Medium and Belief in the Immortal Hu in Northeast China],” *Minsu qiyi* 民俗曲藝 [*Popular Arts*], no. 118 (March 1999). Daoist ceremonies concerning the snake were practiced in Hengyang, Hunan, in 1899. See *Peake in China*, 95.

7 On magical incantations, see Zhang et al., *Daojiao fuzhou, xuan, jiang*.

material in the conduct of one's professional life was one of the basic purposes of *chaoben* across all the occupations discussed in this book. In other words, in this case the Daoist master would consult the reference text he had written in this book when writing out a petition on behalf of an individual who wished to address a request to the deity.

Several Daoist followers were involved with the petitions to the deities in this booklet; their names appear in two of the incantations: Ye Faling 葉法靈 (with the grass radical of the Ye surname omitted), Zhou Fahui 周法輝 (p. 3), and Zhou Fadao 周法道 (pp. 15–17). These are all Daoist religious names taken after ordination. In the margin on page 26, in a section of the booklet dealing with medical prescriptions is another Zhou name, that of a woman, Zhou Nixian 周妮賢. Her name appears to be a standard given name and not an ordination name. This book seems to have belonged to the Zhou family, which seems to be a standard given name, rather than a Daoist ordination name. From the handwriting and color of the ink that are different from the rest of the book, this final female name appears to have been added at a later date.

In the incantation on page 15 the Daoist masters Zhou Fahui and Zhou Fadao indicate where the name of any petitioning individual and the date of the petition can be inserted and sent to Laozi. As mentioned above, all these incantations appear to be general as to the specific complaint or request being made, but they all ask various deities to be marshaled and they ask Laozi to fulfill the request.

An example of a general incantation to drive away evil and troublesome spirits is on page 14. In this case, the Daoist master would use a live chicken and probably conduct the ceremony in public or with an audience present. The words and actions here could have been those of a yinyang master, and it illustrates how the two occupations of Daoist ritual specialist and yinyang master had many similarities. It also illustrates the degree of spectacle that the Daoist masters could incorporate into their rituals to impress the people who had gathered to watch.

The entry begins with a comment:

This chicken is not an ordinary chicken. It is the Queen Mother's dawn-crowing cock. It is when the cock crows and the phoenix crows that the Daoist master achieves the Dao.

*Ciji feishi fanji, wangmu niangniang baoxiaoji, jinji jiao fenghuang tizheng, shi shifu dedaoshi.*

此雞非是反雞，王母娘娘報曉雞，金雞叫鳳凰啼正，是師父得道時。



FIGURE 8.1

*Secret Text for Summoning the Snake* [Shechuan miben 蛇傳秘本], Page 14, *Daoist Ceremony Using a Live Chicken*. In this example of a colorful ceremony by a Daoist ritual master, the entry reads: "This chicken is not an ordinary chicken. It is the Queen Mother's cock that crows at dawn. It is when the cock crows and the phoenix crows that the Daoist master achieves the Dao" [Ciji feishi fanji, wangmu niangniang baoxiaoji, jinji jiao fenghuang, tizheng, shi shifu dedaoshi 此雞非是反雞，王母娘娘報曉雞，金雞叫鳳凰啼正，是師父得道時]. Starting at the right-hand margin of the page, these are the beginning lines, just before the ritual master makes his official invocation [fuyi 伏以, "respectfully submitted"] to the deities. Using a live chicken in ceremonies to link the deities with humans was probably not frequent, but not unknown, in rural China at the time.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

The petition reads:

Heaven and Earth reveal the opportunity, the auspicious day and suitable time are requested. Heaven evil, earth evil, year evil, month evil, day evil, also injuries: heaven evil go back to heaven get away from the earth; evils

go away and hide in the ground. The thirty-six major evils, the seventy-two minor evils, wherever there are bad spirits, evil spirits will not be honored. This disciple, me, I have a heroic chicken coming to ward off evil. I humbly petition. Lord Laozi, promptly, promptly, decree in accordance with the statues and ordinances.

*Fuyi. Tiandi kaizhang, riji shiliang. Tiansha, disha, niansha, yuesha, risha, bing shishang, tiansha guitian qudi, shagui di cang. Sanshiliu dasha, qishier xiaoshang, ruoyou xiongshen, eshabufuzhe, dizi woyou xiongji laididang. Wufeng. Taishang laojun jiji ru liling.*

伏以。天地開張，日吉時良。天殺，地殺，年殺，月殺，日殺，並時傷，天殺歸天去地，殺歸地藏。三十六大殺，七十二小傷，若有兇神，惡殺不服者，弟子我有雄雞來抵擋。吾奉，太上老君急急如律令。

On occasion, part of the ritual of chanting the incantation was to the click the teeth a set number of times. This was not specified in the document we are considering here.<sup>8</sup> Humans, especially children, must pass through numerous gates [*guan* 關], or crises points, in their life journey, so ritual texts on keeping

8 The character 殺 *sha* here is the equivalent of “noxious influence” or “evil force,” also written 煞. The equivalence of these two characters is explained in Min Jihui 閔智會, *Shinsalhak chonso* 神殺學全書 [*Complete Book of Spirits and Evil*] (Paju, Korea: Tongyang sojok, 2005). The equivalence is also mentioned in *Han-Han daesajon* 漢韓大字典 [Chinese-Korean Dictionary] (Seoul: Minjong solim, 1988), 775. See also Yi, *Zhongguo shenguai dazidian*, 425–426. On dealing with *sha*, see Song Daoyuan 宋道元, *Jietu Zhongguo daojiao shengsishu* 解圖中國道教生死書 [*The Book of Life and Death in Chinese Daoism, Illustrated*] (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 2009), 148–155; Wu Kang, *Zhonghua shenmi wenhua cidian*, 2–3, 204. On examples in which clicking the teeth [*kouchi* 叩齒] was prescribed, see Zhang, *Daojiao fuzhou*, especially pp. 12 (click three times), 13 (click seven times), and 15 (click thirty-six times). The evil force *sha* and how it affects human actions are illustrated in *Nimaru ichigo Heisei nijūshichinen jingukan kaiunli* 平成二十七年神宮館開運曆 [*The Jingukan Horoscope for 2015*] (Tokyo: Jingukan, 2014), 7–9. The *chaoben* *Petitions to the Thunder Altar* [*Fengzhi chiling leitan* 奉旨敕令雷壇] has drawings of some of the *sha* forces on pp. 2–5 of this sixty-seven-page work. The title page and some of the early pages have fallen off this book, so I assign the title based on the first talismanic character that appears on the first extant page. Based on dates that appear in the text, this *chaoben* was likely written between 1886 and 1900. Bought in Beijing in January 2015, it is 9 in (22.8 cm) h × 10 in (25.4 cm) w. Use of a chicken as a potent animal to ward off evil spirits is mentioned in Plover, *Chinese Religion Seen Through the Proverb*, 134.

evil at bay while they traverse these gates have also been developed, but in this case the Daoist master apparently did not use this sort of text.<sup>9</sup>

This compilation also contains other material, consisting of herbal recipes to treat a dog bite (p. 26) and a chart (p. 28) showing the sixty combinations of the ten heavenly stems and twelve earthly branches [*tiangan dizhi* 天干地支], explained in Chapter 9. This indicates that these Daoist masters were involved in more than conducting rituals dealing with the deities; they also offered medical advice and helped to identify auspicious and inauspicious days and times. These are all typical skills of those who were able to read and write well and dealt with the concerns of the common people.

It appears that originally this compilation might have been bound with a sheet of red paper. One end of it appears now (in the string-bound version I currently have, just after the front cover on page 2) with the words “Hide your tongue,” meaning “don’t speak out” [*wenkou duocangshe* 穩口躲藏舌]. The other edge of this red paper is a long piece folded to form the final page (p. 29). It reads, “Your foolish younger brother Zhou” [*yudi* Zhou 愚弟周]. The word “foolish” is a polite way to refer to oneself or one’s relatives, and it reinforces the idea that this booklet was written and owned by a member of the Zhou family.

At least two seals appear either on the cover and on various pages of the text above. They were seals bearing an incantation or a magical character (as on pp. 4 and 10), or the name seals of people who owned a copy of the text or who were involved in the writing of portions of it. The two name seals on the cover are for Zhan Jialiang 詹佳良 and Yang Yifan 楊籙范. The great power and prestige of Laozi was invoked in the incantations written in this *chaoben*.

The *chaoben* shows us that even in the case of Daoism’s highest ranked and most venerated deity, some of the common people were able to interpret their relationship with the venerable Laozi as being enacted using a special chicken controlled by a Daoist master. The ritual specialist even claimed that Laozi had taken the shape of a snake. That approach seems as far from the generally accepted communication with Laozi as could be imagined, but it also shows the malleability of local culture, which was influenced by all sorts of ideas.

To return to the standard charts of Daoist deities, just below the Three Pure Ones mentioned above sit four celestial lords (sometimes called the Four Sovereigns [*Siyu* 四御]) who have the rank of emperor. They each have a broad

9 See Zhang Zhenguo 張振國, “‘Ranguan dusha ke’ de gongneng ji qi tese 禳關度煞科的功能及其特色 [The ‘Exorcist Gate to Overcome Evil’: The Function and Special Characteristics of This Text],” *Shanghai daojiao* 上海道教 [*Shanghai Daoism*], no. 4 (2013), 38–40.

responsibility to regulate the known universe and the fates of the beings who dwell there. The Emperor of the North [Beiji ziwei dadi 北極紫微大帝] presides over the stars, the sun, moon, the wind, and rain (i.e., the climate). The Emperor of the South and Long Life [Nanji changsheng dadi 南極長生大帝] controls people's happiness, misfortunes, and longevity. The Emperor of the Military Forces [Gouchen tianhuang dadi 勾陳天皇大帝] presides over the North and South Pole, as well as the military in heaven and on earth. The Empress of the Earth [Houtu huangdi zhi 后土皇帝祇] presides over the mountains and the rivers and the birth of all creatures on earth.

### The Jade Emperor

At about this level of ranking is the Jade emperor. He is sometimes included as among the Four Sovereigns, but in most celestial organizational charts he is given a special place above the sovereigns because he is considered the great executive director or chief administrator of all the deities.<sup>10</sup> In particular, he commands and supervises the deities who rank below him, which includes hundreds of supernatural beings. Because of this great power, the common people often approach the Jade emperor when they decide to “go to the top” in making their request for assistance. Often in popular ceremonies, when other deities are invited to descend to an altar to receive the prostrations and entreaties of the common people, the Jade emperor is also invited and is the highest-ranking deity present.<sup>11</sup>

10 The “Chart of All the Daoist Deities,” mentioned above, has the Jade emperor holding a special place flanked by the Four Sovereigns. A source listing him as one of the Four Sovereigns is Li Dianyan 李殿元, *Tianshen diqi: Daojiao zhushen chuanshuo* 天神地祇: 道教諸神傳說 [*Heavenly Deities, Earthly Gods: Legends of Daoist Gods*] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2012), 25–27. When one of the four, he is flanked by the Supreme Emperor [Taihuang 太皇], who is Emperor of the North [Ziwei beiji dadi 紫微北極大帝]; the Heavenly Emperor [Tianhuang 天皇], who is Emperor of the Military Forces [Gouchen tianhuang dadi 勾陳天皇大帝]; and the Earthly emperor/empress [Tuhuang 土皇], who is Great Empress of the Earth [Houtuhuan diqi 后土皇地祇] and is often portrayed as a female. When the Jade emperor is given his own special ranking, he is replaced as one of the Four Sovereigns by Great Emperor of the South and Long Life [Nanji Changsheng dadi 南極長生大帝], as seen in the “Chart of All the Daoist Deities” and the rankings of deities at Baiyunguan in Beijing.

11 Among many people in China today, the Jade emperor is considered the highest Daoist deity, and they strongly assert that this is the case. Although the standard hierarchy of deities used by the Complete Perfection [Quanzhen 全真] school has the Three Pure

Among the common people, he was colloquially referred to as the Grandfather of Heaven [Laotianye]. Perhaps this is because the Jade emperor holds such an important position in Daoist rituals. For many of the common people of China who paid less attention to the official theological ranking and more attention to the deities that everyone said were most effective in granting requests, the Jade emperor was at the very top of the supernatural pantheon. He was the one they preferred to honor.<sup>12</sup> He is venerated in every major ceremony of the general liturgy and a number of texts have been written for worshiping the Jade emperor. Because of the power of this deity, it was considered that a good way to gain blessings from the Jade emperor was to hand-write one of the texts dedicated to him. I bought a copy of what is considered his principal text, the **Collected Scripture of the Deeds of the Jade Emperor** [*Gaoshang Yuhuang benxingjijing* 高上玉皇本行集經], with an additional text of about six pages titled **Scripture of Repentance** [*Chanhuijing* 懺悔經]. The entire copied version is in three twine-bound volumes on bleached handmade paper and was written in practiced and attractive though not elegant calligraphy. On the cover page of each volume, the location of copying is given as the Hall of Profound Virtue [Houdetang 厚德堂]. The total of 124 leaves was lovingly written by Gu

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Ones at the very top, a major Zhengyi temple in Shanghai, the Hall of Receiving Grace [Qinciyangdian 欽賜仰殿] has the Jade emperor in its innermost and therefore most important building. But I recall seeing him also seated in one of the inner halls as one of the Four Sovereigns. The temple is dedicated to the Emperor of the Eastern Peak [Dongyue dadi 東嶽大帝], who presides over purgatory, and it is common these days for people to hold a ceremony asking the powerful Jade emperor to help the soul of their departed loved ones to be released from Hell (since the Jade emperor outranks the Emperor of the Eastern Peak), in a ceremony known as “crossing over” [*chaodu* 超度], in which the souls cross the bridge out of Hell to be reborn or to enter Paradise. See Ding et al., *Yinciyangdian yu Dongyue dadi xinyang*. For a description of the crossing-over ceremony, see Duan Ming 段明, “Chaodu wanghun de guoqiao jisi yishi 超度亡魂的過橋祭祀儀式 [Ceremony of the Soul Crossing Over],” *Minsu quyi* 民俗曲藝 [*Popular Arts*], no. 118 (March 1999). This issue is devoted to ethnographic field reports of popular Daoist religious ceremonies observed in China and Taiwan in the 1990s concerning belief in the soul [*hunpo xinyang* 魂魄信仰], with photos of many of the ceremonies in progress.

- 12 For mention of the common assertion that the Jade emperor was the supreme Daoist deity, see Li, *Tianshen diqi*, 28. In December 2014 a Chinese scholar with whom I was discussing the place of the Jade emperor in the hierarchy of Daoist gods also expressed her belief that the Jade emperor was at the very top, because that is what she grew up believing. This idea is reinforced in the illustrations in Zhang Xianchang 張憲昌 and Zhang Moxue 張默雪, *Zhongguo minsu baitu* 中國民俗百圖 [*An Album of Chinese New Year Paintings*] (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2009). The folk art illustrated on pp. 2–7 all shows the Jade emperor as the supreme deity.

Yitang 顧義堂 (which may have been his “religious” or “ordination name”) in the spring of 1879. The cover of each volume is stamped with a large seal reading “The Three Treasures of the Dao, the Scriptures, Our Teachers” [*Dao, jing, shi, bao* 道經師寶]. These three volumes are each titled “Number Seven,” so were presumably part of a larger collection.<sup>13</sup>

When religious scriptures were transcribed in order to gain merit, the copyist would try to follow the printed text and not make changes. Unlike the typical *chaoben* discussed in this book that were used as reference material by a person acting as a fortuneteller or a legal advisor or a writer of New Year’s couplets, for example, the copied religious texts were not treated as reference notebooks. Instead, they follow the standard content that, by the time of the late Qing, was already available in printed editions in woodblock, lithograph, or movable type. Faithfully copying the standard text without mistakes would have been done in order to gain full merit in heaven for the act. The manuscript version I have is a faithful copy of a standard printed version that I bought at the White Cloud Monastery in Beijing in 2010.<sup>14</sup>

Another *chaoben* in my collection addressed to the Jade emperor is the **Repentance in Homage to Heaven, Complete** [*Chaotian chan, quan quan* 朝天懺，全券]. The full title, written on the first and final inside pages is “Correct Way, Thirty-Eight Apologies of Repentance in Homage to Heaven” [*Zhengyi chaotian sanba xiezui fachen* 正一朝天三八謝罪法懺].<sup>15</sup> The phrase “correct way” or “orthodox unity” [*zhengyi*] might refer to the Zhengyi school of Daoism, which today is more popular in South China. It is a school that in general does not form religious communities but allows its masters to travel about singly or in small groups, visiting temples and conducting ceremonies either in the temples or in the homes of individual families. The PRC government discourages

13 **Collected Scripture of the Deeds of the Jade Emperor** [*Gaoshang Yuhuang benxing jijing* 高上玉皇本行集經] is 9½ in (24.13 cm) h × 5 in (12.7 cm) w. Vol. 1 [*shang* 上] has forty-five leaves; vol. 2 [*zhong* 中] has thirty-eight leaves; vol. 3 [*xia* 下] has forty-one leaves. I bought this in June 2012 in Shanghai. The Jade emperor as a high deity regularly approached by the common people is also mentioned in Chapter 7.

14 Many Daoist temples in the PRC have obtained lithograph versions of the sacred texts, which are simply reprinted on inexpensive paper and sold in the temple bookshops. In many cases, all publishing identification has been omitted. We can expect that more attractive and expensive copies of these texts will gradually appear for sale.

15 This is a standard Daoist text. My copy faithfully follows a printed version of the text. See: <http://www.daosims.org/article/sort026/info-3847.html>, accessed November 25, 2014. I am not clear on the exact meaning of the phrase *san ba* 三八, which was not evident from reading the text, because both three and eight can have many symbolic meanings.

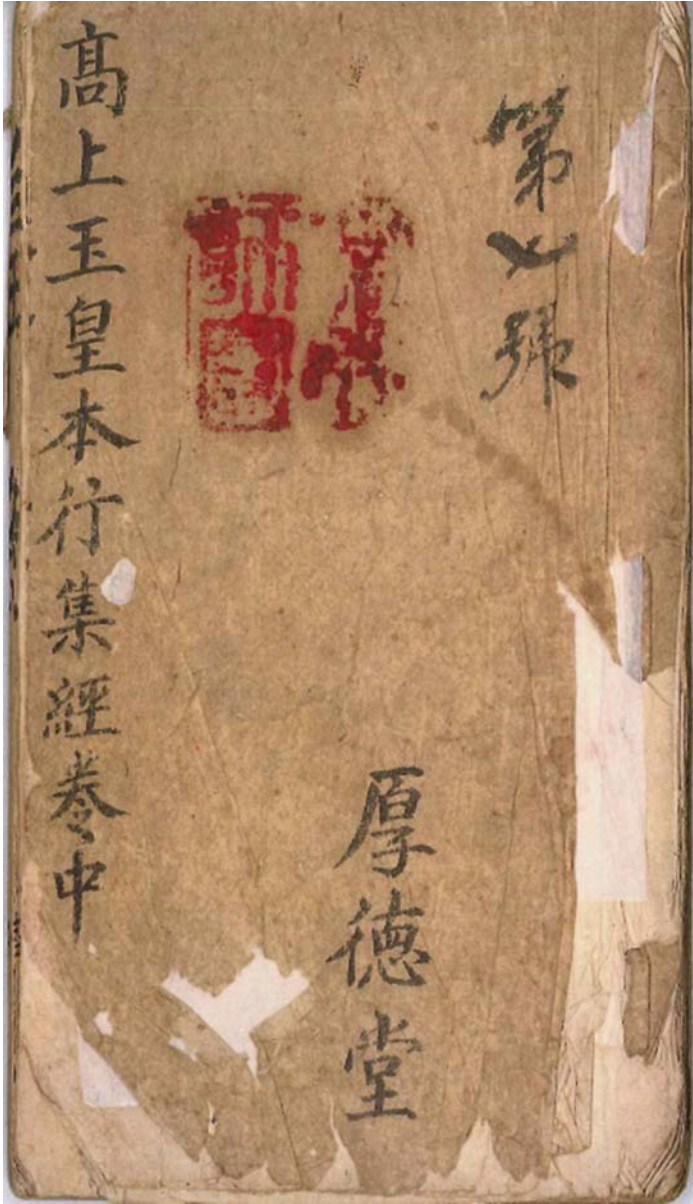


FIGURE 8.2

*Collected Scripture of the Deeds of the Jade Emperor* [Gaoshang yuhuang benxing jijing 高上玉皇本行集經], *Cover of the Middle Volume*. This was prepared in 1879 at the Hall of Profound Virtue [Houdetang 厚德堂]. It was lovingly copied by Gu Yitang 顧義堂, which may have been a “religious” or “ordination name.” Many woodblock print versions of this title circulated, from which Mr. Gu produced his copy.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

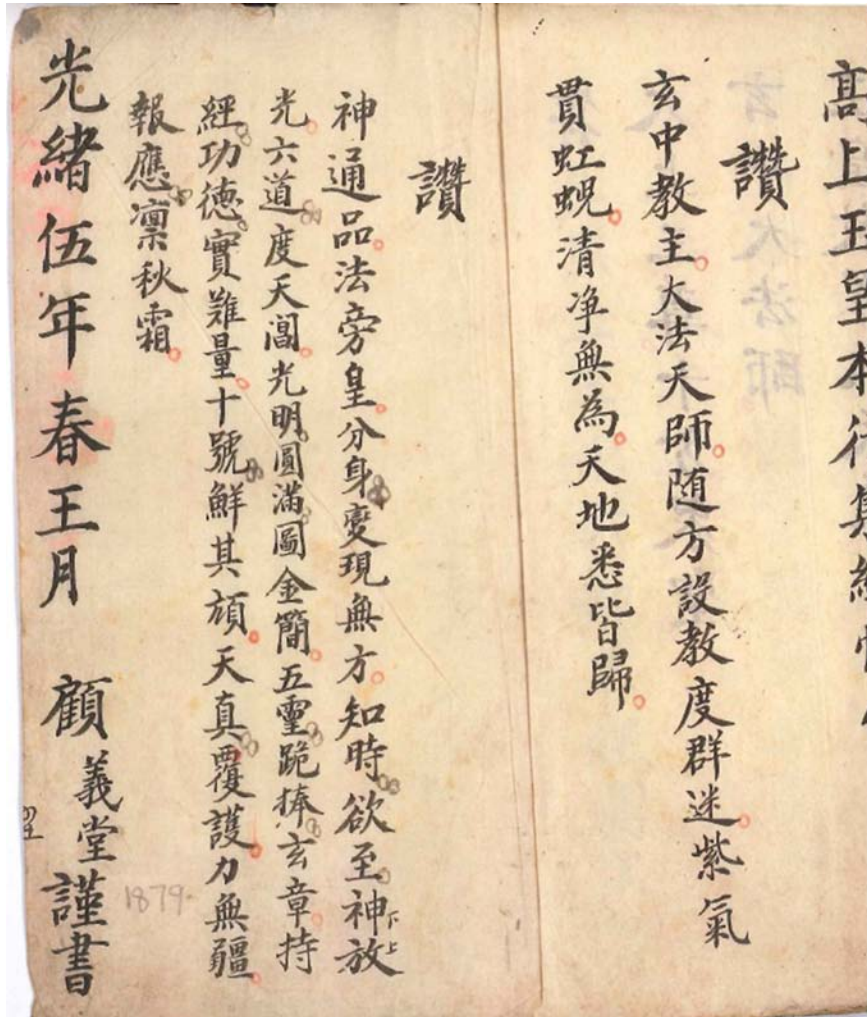


FIGURE 8.3  
 Collected Scripture of the Deeds of the Jade Emperor [Gaoshang yuhuang benxing jijing 高上玉皇本行集經], Final Two Pages of the Middle Volume. This shows that the text was copied in 1879.  
 PHOTO BY AUTHOR



FIGURE 8.4

*Repentance in Homage to Heaven, Complete* [Chaotian chan, quan quan 朝天懺，全卷], Cover. It was copied in the Hall of Heaven's Emolument [Tianlutang 天祿堂]. The full title of the text, written on the first and final inside pages, reads: "Correct Way, Thirty-Eight Apologies of Repentance in Homage to Heaven" [Zhengyi, chaotian sanba xiezui fachen 正一朝天三八謝罪法懺]. The same Daoist and Buddhist works regularly circulated under several different titles. Copies were supposed to be exact duplicates of the original printed work, but often were not.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

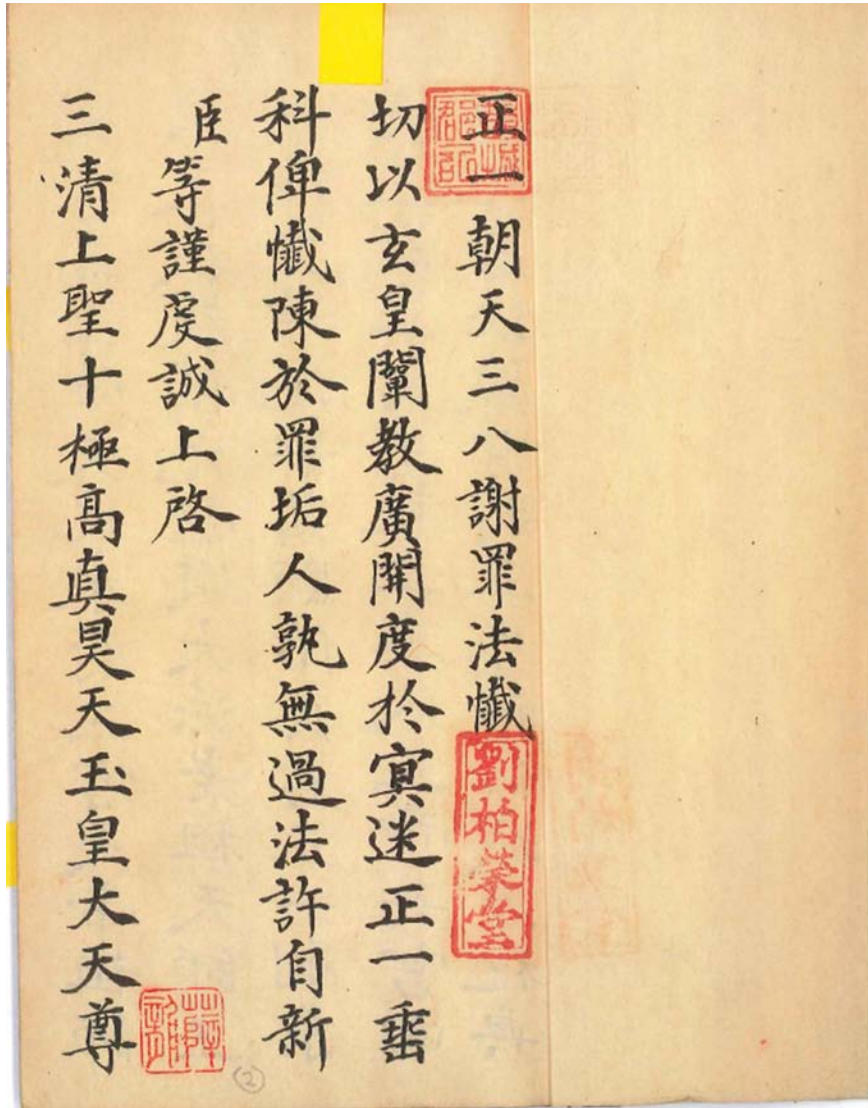


FIGURE 8.5

*Repentance in Homage to Heaven, Complete* [Chaotian chan, quan quan 朝天懺，全券], Page 2, Details of the Text. This sixty-three-page booklet appears to have been written by Liu Borong in his study [Liu Borong tang 劉柏榮堂]. He put his seal and some instructions at the end of each incantation addressed to the Jade emperor.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR (WHOSE SEAL IS AT THE BOTTOM: XUE LONG 薛龍)

the performance of Daoist rituals in private homes.<sup>16</sup> This is possibly a Republican-era text written on machine-made paper.<sup>17</sup>

This string-bound volume of sixty-three pages was copied in the Hall of Heaven's Record [Tianlu tang 天綠堂]. It appears to have been written by Liu Borong in his study. He must have been a ritual master, as shown because he placed his seal and some instructions at the end of each incantation addressed to the Jade emperor. For example, on ten occasions in the text when he wrote one of the elaborate titles to address the Jade emperor "Jade Sovereign, Great Celestial Worthy, Exalted Emperor in Mysterious Eminence" [Yuhuang datianzun, xuanqiong gaoshangdadi 玉皇大天尊玄穹高上大帝], in each case he added the phrase "In the following, after each sentence say the sacred title of the celestial worthy one time" [yixia meiju chenghe tianzun shenghao yibai 以下每句稱和天尊聖號一拜]. He then placed his honorary [hao 號] seal over the instructions. The seal reads "At the Drum Wall Prefecture Gate" [Guchengjun men 鼓城郡門]. Doing so reinforces the idea that he was acting as the ritual master leading the worship or as the master who was an instructor for those using the text.

I bought this *chaoben* in Beijing in 2009, but was told by the person selling the book that he originally acquired it in Hengyang 衡陽, Hunan Province. This person was from Hengyang and had come to the Panjiayuan Market in Beijing with a few boxes of Daoist religious texts from there.<sup>18</sup>

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- 16 On the government discouraging Daoist rituals in private homes, see Adeline Herrou, *A World of Their Own: Daoist Monks & Their Community in Contemporary China* (St. Petersburg, FL: Three Pines Press, 2013), 92. Local authorities in China sometimes turn a blind eye to some activities in order to reach compromises with local religious practitioners. See Adam Yuet Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 224.
- 17 **Repentance in Homage to Heaven, Complete** [*Chaotian chan, quan quan* 朝天懺·全券] was purchased in Beijing in March 2009 but is originally from Hengyang, Hunan. It has sixty-three pages and is 10½ in (26.67 cm) h × 5¾ in (14.6 cm) w.
- 18 In my collection is a recently printed text titled **Exalted Jade Emperor Precious Repentances for Forgiveness of Sins** [*Gaoshang Yuhuang youzui baochan* 高上玉皇宥罪寶懺], that I bought at the White Cloud Monastery in Beijing in 2005. This is a liturgical text developed for worship of the Jade emperor. I compared it with the handwritten text **Repentance in Homage to Heaven, Complete** [*Chaotian chan, quan quan* 朝天懺·全券] to see if the printed text followed the handwritten text. I found that only a short portion of my handwritten text followed the material in the printed text: "Supreme Flourishing One in the Highest Heaven, beyond the subtle and mysterious true border, where there is the distant purple gold watchtower (Golden Portal) of the Supreme and Pure Palace. Supreme Holy One without Limit, in the vastness issuing light, silently without doctrine,

Beneath the Jade emperor sit the Five Lords [*dijun* 帝君], who were labeled with one of the five colors: yellow [*huang* 黃], green [*qing* 青], red [*chi* 赤], white [*bai* 白], or black [*bei* 黑]. This ranking, of course, represents the five directions—center, east, south, west, north—which testifies to their wide areas of influence. Like the Three Pure Ones at the very top, they sit calmly in the heavens with their broad powers. They maintain the somewhat impersonal aura of power holders at a great remove from the common people on earth. In Korean shaman rituals, these deities of the five directions, perhaps personified as the somewhat-lower-ranking Five Generals [*Obang janggūn* 오방장군/五方將軍] are frequently invoked.<sup>19</sup> In China, one can find representations of the Five Lords in temples, but they are much less likely to be approached for assistance by a supplicant. For most Chinese, they are pervasive and impassive deities.

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spreading to all corners of the universe, the pattern of the True and Everlasting Dao” [*Tai-shang miluo wushang tian, miaoyou xuanzhenjing. Miao miao zijingue, taiwei yuqinggong. Wuji wushangsheng, kuoluo faguangming, jiji haowuzong, xuanfan zongshifang, zhanji zhenchangdao* 太上彌羅無上天，妙有玄真境。渺渺紫金闕，太微玉清宮。無極無上聖，廓落發光明，寂寂浩無宗，玄范總十方，湛寂真常道]. In the printed text, see pp. 37 and 38; in the handwritten text, see pp. 53 and 54. This appears to be a standard phrase of glorification, which does not necessarily have a direct relation to the textual material.

- 19 Alan Carter Covell, *Folk Art and Magic: Shamanism in Korea* (Seoul: Hollym International, 1993), 93–97. In Korea, “the lesser Five Direction Forces abide in every room, storeroom, and stock pen within the walls, and in at least one city home, in the dog house.” See Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1985), 114. A number of Chinese Daoist deities, such as the Jade emperor and the Seven Stars [Qixing 七星], make appearances in Korean shamanic ceremonies, along with the Five Direction Forces [Generals of the Five Directions; in Chinese, *Wufang jiangjun* 五方將軍], but the Koreans treat them more as “comrades,” and they do not regard the Generals of the Five Directions with much more formality; they may be different entities than the Five Lords mentioned in my text above. Ideas on Korean shaman ritual behavior are in Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Nostalgias, and the IMF: South Korean Popular Religion in Motion* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009). Kendall refers to them as the Spirit Warriors of the Five Directions [*Obang sinjang* 五方神將], in *God Pictures in Korean Contexts: The Ownership and Meaning of Shaman Paintings*, ed. Laurel Kendall et al. (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2015).

### Middle-Ranked Spirits: The Three Officials

Just below this level of the most august deities are the deities who have interactions with human beings on a regular basis. These deities seem to be more active in exercising their influence over the lives of others. They should be routinely honored by humans because their beneficence can be directed at particular individuals. Well known among deities at this level is the Star Goddess [Doumu 斗姆], who presides over the star constellations in the heavens. Because a person's fate is influenced by the star under which he or she was born, individuals should honor their star, along with the Star Goddess who regulates the movements of the constellations. She can grant posterity and chase away illness, ensure painless childbirth, and overcome sterility. She is honored at temples where people gather to pray to the stars of fate. She is said to be of Indian origin and is often portrayed with nine arms, each representing one of her powers, just as Hindu gods are visualized with many arms, each signifying one of their special powers.<sup>20</sup>

The Three Officials Great Emperors [*Sanguan dadi* 三官大帝] are deities who are approached by the common people frequently, for assistance with all sorts of difficulties. These deities, discussed in earlier chapters, are responsible for three crucial areas of human life: the Official of Heaven [Tian'guan 天官] can bestow happiness and blessings on people; the Official of Earth [Diguan 地官] can absolve people of their sins; the Official of Water [Shuiguan 水官] can remove disasters that befall people. These three are grouped together at altars. Based on the larger number of hand-copied texts addressed to them that I have found in markets in China, they seem to have been among the most frequently approached of the Daoist deities in the Qing and Republican periods. They are often present in the Daoist temples that are reopening or being reestablished in China today.

20 Chen Liansheng 陳蓮荳 et al., *Taisuishen zhuanlue* 太歲神傳略 [*Biography of the Star Goddess*] (Beijing: Zongjiaowenhua chubanshe, 2005). This deity is normally assumed to be female. The openness of Daoism toward gender issues, in the sense of accepting the idea that male and female elements exist in a mixed and complementary way, has been a factor in allowing some new "Christian" religions in China to rapidly gain a following by accepting female leadership as equally valid with male leadership. A case in point for the Forerunner Christian Church [Muzhu xianfeng jiaohui 慕主先鋒教會] is discussed in Joy K.C. Tong and Fenggang Yang, "The Femininity of Chinese Christianity: A Study of a Chinese Charismatic Church and Its Female Leadership," *Review of Religion and Chinese Society* 1, no. 2 (2014): 208–209.



FIGURE 8.6

*Agricultural Market.* This photo appears to have been taken shortly after a harvest, when local farmers were selling their wares, especially walnuts [hutaο 胡桃]. Here farmers were meeting with local merchants, all of whom were common people, with similar social and educational status, though the buyers had access to more cash than the farmers. Taiho Chiaο 太和橋 Market, Fenyang 汾陽, Shanxi 山西, 1914.

PHOTO: WILLIAM LEETE; RESTORATION AND PRINT ©2015 WILLIAM MORSE. USED BY SPECIAL PERMISSION

One of the titles used collectively for these deities, as mentioned in Chapter 7, is *Sanguan dadi*. In the popular imagination, for hundreds of years they have been conflated with the Three Primes [*Sanyuan* 三元] who rule over various four-month periods of the lunar calendar. The Three Officials are said to maintain a register of the acts of humans, and some believe they can pass judgment on the souls who die. But they can also distribute blessings and absolve transgressions, which is why they are so regularly approached in Daoist temples. They are not afraid to maintain contact with the underground Hell, known as Fengdu 豐都. This is thought of by the Chinese as an underground purgatory where the deceased who were virtuous in life are sent to be reborn in the living world, while sinners are sent to one of the underground torture hells (called “earth prisons” [*diyu* 地獄]). Thus as we descend along the celestial hierarchy, they are among the first deities and were once seen as interacting with

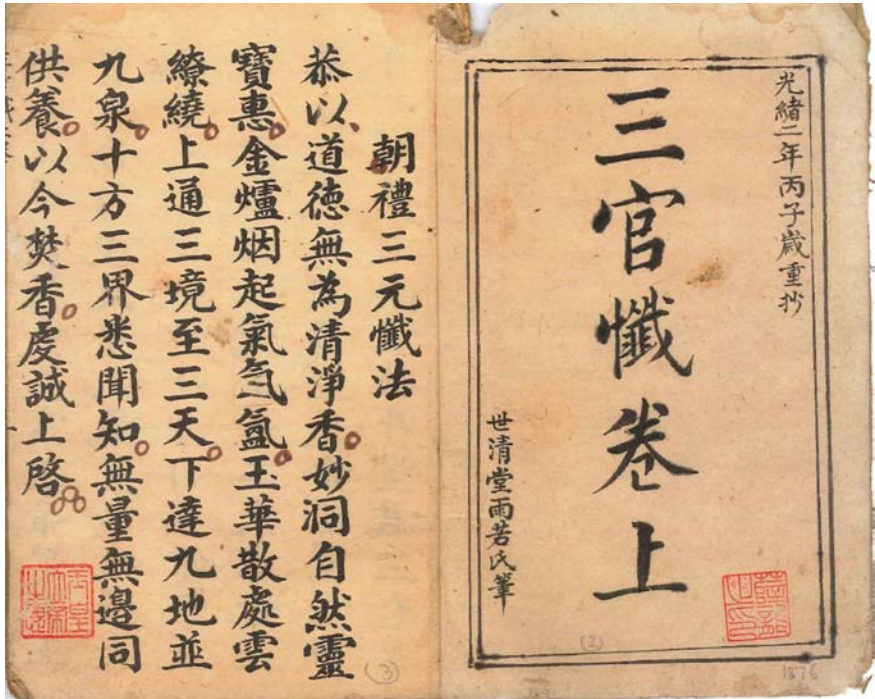


FIGURE 8.7

*Repentances to the Three Officials* [Sanguan chan 三官懺], Pages 2 and 3, Showing Dates. This is the inside cover of volume 1 of a religious text hand-copied in September 1876. The title as given on the inside pages is “Ceremony of Repentances to the Three Primes” [Chaoli Sanyuan chanfa 朝禮三元懺法]. The copyist identifies himself as Mr. Yurou [Yuruo shi 雨若氏] of the Clear World Pavilion [Shiqingtang 世清堂]. People who copied religious texts often included the name of where they did the writing, their name, and the date of their effort.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

the ghosts and malevolent supernatural beings of the netherworld regularly. In earlier times, some believed that they used torture to conduct inquisitions of people who had probably committed sins, but their overly stern approach to humans takes second place these days to the positive ways in which they assist living beings. They are popularly seen more as gods than as ghosts.<sup>21</sup>

Below is an examination of several *chaoben* I bought that deal with the Three Officials. Because of the similarity in their titles, for this discussion I label them A, B, C, and D.

21 See Terry Kleeman, “Three Officers,” in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Pregadio, 2: 833–834.

*Text A*

The text of **Repentances to the Three Officials** [*Sanguan chan* 三官懺] comprised three string-bound volumes hand-copied in September 1876. The copyist identified himself by his given name as Mr. Yuruo [Yuruo *shi* 雨若氏] of the Clear World Pavilion [Shi qing tang 世清堂]. The text contains a number of written talisman characters, yet I am inclined to see the copyist as a layperson because of his use of “mister” [*shi* 氏] following his name. In practice, Daoist masters were sometimes addressed as “mister” [*xiansheng* 先生; perhaps in such cases, a good translation of the phrase would be “master”]. Because on his title pages and a few text pages he used layout formats similar to those found in woodblock printed editions, Yuruo seemed to be copying from a printed text. For example, drawing a border around edge of the title page, placing the copy date in the upper-right-hand corner, and the title of his studio in the lower-left-hand corner were all conventions of woodblock print books. He also wrote the title of the work in the fold of the outer pages, the area called the “fishtail,” another convention of woodblock prints.<sup>22</sup>

In Volume 1, on page 34, Yuruo explained why he had copied this text. After giving the date of the copy he wrote:

The words I have written in this volume were all as told by the Most High Lord of the Dao [Taishang daojun 太上道君], who is Laozi, directly to the Universal Lord of Primordial Being, to offer forgiveness, asking the deity to descend, and it was intended as an offering. My name [the copyist's name?] is different, but it is my ordination [Daoist] name.<sup>23</sup>

*Danquannei chenzi, jieshi Taishang Daojun zai Yuanshi tianzun mianqian kouqi, yu qichan, jiangsheng bichu. Chen jin fengwaizhi. Chenzi butong, shi fashi zicheng.*

22 Talisman characters are specially written words that appear to be versions of Chinese characters, but they are not standard characters. They have special powers allowing them to control the gods or repel ghosts; the words can offer protection from harm and sickness. Many of them are illustrated with brief explanations in *Fuzhou tonglingshenfa* 符咒通靈神法 [Talisman as a Way to Contact the Spirits and Gods] (Taipei [?]: Dashan shudian, n.d. [ca. 2000s]). This work has the phrase *longtange cangban* 龍潭閣藏版 [From Blocks Held by the Dragon Pond Pavilion]. **Repentances to the Three Officials** [*Sanguan chan* 三官懺] was bought in Beijing in January 2010, but it was originally from Hengyang, Hunan. Its volumes are 8¼ in (20.96 cm) h × 5¼ in (13.33 cm) w. Vol. 1 has thirty-five pages; vol. 2 has twenty-two pages; vol. 3 has twenty pages.

23 This last phrase is confusing and could also be translated as “If my words are different [not correct?] they were [intended to conform to] the words as spoken by the deity.”

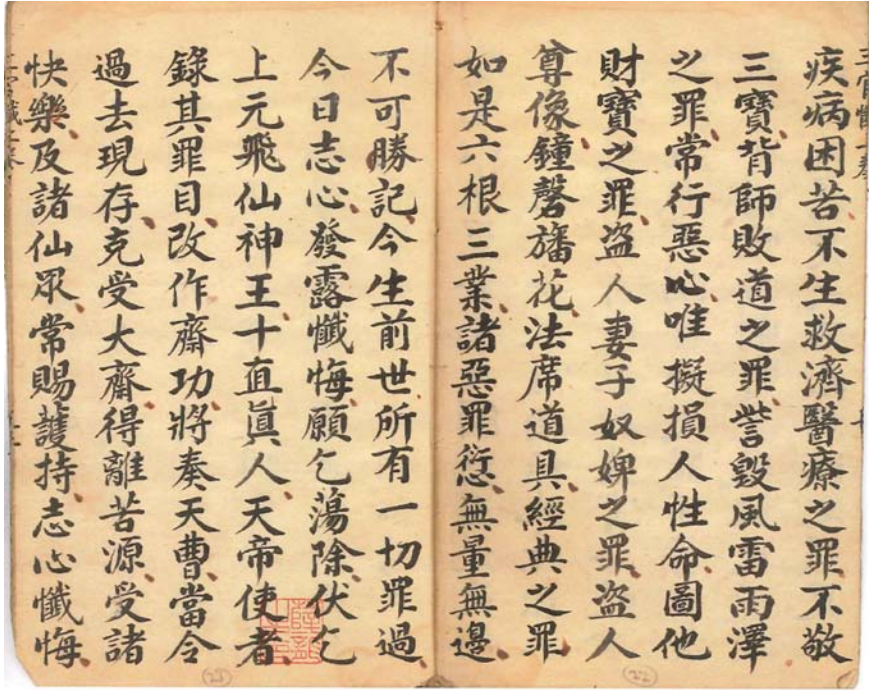


FIGURE 8.8

*Repentances to the Three Officials* [Sanguan chan 三官懺], Pages 22 and 23 of Volume 1, Listing One's Sins. Perhaps speaking of his own transgressions, the copyist wrote (second vertical line from the right-hand side, beginning with the ninth character) of some specific sins: "The sin of reviling nature, the wind, thunder rain, and marsh lands; Harboring an evil heart that destroys people's spirit" [Zihui fenglei yuze zhi zui, changxing exin, weini sunren xingming 訾毀風雷雨澤之罪，常行惡心唯擬損人性命].

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但券內，臣字皆是太上道君在元始天尊面前口氣，於起懺降聖畢處。臣字不同，是法事自稱。

In other words, Laozi said this to the Universal Lord of Primordial Being. In the ranking of the Three Pure Ones, Lord no. 1 was told this by Lord no. 3. The Most High Lord of the Dao is known to have revealed sacred scriptures, and Laozi has a special position in Daoism as transmitting those teachings to human beings. This transmission was given above by Yurou and is indicated in the full title of the work on the inside pages: **Repentances to the Three Officials as Taught by the Universal Lord of Primordial Being** [*Yuanshi tianzun shuo Sanguan zuifa* 元始天尊說三官罪法].



FIGURE 8.9

*The Three Pure Ones* [Sanqing 三清]. The middle figure is the Universal Lord of Primordial Being [Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊], who created heaven and earth. To his left (our right) is the Universal Lord of the Numinous Treasure [Lingbao tianzun 灵宝天尊], who divides time into eras. On his far right (our left) is the Universal Lord of the Way and Its Virtue [Daode tianzun 道德天尊], or Laozi, popularly called the Most Ancient Noble [Taishang laojun 太上老君], who came to earth in the form of a man to teach the Dao.

WEB PHOTO

Yuruo was determined to carry out his vows to better himself, which is probably the reason he was copying this text in the first place: to gain merit after having reformed himself. His was a very concrete plan to get back into the good graces of the deities. In the text he copied, when he wrote of some specific sins Yuruo may have been speaking of his own transgressions:

The sin of reviling nature, the wind, thunder rain, and marsh lands; Harboring an evil heart that destroys people's spirit; The sin of striving for wealth and treasures; The sin of taking someone's wife forcefully; The sin of worshipping idols, of glorying in lavish decorations, of mistreating the holy books and Daoist objects. ... On this day I resolve to seek understanding and repentance, to be humble and to seek forgiveness. I resolve to repent, to respect all human beings [red circles are used here for emphasis]. I resolve to honor the rituals.



FIGURE 8.10

*Jade Emperor [Yuhuang dadi 玉皇大帝]. He is considered the great executive director or chief administrator of all the deities; he commands and supervises the deities who rank below him, which includes hundreds of supernatural beings. The Jade Emperor is often invited to popular ceremonies, where he descends to an altar to receive the prostrations and entreaties of the common people, and where he is the highest-ranking deity present. Among the common people, he is colloquially referred to as the Grandfather of Heaven [Laotianye 老天爺].*

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*Zihui fenglei yuze zhi zui, changxing exin, weini sunren xingming, tuta caibao zhi zui, dao ren qizi nubi zhi zui, ren zun xiangjing qingfan hua xi daoju jingdian zhi zui ... jinri zhixin falu chanhui yuanqi dangchu fu xi zhixin chanhui rengo gongjing.* [red circles here] *Zhixin chaoli.*

訾毀風雷雨澤之罪，常行惡心唯擬損人性命，圖他財寶之罪，盜人妻子奴婢之罪，人尊像鏡磬旛花x席道具經典之罪。。。今日志心，發露懺悔，願乞，蕩除x伏乞。志心懺悔人各恭敬。[red circles here.] 志心朝禮。(1: 22–23)

### Text B

A volume titled **Repentances to the Supreme Three Primes to Forgive Sins** [*Taishang sanyuan youzui fachen* 太上三元宥罪法懺] is another Daoist religious text supplied in Beijing by my friends from Hengyang, Hunan. There is no date in the handwritten string-bound volume of forty-seven pages. The unbleached handmade paper suggests a late Qing date.<sup>24</sup>

This text was copied in the Hall of Auspiciousness [Rui tang 瑞堂] by Qin Yicheng 秦一誠, who was seeking the Dao but had not yet found it. We know this because in his signature at the end of volume 2 [*quan zhong* 券中] on page 30, he described himself as “Least of the Dao” [*modao* 末道, which could also be translated as “Not yet having achieved the Dao”], and on page 47, where he signed his name again at the end of the three volumes, he describes himself as having “superficial learning” [*qianxue* 淺學].

It is clear to see in this text how the Three Primes [*Sanyuan* 三元] were conflated with the Three Officials [*Sanguan* 三官], a point mentioned in Chapter 7. For example, at the beginning of volume 2 on page 18, the title beginning with “Supreme Three Primes” [*Taishang Sanyuan* 太上三元] is shortly followed by the phrase “Middle Prime Official of the Earth, with your hundred officials” [*Zhongyuan diguan, zhulu baisi* 中元地官, 主錄百司]. The term “middle official” [*zhongguan* 中官] is the Official of the Earth.<sup>25</sup>

24 The text of **Repentances to the Supreme Three Primes to Forgive Sins** [*Taishang sanyuan youzui fachen* 太上三元宥罪法懺] is 9¾ in (24.76 cm) h × 8¼ in (20.95 cm) w and was purchased in Beijing in March 2009. The three volumes have a total of forty-seven pages. This title was discussed in Chapter 7. On the inside pages is the title *Taishang sanyuan miezui miaochan* 太上三元滅罪妙懺. The word *miao* 妙 can be translated as “mysterious.” It is a word often used in reference to spiritual matters.

25 The mixing up of the Three Officials with the Three Primes is also discussed and documented in note 32 in Chapter 7.

*Text c*

In 2008 in Beijing I bought a hand-copied religious text called **Chants of Repentances to the Three Primes** [*Sanyuan fachen* 三元法懺]. It is a string-bound text of fifty-one pages copied in February 1909 by Wang Shuxiang 王恕鄉, who felt that he had low social status and thus asked readers [p. 49]: “don’t look at my unsightly writing and snicker” [*chou wu xiao* 醜勿笑].<sup>26</sup> Master Wang had the Daoist religious name of Wang Observing the Dao (or Wang Protecting the Dao) [Wang Shoudao 王守道], which he wrote at the end on page 51. But he also had another name, Wang Who Has Achieved [Wang Youda 王有達], which he stamped in black ink on various pages. The stamp reads “Recorded by Wang Youda” [Wang Youda *ji* 王有達記]. Clearly he was proud to claim ownership of having produced this copy.

The text consists of ritual repentances [*fa chan* 法懺] for sins committed and is addressed to each of the Three Officials and refers to both as the Three Primes and the Three Officials, as in the title discussed earlier above.

This text also lists the fears of the common people who lived in a world of many actual and perceived dangers. In one section of this text, the Middle Prime is asked for help:

Universal Lord of Primordial Being, again call on the Middle Prime the Earth Official, and on the sacred multitude, henceforth, in this world wherever there are people who are not at ease, who suffer the three calamities and the five poisons spread out, when robbers come to bully and plunder and when all is burned up and destroyed, when the people lose their source of income, when government officials and all are worried, when all the fields are barren in the thirty surrounding counties and villages, when both those living and the spirits are starving, when the kinfolk all scatter, when flesh is separated from the bone, when the dead become holy but only are ghost soldiers, when the king of demons causes troubles, then order the Middle Prime to receive these many, who have suffered with no place to live, to examine all, and to let these things pass away.

*Yuanshi tianzun, fugao Zhongyuan Diguan, jizhushengzhong, zijin yilai, tianxia rou you renming bu'an, sanzai jingqi, wudu xingxing, daozei qinling, renzao tutan, renmin shiye, yishujinghuang, saxian xiangcun, tianyuan huangmo, shengling epiao, qinqi xiangshu, gurou fenli, siwang zhisheng,*

26 This work is described in Chapters 1 and 2. **Chants of Repentance to the Three Primes** [*Sanyuan fachen* 三元法懺] is 9¼ in (25.46 cm) h × 5½ in (13.97 cm) w.

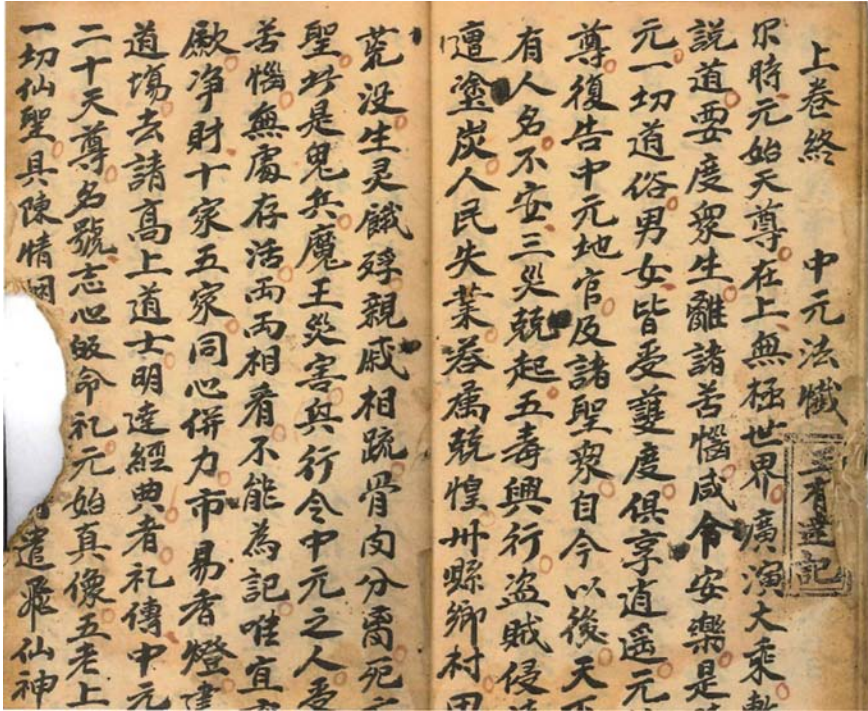


FIGURE 8.11

*Chants of Repentance to the Three Primes* [Sanyuan fa chan 三元法懺], Pages 20 and 21, *Calling on the Deity for Help*. This text was copied in February 1909 by Wang Shuxiang 王恕鄉. He wrote on page 21 (fourth line from the right of vertical text, beginning with the sixteenth character) “Universal Lord of Primordial Being” [Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊], again call on the Middle Primate the Earth Official, and on the sacred multitude, henceforth, in this world wherever there are people who are not at ease, who suffer the three calamities and the five poisons spread out, when robbers come to bully and plunder and when all is burned up and destroyed, when the people lose their source of income [Yuanshi tianzun, fugao zhongyuan diguan, jizhushengzhong, zijin yilai, tianxia ruo you renming buan, sanzai jingqi, wudu xingxing, daozei qinling, renzao tutan, renmin shiye 元始天尊，復告中元地官，及諸聖眾，自今以來，天下若有人名不安，三災競起，五毒興行，盜賊侵凌，枉遭塗炭，人民失業].

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*cishi guibing, mowang zaihai. Xingxing ling Zhongyuan zhiren, shouzhu kunao wuchu cunhuo, liangliang xiangkan, buneng weiji.*

元始天尊，復告中元地官，及諸聖眾，自今以來，天下若有人名不安，三災競起，五毒興行，盜賊侵凌，枉遭塗炭，人民失業，益屬競惶，卅縣鄉村，田園荒沒，生靈餓殍親戚相疏，骨肉分離，死亡至聖，此是鬼兵，魔王災害。興行令中元之人，受諸苦惱，無處存活，兩兩相看，不能為記。

*Text D*

Among the *chaoben* I collected related to the Three Officials is one that is quite Buddhist in its orientation. It illustrates that, in Chinese popular religion, Buddhist and Daoist ideas were conflated and integrated, so most people did not draw distinctions between their beliefs.

The book is titled **Precious Repentances to the Three Primes** [*Sanyuan baochan* 三元寶懺]. This handwritten account of seventy-five pages was rebound in heavier paper sometime in the 1950s or 1960s, and it appears the title and the name of the altar where it was held were cut from the original cover and pasted onto the newer heavier cover. In the same red paper as the title, the altar is given as Record of the Altar of the Mysterious Thunder Deity [*Xuanmiao leitan zhi* 玄妙雷壇誌]. The book is organized into three volumes, and each volume calls upon one of the Three Officials for assistance.<sup>27</sup>

But on the first page of text the title is given as “Precious Repentances to the Yoga Three Primes, Complete” [*Yujia sanyuan baochan, quanbu* 瑜伽三元寶懺全部]. Yoga is a system of linking the mind and the body through controlled meditation. It is part of Hindu, Buddhist, and Daoist religious discipline for many people, but in the popular Western imagination is probably associated mostly with Buddhism. In the text, many Buddhist deities are cited by name and called upon for help. Among these are Amida [Namo amitufo 南無阿彌陀佛],<sup>28</sup> who presides over the Western Paradise; the chubby and laughing Maitreya [Namo mile zunfo 南無彌勒尊佛],<sup>29</sup> expected to be a Buddha in the future (both are on p. 6); and the much-loved Goddess of Mercy [Namo guanshiyin pusa 南無觀世音菩薩],<sup>30</sup> who anoints all with mercy (p. 21). *Namo* 南無 comes from a Sanskrit word that can be translated as “worshipful.” *Pusa* 菩薩 comes from a Sanskrit word to indicate a divine being who has put off enlightenment in order to help sentient beings in the world achieve enlightenment; such deities are called bodhisattvas. These and numerous other Buddhist deities are called upon throughout the text.

In fact, the first Buddhist deity so addressed is the Worshipful Bodhisattva of the Fragrant Cloud Canopy [Namo xiangyungai pusa 南無香雲蓋菩薩] (p. 2). This is a god associated with medical healing. The canopy refers to its protective

27 **Precious Repentances to the Three Primes** [*Sanyuan baochan* 三元寶懺] is 9¾ in (24.76 cm) h × 5½ in (13.97 cm) w. It was originally from Hengyang 衡陽 in Hunan 湖南 but was purchased in Beijing in May 2010. The copy dates to 1863.

28 The Sanskrit name of this deity is Amitābha.

29 Maitreya is the Sanskrit for Milefo 彌勒佛, whose form is often seen on scrolls or as statues in China and Japan.

30 The Sanskrit name of this beloved deity is Avalokiteśvara.

power and is depicted in art to resemble the ritual umbrellas used to shade deities and high power holders. This deity can cure illness, forgive sins, and increase fortune.<sup>31</sup>

The first page of text sets the stage for the prayers to follow. It reads in part:

Offering incense with smoke that curls upward to the lotus cave from where the many buddhas and bodhisattvas can descend from their heavenly palace and the Luohan saints on the Cold Mountain can come to be worshipped [missing character]

*Gongxiang yanliaorau lianhuadong zhufu pusa xiatiangong qingliang-shan luohan nashou renjian gong x.*

供香煙繚繞蓮花洞諸佛菩薩下天宮清涼山羅漢納受人間供口。(p. 2)<sup>32</sup>

The Daoist Three Officials are called upon frequently in the work. One example repeated in some version in each volume of the work is

31 This is the Buddhist deity Gandharaja, also called Fragrant King Bodhisattva [Xiangwang pusa 香王菩薩]. See Sawa Ryōken 佐和陵研, *Butsuzō zūten* 佛像図典 [*Dictionary of Buddhist Statues*] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kubunkan, 1978), 96. This healing Buddha is also known as a manifestation of Guanyin, called the Fragrant King Guanyin [Xiangwang Guanyin 香王觀音]. The word “fragrance” [*xiang* 香] refers to flowers and herbs used to make medicine. The sutra mentioning this deity is the *Xiangwang pusa tuoluoni zhoujing* 香王菩薩陀羅尼呪經 [Sutra of Appealing to the Fragrant King Bodhisattva], [http://www.suttaworld.org/collection\\_of\\_buddhist/chiarnlurng\\_tripitaka/42-48\\_372-537/501.htm](http://www.suttaworld.org/collection_of_buddhist/chiarnlurng_tripitaka/42-48_372-537/501.htm), accessed December 7, 2014. In Buddhism, medicine cures both physical illness and the ills caused by spiritual ignorance. This is alluded to in the citation: “Gandharaja’s (Fragrant King Bodhisattva’s) point is that when conducting a ceremony or evening prayers, one should first face the Buddha, lighting incense (i.e. making a fragrance) and concentrate the mind. One can then clearly understand one’s heart, as if one truly perceives the things being seen, to know that the fragrance comes from your own pure heart, and it is also from your basic nature. This is the Law made real through the incense. This incense can spread to all corners of the known universe.” See “Gandharaja’s (Fragrant King Bodhisattva’s) point is that” *Xiangyungai pusa de yiyi* 香雲蓋菩薩的意義, at *Xiangwang pusa toluo nozhoujing* 香王菩薩陀羅尼呪經 (Sutra of Appealing to the Fragrant King Bodhisattva)

[http://www.tzuchi.org.tw/community/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=3118:D6830E46C0819DFC4825771E004A8A0F&catid=164:2010-01-22-03-41-46&Itemid=197/](http://www.tzuchi.org.tw/community/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3118:D6830E46C0819DFC4825771E004A8A0F&catid=164:2010-01-22-03-41-46&Itemid=197/), accessed December 14, 2014.

32 The missing character could be “offerings” [*feng* 奉], to complete the phrase “to be worshipped,” or “to receive offerings” [*gongfeng* 供奉]. The *luohan* 羅漢 are similar to Christian saints, individuals who are following a holy path and wish to help others.

Upper Prime, the Heavenly Official and Emperor who gives blessings, with your forty-two officials and many heavenly spirits and immortals, please decrease our transgressions of the past.

*Shangyuan cifu tianguan dadi sishiersi zhutianshenxian qiushuai chanhui guoqu.*

上元賜福天宮大帝四十二司諸天神仙求衰懺悔過去. (p. 5)

Although I bought this in Beijing, it is another of the religious items obtained by my friends from Hengyang, Hunan. I bought it in 2010, but this text was copied out in the autumn of 1863. It was “Respectfully given by Mr. Tian Yicheng for use on the altar” [*Jing yu Tian Yicheng xiansheng tanzhong yingyong* 敬於田一澄先生壇中應用; p. 75]. As mentioned above, the word for “mister” can also be used to address Daoist masters, so we cannot know whether Mr. Tian was a layperson or a religious specialist.

Although the structure of these four texts, such as calling on the deities for help and vowing [*zhixin* 志心] to follow the teachings of the text, and most of the imagery, such as those referring to numerous palaces [*gong* 宮] or offices [*fu* 府], are similar, only occasionally do portions of the texts seem to have been taken from the same source. None of these texts resemble a printed version, the **Precious Repentances to the Supreme Three Officials** [*Taishang sanguan baochan* 太上三官寶懺], which I bought at Baiyunguan in Beijing in 2010. This printed version should have been treated as the “standard and correct” version of the text to be copied, and it was likely available to all the writers of these *chaoben* from the late 1800s onward. But this printed text was not used as the single source for their *chaoben*, even though they were not writing original text but were copying pages from some other source.

However, two of the handwritten texts resemble each other in portions. This indicates a single source, whether hand-copied or printed is not clear, to which both writers were referring. They are Text A, **Repentances to the Three Officials**, and Text C, **Chants of Repentances to the Three Primes**. For example, in the section addressing the middle prime [*zhongyuan* 中元], they both have the wording “All males and females can achieve total redemption” [*Yiqie nannv, jie shouhudu, juheng xiaoyao* 一切男女，皆受護度，俱享逍遙; as seen in **Repentances to the Three Officials**, vol. 2, p. 3]. Text C (p. 20) has the same sentence with the simple insertion of “In accordance with Daoist practices, all males and females can achieve total redemption.” The inserted phrase is “In accordance with Daoist practices” [*Yiqie daosu* 一切道俗]. The two versions have some slight differences.

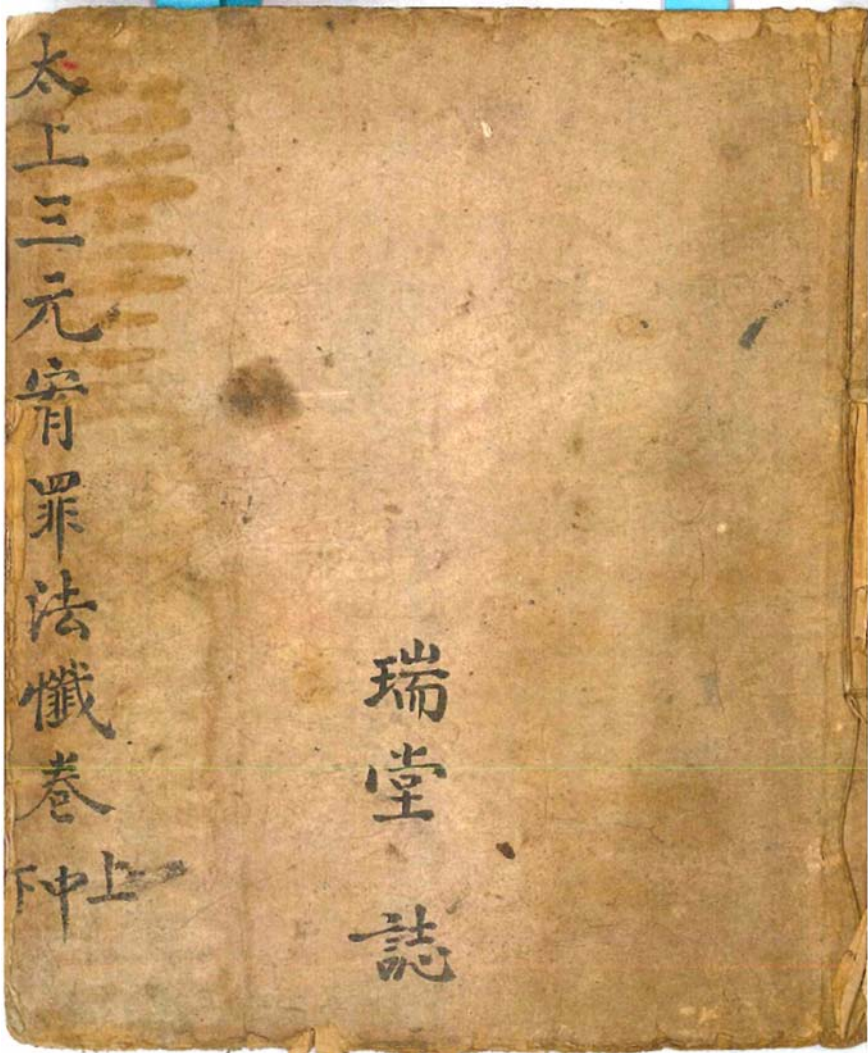


FIGURE 8.12

*Repentances to the Supreme Three Primes to Forgive Sins* [Taishang sanyuan youzui fachen 太上三元宥罪法懺], Cover. The title is also written on the inside pages as Taishang sanyuan miezui miaochan 太上三元滅罪妙懺. Each of the three volumes addresses one of the Three Officials [Sanguan 三官] and gives the text of memorials [zou 奏] that can be written to approach them, often followed by the text “after delivering this memorial, it is burned” [toubiao fenhua 投表焚化; e.g., p. 30].

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If these two works followed a printed text, which they likely should have, the difference between them would mean they were violating the idea of copying a “standard” or printed version faithfully. Possibly the copyist was reciting as he was writing, and the text as recorded became more “colloquial,” as if it were being spoken. That might account for some of the “extra” words added in places. If we accept this idea, we can conjure up a nice image of the copyist fully engaged in his work, chanting and writing at the same time. I find this a comforting and “human” image.

A further difference between the printed and the written versions is that two of the rather similar texts are focused more on one’s parents [*fumu* 父母] than on males and females [*nannv* 男女]. These two are Text B, **Repentances to the Supreme Three Primes to Forgive Sins** (p. 25), and Text D, **Precious Repentances to the Three Primes** (p. 52). Those copying these texts were perhaps most keenly interested in being filial and in gaining blessings for their parents. Perhaps they were older and past the age of constructing their marriage relationships and were more concerned with their aged parents. The copied texts were being adapted to reflect their own concerns, which in their minds must have taken precedence over slavishly copying the standard text in front of them.

In both cases, we see that the hand-copied *chaoben* were works created by the copyist as he went along. They were, in that sense, documents being brought to life, reflecting not just the material being copied but something of the perceptions of the copyist as well, perhaps his way of speaking or his ideas of how the phrase ought to be stated. They became part of the specific local culture that the *pingmin* always created. The texts show us that, even in the realm of the suprahuman deities and natural forces, the *pingmin* interpreted those phenomena with their own eyes. They were not constrained by the distant and exalted deities to transmit only received information. They were, instead, absorbing those received ideas into their more meaningful everyday world.

### Gods and Ghosts: The Netherworld

As we continue to descend the hierarchy of Daoist deities, we arrive at the altar of the Celestial Lord Who Relieves Suffering [Taiyi jiuku tianzun 太乙救苦天尊]. Here is a deity whose responsibilities are clearly designated to deal with the lives of the common people. When facing worrisome and disturbing situations, this deity is specifically ready to receive the pleadings of human beings and to assist them in overcoming their difficulties. He sits as impassively as do the

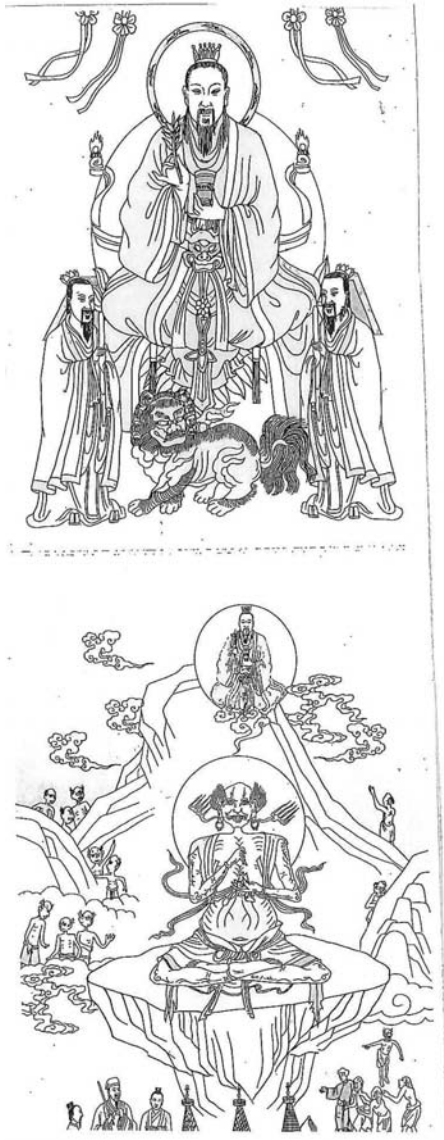


FIGURE 8.13

*Celestial Lord Who Relieves Suffering.* [Taiyi jiuku tianzun 太乙救苦天尊] is usually approached by people at funerals or when they are worried about a serious health issue. By transforming into a ghost, the Celestial Lord Who Relieves Suffering can descend to the netherworld to assist those suffering there. The top illustration shows him as a deity, the bottom after his transformation into a ghost.

ZHANG MENGXIAO 張夢逍, TUJIE DAOJIAO: JIESHI ZHONGGUOREN ZUIYINMI DE MENGXIANG 圖解道教：揭示中國人最隱秘的夢想 (DAOISM ILLUSTRATED: REVEALING THE MOST HIDDEN DREAMS OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE), XI'AN: SHAANXI SHIFAN DAXUE CHUBANSHE 陝西師範大學出版社, 2010, 139.



FIGURE 8.14

*Spirit Generals* [shenjiang 神將]. These ghosts will escort the newly dead into the netherworld. This tableau is in the Fengdu Temple [Fengdu miao 豐都廟] in Chongqing, China.

[HTTPS://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FENGDU\\_GHOST\\_CITY](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fengdu_Ghost_City). ACCESSED 20 OCTOBER 2017

other venerated deities, but he casts his eyes on the particular people who approach him for help.<sup>33</sup>

The common people of China, involved in their daily lives and struggles, interpreted their concerns and fears in very concrete terms. They were fearful of the transgressions and sins they had committed against their fellow humans and against the deities. They were apprehensive about the ultimate fate of death and dreaded the punishments they might face when their souls descended to the netherworld, which was commonly referred to as the underground prison or Hell [*diyu* 地獄]. In the popular conception, when people died, their soul or spirit [*hun* 魂]<sup>34</sup> descended to the lower world, where they

33 The printed religious text for this deity is **Precious Repentances to the Lord Who Relieves Suffering** [*Taiyi jiuku baochan* 太乙救苦寶懺], a copy of which I bought at Baiyunguan in 2012. With its many repeated words and phrases, this is clearly a text written to be chanted aloud.

34 In the popular conception, people had two or more souls. The soul left the body at death and descended into the netherworld, where it could suffer and then be reborn or sent to

would be judged by various deities. The judges would examine the record of each person, which had been compiled during the person's life on earth. Each person had to pass through ten gates, each commanded by a judge [*pan'guan* 判官] who would assign them a punishment based on the sins or transgressions they had committed. Most people knew that in the course of their lives, they had done things that they regretted. In the commonly circulated explanation, each gate had several minor hells, in which the dead, reunited with their physical body in Hell, had to undergo horrendous punishments, being tortured and mutilated. Very graphic illustrations were produced detailing the awful punishments. The punishments could last for a long time, perhaps hundreds of years.<sup>35</sup> At the end of the punishment, they proceeded to the next gate, to be assigned other punishments if they had sins in that category of punishment. At the conclusion of this period of "purgatory," those who had suffered the punishments and thus atoned for their sins would be freed from Hell and sent across a bridge in order to be reborn as a sentient being, whether an animal or a human.<sup>36</sup>

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Paradise. Another soul [*po* 魄] might stay with the body, or it might be released to wander about the earth. People feared these wandering *po* souls because if they were lonely or hungry, they could cause troubles to living human beings. This concept is explained again below in the text. Some people postulated three *po* souls, and some seven or more.

- 35 A highly illustrated study of the Ten Kings of Hell is Shen Hong 沈泓, *Shidian yanluo: Minjian shuiluhuazhong de wuqing lunhui* 十殿閻羅：民間水陸畫中的無情輪迴 [*The Ten Kings of Hell: The Merciless Rebirth Shown in Popular Illustrations*] (Beijing: Zhongguo caifu chubanshe, 2012). We have the record of a Taiwanese author named Yang Zanru 楊贊儒 (b. 1950), who paid several visits to Hell between 1976 and 1978. His account is *Diyu youji* 地獄遊記 [*Voyages to Hell*] (n.p.: Jingdian wenhua zhiban, n.d.), which I purchased in Jilin City in July 2015, most likely an unauthorized reprint of an edition published in Taiwan.
- 36 The torturers of Hell are graphically illustrated in color and black and white in Kim Man-hee 金萬熙, *Jiokdo* 地獄圖 [*Pictures of Hell*] (Seoul: Sangmisa, 1990). Graphics of the tortures of Hell were always reproduced in the *Yuli baochao* 玉曆寶鈔 [*Precious Jade Calendar*], which has been issued for decades in China. My collection includes **Illustrated Precious Jade Calendar to Save the World** *Huitu Yuli baochao quanshiwen* 繪圖玉曆寶鈔勸世文 (Shanghai: Jinzhang tushuju, 1921?), a printed edition with the illustrations on pp. 7–18. This was one of the books considered appropriate to reprint and pass out *gratis* as a way of incurring and encouraging blessings, as can be seen from the publisher's inscription on the cover page: "Shanghai Qipanjie, Jinzhang tushuju cangban, shanren yinsong, zhiqu zhiliao yinong 上海棋盤街, 錦章圖書局藏版, 善人印送, 祇取紙料印工 [This book was printed from woodblocks held by the Jinzhang Publisher on Shanghai's Qipan Road. A kind gentleman provided the book, and the paper and printing were performed by our company]." The book is 8¼ in. (20.96 cm) h × 5¾ in (14.61 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing

The punishments were administered by ghosts. Some texts in Chinese refer to these as “small ghosts” [*xiaogui* 小鬼]. When we come to the level of the common people in China in the late Qing and Republican periods, we encounter ghosts. Some ghosts were the souls of former human beings. As mentioned above, the Chinese popular imagination said a person had two souls: the *hun* was the spirit that had to undergo punishments and be cleansed; the *po* 魄 soul stayed with the physical body, even as it decayed, and stayed in the world. Thus the *po* soul of a person who had died a tragic death or who had no relatives to offer sacrifices to him after death might wander the earth as an orphan ghost [*gugui* 孤鬼], seeking revenge on living humans.<sup>37</sup>

From the level of the Celestial Lord Who Relieves Suffering on down the hierarchy, we need to accept that many ghosts exist. In fact, some of the Daoist deities at these levels can transform themselves into ghosts. This means they are both deity/spirit and ghost. These spirits can assert themselves either as deities or as ghosts. The most powerful of these deity/ghost figures is probably the Celestial Lord Who Relieves Suffering. In order to descend to the netherworld to locate a spirit whose relative has beseeched the deity for help, the Celestial Lord transforms himself into a ghost, thereby to examine the various hells and to extract the dead person who is suffering punishment. Because of this important role, traditional funerals might carry a banner in the funeral procession with the name of the Celestial Lord, to indicate he was requested to assist the souls of the recently departed. I found these banners for sale near Baiyunguan in Beijing in 2014.<sup>38</sup>

One text I bought in 2012 is titled **Supreme Morning Text for Becoming an Immortal** [*Taishang xiuzhen chenke* 太上修真晨課]. There is no date on the

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in June 2013. A more recent version, prepared in colloquial Chinese and given out free by the Qinciyangdian in 2010, is titled *Yuli baobao* 玉曆寶鈔, with the illustrations of Hell on pp. 23–29. These are popular titles intended for the common people.

- 37 Livia Kohn, *Introducing Daoism* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 128; Song, *Jietu Zhongguo daojiao shengsishu*, 120–129. This belief in multiple souls is of ancient origin in China, going back to at least the first century CE. See Jean M. James, “The Iconographic Program of the Wu Family Offering Shrines,” *Artibus Asiae*, 48, no. 1 (1988–1989): 47.
- 38 A mention of the Celestial Lord Who Relieves Suffering as a deity who changes into a ghostly form in order to enter the gates of Hell is in Song, *Jietu Zhongguo daojiao shengsishu*, 103. This source shows that the banner calling the soul back to the body can be carried at the head of the funeral procession by the eldest son. See *ibid.*, 261. The manner in which this spirit transforms from a deity into a ghost is illustrated in Zhang Mengxiao 張夢遒, *Tujie Daojiao: Jieshi Zhongguoren zuiyinmi de mengxiang* 圖解道教：揭示中國人最隱秘的夢想 [*Daoism Illustrated: Revealing the Most Hidden Dreams of the Chinese People*] (Xi’an: Shaanxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2010), 139.

forty-eight-page handwritten text, and it could as easily be from the late Qing (1890–1911) as from the mid-Republican period (1920s–1930s). I bought this in Shanghai, but someone (in the 1940s or later) wrote in ink: Kui 奎 Village, Wujin 武進 County. Today this area is called Wuzhou 武洲 district in Changzhou 常州, in Jiangsu Province. The city is in the southeast region of the province, just south of the Yangtze River on the Grand Canal in a very luxuriant region of China. Early on, it became a distribution center for agricultural products and fish. Cotton mills flourished in the 1920s. Today it is considered one of the most developed cities in Jiangsu Province and is on the main Shanghai-Beijing rail line.<sup>39</sup>

The text is meant to be chanted as part of the morning services offered by the Daoist masters. As the text begins, a deity addressed as Supreme Great Celestial Worthy [Wushang da tianzun 無上大天尊] is called upon by two formal names Great Holy Fragrant Cloud Achieving Trust Great Celestial Worthy [Dasheng xiangyun daxin da tianzun 大聖香雲達信大天尊], Ever-Pure Ever-Silent Supreme Great Celestial Worthy [Changqing changjing wushang da tianzun 常清常靜無上大天尊; p. 2]. But after some ceremonial incantations to pacify the altar and to approach the deities by “opening the scripture” [*kaijing* 開經; pp. 3–11], the prayers are directed to the Three Officials. This idea is confirmed on the final page (p. 44), where we see that the deity so named is in fact the Three Primes. We might therefore have placed this text with those mentioned above that are directed to the Three Officials. It is in this section, however, because the text goes on to earnestly call for assistance from the Three Officials, in particular from the water official, for help in escaping from the tortures of Hell.

As mentioned above, the Official of Earth can absolve people of their sins, and the Official of Water can remove disasters that have befallen or might befall people. Both of these deities are earnestly addressed in this text. One cause of anguish is the death of children, so the following text reads: “One’s child dies in the womb, or the child is born then dies. The child dies at age three, six or nine years. The child dies at age twelve or fifteen. One day and one night, there are ten thousand deaths and ten thousand births” [*Zaishen erwang, shengxia erwang. San, liu jiu sui erwang. Shi'er wu sui erwang. Yi ri yi ye, wansi wansheng* 在身兒亡, 生下兒亡. 三六九歲兒亡, 十二五歲兒亡. 一日一夜, 萬死萬生; p. 30].

39 **Supreme Morning Text for Becoming an Immortal** [*Taishang xiuzhen chenke* 太上修真晨課] is 8¾ in (22.22 cm) h × 5 in (12.7 cm) w, with forty-eight pages. I bought it in Shanghai in January 2012.

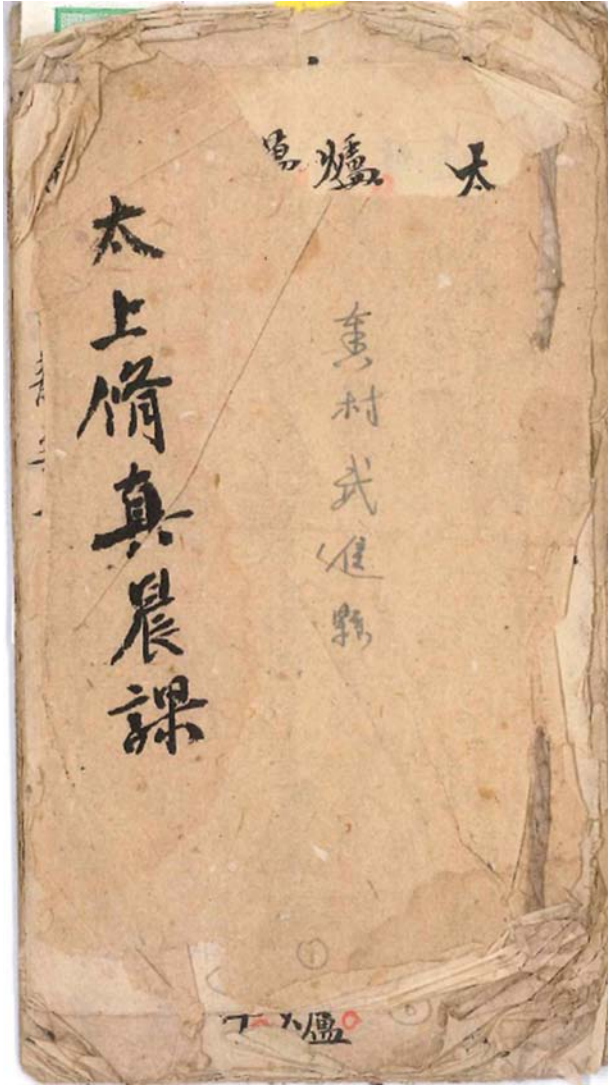


FIGURE 8.15

*Supreme Morning Text for Becoming an Immortal* [Taishang xiuzhen chenke 太上修真晨課, Cover. This is a Daoist text meant to be recited in the morning as part of the devotions that begin the day, and at places in the text are indications that a particular phrase should be spoken three times: “Ever pure, ever serene, most supreme heavenly worthy, three times” [Changqing changjing wushang datianzun, san sheng 常清常靜無上大天尊，三聲, p. 2], along with prayers to “cleanse my heart” [jingxin shenzhou 淨心神咒], “cleanse my mouth” [jingkou shenzhou 淨口神咒, both p. 3]; “cleanse my body” [jingjingshen shenzhou 淨淨身神咒, p. 4]. Also written on the cover is Kui 奎 Village, Wujin 武進 County, now called Wuzhou 武洲 District, Changzhou 常州, Jiangsu 江蘇 Province.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

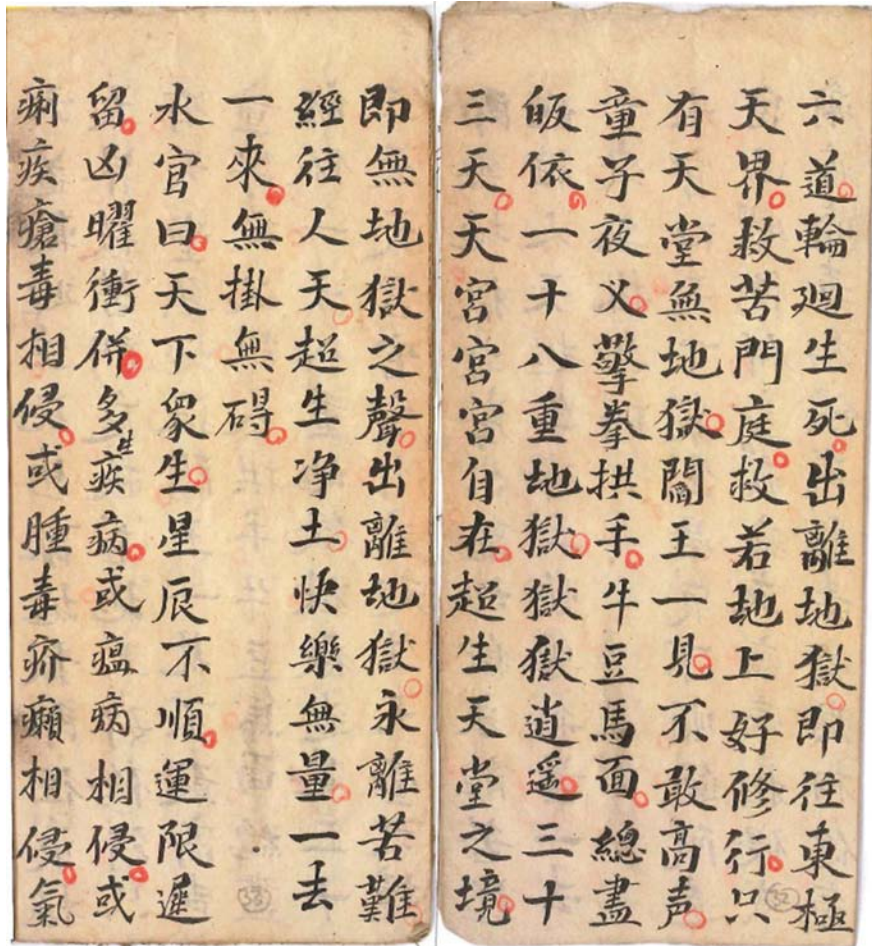


FIGURE 8.16

*Supreme Morning Text for Becoming an Immortal* [Taishang xiuzhen chenke 太上修真晨課], Pages 32 and 33, *Begging to Be Released for a Better Life*. The text on these pages asks for release from Hell. "The cycle of birth and death, take me out of the earthly prison [Hell]. Then turn me toward the Eastern Ultimate Heaven, past the gate of saving from suffering, to the place on the earth for altering my actions, where there is heaven without the earthly Hell. Where the King of Hell dare not raise his voice" [Lunhui shengsi, chuli diyu, jiwang dongji tianjie. Jiuku menting, jiuruo dishang haoxiuxing. Zhiyou tiantang wu diyu. Yanwang yijian, bugan gaosheng 輪迴生死，出離地獄，即往東極天界。救苦門庭，救若地上好修行。只有天堂無地獄。閻王一見，不敢高聲]。

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

The text goes on to ask for release from Hell.

The cycle of birth and death, take me out of the earthly prison [Hell]. Then turn me toward the Eastern Ultimate Heaven, past the gate of saving from suffering, to the place on the earth for altering my actions, where there is heaven without the earthly Hell. Where the King of Hell dare not raise his voice. Where the children of righteousness raise their hands in supplication. Where the Oxhead [*Niutou* 牛頭] and the Horse Face [*Mamian* 馬面] completely take refuge from the eighteen earthly Hells, all the Hells where they ramble in the thirty-three Heavens the heavenly palaces, all the palaces are there, beyond the boarder of being born in Heaven, where there are no sounds of Hell. Take me out of Hell, forever away from hardship, toward the human Heaven, reborn in the Pure Land, happiness without measure. Going and coming, without anxiety, without obstruction.

*Lunhui shengsi, chuli diyu, jiwang dongji tianjie. Jiuku menting, jiu rou dishang haoxiuxing. Zhiyou tiantang wu diyu. Yanwang yijian, bugan gao sheng. Tongzi yeyi, qinju gongshou. Niutou Mamian, zongjin fanyi, yishiba zhong diyu, yu yu xiaoyao. Sanshisantian, tiangong gonggong zizai. Chaosheng tiantang zhijing, ji wudiyu zhi sheng. Chuli diyu, yongli kunan, jingwang rentian, chaosheng jingtu, kuaile wuliang. Yiqu, yilai, wugua wu ai.*

輪迴生死，出離地獄，即往東極天界。救苦門庭，救若地上好修行。只有天堂無地獄。閻王一見，不敢高聲。童子夜義，擎舉拱手。牛頭馬面總盡皈依，一十八種地獄，獄獄逍遙。三十三天，天宮宮宮自在。超生天堂之境，即無地獄之聲。出離地獄，永離苦難，經往人天，超生淨土，快樂無量。一去一來，無掛無礙。(pp. 32–33)

The King of Hell is called Yama in Sanskrit and Yanwang 閻王 or Yanlouwang 閻羅王 in Chinese. The Oxhead ghost [*niutou gui* 牛頭鬼] and the Horse-Faced Ghost [*Mamian gui* 馬面鬼] assist the Kings of Hell [the ten judges mentioned above] by arresting people and delivering them before the hell tribunal for judgment. In this text, the character for “head” [*tou* 頭] was miswritten as “bean” [*dou* 豆], as the writer simply omitted the second portion of the character. The Pure Land [Jingtu 淨土] is the Buddhist Heaven into which those who have achieved enlightenment are reborn. After entering the Pure Land, with its everlasting ease and calm, humans are released from the cycle of birth and rebirth.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Yi, *Zhongguo shengguai dizidian*, on Yama [Yanlouwang], see pp. 610–611; on the Ox-head

Since we have descended to Hell in this narrative, I mention another *chaoben* that lets us spy the netherworld. The text is titled **Sutra of the City God, Sutra of the Dead** [*Chenghuang jing, Duwang jing* 城隍經度亡經]. It was written in attractive calligraphy, and the leaves are folded, as holy books or sutra in China with accordion-style folds often are.<sup>41</sup> A date that appears is the *wuzi* 戊子 year, which would be either 1888 or 1948. Based on the text and the paper, a date of 1888 seems reasonable. But because at some point the *chaoben* was falling apart, the pages were pasted onto machine-made notebook paper, so a date of 1948 is also possible. The text may have been written by Xia Linchang 夏林昌, whose name appears. Xia was in Quanzhou 全州, a city in Guangxi 廣西 Province about 100 miles northeast of the often-visited tourist spot, Guilin 桂林. Quanzhou was a key market city and trading center and was seen as the transportation entrance to Guangxi, linking it with Hunan 湖南 Province. This text may have been written on the unused side of pages from Mr. Xia's ledger. One item that Mr. Xia ordered (or perhaps supplied to someone else) was hard cinnabar [*genzhu* 艮硃]. This is the principal ore of mercury, sometimes called mercury sulfide, or native vermilion. The mineral resembles quartz but is a deep red color. It was used in making Chinese lacquerware and gilded religious statues. Daoist mystics tried to refine cinnabar into magical elixirs to grant immortality, and they often spoke of the cinnabar fields [*dantian* 丹田], three areas of the human body that play a role in breathing, meditation, and inner alchemy [*neidan* 內丹]. So if Mr. Xia was a supplier or customer for the mineral, it could easily have been used by a Daoist master, and in this instance it would be natural for it to be connected to this text.<sup>42</sup>

This text was most likely prepared to be read at a funeral, and all its contents are related to death and to Hell. One function of the city god was to take charge of the souls of the deceased, either by arresting them because they had

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and Horse-face ghosts, see pp. 366–367. On the Pure Land, see Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, ed., *Zongjiao cidian* 宗教詞典 [*Dictionary of Religion*] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2009), 645. In this chapter, the Pure Land is also referred to as the Western Paradise, which was another of the terms used by Buddhists.

41 The word *sutra* is from Sanskrit and is most regularly used to designate a Buddhist religious work. The term in China is *jing* 經. Some scholars translate *jing* as “scripture” or “classic.” In most cases, any of these three terms would be appropriate translations, and I use all three of them in this book.

42 **Sutra of the City God, Sutra of the Dead** [*Chenghuang jing, duwang jing* 城隍經度亡經] is folded like a typical Buddhist sutra in the “accordion fold” style, in this case with forty-three “pages.” It is 9 in (22.86 cm) h × 4¼ in (10.79 cm) w and dates from 1888 or 1948. I bought it in Beijing in May 2012.

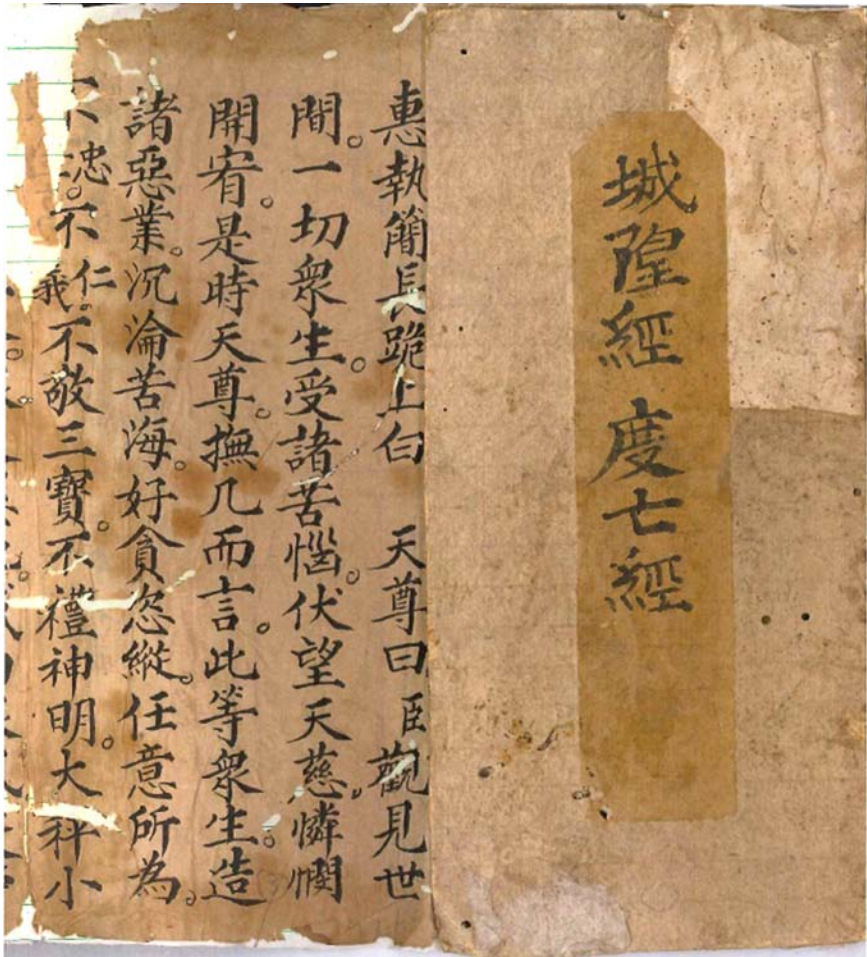


FIGURE 8.17

*Sutra of the City God, Sutra of the Dead* [Chenghuang jing, Duwang jing 城隍經度亡經], *Cover and First Page*. Sutra of the Dead inside this text is labeled the Sutra of the Six Hells [Liu yu jing 六獄經]. The city god is approached here on behalf of a woman, possibly someone's wife, who had died in childbirth with the heavy loss of blood. Unfortunately, because of common beliefs at the time, she would be plunged into the hells of blood. The city god had to arrest people who had committed transgressions and send them to the netherworld, but he could also assist and pardon the poor souls descending to Hell.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

committed transgressions or to order them to be escorted to the gate of Hell. He was assisted in this task by two jailers, the Oxhead Ghost and the Horse-Faced Ghost. The city god is approached in the **Sutra of the City God** (pp. 6–8) on behalf of a woman, possibly someone's wife, who had died in childbirth after the loss of much blood. Unfortunately, because of the beliefs of many at the time, she would be plunged into the hells of blood, which these days Americans would see as a case of "blaming the victim." The city god could also assist and pardon the poor souls descending into Hell. His scripture is on pages 2 to 17 in this text.<sup>43</sup>

The **Sutra of the Dead** of the title is inside this text labeled as the Sutra of the Six Hells [*Liu yu jing* 六獄經], on pages 17–43. This actually consists of several shorter Buddhist-inspired texts. For example, the Precious Sutra of the Correct Teaching of the Dizang King [Dizang *wang* 地藏王] about the Blood Mountain as Revealed by the Buddha [*Foshuo dazang zhengjiao xueshan miaojing* 佛說大藏正教血山妙經] begins on page 18. He is known for his great compassion; he carries a staff with tiny bells to warn away insects as he approaches, so that they will not be stepped on as he passes. He also has the power to descend to the netherworld and to break open the gates of Hell to release the souls suffering there. He is often associated with the Daoist judges of the underworld and is regularly pictured in illustrations of the underground hells of the netherworld mentioned earlier, Fengdu.<sup>44</sup>

43 The role of the city god in dealing with souls of the dead is in Song, *Jietu Zhongguo dao jiao shengsishu*, 130–133; Yi, *Zhongguo shenguai dizidian*, 65–66. For historical comments, see David Johnson, "The City-God Cults of T'ang and Sung China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 4, no. 2 (December 1985); Cai Limin 蔡利民 et al., *Suzhou chenghuangmiao* 蘇州城隍廟 [The Suzhou City God Temple] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011). See also Katz, "Divine Justice in Late Imperial China." A comprehensive study is Zheng Tuyou 鄭土有 et al., *Hucheng xingshi: Chenghuang xinyang de renleixue kaocha* 護城興市：城隍信仰的人類學考察 [*Protected City and Flourishing Markets: Anthropological Investigations of City God Worship*] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2005).

44 Dizang is very popular in northeast Asia. His Sanskrit name is Kṣitigarbha क्षितिगर्भ. He is beloved in China and Korea because of his ability to break open the gates of Hell and his desire to protect all sentient beings. He is beloved in Japan as a protector of the souls of innocent children who have died. His sutra is widely reprinted and given away free at temples in China. I have several in my collection, including *Dizang pusa benyuan jing* 地藏菩薩本願經 [*Sutra of the True Intention of the Dizang Bodhisattva*], a published work that was reprinted in Ji'nan, Shandong, and distributed by the Chengnei Guangong miao 城內關公廟 [City Guangong Temple] in 2013. *Dizangwang* receives a long entry in Yi, *Zhongguo shenguai dizidian*, 95–96; Sawa Ryōken 佐和陵研, *Butsuzō zūten* (佛像図典 [*Dictionary of Buddhist Statues*] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kubunkan, 1978), 90–92. As

For the unfortunate woman whose soul was consigned to this purgatory, as described in the Sutra of the Six Hells, she might have to experience a mountain of blood [*xueshan* 血山; pp. 18–25]; a lake of blood [*xue hu* 血湖; pp. 26–29]; a sea of blood [*xue hai* 血海; pp. 30–33]; a pool of blood [*xue chi* 血池; pp. 33–37]; or a vessel of blood [*xue pen* 血盆; pp. 37–43]. Although the adjectives used to refer to these places tell of filth and dirt [*huiwu* 穢污] and filthy blood [*huixue* 穢血; p. 34], and although the various tortures and the ghosts who rule this realm, the judges and small ghosts [*panguan xiaogui* 判官小鬼; p. 35] occur inside the unwelcome place, there is still redemption, because we also see the phrase “Look into the vessel and pond of blood and there are five lotus blossoms coming forth” [*Kanjian xuepenchizhong you wuduo lianhua chuxian* 看見血盆池中有五朵蓮花出現; p. 41]. The lotus is the Buddhist symbol of a pure white flower that grows in the mud. It is a symbol of forgiveness and of overcoming the filth of the world to reach a higher plane.

The event that prompted the copying of these texts to be read at the funeral or at a service remembering the deceased is made clear on the final page of this work. The copyist has written:

The petitioner was filial. Break open the gates of Hell to search for our poor and miserable mother in the vessel and pool of blood. It is hard to think this birth mother has sinned. We call out “mother” and ask that she be rescued and sent to the Western Paradise.

*Zunzhe xingxiao. Poyu xunniang. Xuepenchinei jianxihuang. Chanmu zui nandang. Jiaoqi a'niang. Jiumu wang xifang*

尊者行孝。破獄尋娘。血盆池內見恚惶。<sup>45</sup> 產母罪難當。叫起阿娘。救母往西方。(p. 43)

The petition ends by calling on the name of the Holy Bodhisattva Dizang King [Namo dizangwang pusa 南無地藏王菩薩]. From this text, we can imagine the anguish and sorrow of those who had suffered the loss of someone they held dear, someone who had died in pain and was unjustly suffering. One can imagine the earnestness and pleading of the bereaved petitioner as this text was being read aloud. This was very likely recited by a priest on behalf of the poor man who had lost his wife, the mother of his children, and who anguished

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mentioned earlier, Fengdu is generally considered the underworld kingdom of Hell. By some accounts, it is located below Taishan 泰山 in Shandong Province.

45 In Shanxi dialect, *xihuang* 恚惶 is sometimes used to mean “mother,” according to my colleague Du Yuping 杜玉平. It is also used to mean “poor and miserable.”

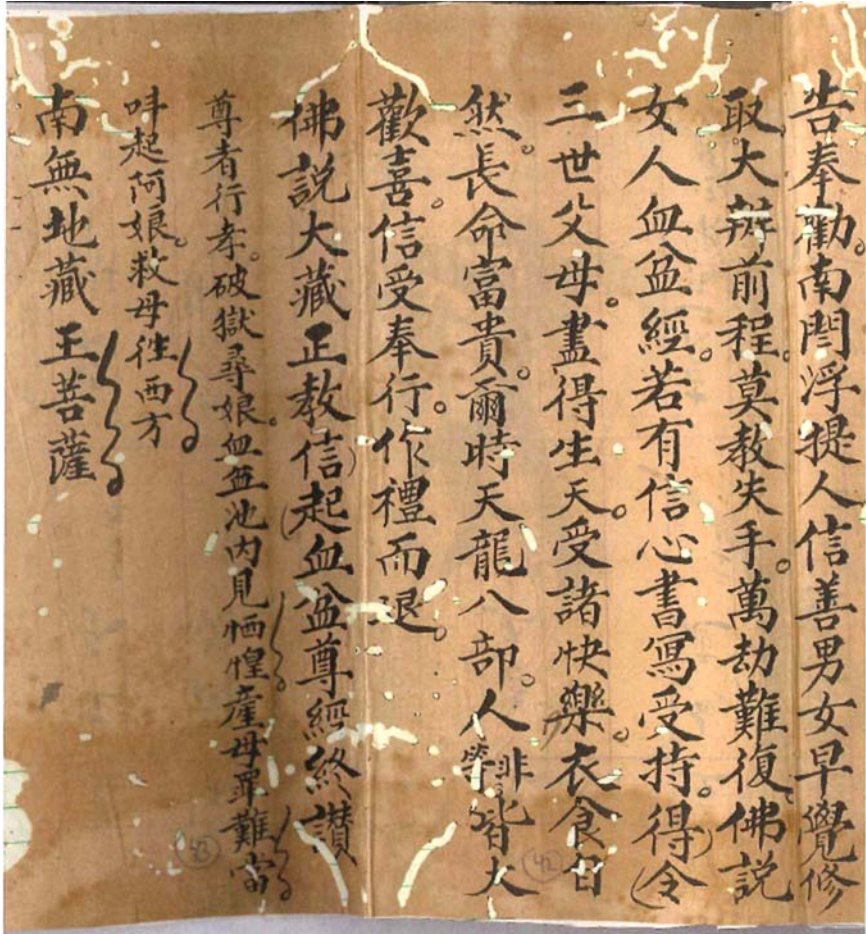


FIGURE 8.18

*Sutra of the City God, Sutra of the Dead* [Chenghuang jing, Duwang jing 城隍經度亡經], Pages 42 and 43, *Asking for Release from Hell*. The person who had this text copied inserted a personal plea: "The petitioner was filial. Break open the gates of Hell to search for our poor and miserable mother in the vessel and pool of blood. It is hard to think this birth mother has sinned. We call out 'mother' and ask that she be rescued and sent to the Western Paradise" [Zunzhe xingxiao. Poyu xunniang. Xuepenchinei jianxihuang. Chanmu zui nandang. Jiaoqi aniang. Jiumu wang xifang 尊者行孝。破獄尋娘。血盆池內見恚惶。產母罪難當。叫起阿娘。救母往西方]. On page 43, these are lines 2 and 3, reading from right to left.

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over the suffering he thought she was being forced to endure. It shows complete acceptance of the explanations of Hell and its indignities given to the common people at the time. Their only recourse in the face of such overwhelming loss and impotence compared to the powerful forces governing human life and death was to prepare handwritten texts such as this and to beseech the deities for help.

### The Dragon King

Another example of a deity who can be both god and ghost is the Dragon King [Long wang 龍王]. Dragon kings are numerous, probably one for each major river and lake in China. Although some Daoist pantheons list the Dragon Kings of the Four Seas [Sihai longwang 四海龍王] and thus grant them status as universal deities, most dragon kings are local deities tied to a specific source of water. The dragon kings can bring water for growing crops, cooking, washing, and many life actions, so they were often invoked for help in ceremonies asking for rain. The dragon kings can equally bring floods and devastation or withhold needed rain. Chinese farmers were respectful to their local dragon kings in good times, but they could chastise or threaten this deity when its services were withheld. In times of trouble, a dragon king was seen as a bad ghost causing hardship.<sup>46</sup>

One *chaoben* in my collection is titled **Prayers to the Dragon King** [*Longwang fashi* 龍王法事]. Its more descriptive title is on the inside cover page is **Recommended Memorials, Petitions and Certificates for a Religious Service** [*Gongjin biao shu die fashi* 貢進表疏牒法事]. It was written in the *renyin* 壬寅 year; judging from the handmade paper and the twine binding of the work, 1902 seems a reasonable date. I bought it in Beijing in 2010.<sup>47</sup>

The text is composed of invocations and petitions, spoken and written, that can be offered up to the dragon kings, to ask them to descend to earth to hear the petitions of the people and to address the concerns of those offering the petitions. Petitions were often written and read aloud by the ritual master at the ceremony, then burned so that the smoke would ascend to heaven, where the gods would receive and understand them. This process is the focus of the first subsection of the manuscript. The text is divided into subsections: "Offering up Memorials" [*Shang biao* 上表] on pages 3–15; "Offering up Petitions" [*Shang shu*

46 On both worshiping and chastising the dragon king, see Snyder-Reinke, *Dry Spells*.

47 **Prayers to the Dragon King** [*Longwang fashi* 龍王法事] contains thirty-four pages and is 9 in (22.86 cm) h × 5¼ in (13.33 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in January 2010.

上疏] on pages 15–25; “Ceremonial Texts for Water Ceremonies, Certificates” [*Qingshui yiwen, shu* 請水儀文疏] on pages 25–29; “Petitions to the Dragon King” [*Longwang biao* 龍王表] on pages 30–34.<sup>48</sup>

The first sentence of this work was recited by the ritual master, possibly also written as a text to be burned after it was read aloud at the altar.<sup>49</sup>

The glory of the mountains and the rivers, each cave is a treasure; the irrigation of the paddies and fields, cannot be accomplished without water. We chant this petition, and today offer it up here.

*Shanchuan zhi jingying, meixue weizhibao. Tianye zhi guangai, feishui bunengcheng. Gongbiao yinji, jin wei juchang.*

山川之精英，每穴為之寶。田野之灌溉，非水不能成。貢表吟偈，今為舉揚。

The dragon kings are sometimes accorded honors or respect, because some of them hold high office with much responsibility. At the local level, they are given a much less exalted rank, although their power can still be great in the local community, especially where a river and its rushing currents are involved or when rain is desperately needed for growing crops. At this local level, the gods and the people seem to have a close relationship or at least sometimes a relationship bordering on the informal. Thus the dragon kings make a good point for us to descend even lower in the hierarchy, to the level of pesky, troublesome ghosts who vex and frustrate people. This aspect of the ghosts who lived with the common people of China in the late Qing and Republican periods is discussed in Chapter 9.

### Conclusion: How Should We View These Spirits?

These gods and ghosts at the lower end of the hierarchy could be troublesome creatures, changeable in nature to the point of being unpredictable. They

48 The honorific titles by which the dragon kings can be addressed are given in Min Zhiting 閔智亭, *Daojiao yifan* 道教儀范 [*Daoist Ceremonies*] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2006), 168.

49 Comments on rituals are in Kohn, *Introducing Daoism*, 144–148. For comments on how the carved statues of deities are “brought to life” and infused with religious efficacy, see Laurel Kendall, “Things Fall Apart: Material Religion and the Problem of Decay,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 76, No. 4 (November 2017), 861–886.



FIGURE 8.19

*Prayers to the Dragon King* [Longwang fashi 龍王法事], *Page 1 and Inside Cover*. The more descriptive title is on the inside cover: *Recommended Memorials, Petitions, and Certificates for a Religious Service* [Gongjin biao shu die fashi 貢進表疏牒法事]. It was written in the renyin 壬寅 year; based on the handmade paper and the twine binding of the work, 1902 seems a reasonable date. The text is composed of invocations and petitions, spoken and written, that can be offered up to the Dragon Kings, to ask them to descend to earth to hear the petitions of the people and to address the concerns of those offering the petitions. Petitions were often written and recited by the ritual master at the ceremony, then burned so that the smoke would ascend to heaven, where the gods would receive and understand them.

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were not harmless pranksters; as we see in Chapter 9, they could cause real unpleasantness and discomfort for human beings. Negative spirits are found or referred to at the temples and shrines of all the world's major religions, since the holy deities worshiped are to some degree defined in contrast to the negative forces that are also said to exist. Buddhist, Christian, and Hindu literature finds it important to mention the negative powers that lurk. Islam is concerned with the evil of Satan. In religious Daoism, however, negative and uncontrollable spirits are numerous, and even the troublesome spirits might change their course to aid human beings. Like the complementary forces of yin and yang, they contain all aspects of the Dao, and they exist in relation to one another.

Liu Daochao 劉道超, an anthropologist and scholar of popular religious practices in China, has made interesting observations about popular religion in China, a topic he has been investigating since 1984. In his book *Zhumeng minsheng: Zhongguo minjian xinyang xinzhahui* 築夢民生：中國民間信仰新智慧 [Constructing Dreams for Life: New Thinking about Chinese Popular Beliefs], he assembles a number of ideas about this changeable nature of Daoist deities.<sup>50</sup> When talking about “The Wisdom of Worshipping Evil Spirits” [*Jingji e'shen zhi zhahui* 敬祭惡神之智慧], he says there are two kinds of spirits, good spirits [*shan de shen* 善的神] and evil spirits [*e de shen* 惡的神]. The first part of this chapter discusses the most holy of the Daoist deities, those who rule with grace and absolute authority. Liu says that many spirits bring only blessings and good, including the god of wealth, the city god, Wenchang, the Goddess of Mercy, the Jade emperor, and the Spirit Controlling Locusts [Quhuang shen 驅蝗神].

Among the spirits who can bring either blessings or destruction [*keweishan yi kewe'e* 可為善亦可為惡], Liu lists the following: the year god [*taisui* 太歲], the thunder god [*leishen* 雷神], the Big Dipper [*Beidou* 北斗], the god of wind

50 Liu Daochao 劉道超, *Zhumeng minsheng: Zhongguo minjian xinyang xinzhahui* 築夢民生：中國民間信仰新智慧 [Constructing Dreams for Life: New Thinking about Chinese Popular Beliefs] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2011), especially 238–249. A study of the earliest Chinese concepts of deities and spirits being both helpful and malevolent is Richard von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). This excellent study touches on many points made in this chapter and Chapter 9. Many of the earliest beliefs and practices continue today among Chinese communities. Some, such as throwing beans near a house to chase away spirits, are not seen much in China but are part of the popular *setsubun* 節分 festival in Japan celebrating the end of winter and the coming of spring. See Setsuko Kojima and Gene A. Crane, *A Dictionary of Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Japan Times, 1993), 298–299.

[*fengshen* 風神], the dragon king [*Long wang* 龍王], the king of the underworld [*Yanluo wang* 閻羅王], the Dizang king, the Emperor of the Underworld [*Fengdu dadi* 豐都大帝], and the stove god [*zaoshen* 灶神]. When we look at the horoscopes compiled by astrologers and fortunetellers, we find a number of these spirits cited, sometimes in their helpful form and sometimes in their negative incarnation. Several are mentioned in this chapter, especially the Dizang king, whom I refer to as the Dizang bodhisattva because he can descend to the gates of Hell and help tortured souls to escape their torments there. Some of these spirits have more than one manifestation—for example, the numerous dragon kings.

Liu also lists a number of ghosts frequently encountered in popular religion as among the spirits harmful to human beings [*yuren wei ede shen* 於人為惡的神]: the demon of drought [*hanba* 旱魃], the god of plague [*wen shen* 瘟神], the tiger spirit [*hu shen* 虎神], the king of locusts [*huangchong wang* 蝗蟲王], the god of smallpox [*dou shen* 痘神], and the snake god [*she shen* 蛇神]. Most of them ought to be considered plural. It is not clear from Chinese texts whether they are considered one god or one iteration of the god. Liu seems to correctly identify them as harmful spirits, which is the way they appear in most horoscopes. Fortunetellers and astrologers construct horoscopes by listing the “stars” for “forces” that will influence one’s future, and they often refer to these ghosts.

Liu says that people sometimes erected shrines to these harmful spirits, and they worshiped them with offerings or incense or ceremonies. He says the purpose of such worship was to control the evil spirit, as if by offering a bribe, they could mollify the evil spirits or lull them into being passive. He goes on to say that people recited incantations against these plague gods and cursed them. Before the growing season, they burned fields as a way of threatening the locust gods.

Liu describes several other ways in which people dealt with demons and evil spirits. Of course, they could take hold of symbolic items thought to have power, such as a branch of a peach tree [*tiaozhi* 桃枝] or a ceremonial sword made of wood [*baojian* 寶劍]. They could curse the ghost [*magui* 罵鬼], say a magic spell or incantation [*fyu* 符語], or “press down” on the ghost to control the evil spirit [*zhengui* 鎮鬼]. Further, they could chase the ghost to expel it [*gangui* 趕鬼], they could eat the ghost [*chigui* 吃鬼], they could send off the ghost [*songgui* 送鬼], or they could exorcise the ghost [*nuogui* 儼鬼].

All the symbolic actions and items cited by Liu were those regularly used by ritual specialists when grappling with ghosts or demons. The peach branch was a favorite of yinyang masters, and the wooden sword is a popular item in religious Daoism. If one wanted to send off the high gods after a ceremony,

the reasoning must have been that, by burning incense, setting off firecrackers, and bidding farewell, people could use the same techniques to scare away and banish demons, i.e. they would create an atmosphere of noise and incense through which the spirits, be they deities or demons, could move. We know from observation that putting tablets of the plague gods on a boat and sending them down the river or ritually burning them on a boat was part of the exorcist rites of rural peasants. We also have reports of dragon kings who failed to bring rain being set out under the hot sun to give them a taste of the suffering they were causing to the people by not bringing rain.<sup>51</sup>

The result of these actions, Liu tells us, was to empower the people in the face of difficulties. Rather than being passive, the people confronted their difficulties. The priests or mediums (he calls them “shaman”) [*saman* 薩滿] helped the people to organize and confront the demons. Government officials often participated, lending the authority of the government and helping to bind the people and the government together. These actions and ceremonies by the people helped to change a frustrating and threatening situation into an optimistic situation in which the people had hope for a favorable outcome. The actual efficacy of the event, such as changing the weather pattern and bringing rain, was less important than the spirit of optimism and potential that the people gained through the ceremonies and rituals.

Liu’s point about the common people being faced with difficulties and working to empower themselves in the face of these threats is well taken. The practices they devised to confront the demons, such as threatening them with a ritual sword or yelling at them, can be seen as an attempt not to let themselves be overwhelmed by the mysterious and seemingly powerful forces that seemed almost beyond human control. Through the noise and frenetic activity against the demons, they could vent their anger (to the ghosts and to one another) about the situation in which they found themselves.

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51 Examples of putting the dragon king statue under the hot sun are in Snyder-Reinke, *Dry Spells*. Old texts held that the plague gods lived in the rivers and would come at the change of seasons to afflict the people. So it made logical sense as part of the ritual to rid an area of pestilence by sending representations of the plague gods on a boat down the river. The old texts are in Ren, *Zongjiao cidian*, 1038. For an overview of the plague gods from the point of view of a Western-trained medical man, see John R. Watt, *Saving Lives in Wartime China: How Medical Reformers Built Modern Healthcare Systems Amid War and Epidemics, 1928–1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 6–8, with other descriptions of plague situations throughout the book. A description of burning the plague gods on a boat is in Donald S. Sutton, *Steps to Perfection: Exorcistic Performers and Chinese Religion in Twentieth-Century Taiwan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 38–39.

Liu's comments seem positive and contemporary, so I thought it would be interesting to consult with a Daoist master I had met to get his perspective on Liu's views. I contacted Zhou Xuanyun 周玄雲, a member of the Zhengyi school of Daoism who now lives in the Boston area. Master Zhou's view was that everyone writing about religious Daoism reflects his own understanding of the phenomenon. From that perspective, he had no special quarrel or criticism of Liu's analysis. Like Liu, Zhou believed in two types of spirits and ghosts, good and bad. People can pray to the good ones for help, and they can pray to the bad ones to be left alone. If a human being upsets a good deity, the god might be cruel to them. But if a human placates a bad spirit, the demon might be good to the human. Therefore, the important thing is not the alignment of the ghost or spirit but the relationship between the human being and the spirit.<sup>52</sup>

Concerning Liu's use of the term "shaman," Zhou said that was a term used to describe early practices, but in present-day Daoism the terms used for the medium who interfaces with the spirits are *nanxi* 男覡 for males and *nüwu* 女巫 for females. Dictionaries translate these terms as "wizard" or "sorceress." These translations seem somewhat dismissive for describing people who play a crucial role in extending the power of humans with forces that seem to exist in a different realm. Perhaps the term "medium" is a more neutral term. A general term used by Chinese scholars for a medium is *wuxi* 巫覡, although in practice it often refers to a woman.<sup>53</sup>

Human beings and the deities of Chinese popular religion have a lively relationship and an energetic exchange of prayers and favors that continues in Chinese communities to this day. When faced with powerful or overwhelming influences, it becomes a comforting and hopeful action to call upon the superhuman or "otherworldly" spirits, whether we label them ghosts or deities. The universe of spirits that seems so distant and ethereal from daily social interactions becomes very real, colorful, and alive when given form by the Daoist masters and ritual specialists and by the fervent believers who participate in addressing the gods of popular religious Daoism. This universe of spirits, ritual specialists, and humans was very much alive and accepted by the *pingmin* of China in the period 1850–1950. As the anthropologist Liu Daochao outlines, by knowing something of the gods and ghosts and by taking an active stance toward them, the common people empowered themselves as they struggled through life's vicissitudes.

52 The comments generously offered by Zhou Xuanyun are in a personal communication dated February 18, 2014. The idea of a troublesome ghost becoming a protective deity is discussed in Huang, "Wuxi yu shouhu fuzhuling," 291–294.

53 This usage referring to a woman is seen in *ibid.*, 281–314.

## The Troublesome Ghosts: Part 2

### 妖魔，第二部

#### The Lowest-Ranked Ghosts

Ghosts are, in general, troublesome creatures. The lower ranks of the Daoist hierarchy of spirits includes many ghosts. Someone who is being harassed by ghosts can call for help from a spirit general. Sometimes, former generals who were heroic in life are honored as spirit generals after their death and are given the title prime marshal [*yuanshuai* 元帥]. These spirits can carry messages from Daoist masters on earth who are human beings to the deities in the heavens. They are also responsible for security and the protection of the celestial realms. They command thousands of ghost soldiers, who can be ordered to attack the ghosts and demons who are causing trouble for human beings.

One text I bought is titled **Eight Effective Formulas** [*Ba qinkoujue* 八親口訣].<sup>1</sup> It was written and illustrated in October 1904 and is filled with incantations calling upon spirit generals and their troops and horses for help in dealing with unwanted ghosts and evil forces. In order to marshal these spirit forces, in the course of a ceremony a Daoist ritual master would bang on the alter a wooden “command placard” [*lingpai* 令牌] block as a sign of his issuing an order to the spirits. A *lingpai* I bought in December 2014 that was made in Changsha 長沙 perfectly illustrates its function. It is 5–1/8 inches (13 cm) high and a little over 2 inches (6 cm) wide, with a square base representing the earth and a rounded top representing the heavens. On one face is carved “An Official Order to the Command of the Five Thunders” [*Chiling wu leihao ling* 敕令五雷號令], and on the side orders to the forces to be mobilized: “Tens of thousands of spirit generals, Thousands of troops and horses” [*Wanwan shenjiang*,

1 The final character was written this way, but probably should have been written 訣. The pages were torn and in poor condition at the top, so it is possible another character preceded the character 八. **Eight Effective Formulas** [*Ba qinkoujue* 八親口訣] is a work of fifty-three pages that I bought in Beijing in January 2015. It is 9¾ in (24.76 cm) × 6¼ in (15.87 cm) w. Drawings of some *sha* forces are on pp. 47–52 with pp. 43–46 showing talismanic characters dealing with *sha*. For a detailed review of the spirit generals see Nikaidō Yoshihiro 二階堂善弘, *Yuanshuaishen yanjiu* 元帥神研究 [*Research on Marshal Gods*], trans. Liu Xiongfeng 劉雄峰 (Ji'nan: Qilu shushe, 2014).

*qianqian bingma* 萬萬神將, 千千兵馬].<sup>2</sup> On the opposite face is carved a likeness of the god of thunder showing him dressed in armor, brandishing a sword above his head with his right hand and riding on fire wheels [*huolun* 火輪]. In this depiction, he does not have the bird's beak with which he is often drawn.<sup>3</sup>

A portion of an incantation to these forces in the text **Eight Effective Formulas** (p. 19) reads:

The spirit soldiers with horses, go under the bridge; soldiers without horses, march under the bridge. Soldiers who arrive at the altar, remove your armor. As horses arrive at the altar, take off their saddles. At this time your follower will burn incense to ask a thousand soldiers and ten-thousand horses to attend the altar.

*You ma shenbing, qiaoxia guo; wuma shenbing, qiaoxia xing. Bing daotan-qian, xiexia jia. Ma dao tanqian, xiexia an. Jinshi, dizi fenxiang, qing qian-bing wanma, fu tanting.*

有馬神兵，橋下過；無馬神兵，橋下行。兵到壇前，卸下甲。馬到壇前，卸下鞍。今時弟子焚香，請千兵萬馬，赴壇庭。<sup>4</sup>

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- 2 Concerning *lingpai* 令牌: The trigram for pure north [*qian* 乾] of three unbroken lines ☰ is carved on the top (signifying heaven), and the trigram of two broken lines over an unbroken line ☳ [*zhen* 震] is carved on the earth-facing bottom; it signifies thunder. This item was once actually in ritual use because the sacred object to give it ritual life still rattles around inside. There is another date, partially obscured, written at the end of the text being discussed, which appears to be December 1915.
- 3 A description of a *lingpai* by Asano Haruji 淺野春二 in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Pregadio, 1: 411–415. The Daoist rituals I have seen where the *lingpai* was frequently used by banging it down on the altar with each command issued have been conducted by members of the Zhengyi sect. These have been principally the *chaodu* 超度 [salvation ritual to help the souls of deceased proceed out of the netherworld and toward rebirth] ceremonies conducted at Baiyunguan in Shanghai, Qinxiyangdian in Shanghai, and Huode zhenjun miao 火德真君廟 in Beijing between 2011 and 2014. In his book about a Daoist spiritual leader in the modern period, anthropologist Liu Xun 劉迅 mentions the Shanghai Baiyunguan at the turn of the twentieth century in Xun Liu, *Daoist Modern: Innovation, Lay Practice, and the Community of Inner Alchemy in Republican Shanghai* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 49–51.
- 4 In addition to the spirit generals, soldiers, and horses, other spirits are invoked in this work. On the summoning of spirit soldiers among villagers in Taiwan today, see Lin, *Materializing Magic Power*, 40–44. Mobilizing the spirit soldiers is referred to in Mark R.E. Meulenbeld, *Demonic Warfare: Daoism, Territorial Networks, and the History of a Ming Novel* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 115–117.

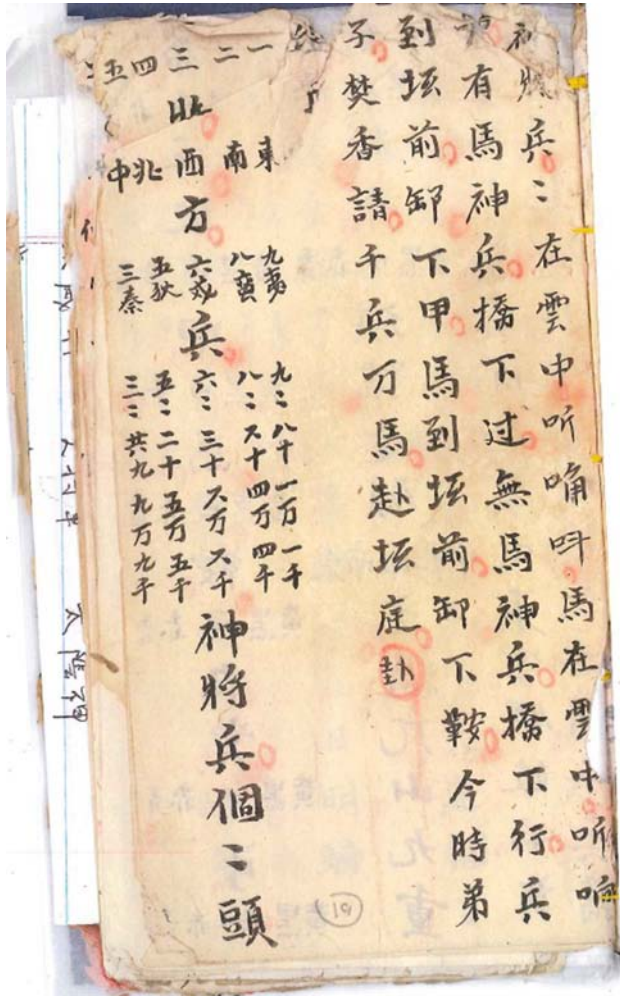


FIGURE 9.1  
*Eight Effective Formulas* [Ba qinkoujue 八親口訣], Page 19, *Calling on Spirit Armies*. The final character of the title, 訣 jue, probably should have been written 訣 jue. This is a handwritten collection of incantations addressed to the Eight Evil Great Generals [Basha dajiangjun 八煞大將軍]. Because they are so powerful and frightening, the text also includes many magic talisman [fu 符] that can be used to command and control the generals. An example on page 19 reads (second vertical line from the right): “The spirit soldiers with horses, go under the bridge; soldiers without horses, march under the bridge. Soldiers who arrive at the altar, remove your armor. As horses arrive at the altar, take off their saddles. At this time your follower will burn incense to ask a thousand soldiers and ten thousand horses to attend the altar” [You ma shenbing, qiaoxia guo; wuma shenbing, qiaoxia xing. Bing daotanqian, xiexia jia. Ma dao tanqian, xiexia an. Jinshi dizi fenxiang, qing qianbing wanma, fu tanting. 有馬神兵，橋下過；無馬神兵，橋下行。兵到壇前，卸下甲。馬到壇前，卸下鞍。今時弟子焚香，請千兵萬馬，赴壇庭]。

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

Human ritual specialists on earth would hold a ceremony, as the ritual master is doing in this text, that often included writing a talisman [*fuzhou* 符咒] with magic writing and an incantation that instructed the spirit soldiers to come to the aid of a human being who was being troubled by demons or mischievous ghosts. Many of the handwritten materials with incantations to the spirits also give examples of efficacious talisman, as does this item.<sup>5</sup>

Where did all these ghosts come from? It was generally believed that anyone who had died a tragic or unexpected death was almost doomed to become a lonely, wandering ghost. People who died in war, with much loss of blood and disfiguration, were in that category. Their poor souls were angry that they had become hideous and frightful to others. So were those who died far from home amid uncaring strangers and would have no relatives to carry out the ancestor rites for them, no one to properly bury them and tend to their graves. Some people seemed mentally unstable from birth and incapable of participating in normal human society. All such wronged or traumatized or unstable people could become troublesome ghosts. Being lonely and disoriented, their spirits would wander around seeking to vent their anger and frustration on living people whose busy lives of worldly affairs left no time or inclination to sooth the turbulent spirits of a discarded soul.

Troublesome ghosts sometimes took possession of a place on earth. It could be a tree or a mountain pass. It could be a corner of the courtyard wall, perhaps near a well or near an outhouse. They might make strange sounds or take on a shape visible to living humans. They had the potential to cause people great harm, and the living were frightened by the presence of troublesome ghosts. These ghosts, it seemed, could be anywhere.

A huge collection of Daoist ritual manuals compiled in 1445, titled the *Daofa huiyuan* 道法會元 [Corpus of Daoist Ritual], contains a work called

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5 The talisman in the *chaoben* discussed here are very serious and meant to summon the spirit generals and their troops. All talisman are meant to control ghosts, often by keeping them away. In many cases, they are for everyday protection and help, such as helping one obtain money or protect a child from illness. A collection of these protective talisman is illustrated and explained in Fengyunshanren 風雲山人, *Guling fuzhaojing* 鬼靈符咒經 [Collection of Talisman for Ghosts and Spirits] (Taipei: Wuling chuban youxian gongsi, 2006). Drawings of various ghosts to be petitioned and controlled by Daoist priests are in the *chaoben* in my collection titled *We Petition* [*fu* 伏以]. This work has no cover or title, so I assigned this title based on the first characters on the first page of the text. The book is 11 in (27.94 cm) h × 7½ in (19.05 cm) w, with sixty-six pages. I bought it in Beijing in January 2015. Drawings of these ghosts are on pp. 37–48. A book of this large size would be good when used for instructional purposes.

“Yuchen jingfa liandu neizhi bingxu 玉宸經法鍊度內旨并序 [Preface on Secret Instructions for the Sublimation Ritual in the Sutra of the Jade Palace].” A portion of this preface, expertly translated by Mark R.E. Meulenbeld, describes how some unfortunate souls become troublesome ghosts.

They naturally follow the breaths (*qi* 炁) of dark turbidity and submerge beneath the earth; then they become devils and demons. Others base themselves in the grasses or take possession of trees, and they practice pestilence and bewitchment. Some are born into the world and become stupid and lewd people, with bodies and faces that are imperfect. Others are born among the barbarians, or transformed into abnormal species. Some essential spirits float around, with their cloud-souls (*hun* 魂) and bone-souls (*po* 魄) still congealed they are unaware that their body and bones have decayed; they cling to the desire of eating boys and girls in this world. They have thoughts of taking revenge on their relatives. They are as if drunk without ever sobering up, they are as in a dream from which they will not awake.

*Ziran suihun zhuozhiqi, chenlun dixia, zeweili weigui. Huo yicaoofumu erweili weiyao. Huo shengyushi, zewei yuwan xiajian, tixiang bujuzhi ren. Huo shengzai bianyi, huo huawei yilei. Huozhe jingshuang piaochen, hunpo jiezhi, buzhi xingti yihuai er youzhi zaishi yinshi nannv zhiyu. Yuanqin baofu zhinian. Ruzui fuxing, ru meng fujue.*

自然隨昏濁之炁，沉淪地下，則為厲為鬼。或依草附木而為厲為妖。或生於世，則為愚頑下賤，體相不具之人。或生在邊夷，或化為異類。或者精爽漂沉，魂魄結滯，不知形體已壞而猶執在世飲食男女之欲。冤親報復之念。如醉弗醒，如夢弗覺。<sup>6</sup>

For the typical Chinese peasant family living and working in a rural village or in the countryside, troublesome ghosts or goblins could appear unexpectedly

6 Meulenbeld, *Demonic Warfare*; English text, 156–157; Chinese text, 232. *Hun* and *po* refer to the two aspects of the soul. *Hun* is the spirit of the soul, and *po* refers to the corporeal body of bones and flesh that also has a soul. The two types of souls are explained in Chapter 8. This passage speaks of a desire to “eat and drink boys and girls.” This is the literal translation of the text, which could in fact refer to the desire of ghosts to eat people. It could also refer to the desire to have sexual relations with people. Chinese ghost stories tell of both events taking place. In contemporary Chinese slang, to want to “eat” [*chi* 吃] someone expresses the wish to have sex with that person.

at any time. Their mischief included causing accidents, making things spill or break, or introducing any misfortune that interfered with the peasant's daily work and life. In the popular imagination, these ghosts were usually tiny or miniature creatures, able to jump and hide and disappear. They could be green or have a bright red face. Sometimes they were bobble headed or repeated some action over and over. Some were evil and frightening, and others were deceptively not unpleasant, even though they brought annoyance and trouble. Some took the initial form of a charming young girl or a Buddhist monk, though they might then change into another creature or disappear into thin air. Often these goblins affected the physical and mental health of the peasant, which, as we see below, was one way to detect their presence.<sup>7</sup>

Troublesome ghosts could be dealt with by ritual specialists in simpler ways than by holding a Daoist religious ceremony. Sometimes a local Daoist priest knew the procedures for chasing away a ghost. Some communities had a yinyang master, who had studied about ghosts and how to remove them. Yinyang specialists had studied all the calculations involved in the ritual calendar, the stars, and their influences, which they combined with other phenomena as the calendrical cycle proceeded. He could select a propitious day for a marriage, for moving house, or for a funeral. He could help determine the optimal location for the front gate of a house to receive the blessings of the symbolic universe through geomancy [*fengshui* 風水]. Similarly, he could select the most auspicious spot for a grave in order to ensure continued blessings on the family by the spirit of the departed.

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7 Many descriptions of troublesome ghosts and goblins are given in G. Willoughby-Meade, *Chinese Ghouls and Goblins* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1926 [?]); illustrations of some of these creatures are on pp. 26, 37, 139, 179, 293, and 294, and a drawing of the Oxhead Spirit General Zhao Ziyu [*Dingchou shenjiang ming Zhao Ziyu* 丁丑神將名趙子玉] is on p. 74. Before the book's publication in 1926, the nearest *dingchou* 丁丑 year would have been 1877, which could be a likely date for this drawing. Ghosts and demons are discussed at length in Plopper, *Chinese Religion Seen through the Proverb*, 77–117, with an illustration of one of these ghosts on p. 117. The belief in strangely formed goblins has a long history in China. Many of these fantastic and often threatening creatures are described in the ancient work the *Shanhajing* 山海經 [*Classic of the Mountains and Rivers*], apparently already known in China in the third century BCE. A study discussing these creatures, with many illustrations is Itō Seiji 伊藤清司, *Chūgoku no shinjū, akki tachi: Sankaikyō no sekai* 中國の神獸・悪鬼たち：山海經の世界 [*Chinese Spirit Beasts and Bad Ghosts: The World of the Classic of Mountains and Seas*] (Tokyo: Tōhō shoten, 2013). Professor Itō's 1986 edition was expanded by scholars of the Kodai Chūgoku kenkyūkai 古代中國研究會 [*Ancient China Research Seminar*] at Keio University.



FIGURE 9.2

*Zhong Kui and Ghosts* [Zhong kui 鐘馗]. This deity is able to tame wild ghosts and demons. Here he has them willingly do his bidding.

FROM THE PAINTING GONG KAI, *ZHONG KUI TRAVELING* (C. 1304), FREER GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.

When the yinyang master confronted a ghost, he could use proven ritual objects, such as a sword made of peach wood, a willow branch, or a brass bell. Poor peasants who were besieged by a troublesome ghost but had no ritual master nearby or perhaps not enough money to pay for his services, had fairly simple ways of getting rid of unwanted ghosts. The afflicted person could throw a slipper at it or hold up a mirror that would reveal its true shape as a demon, which would become frightened. One could throw firecrackers at it to make the frightened ghost run away. If the ghost was hiding in a crack in the wall, the crack could be pasted over with paper or with mud, and the ghost would be trapped. If one was able to identify the name of the ghost and to call it out, the ghost would become frightened, because it had been discovered and identified, and it would hurry away. Calling out a goblin's name was considered an effective way of weakening its resolve and making it leave.<sup>8</sup>

8 Some of these techniques are mentioned in Kohn, *Introducing Daoism*, 77. Several often used techniques are given in Plopper, *Chinese Religion Seen through the Proverb*, 133–136.

### Fifty Days to Encounter the Five Spirits

One *chaoben* is titled **Fifty Days to Encounter the Five Spirits** [*Wushi zhiri feng wudao* 五十之日逢五道]. The book's title refers to the "five robbers" [*wudao* 五道], but on page 18 it mentions the "five spirits" [*wudaoshen* 五道神].<sup>9</sup> Who were the five spirits?

According to the *Zhongguo shenguai dacidian* 中國神怪大辭典 [Dictionary of Chinese Gods and Spirits], the five spirits were a band of robbers in Central China in the mid-fifth century, a time when several local kingdoms were competing against one another. The five robbers—Du Ping 杜平, Li Si 李思, Ren An 任安, Sun Li 孫立, and Geng Yanzheng 耿彥正<sup>10</sup>—created disturbances in order to rob and pillage. After they killed a Chinese general from the kingdom of Liu Song 劉宋 (in roughly 469), they became well known for their prowess, and people in the area began to honor them as spirit generals. It was a time when people of all social classes held an active belief in ghosts and spirits. Although the five robbers were honored for their feats, they were seen as local evil gods [*xiong shen* 兇神]. They are identified among the troublesome ghosts in some cases by the yinyang master. The people originally referred to them as the "five robbers" [*wudao* 五盜]. Over the centuries, they became known as the "five spirits" [*wudao shen* 五道神].<sup>11</sup>

These five spirits do not appear on any of the organizational charts of Daoist deities, but they can be said to have existed in the minds of many of the

9 **Fifty Days to Encounter the Five Spirits** is a short text of nineteen pages. It is 7¼ in (18.41 cm) h × 5 in (12.7 cm) w, bound with twine. I bought it in Beijing in December 2012. An illustration of a Daoist talisman written to keep robbers away appears in Robert J. Antony, *Unruly People: Crime, Community, and the State in Late Imperial South China*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016), 87. Antony gives a detailed discussion of the *pingmin* he calls the "working poor" who turned to banditry and crime as a way to survive.

10 These are the names listed in a text probably dating to the late 1500s, *Sanjiao soushen daquan* 三教搜神大全 [*Great Compendium of the Unseen Spirits of the Three Teachings*], in the version reprinted about 2004 and available at Baiyunguan in Beijing; see 2 *ce* 冊, 4 *quan* 券, pp. 4–5. This publication is mentioned in von Glahn, *The Sinister Way*, 217–218, bibliographic entry 328.

11 Yi, *Zhongguo shenguai dizidian*, 554. The two entries I recommend as clues to the five spirits in question are the five robber generals [*wudao jiangjun* 五盜將軍] and the generals of the five Dao [*wudao jiangjun* 五道將軍]. There also exist gods of wealth of the five roads [*wulu caishen* 五路財神], on which, see Philip Clart, in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 1: 243.

common people of China who were influenced by Daoist thinking.<sup>12</sup> The five spirits are among the rabble of ghosts and demons who populate the lower strata of the world of spirits. They could be among the goblins who interact to cause human beings harm, as do all the troublesome ghosts. When maladies, misfortune, ill health, or other difficulties arise in the course of a person's life, troublesome ghosts are likely to be found as the cause.

When someone is annoyed by a ghost, the first course of action was to consult the booklet by the yinyang master discussed here or to consult with the master himself, to identify and locate the offending ghost. The yinyang master may have kept this book for his own reference when his help was requested. Often the ghost or ghosts can be made to leave by performing some simple actions, as outlined above. In more severe cases, in which the ghost refuses to depart or the afflicted person feels especially burdened, the troublesome ghosts can be forced out by invoking the spirit generals to mobilize their yin soldiers against them. Accompanying this operation was the writing of talisman, often in red ink on yellow paper, to order the spirit generals into action with their troops. The talisman was also being pasted on the gate or the house or in a room or even worn by the afflicted person.<sup>13</sup>

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- 12 The complete intertwining of commonly held beliefs from popular religion that form the worldview of many rural Chinese communities even in the present is explicated in Tik-sang Liu, "A Nameless but Active Religion: An Anthropologist's View of Local Religion in Hong Kong and Macau," *China Quarterly*, no. 174 (2003): 373–394. See also Liu Tik-sang liu 劉迪生, "'Difang zongjiao' yu 'minsu chuantong': Xianggang tianhou chongbai huodong de bianqian 地方宗教與民俗傳通：香港天后崇拜活動的變遷 [*Local Religion' and 'Popular Traditions': Changes in the Worship of Mazu in Hong Kong*]," *Mazu yanjiu xuebao 媽祖研究學報* [*Journal of Mazu Research*], 1 (2004): 48–57.
- 13 Spirit generals could be summoned to mobilize their troops in many ways, as seen in Zhang and Wu, *Daojiao Fuzhou xuanjiang*. A fictionalized account of a professional yinyang master in recent times but still using traditional techniques, is given by Zangfeng yunqi 藏風運氣, *Yinyangshi riji* 陰陽師日記 [*Diary of a Yinyang Master*] (Guangzhou: Xinshiji chubanshe, 2011). A prolific Japanese fiction writer whose pen name is Yumemakura Baku (which means Pillow of Dreams Tapir) has been publishing works on ghosts and disembodied spirits for over the past twenty-five years, including accounts of a yinyang master. However, the stories in his books are in the vein of Japanese ghost stories and strange encounters with disembodied spirits and portray situations somewhat different from those discussed here. For example, they have a more literary and Buddhist religious frame. An example of this genre is Yumemakura Baku 夢枕獯, *Onmyōji: sōkō no maki* 陰陽師：蒼猴の巻 [*Yinyang Master: Blue Monkey Collection*] (Tokyo: Bungei shunjū, 2014). Another *chaoben* in my collection I have titled Cao Suosen 曹鎖森, from the name written on the cover. I bought this handwritten book of seventy-seven pages in Shanghai

The yinyang master who compiled this book indicated that, in any fifty-day period, people might encounter troublesome ghosts, as epitomized by the five robbers. His purpose was to help those afflicted with a troublesome ghost to identify the spirit and to cause it to leave. He used a fifty-day period as the time frame for his text and listed each day according to its designation in the traditional Chinese calendrical cycle.

### Calculating the Days

According to archaeological finds, for about three thousand years, the Chinese have been keeping track of time using a system of ten heavenly stems [*tian-gan* 天干] and twelve earthly branches [*dizhi* 地支]. Although China has used numerous systems for counting time and making calendars over its long history, the stem-branch [*gan-zhi* 干支] binary system in its various permutations has been one of the longest in use. One stem and one branch make up a pair. Each pair stands for a unit of time. This can be illustrated by listing the ten branches and twelve stems to show how they combine.

Ten heavenly branches:

*jia* 甲 *yi* 乙 *bing* 丙 *ding* 丁 *wu* 戊 *ji* 己 *geng* 庚 *xin* 辛 *ren* 壬 *gui* 癸

Twelve earthly stems:

*zi* 子 *chou* 丑 *yin* 寅 *mao* 卯 *chen* 辰 *si* 巳 *wu* 午 *wei* 未 *shen* 申 *you* 酉 *xu* 戌 *hai* 亥

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in December 2014. It is 8¾ in (22.22 cm) h × 5 in (12.7 cm) w, written on badly deteriorated handmade paper. In quite passable calligraphy, it offers incantations to deal with many illnesses, often with an example of an efficacious talisman character. These were the magic characters that could be pasted on a doorway or above a bed or worn by the afflicted person or dissolved in tea and drunk. It refers to the Celestial Lord Who Relieves Suffering [Taiyi jiuku tianzun 太乙救苦天尊] on p. 11. This deity, discussed in Chapter 8, is usually associated with death, because he descends to Hell to search for and free tortured souls. Most of the medical issues addressed in this work, however, seem to deal with physical complaints, rather than with death. This means the text was used by people with various maladies; it was not compiled for funerals.

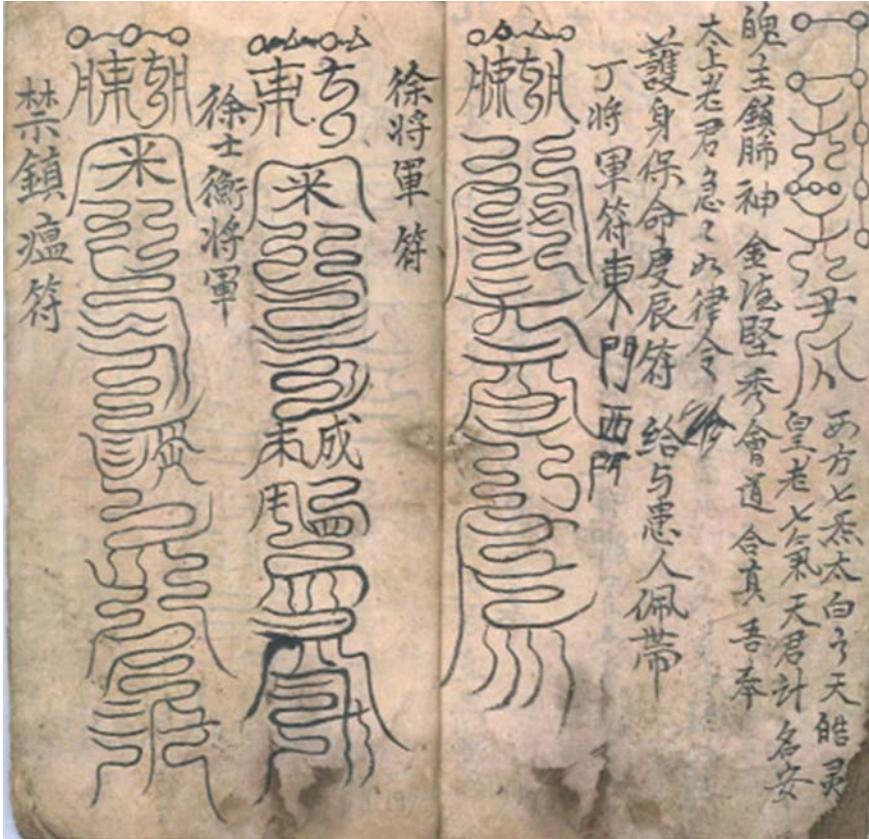


FIGURE 9.3

*Cao Suosen 曹鎖森, Pages 18 and 19, Call the Spirit Generals. Cao Suosen is the name of the person written on the cover, so I use it as the title of this chaoben. The booklet is a list of incantations to deal with illnesses and other human afflictions, many of which are accompanied by a talisman character that will mobilize the deities to help the afflicted. Page 18 shows the fu for summoning General Ding [Ding jiangjun 丁將軍], and page 19 gives two talisman for summoning General Xu [Xu jiangjun 徐將軍]. Both are powerful spirit generals [shenjiang 神將], who command thousands of spirit soldiers [shenbing 神兵]. The final line on page 19 (far left-hand side of the page) indicates that the following page has a talisman for “preventing plague” [jinzhenwen fu 禁鎮瘟符].*

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

The combination of one from each line is most commonly seen when it is used as a designation for years. The first branch *jia* 甲 will be combined with the first stem *zi* 子 to designate a year known as a *jiazi* 甲子 year. The two most recent *jiazi* years were 1924 and 1984. If 1924 was a *jiazi* year, then to designate the following year, 1925, we take the following letter from the branches *yi* 乙, and the following letter from the stems *chou* 丑, to get the *yichou* 乙丑 year. We make this combination in turn for each branch and stem.

If we continue on from 1925, when we complete ten combinations [*guiyou* 癸酉, 1933], we will have completed the line of branches, but two terms remain in the stem line. So we go back to the start of the branch line *jia* 甲 and combine it with the eleventh remaining stem *xu* 戌, and we come up the *jiaxu* 甲戌 year (1934). We take the second branch term *yi* 乙 and combine it with the twelfth remaining branch term *hai* 亥 to get the *yihai* 乙亥 year (1935). We thus create a twelve-year cycle, based on the ten branches.

What becomes clear as we go through this orderly process of combining the branches and stems is that they will not exactly correspond as they did in the first run through because the branches are ten and the stems are twelve. However, when we follow the combinations through six cycles (six times) of the branch line, the first terms in both the branch and stem lines once again align. Thus by this calculation every sixty years we complete a cycle of all the possible combinations of these terms. In this case, the final terms in both the branches and the stems align, to form a *guihai* 癸亥 year (1983). This sixtieth year is celebrated in East Asia as *huanli* (in Chinese) or *kanreki* (in Japanese) 還曆, meaning the cycle has been completed, and the calendar has been restored to its original position, so the sixtieth birthday is treated as a special celebration.<sup>14</sup>

14 A thorough explanation of this system in English is in Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2013), 532–543; and in “Chinese Astrology,” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese\\_astrology/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_astrology/), accessed September 18, 2014. For a clear explanation in Japanese, see the Japanese Wikipedia site: <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%B9%B2%E6%94%AF/>, accessed September 19, 2014. The *chaoben* in my collection discussed in Chapter 8, **Secret Text for Summoning the Snake** [*shechuan miben* 蛇傳秘本], has a handwritten chart on p. 28 of the heavenly branches and earthly stems that shows how to combine them in order to move through the cycle, organized according to the *jia* designation. This illustrates that the ritual master who wrote the text was using calculations according to this system. Another chart useful for making the calculations is in Min, *Shinsalhak chonso*, 33. The heavenly branches and earthly stems system is outlined and elaborated on to show how to use the system for fortunetelling in Wang Sisi 王思思 and Wang Desen 王德森, ed., *Xiuzhen nianliyu zhisuanfa* 袖珍年曆與指算法 [*Pocket Calendrical Calculations and Using the Fingers for Calculations*] (Shanghai: Shanghai kexue zhishu chubanshe, 2011), 1–51. A thorough and chronological explanation of Chinese astrological and calendrical thinking, an original form of rational and scientific thought according to the author, is Yabuuchi, *Chūgoku no tenmon rekihō*. The manner in which the twelve earthly branches were appropriated in popular folklore to make up the animal signs of the zodiac is covered in Ishigami Nanasaya 石上七鞆, *Jūnishi no minzoku denshō* 十二支の民俗伝承 [*Popular Lore about the Twelve Branches*] (Tokyo: Ōfū, 2003). For an alternate method of

This system can be used to designate any period of time. It is most common to designate years, but it can be used for months, weeks, days, or hours. By then linking the various stem and branch combinations to seasons, colors, elements, and, especially, star deities, a holistic web of positive and negative forces can be created to distinguish lucky [*ji* 吉] and unlucky [*xiong* 兇] time periods. Fortunetellers use these combinations to advise which days are propitious and times for actions, such as when to get married, hold a funeral, invest in a business, or begin a long journey. The text we discuss here is organized according to this system.<sup>15</sup>

The book *Fifty Days to Encounter the Five Spirits* originally listed fifty days, each day designated by its stem and branch combination. We know that, because forty-six days are listed, the first four days were lost when the title page and the page with the first four days were detached from the book. We also know that, by taking the designations we do have and working backward according to the progression of stems and branches, we can determine which days were lost. The first four days in this fifty-day cycle that were lost were for the *jiayu* 甲戌, *yihai* 乙亥, *bingzi* 丙子 and *dingchou* 丁丑 days. But according to the next days in the cycle, beginning with the *wuyin* 戊寅 day, the remaining forty-six days are complete in the text.

In fact, a fragment of the lost *dingchou* day tells us that the troublesome spirit for that day hides in the well of the oil lamp in the northwest direction of the house and should be driven out to result in great happiness [*Zaixibei, youdeng youpingnei cangzhi, chuzhi liji* 在西北油燈油瓶內藏之，出之利吉].

We can now begin to follow each of the remaining forty-six days listed in this book. The text is translated in full in Appendix D and is shown in its original text in Figures. 9.4 and 9.5.

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using calendrical calculations to reveal human virtues, see He Wumeng 何無夢, *Shunshou qizheng: Chuantong Zhongguo shehui de qiuren moxing* 順受其正：傳通中國社會的求仁模型 [Willingly Submit: A Model for Seeking Humaneness in Traditional Chinese Society] (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2016). The phrase translated here as “willingly submit” [*shunshou qizheng* 順受其正] is taken from a phrase in *Mencius* (book VII, part 1, *Jinxin* 盡心, chapter 11). Mencius was discussing the “Will of Heaven” [*tianming* 天命] and its infallibility, and he suggested that humans willingly submit to this force.

15 This is the basic system for most horoscopes and almanacs published in China. For example, see the widely used *Zhongbaolou tongsheng* 眾寶樓通勝 [*Treasure House for the People*] (Jiangmen: Guangdongsheng jiangmen tuchan jinchukou youxian gongsi, 2014); and *Erling yiwu yiweinian tongli* 2015 乙未年通曆 [*Horoscope for 2015*] (Hong Kong: Haifeng chubanshe, 2015).

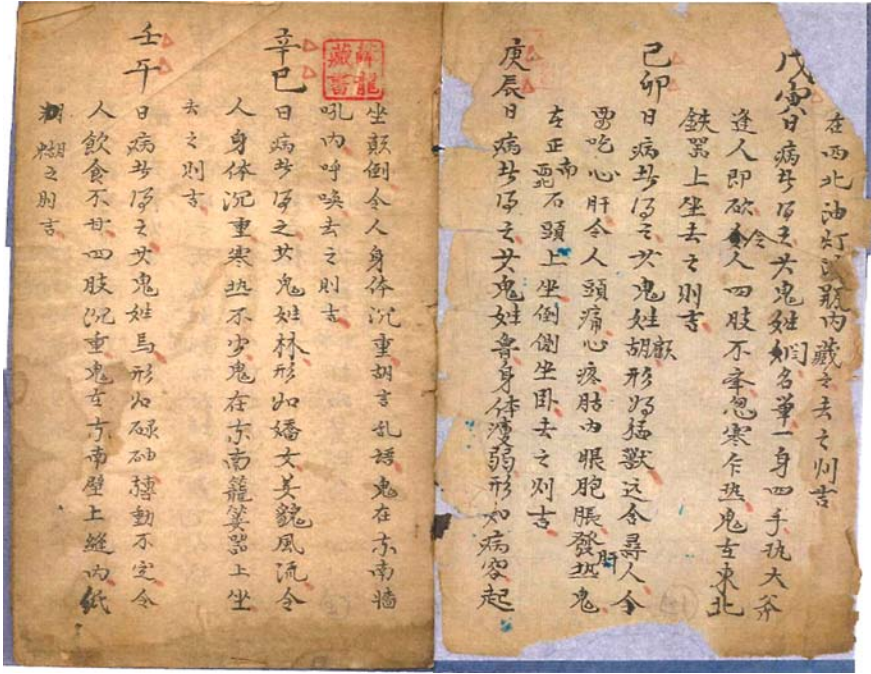


FIGURE 9.4

*Fifty Days to Encounter the Five Spirits* [Wushi zhiri feng wudao 五十之日逢五道], Pages 1 and 2, *Detail of a Day's Evil*. This is an example of written material that might be used by a yinyang master [yinyangshi 陰陽師] or an exorcist. It contains a list of a sixty-day cycle (in this item, a fifty-day cycle) describing the goblin that might cause physical distress on each particular day. Page 1 begins by describing a wuyin 戊寅 day: "For those afflicted on this day, the ghost is surnamed Yan 閻, named Zhao 肇. It has one body with four arms, holding a large ax. When it encounters humans, it begins chopping. It causes people to be unable to raise their four limbs and to feel cold and then suddenly hot. This ghost is settling in the northeastern direction on something metal. It would be good for it to depart" [Wuyinri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Yan, ming Zhao. Yi shen si shou zhidafu. Fengren jikan. Lingren sizhi buju, huhanzhare. Gui zai dongbei tieqi shang zuo. Quzhi zeji 戊寅日病者得之，其鬼姓閻名肇。一身四手執大斧。逢人即砍。令人四肢不舉，忽寒乍熱。鬼在東北鐵器上坐。去之則吉].

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

All the items and places within the home mentioned in these descriptions would have been in a typical home in premodern China. They might have equally been in an urban or rural home, though they seem more likely to have come from a rural home, filled with straw baskets, pegs in the walls for hanging things, and pots and pans for cooking or transporting grains and oil. Another reason for assuming a rural household is that these afflictions are more likely to be confronted by a person living in a rural area. In that environment, where practices of good hygiene and sanitation were not carefully followed, perhaps

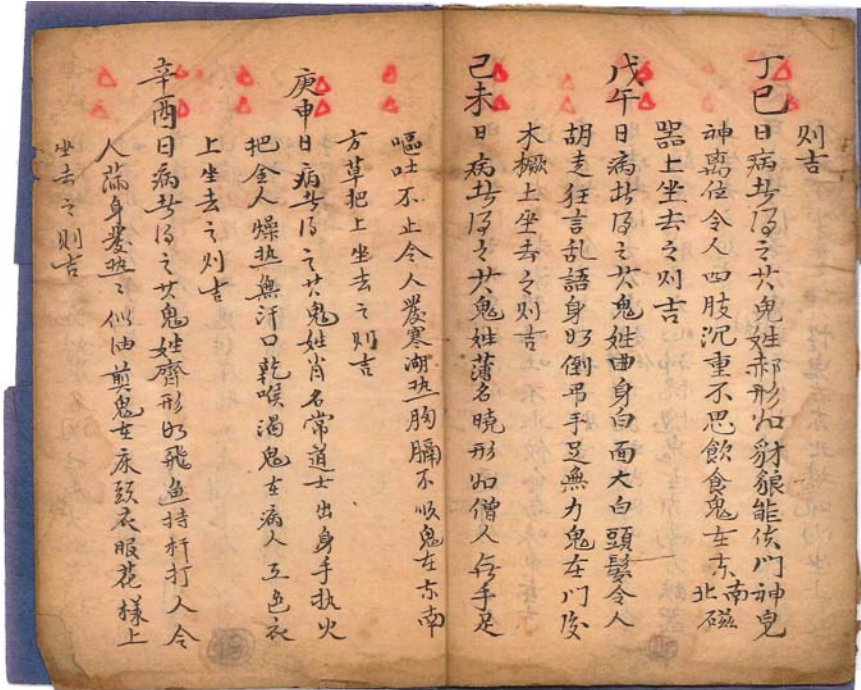


FIGURE 9.5

*Fifty Days to Encounter the Five Spirits* [Wushi zhiri feng wudao 五十之日逢五道], Pages 15 and 16, *This Evil Frightens the Home's Protective Gods*. On the right-hand side, page 15 begins with the dingsi 丁巳 day: "The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Hao 郝. It is shaped like a jackal/wolf that can make the door gods and the kitchen god leave their posts. It causes the four limbs to feel heavy and makes a person lose his appetite. The ghost is found in the southeast or northeast, sitting on a pottery vessel. It would be good for it to depart" [Dingsiri bingzhedezhi, qigui xingHao. Xing ru chailang, nenggong menshen zaoshen liwei. Lingren sizhi chenzhong, busi yinshi. Gui zai dongnan, bei, ciqishangzuo. Quzhi zeji 丁巳日病者得之，其鬼姓郝。形如豺狼能供門神皂神離位。令人四肢沉重，不思飲食。鬼在東南，北，磁器上坐。去之則吉]. The door gods and the kitchen god protect the house and the family that lives in it. This evil spirit is so frightening that even these protective deities run away.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

not even known by the majority of people, the resulting medical complaints would be of the type mentioned in these descriptions of ghostly maliciousness. For example, for rural people working in dirty water and around animal waste, problems of the digestive tract, skin ailments, loss of appetite, and listlessness and fatigue were not uncommon.<sup>16</sup>

16 A British medical doctor working in Hengyang 衡陽 and Tianjin from 1899 to 1922 has chronicled many of these medical complaints. See *Peake in China*.

I asked a friend living and working in Boston, a knowledgeable Chinese doctor trained in both Asian and Western medicine, to comment on this handwritten text from a medical standpoint. He is Dr. Wong Ming (Huang Ming 黃明). I offer here a paraphrase and summary of his comments.<sup>17</sup>

From the traditional Asian medical point of view, the forces of yin and yang need to be maintained in a balance for healthy living. The negative effects of yin can include chills, weakness, lethargy. The negative effects of yang can include a burning in internal organs, a strong headache, sweating and nervousness. Most of the symptoms exhibited by the afflicted persons described in the text represent an upset to that balance as expressed by their symptoms, from feelings of lethargy to mental confusion to vomiting.

In the general Western medical approach, there is an underlying philosophy of rationalism, to study the various parts of the body, to determine how they should behave, and the purpose of their functions. This is all based on the physical, on what can be seen and studied through repetitive experiments. On the other hand, in the Asian system there is a very broad view of the context in which all life exists in relation to all of the forces that are in play. All the physical symptoms observed should be considered in relation to the larger perspective. They should be explained and dealt with in that context. This is a very broad conceptualization. Anthropologically speaking, the Chinese medical specialists were following a reasonable nonrationalism to fit their observations into the larger theory.

Some Chinese medical people felt that Westerners had a high degree of yang influence, while Chinese had a higher degree of yin influence. This impacted their perceptions of how to approach medical conditions caused by an imbalance of the two forces. This can be called a theory of the non-equilibrium of thermodynamics. It is a kind of physics approach, but one that should be called quasi-physics, because at the level of folk culture it allowed for the entry of ghosts or goblins as causative agents.

In the school of yin-yang thought, the yinyang master had a wisdom system that postulated a high degree of free energy, and their view of

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17 Dr. Wong has published his method of medical analysis in Huang Mingda 黃明達, *Zhongyixue he xingershangxue: Boshitun de suixiang* 中醫學和形而上學：波士頓的隨想 [*Chinese Medicine and Metaphysics: Boston Ruminations*] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2008). An English-language version was published as Ming Wong, *Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Metaphysics* (Baltimore: Publish America, 2010). His advice on an herbal recipe for a sleep aid was given to me as recorded in Chapter 4.

the interplay of these forces was not discrete, but was instead very wide-ranging. This allowed them to deal with ghosts and goblins without feeling guilty toward the people they were trying to help. In fact, by offering a placebo or type of hypnosis, their patients could actually feel better after the treatment was delivered. It also allowed for both physical and mental problems to be addressed.

Take the situation of the *Wuyin* Day 戊寅 described above. In this case the ghost had one body with four arms, holding a large ax; when it encounters humans it begins chopping. It caused people to be unable to raise their four limbs, to feel cold and suddenly hot. By Asian theory, the patient was suffering from weak yin and yang inside the body. Medically the person caught a “wind,” and the body experienced hot and cold. In Western medicine this would be similar to a malaise, low fever, perhaps a viral infection. By pinpointing the ghost, and then causing it to leave, the balance of *yin* and *yang* could be restored. The ghost was a type of placebo, and getting rid of it allowed a degree of recovery.

In the case of the *Yimao* 乙卯 Day, the ghost was like a wild beast searching for someone and acted like it wanted to eat their heart and liver. It caused the afflicted to get a headache and fever, the eyelids to swell and the stomach to become hot. This was a more serious case than the one in the preceding paragraph. This patient also had low *yin* but with high yang. He/she caught a “fire” from outside, his/her liver was affected which also affected the stomach. The ghost caused the bad situation, so the ghost had to be removed. Possibly in this case seeing the ghost as a placebo and removing it by itself it would probably not relieve the medical condition. This might have been a case of gastritis.

Finally, let's look at the case of the *Gengchen* 庚辰 Day. The ghost was thin and frail, it gets up and falls down headfirst. The person's body feels heavy, the patient speaks strangely in nonsense syllables. The medical symptoms seem to be lethargy and confused speech. This person also caught a “wetness” from the outside, affecting the kidney, and a “dampness” in the heart affecting his/her mental condition. From the Western perspective, the person needs psychological consultation, help with stress management, and medication to treat depression and anxiety, possibly a life-style adjustment. Here again, as in the case of the *Wuyin* Day, removing the placebo (the ghost) or a form of hypnosis (perhaps through a ceremony of chasing off the ghost) would probably not relieve the situation in any long-term sense.

When the medical situation was not too serious, it could be relieved by yelling at the ghost to leave, or by calling on the spirit generals or writing

a talisman to keep the ghost away. We should keep in mind that not all Chinese people subscribed to this behavior. It was popular among the common people as part of the “folk culture.” This is a medical tradition that has been largely ignored and not studied much. It seems to me that because philosophically China had a lot of theoretical interconnections involving the number five, such as five colors, five elements, five directions, etc., to turn the number five into five ghosts or spirits, as in the “five spirits” discussed above, we see a logical outcome from more sophisticated thinking, down to the level of popular folk beliefs.

Another aspect of understanding the medical conditions described in this *chaoben* is seeing them as a catalogue of afflictions that were probably typical among the poor workers and peasants in rural China. They could grow exhausted from hard work and feel unable even to move their limbs. They could get bad headaches from their weakened physical condition or from the stresses of surviving in an environment that presented many difficulties. Suffering from a severe infection or bodily malfunction, they could get chills, pains, or vomiting. A combination of factors could also lead to erratic and worrisome behavior, such as falling down or speaking unintelligibly.

In the description of each of the ghosts above, could it be said that, psychologically speaking, the ghosts represented the anxieties and fears of the afflicted? For example, a ghost that chops away at someone represents the dangers of a perceived hostile environment; a ghost that bobs its head unable to control its movements or otherwise to be effective in its environment expressed the confusions of a person who felt useless and marginalized; a ghost unable to stop vomiting symbolized a person unable to overcome the threatening or debilitating situation he was in. This degree of interpretation has not been followed in this chapter or in the remarks by Dr. Wong, who is more interested in the medical condition than in the causes (which are unknown to both of us) of the medical condition.

In the book *Fifty Days to Encounter the Five Spirits*, each day listed by the yinyang master is designated by one of the combinations of stem and branch. At the conclusion of the booklet, he gives an overview of the characteristics of which *shen* 神 spirits will respond to the needs of each day according to the branch designation of the day. (Only nine of the ten branch designations are listed.) For example, he writes:

*Jia* days have always been for the mountain deities [*Jiari yuanlai shi shan-shen* 甲日原來是山神]

*Yi* days will be for the tree spirits [*Yiri biding shushen* 乙日必定樹神]

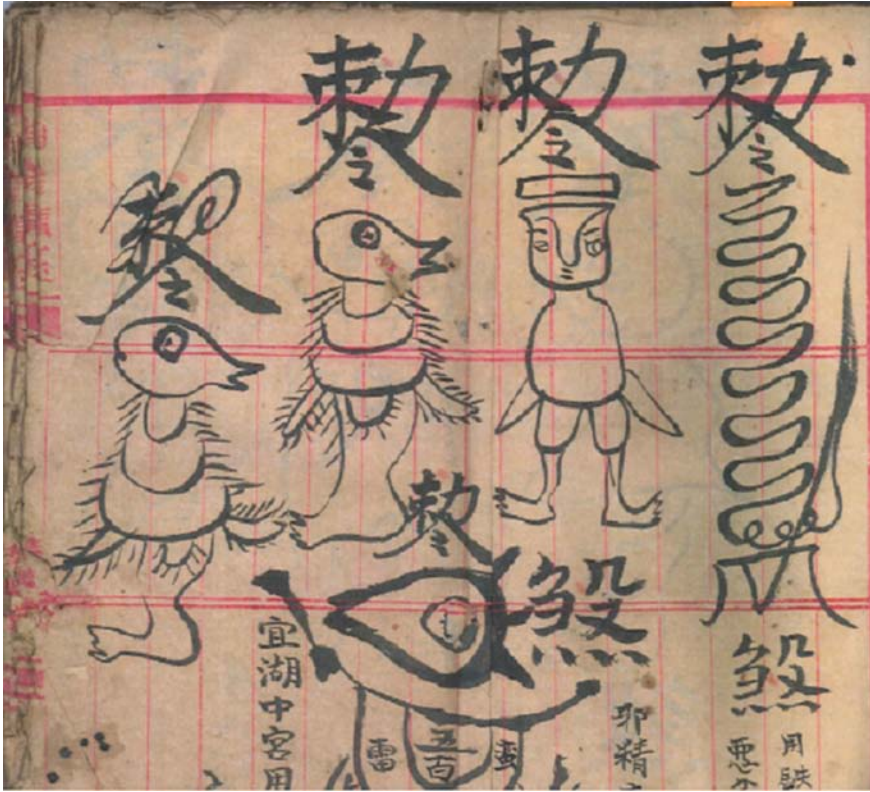


FIGURE 9.6

*Petitions to the Thunder Altar* [Fengzhi chiling leitan 奉旨敕令雷壇], Page 3, *Protection from Evil* [sha 煞]. I assigned the title based on the first talismanic character that appears on the first extant page. Drawings of some of the malevolent forces are on pages 2–5. Various spirit generals [shenjiang 神將] are described, along with incantations [zhou 咒] for approaching them to request their help. Based on dates that appear in the text, this was likely written between 1886 and 1900.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

*Bing* days will see the kitchen god unable to help [*Bingri zaojun dabuli* 丙日皂君大不利]

*Ding* days will have their calamities crushed by the heaven spirits [*Dingri dazai shi tianshen* 丁日打災是天神]

*Wu* days and the land deities sneak around [*Wuri chongzuo shi tudi* 戊日崇作是土地]

*Yi* days are controlled by the Northern Dipper are not propitious [*Yiri beidou bujili* 乙日北斗不吉利]

*Geng* days will find the Buddha comes and makes trouble [*Gengri foye lai rehuo* 庚日佛爺來惹禍]

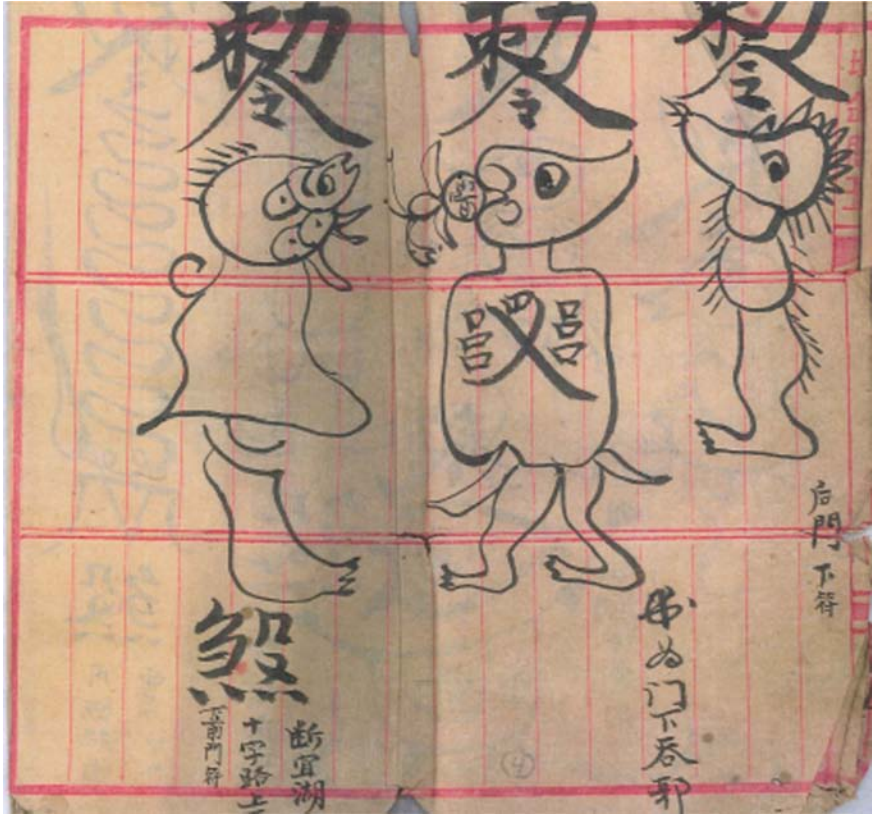


FIGURE 9.7

*Petitions to the Thunder Altar* [Fengzhi chiling leitan 奉旨敕令雷壇], Page 4, *Protection at the Gate*. This page shows door or gate evils that can be controlled by the ritual information given in the text. To call on their protection, one can have a talisman prepared; they would not be portrayed in this manner on the door.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

*Xin* days will find Guanyin won't leave you [*Xinri Guanyin bu lishen* 辛日觀音不離身]<sup>18</sup>

*Ren* and *gui* days are for the five Daoist spirits [*Rengui jushi wudaoshen* 壬癸俱是五道神] (p. 18)

18 Here the word *guan* 觀 is one word written as *mu* 目 plus *jian* 見 (*jian* 見 on the right side, with the eye radical *mu* 目 on the left). This is another example of a nonstandard character.

This step is a further refinement in specifying how certain star spirits [*xing-shen* 星神] and evil forces determine the expected outcomes of each day. It continues to be one of the calculations used by fortunetellers.<sup>19</sup>

### Still More Ghosts

Before we leave this discussion of malevolent ghosts lurking about, let us briefly mention another *chaoben* dedicated to warning people about these troublesome forces: **Incantations to Send Off Ghosts** [Songgui chongzhou 送鬼崇咒]. It first introduces the preparations for approaching this sort of trouble, by suggesting that one worship the kitchen god, hang matching couplets for heaven and earth and to the ancestors [*zuxian dui* 祖先對; pp. 12 and 13] and the “Original Princess of the Jasper Mist,” “Sovereign of the Azure Clouds” [*Bixia yuanjun* 碧霞元君; p. 13]. This beloved maternal figure was extremely popular in Shandong and Taishan 泰山 and in the Beijing area, so we can safely assume this text was prepared in Shandong or Beijing.<sup>20</sup>

The cycle of calendar days and the invading spirit that might be troubling on each day is on pages 14–58. It begins with the first day of the cycle on page 14, “*Jiazi*, Metal Element Day” [*jiazi jinri* 甲子金日]. This yinyang master used a system called “Placing the Sounds and the Elements” [*Nayin wuxing* 纳音五行]. It was a way of arranging all the sixty days into thirty pairs. Each pair is put under one of the five elements. So in this case the first two days, the *jiazi* day and the *yichou* 乙丑 day, belong to the element metal [*jin* 金]. The reference to sound is due to this approach’s origin to an ancient theory of music. The system was not used by all fortunetellers or yinyang masters, so in other systems the days are not necessarily attached to a particular element.<sup>21</sup>

The text for this day reads:

Those who become ill on the *jia* day will not feel calm. They will experience cold and hot flashes; their skin will be flushed. The Ghosts of the Five

19 This aspect of interpreting fortunes can be seen in current horoscopes published in Asia, such as *Zhongbaolou tongsheng* and *Nimaru ichigo Heisei nijūshichinen jingukan kaiunli* 2015.

20 Detailed research on the worship of *Bixia yuanjun* in the Beijing area is in Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

21 I am indebted to He Wumeng 何無夢 (personal communication, September 2016) for this very clear explanation. The system is laid out well in Yang, *Zhuantong wenhua, quanshu*, 96–102.

Roads will come to the home to do mischief, trying to seduce the females and take away their souls. This is because the original request [for help?] has not yet been granted. Quickly face the east and worship the spirit soldiers.

The person who becomes ill on this day will see the Ghosts of the Five Roads, will see spirits, will see ghosts. They will be agitated. It is because someone in the household has committed a transgression. Four malevolent forces are hanging in the room as if a person has died from sickness. The afflicted person has a headache, the heart beats quickly, and there is no appetite. The peak of the illness will come in three, six, or nine days. When the illness is at its worst, worship by reciting the sutra of the kitchen god.

*Jiari debing, bu anning. Zuohan, zuore, mianpi qing. Wutong jiaqin laizuo-hai. Gouyin nv guiwanghunling. Yuanshi jiu yuan weihuanwan; Zhengdong jiqu jishenbing.*

*Ciri debing, zhuangjian wutong, jianshen, jiangui. Shenshang bu'an. Yin jiazhong dezui, sisha wudiao siguo bingren. Touteng rexin, busi yinshi. Fengsan, liu, jiuri bingzhong. Nian Zao Wang Jing ji.*

甲日得病，不安寧。作寒，作熱，面皮清。五通家親來作害；勾引女鬼亡魂靈。原是舊愿，未還完；正東急去祭神兵。

此日得病，撞見五通，見神，見鬼。身上不安。因家中得罪。四煞屋吊死過病人。頭疼熱心，不思飲食。逢三，六，九日病重。念竈王經祭。

Like the fifty-day cycle discussed above, this explanation also describes a person afflicted with physical and emotional trauma. The person has fallen into a situation in which the malevolent spirits are angered. A darkness hangs over the environment that can best be lifted by, in this case, calling on the name of the protector of the household, the kitchen god. The explanations for other days in the cycle also prescribe calling on the kitchen god for help, as in the discussion of the *gengxu* 庚戌 day, which also belong to the metal element (p. 50). The logic behind both of the accounts discussed in this chapter is the same, and the ability of the spirits, malevolent and beneficial, to fight among themselves, is affirmed.<sup>22</sup>

22 **Incantations to Send Off Ghosts** [*Songgui chongzhou* 送鬼崇咒] has 112 pages (including partial pages) and is dated 1887. It was copied by Qu Runtian (**Qu Runtian ji** 曲潤田記, cover, p. 1). All the days in a sixty-day cycle of each of the heavenly stems and earthly

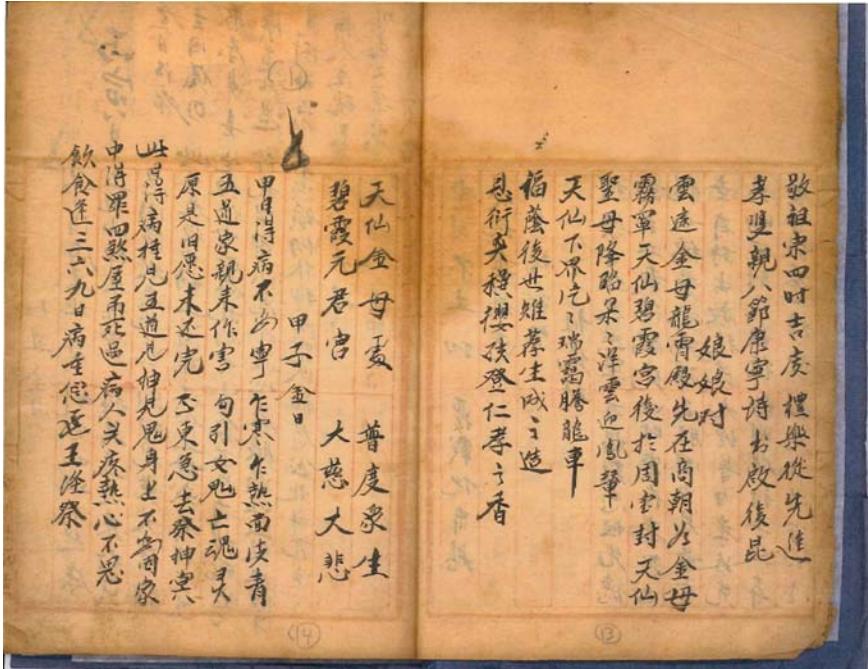


FIGURE 9.8

*Incantations to Send Off Ghosts* [Songgui chongzhou 送鬼崇咒], Pages 13 and 14, *Ghosts of the Five Roads Will Come*. A description of trouble on the *jia* 甲 day is on page 14, in the third vertical line from the right-hand margin. It begins: "Those who become ill on the *jia* day will not feel calm. They will experience cold and hot flashes, and their skin will be flushed. The Ghosts of the Five Roads will come to the home to do mischief, trying to seduce the females and take away their souls. This is because the original request [for help?] has not yet been granted. Quickly face toward the East and worship the spirit soldiers" [Jiari debing, bu anning. Zuohan, zuore, mian pi qing. Wutong jiaqin laizuohai. Gouyin nu, guiwanghunling. Yuanshi jiuyuan weihuanwan; Zhengdong jiqu jishenbing 甲日得病，不安寧。作寒，作熱，面皮清。五通家親來作害；勾引女鬼亡魂靈。原是舊愿，未還完；正東急去祭神兵].

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

branches are listed, including the symptoms of the afflicted person and the benevolent spirits that can be called upon for help. The book is  $7\frac{3}{4}$  in (19.68 cm) h  $\times$  6 in (15.24 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in June 2014. Mr. Qu also offered advice on marriage and on the proper couplets to be hung for the occasion. Later on, he told newlyweds how to avoid pregnancy and how to prepare to move house. It appears that after completing the ceremony involving the spirits, he brings up the topic of money. Was it paper money to burn in offering to the spirits, or was it money to be given to the ritual master who has just completed the ceremony? He may have intended the talk on offering spirit money as a way to remind his clients that he would also like to be compensated. In the second



FIGURE 9.9

*Rickshaw Pullers Resting.* These hard-working common people could easily fall prey to a malevolent force. The evil forces could cause a headache or make the body grow weak, or they could trip the man as he was pulling a customer, resulting in all sorts of troubles. The photo shows the inner gate of the Qianmen Gate 前門 complex in Beijing. The official name of the gate was the Zhengyangmen 正陽門.

PHOTO: RICKSHAW PULLERS AT CHIEN MEN, BEIJING, 1914; PHOTO: WILLIAM LEETE; RESTORATION AND PRINT ©2016 WILLIAM MORSE. USED BY SPECIAL PERMISSION

## Conclusion

The spaces inhabited by the supernatural were in the Heavens above and in Hell below, but it was also in this world of human beings. In the Heavens, the highest spirits were impassive, ruling through their majesty and vast powers. In Hell below the earth, the ghosts and demons carried out the punishments that had been allotted to souls who in life had transgressed the accepted

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half of the booklet, he repeats some of the couplets he recorded on earlier pages and, in some cases, writes down additional couplet texts. A number of riddles are on pp. 86–96; pp. 103–112 return to the topic of advice for people on writing polite letters to relatives.



FIGURE 9.10

*The Dingchou Spirit General Named Zhao Ziyu [Dingchou shenjiang ming Zhao Ziyu 丁丑神將名趙子玉]. His designation, Dingchou, comes from the system of ten heavenly stems [tian'gan 天干] and twelve earthly branches [dizhi 地支] usually used to mark the cycles of days and years. He is considered to be associated with the powerful group known as the Spirit Generals of the Six Jia and Six Ding [Liuja liuding shenjiang 六甲六丁神將]. He commands numerous ghost soldiers [yinbing 陰兵] and can be called upon using special talismans to confront evil and malevolent forces. He is said to be under the command of the Perfected Warrior Great Emperor [Zhenwu dadi 真武大帝]. The original illustration was published in the Collection of Ancient and Current Illustrations [Gujin tushu jicheng 古今圖書集成] section on spirits and the supernatural [shenyi dian 神異典], vol. 32, printed in the early 1700s.*

THIS ILLUSTRATION IS IDENTIFIED AS THE "OX-HEADED SPIRIT," IN G. WILLOUGHBY-MEADE, *CHINESE GHOULS AND GOBLINS* (NEW YORK: FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY, 1926 [?]), FOLLOWING P. 74



FIGURE 9.11

*Panjiayuan Antiques Market in Beijing.* Beijing's Panjiayuan Antiques Market [Panjiayuan jiu huo shi chang 潘家園舊貨市場], which opened in the early 1990s, is where many of the chaoben used in this book were purchased. Although filled with replicas of antiques, most of the chaoben and old documents for sale are authentic. The section of the market in this photo is one area where books and printed matter are for sale.

TAKEN FROM THE BLOG OF WEI LIMIN 魏利民, PARTIALLY TITLED "GATHERING THE WIND, RARE TREASURES FROM THE PANJIAYUAN MARKET" [CAIFENG DAO BEIJING PANJIAYUAN JUIHUO SHICHANG LAI TAobao 采風到北京潘家園舊貨市場來淘寶], AT [HTTP://BLOG.163.COM/WEILIMINOK@126/BLOG/STATIC/7198781320134784346594/](http://blog.163.com/weiliminok@126/blog/static/7198781320134784346594/). ACCESSED 7 MAY 2013

morality. The ghosts could interact with the spirits of the middle rank or lower because in Hell the lower-rank spirits supervised the ghosts. On earth, ghosts and goblins could move about to vex and frighten hapless human beings. Daily tasks were difficult when some angry demon caused a headache or loss of energy. In popular stories circulated during the Qing and the Republic, ghosts could actually cause human beings to die. In the handwritten text *Fifty Days to Encounter the Five Spirits* discussed above, the ghosts could trouble hard-working peasants in all sorts of ways.

While I was still a student studying in Taiwan in the 1960s, I collected information by asking people I met to tell me about their experiences with ghosts. I learned about the ghosts, goblins, and demons that the Daoist deities



FIGURE 9.12

*Japanese Image of a Goblin.* This is an ivory netsuke 根付け figurine from Japan, less than 2 inches tall. It depicts the scary countenance of a goblin and resembles descriptions of them in Chinese-language sources.

THIS PHOTO IS IDENTIFIED AS “MAMMOTH IVORY NETSUKES HANDCRAFTED JAPANESE GOBLIN WITH BELL CARVING,” POSTED ON THE SITE OF INVALUABLE COMPANY, U.K., PREMIER AUCTIONS AND GALLERIES IN NOVEMBER 2015, [HTTP://WWW.INVALUABLE.CO.UK/INVALUABLE/HELP.CFM](http://www.invaluable.co.uk/invaluable/help.cfm)

could control and banish with their spirit generals and spirit troops [*shenbing* 神兵]. In 1967, I had a conversation about ghosts with our *amah* 阿媽 (a maid and cook in our house; this is a polite form of address for an elderly woman, although our *amah* was in her thirties). She was a woman from Hunan with almost no formal education and had come to Taiwan with her husband in the late 1940s with the Nationalist forces. Here is what she told me (April 1967, in Taipei):

When I was about twelve or thirteen years old, near the city of Hankou 漢口, I saw a sick man lying in a nearby house that was not lived in regularly, and his room was bare. At one point, he began gasping as if he would die.



FIGURE 9.13

*Beijing Fortuneteller.* By sitting in public with his “tools” laid out before him, this fortuneteller was advertising his trade and his availability to the public. He did not need a banner or shop sign, and, weather permitting, he did not even need a shop. The photo was taken by Hedda H. Morrison (1908–1991), likely in the 1930s. Morrison was born in Germany and lived and worked as a photographer in Beijing from 1933 to 1946.

PHOTO FROM THE HEDDA MORRISON PHOTOGRAPHS OF CHINA COLLECTION AT THE HARVARD-YENCHING LIBRARY

My young friends and I went into the room, and the man told us to look up at one of the windows high on the wall, saying he had seen a ghost there.

Our amah became very frightened because she saw it, too. It was the face of a Chinese man wearing a Chinese army cap. Her friends all hugged one another, and then they ran out of the room, where our amah became dizzy and almost fainted. Her grandfather put her to bed, but none of her little friends had seen the ghost. Later, when she and the sick man compared what they had seen, they realized they had both seen the same image. Our amah called the apparition a ghost soldier. In talking about this with me, she said she had no idea where the ghost came from or why. I asked her if she ever went to a temple to pray, and she said she had no religious beliefs, except that she believed in ghosts because she had seen one.

Our amah made further comments on ghosts the following day: “There are many types of ghosts, such as male and female ghosts [*nanguì nǚguì* 男鬼女鬼], and they live on a certain spot of land. If someone disturbs them, then they will come to bother that person. They can see you, though you usually cannot see or hear them.”

On the mainland, her uncle had the ability to see these ghosts or at least to distinguish their sounds. Sometimes, while walking along, he would sense one ahead and make a wide circle to avoid them. If a ghost comes to you, you should consult a Daoist master, and he will tell you what type of article will propitiate the ghost. Perhaps you can burn some money or other articles for him. Female ghosts often want some nice clothes or such. In the old days, some ghosts would want articles connected with opium smoking, so these goods had to be bought and “burned for the ghost” [*shaogei ta* 燒給他]. “Many of the young people don’t believe in ghosts and none of the younger people do. But I definitely believe in them.”

She told me that the second time she saw a ghost was a few years earlier, while living in Banqiao 板橋, Taiwan, in the 1950s. One evening, high up in one of the windows, she saw the face of a very pretty young boy; she could not see his body or the top of his head. She knew it was a male ghost because no person is that tall, and there was no way for a normal person to climb up so high as to reach that window. Her friends told her it had been a thief, but she knew it had really been a ghost. The next day she bought some paper money [*jinzi* 金子] and burned it outside her house. She could not remember the amount of the money but it was “several score of bills” [*shiji yuanqian* 十幾元錢]. She went on to say that people usually just happen to run into ghosts if their “luck is bad” [*yunbuhao* 運不好], and then they should offer something to the spirit.

If a person is walking along and bumps into a ghost, he will “fall down dead” [*sidaole* 死倒了]. If your luck is good or you avoid them, they will not trouble you. Usually, they trouble you only because you have disturbed them, because the area was originally theirs.

These ideas about ever-present ghosts persist in China. In 2012 the American writer Michael Meyer spent a year living in the village of Wasteland [Huangdi 荒地] in Jilin Province. One day, he visited a home where a funeral was being held. Outside the home, Meyer encountered one of his middle-school students. Meyer described the encounter:

“Let’s go,” the boy urged, “before the ghost attaches itself to you.” “What about you?” I said. “Why wouldn’t the ghost cling to you?” “I’m a kid! the boy yelled.” “So what? Do ghosts hate homework? They don’t want to go through school again?” The boy pulled my arm and said, “Stop joking. We have to move, before it’s too late.” He handed me the umbrella, and we huddled beneath it on the walk to his house.<sup>23</sup>

The amah’s words and the boy’s fears, along with the catalogue presented in the **Fifty Days to Encounter the Five Spirits** *chaoben* discussed above, sum up concisely the popular perceptions held by the common people in China, then and today. The troublesome ghosts could be anywhere, lurking unseen to interfere with human activity. Best to avoid them if possible, propitiate them with spirit money or other offerings when necessary, and chase them away when you know their names and can discover their hiding place.

This chapter uses the *chaoben* I collected as a way to illustrate the perceptions and involvements of the common people in China from the late Qing (1876 is the earliest dated manuscript discussed in this chapter) to 1967 (when I interviewed our amah in Taiwan), then to the account I read in 2015. The popular religious activities in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore and being revived in China indicate that the same religious approaches as discussed in this chapter are used to deal with issues involving the supernatural today.

The approach of many people until the end of the Republican period was to manually copy a religious text in order to gain merit with the deities in the Heavens. In addition, ritual specialists compiled information about the deities and ghosts, as we examine here in **Secret Text for Summoning the Snake** and **Fifty Days to Encounter the Five Spirits**. They may have had printed materials

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23 Michael Meyer, *In Manchuria: A Village Called Wasteland and the Transformation of Rural China* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2015), 259–260.

or other handwritten texts available to them, because their purpose was to pass on practices that were effective when dealing with ghosts; they were not permitted to be inventive or alter the text they were copying. But in these cases, unlike in accepted Daoist or Buddhist works, the materials they may have copied from were not part of any standard textual corpus, so we cannot verify them against a standard or authorized version; instead, we need to rely on the handwritten versions we have as authentic representations of their views.

The large number of hand-copied books by ritual specialists currently available in the markets in China indicate that involvement with the deities and ghosts among the common people was extensive during the late Qing and Republic. The *pingmin* in China perpetuated a highly symbolic culture involving gods and ghosts. They put their talents and energies together to help their fellow humans gain blessings from the deities and to control the troublesome ghosts that bullied them. We can only fully understand the lives of the common people of China in the period studied in this book if we take into account and give a place of prominence to the tradition of “popular religion,” which formed their perceptions of the realms of deities and spirits. The supernatural was a part of their lives. It materialized in every community celebration held during the calendrical cycle, in every small shrine or imposing temple such as appeared throughout the country.

Springing forth from the grand vision of the forces that ordered life and death came the ghosts and goblins that interfered with one's life in a very personal and intimate way, such as vomiting, a headache, or dizziness. The troublesome spirits were a logical extension of the grander vision of august deities. The troublesome spirits brought the powers of the spirit world down to the level of the individual. At that level, the individual *pingmin* constructed a symbolic and physical world that was immediately understandable and relevant to them.

## Concluding Remarks

### 結論

The goal of this book is to introduce the category of handwritten manuscripts [*shou chaoben* 手抄本] as valuable and heretofore overlooked materials for understanding the lives of China's people between 1850 to 1950. Not only do these manuscripts reflect the prevailing values and world-outlook of the people, but they in particular are materials of special relevance to the masses of the common people [*pingmen* 平民], whose lives can be difficult to document through written sources.

The handwritten materials examined in this book can be said to represent the written records of a largely illiterate people. They did not have the opportunity to gain much formal education, they did not recognize many written characters, and they could not express themselves well through the written word. In general, if we wish to understand the lives of the illiterate or semiliterate Chinese common people who lived in the century from 1850 to 1950, we must rely on the material objects that surrounded them. These objects were things that they created themselves, such as chairs, cooking pots, grinding stones, tools, hand-sewn tunics, and cloth shoes. They constructed buildings and fences and the tools needed for the creation of material objects. From objects on display in museums and in old photographs that have survived, we can see the external material space in which the common people lived.

To some degree, of course, the material items take us into the symbolic and intellectual world of the typical person of that time. For example, a wooden, cloth, and paper stage for traditional Chinese opera gloriously displays the world of vivid colors, accepted symbols of power (e.g., the symbolic flags worn by military generals), symbols of felicity (bats stand for blessings, because both are pronounced *fu*: 福 [blessings], 蝠 [bats]), representations of honesty and innocence (when opera performers had their faces painted red for courage or largely undecorated to show a lack of malice). The outward use of those colors, symbols, and decorations display part of the intellectual world of the Chinese people at the time. But in order to fully enter and appreciate the psychological, emotional, and perceptual universes in which the common people lived out their existence, we need to move beyond the material items of wood, stone, metal, and wattle that surrounded them.

Written materials allow a higher degree of understanding and can give

us a more sustained exposition of what was taking place in the emotions, thoughts, fears, and hopes of the typical Chinese person during the century we are examining. Fortunately, written materials about their lives exist in the handwritten materials explored in this study. They were created by those members of the common people who were able to read and to write to some degree. They were the men who had gained a degree of literacy but could not claim the more exalted social status or longed-for government job as an official that would allow them to earn a sizable income: *xiuca* 秀才, who had just obtained or were trying to obtain the lowest official degree. Even after the degree-granting system was abolished in 1905, people in that economic and aspirational class, who wanted to leave the ranks of the illiterate and low-income masses but never quite made it, continued to wear the traditional gowns and skullcaps of a scholar or a man of social status as a way of advertising their literacy until 1950. In a society in which the vast majority was illiterate, the cap and gown indicating literacy (i.e., people who engaged in mental rather than manual labor) were still powerful symbols.

In order to earn an income, the literate scholars or the yinyang masters [*yinyang shi* 陰陽師] who could read and write a number of characters set up tables at the local market or at the periodic temple fairs to advertise their services. The common people, though illiterate, still had emotional needs and an appreciation of symbolic activities. The peasant, construction worker, or seller of miscellaneous goods might wish to display a festive banner of rhyming poetry to celebrate the marriage of his children, so he hired a scribe to write banners, invitations, or letters for him. People seeking guidance about the future consulted a fortuneteller. Those plagued by headaches or stomach troubles went to an herbal doctor for help. They had fears and worries that they hoped a ritual specialist such as a yinyang master or a Daoist priest could assuage by rebalancing or clearing away the negative supernatural forces that were causing physical afflictions. The periodic markets held throughout China in that century were occasions for the common people to socialize with friends, to trade or sell or buy, to drink and enjoy a lively scene, or “enjoy the commotion” [*kan renao* 看熱鬧]. The markets and temple fairs were also opportunities for even poor peasants from remote villages to interact with the world of those who knew about reading and writing.

The items requested by the common people who were paying for advice, guidance, and help reflected their concrete questions and needs. The materials were prepared by men (almost always men) who could write, who in many ways also comprised the common people, distinguished only by their command of some written materials. Those men knew how to provide information that would be comprehensible, acceptable, and useful to the common

people who were their customers. The handwritten materials in this study are therefore accurate representations of the psychological and intellectual world of the common people in China as they navigated through life between 1850 and 1950. An important point the *chaoben* collectively reveal is that the values, perceptions, and cultural parameters of the majority of the Chinese people remained fairly consistent over that century. As the century progressed, new material objects and sets of actions entered the daily lives of the common people. The new material objects ranged from sewing machines to ready-made clothing, radios, and aircraft. Some of the new sets of behaviors, such as working in a small manufacturing company or along a railroad, changed the work patterns of some of the common people, but most of these people did not change their ingrained patterns of behavior or practices of social interaction—the latter were based on the values and symbols of the general inherited culture. For almost all Chinese, the accepted cultural symbols remained much the same at the end of the century as they had been at the beginning.

Virtually all the handwritten materials discussed in this book reflect the concrete culture created by the common people of the time. The materials existed with reference to the inherited, accepted culture of China, sometimes called the Great Tradition, except that the impersonal historical culture was modified by the common people to suit their particular understanding and circumstances. For example, in the Great Tradition, ghosts were part of the literary genre of stories involving educated scholars who might be seduced by a ghost taking the form of a beautiful maiden, perhaps appearing as a winsome courtesan associated with the august imperial family. But for the common people living in a rural village, the ghosts they encountered and feared were goblins, who created mischief by making strange unexplained noises or who afflicted them with a loss of appetite or vomiting. One might see such a goblin shaking its head uncontrollably or repeatedly clapping its hands—nothing august or literary about that. When the common people asked the herbal doctor for a pill or prescription to ward off physical ailments, that same doctor could also recommend a Daoist ceremony to control the baleful forces of the larger conceptual universe that influenced the perspectives of the rural peasant. In order to be effective and acceptable to the common people, the written materials prepared by the scholars had to address these relevant aspects of the mental and emotional environment in which the common people lived.

The relationship between the common people and the deities of Daoism, Buddhism, and the less-structured but extremely pervasive popular religion is an especially fruitful topic for research. If we include talisman papers with

magic writing [*fu* 符] designed to ward off evil spirits, along with statues of gods and the presence of small temples as part of the religious life of the people, then religious symbols were abundant in every village and city in China during the period under study. In the flea markets where I have shopped in China, handwritten materials about the gods, ghosts, spirits, and evil forces are regularly found. Spiritual, superstitious, and religious ideas were ever present in the lives of most of the common people. The supernatural forces could threaten the safety of daily life in this world and condemn the soul to suffering in Hell after death. The materials examined in these chapters indicate that some Daoist priests or followers had a good calligraphic hand, no doubt a reflection of several years of practice as part of their formal education. Equally we find cases in which the Daoist ritual master had a rather unpracticed hand, not only miswriting characters, but executing them in the style of a person who had never spent much time practicing his writing, a sign of very little formal education. I conjecture that such religious specialists had a background and self-image similar to those of the illiterate common people who went to them for advice and help. Several chapters in this book refer to deities and spirits, and they are fully considered in Chapters 8 and 9.

The differences between the ordered, inherited cultural traditions of the Great Tradition were altered by the realities of daily life for the common people. For example, inherited tradition called for a reverence for all of one's ancestors who had started and perpetuated the family line, but, at the level of the local village, the people who psychologically made up one's kin were the family members they had actually met. The study of a genealogy from 1944 discussed in Chapter 6 illustrates that this was so: one's siblings and cousins, uncles and grandparents were really the most important members in the family's written record, and after their death they were the ones most fervently eulogized and remembered by their living relatives at the ceremonies of ancestral worship.

Some of the common people obtained a few years of formal education. The goal of this education offered in the villages and market towns was not to produce erudite scholars who would leave their mark on China's intellectual history but, rather, to give children some basic skills so that they could provide for themselves when they became adults. In Chapter 4, Teacher Xu wrote of his student who lived above the dry goods shop in Jilin Province after his family had moved to Manchuria from North China. Another teacher, Mr. Bai in Chapter 7, taught his students just enough poetry from the Great Tradition that they could impress their parents, but the two student essays in his hand-copied book showed boys (we assume they were boys) whose calligraphic skills were of a very low level. Both the boys and their teacher, Mr. Bai, were among the masses of the illiterate or semiliterate common people of the time.

Likewise, as a result of very limited educational opportunities, these handwritten materials include many characters that were either nonstandard or incorrectly written [*suzi* 俗子]. Mr. Bai was aware that he could easily miswrite a word, so when he saw a word or phrase correctly written, he quickly wrote it in the margins of the reference work he was compiling. And he was prepared to cross out and rewrite words in which he had jumbled the stroke order. It was important to do this because he used this self-created reference work as a guide when producing written items for his customers. Another not-uncommon practice found in these handwritten materials was the use of homonyms to write down a word that could not be correctly remembered. Several chapters give examples of nonstandard or incorrectly written characters.

The astrologer in Chapter 5 who wrote a horoscope in 1899 was literate, and it appears that the parents who commissioned the study about the future of their male infant may have also been literate. In that chapter, I posit that they may have owned a transportation company of boats along the waterways of Wenzhou. They might have also had warehouses, and they hoped their son might someday take over the business. He may have done so, only to face the Japanese moving into Shanghai in 1937 just to the north of the city at the beginning of World War II. That chapter compares the annual predictions of the astrologer with the historical events in the Wenzhou area, and I find the predictions were amazingly accurate. The copy I bought shows the wear and tear of frequent use, which seems to indicate that the horoscope was consulted often. Written horoscopes from the century under study can be found in the flea markets in China because they were important items for the people who could afford to have one written for themselves or for their children.

Although this book looks at the lives of the largely illiterate common people who in one way or another made use of the written materials presented in this study, the materials themselves tell us that the written word intersected the lives of the common people in many instances. In fact, they seem to have regarded the written word as a necessary part of their lives. Such was particularly the case when it came to marriage, which for the common people may or may not have involved a lot of property or a large dowry, but the joining of two families and the beginning of a new generation on the patrilineal side was an occasion that was not taken lightly. Above I mentioned the need for poetic matching couplets [*duilian* 對聯] to be written on red paper and hung on the gate and in the marriage hall or restaurant where a wedding meal would be enjoyed. If the family had the money to display more formality, written announcements and invitations to the ceremony were needed. Comments about what to write on the red scrolls, how to word a wedding invitation, and

even the ceremonies involved as the newlyweds entered the house where they would live and bow before the stove god are reference points in the handwritten materials considered in this study.

The lunar New Year remains the most festive and critical holiday in the cultural life (and probably also in the emotional life) of most families in China, just as it was in the period 1850 to 1950. A majority of gates were decorated with red banners of poetic New Year couplets. A large number of handwritten materials that I found in the book markets and in many of the materials examined in this study contain suggested texts for New Year poems. The decision of Mr. Bai and Mr. Qian in Chapter 7 to offer New Year couplets for sale were sound decisions, because they were items sure to sell well during the holiday season. By looking at the sample texts they prepared for their customers, we can get an idea of the community in which they lived, because they were preparing sample texts that they expected would be ordered and paid for by people in their community. In order to understand the importance and use of the handwritten material presented in this book, we need to know how to read into them the context of the times and the ways in which they were used; we need to appreciate the economic rationale for producing these manuscripts.

Life was not only celebration, and the common people could find themselves involved in legal disputes. We see from the four legal cases introduced in Chapter 1, as outlined in the handwritten book prepared by the litigator [*songshi* 訟師] offering legal advice, that the sharp distinctions in economic and social status faced by people who had no formal education put them at a distinct disadvantage when confronted by the more powerful members of their community. One of the cases presented in that manuscript is the not-untypical case of a servant girl being raped by a male of the well-to-do family in whose home she worked. Another of the handwritten manuscripts looked at in this book in Chapter 2 contains warnings to a wagon puller, a laborer with probably no formal education and few funds who could easily be taken advantage of by the people who hired him. He was reminded that, when transporting goods, the wagon was weighed empty, then weighed again after the load was delivered. By deducting the weight of the empty wagon, the employer determined the weight of the load and paid the puller accordingly. So in that handwritten manuscript the wagon puller was given a warning to pay attention to the accuracy of the two weights or he could be cheated out of some of his rightfully earned wages. We see from reoccurring comments like these in the handwritten materials that the message was to be careful because society was not prepared to be kind to those at the low end of the social or economic scale.

Much about the social position of the common people can be found in the vocabulary lists [*zazi* 雜字] that are discussed in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. From

the types of words introduced to the moral instructions given, it is plain to see that these guides to writing and improving one's vocabulary were written for those not high in social or economic standing. We can surmise from the information in Chapter 3 that advice to "keep your clothes clean" or "don't get in fights" is given to teens or young men who are trying to make a living; they were not points one would make to the son of a government official. Whenever moral instructions such as this are found in the texts, I label them "conventional morality" because they hold no deep philosophical or ethical principle to be pondered but are, instead, basic instructions to stay out of trouble. Other examples of conventional morality are seen in the amateur poetry in Chapter 3 that was added to some texts to express their author's pride at working hard or an awareness of his own social standing, as in the poem with the line "Man is born by fate to be poor." He wrote this line as a truism, because it was true for him and for those with whom he associated. It was probably perceived as a true statement by most of the people who wrote, listened to, or used the *chaoben* analyzed in this book.

Chapter 2 presents several examples of the self-perceptions of the men who prepared these handwritten materials for their own reference or for sale. We might think of them as occupying the lowest level of educated scholars, the *xiucai*. These literate men had a degree of formal education that included training in using the writing brush for calligraphy, but they lived among and I assume identified most strongly with the semiliterate or illiterate people with whom they had daily contact. Even when a *xiucai* scholar copied out a vocabulary list as an educational aid for a young person we find one instance of the scholar concluding his text by apologizing, "Don't laugh at the poor quality of my unsightly writing." Other similar examples of apologia that strikes one as not pro forma but genuinely offered are discussed in Chapter 2.

Common people including the scholars took pride in their accomplishments and liked to boast about them. In the handwritten materials, they tell us their written work is "worth a thousand cash." We find this reference to "good money" as one in which the *xiucai* scholars or scribes wrote out the phrases about the value of their labors. When giving advice, they told their customers, "A thousand cash is easy to obtain, but good advice is hard to get." One can see this as a form of marketing. It also speaks of the acceptance by these people of their occupation, their place in society, and their confidence in the value of their own work. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 give examples of these types of phrases.

Chapter 3 especially tells us about information written in the margins of these hand-copied manuscripts. Sometimes we find an address or a partial address. When religious texts were copied by hand as a way of gaining merit with Heaven for the writer, it was the practice to write the date the religious

text was copied, often followed by the name of the copyist. Several chapters give examples of this practice. Many copied out materials also list the “studio” or “hall” where it was copied. This may have given an image of the copyist writing in a stately hall or temple, but equally possible is that the studio was almost a fiction, the name of the writer’s room that he used to give the impression of some formality in the copying process. The majority of hand-copied materials have no location or address indicated. This makes it almost impossible to place the material in a geographical setting. It also exemplifies the idea that the writers of these materials had an extremely provincial concept of their place in the world. They were writing in a certain locality, and they assumed what they wrote would be kept or used in that locality. Therefore, they saw no need to write out the province, city, or village where they were working. For them, the world was their immediate vicinity, and they probably did not contemplate leaving that vicinity. Neither did they ever contemplate their handwritten notebooks leaving their side.

In spite of the vagueness of most handwritten materials about names, dates, or geographic locations, it is sometimes possible to infer these aspects of the text. One way is to look for references to geography or climate. For example, in Chapter 2 we find a text that talks about the snows of December. It seems to be written by and intended for readers in a northern and cold climate with enough moisture for snow. Another text given in Chapter 2 almost casually talks about Manchuria, though not in any other identifying area of the *chaoben*. Equally, we can search for words that seem to indicate a period of historical time. A further text discussed in Chapter 1 used the word for officials [*guanya* 官衙] that was current in the Qing dynasty, but used less frequently in the Republican period after the system of imperial offices had been disbanded. From the text, we can guess this is a text from the late Qing or early Republic. Another indication of a text from the early Republic is that, just after the fall of the Qing, many people were not sure how to refer to the new nation. Thus a text discussed in Chapter 1 features the phrase “Great Han Republic,” which gives us a good clue that it dates to the first years of the new Republic (1912–1913). Some texts write of the currency in use as large foreign notes [*dayangpiao* 大洋票], a term that was used into the early 1930s but then fell out of use in the 1930s and 1940s, when other forms of paper money, such as the national currency issued by the Nationalist government, was in circulation, as discussed in Chapter 4. Such clues in the texts are guides to the larger geographic or chronological setting.

This book presents a wide range of handwritten materials. They cover topics from moral aphorisms to petitions to the deities for help, from judgments of legal cases to instructions for a laborer pulling carts. The topics covered were all areas of interest and importance to the common people working in the

villages, working the land, or living in the market towns and trading centers of small walled cities. They show the many fields of endeavor for the illiterate population and where the literate scholars in their midst were catering to their needs when written materials were called for. If we had a set of this wide range of materials for one specific location over a lengthy period, we would be able to use that set of materials to reconstruct the community in terms of its economic life, the businesses there, the degree of its religious activities, the length to which its inhabitants went to follow the social niceties of sending out written announcements or notices of a birth, marriage, or death. Information from an herbal doctor or a legal advisor would tell us about the health of the common people and something about the legal/social troubles they faced. This type of analysis appears especially in Chapter 7 on Mr. Bai and my attempt mentioned above to characterize the community in which he lived.

We lack a large set of handwritten materials for a single place in China for a specific historical period in that crucial century. However, we can use the materials that are available to characterize the lives of the common people of China during that period. The materials collected here come from a fairly wide geographic area in China, and in general they fall within the hundred years period 1850–1950. They appear logically coherent as part of the same sociocultural system, which allows us to conclude that these materials permit a glimpse of the lives and values of the common people of China. With a degree of nuance that previously was available only in works of fiction, these materials allow us to understand much of that fiction written long after the fact of the people's lives. The *chaoben* examined in this book were not works of fiction. They were written at the time that the people who used them were alive. We can assume these handwritten materials are in the common people's own words or in words they would understand and respond to. They reflect the values of action and thought held by those people.

This study has shown why, how, and in what context the handwritten materials were prepared. The *chaoben* considered here were produced during the century 1850–1950, yet they make almost no reference to the changes in material life taking place at that time. This indicates that, for the majority of Chinese people living outside highly urban regions, life did not change significantly over that century. The new objects coming into use in China could be known about but not to the point that they altered daily patterns of life and work—not to the point of altering one's value structure.

This study presents the common people of China during this era as intelligent, complex, hard-working people who, through these written materials, were able to comment on their lives and work. Based on the materials I have collected, they were concerned about family and seem to have felt removed from

political life, even though it could affect their lives. I have found few commentaries about political or national events in such handwritten materials. Instead, the common people were concerned about the supernatural forces in the universe and wary of the spirits that might haunt them. They regularly resolved to make themselves better people through veneration of the deities, as seen in a number of the religious texts examined. They may have been poor in material terms and lacking in formal education, they were not well traveled, and their health might not have been good. But they lived in an extremely rich cultural environment that they created and sustained through generations. If this study allows us to see the Chinese common people, many of whom were illiterate or semiliterate peasants in rural villages, in these terms, then I will be pleased, because they were our fellow human beings, no different in any fundamental way from ourselves.

I would like to address a few words here to the Dear Reader [*quanjun* 勸君], to use a phrase taken from the handwritten booklet about the Wenchang deity discussed in Chapter 2. I am confident this study allows us to speak about the lives of the common people even beyond the points outlined above. We can understand their culture in very concrete terms, citing many specific points because of the observations raised in each chapter and by each handwritten manuscript introduced. We can see what they expected from the scholars they met who gave them advice on marriage, graves, or ghosts. They have told us about their work and how to “keep your head low” in order to move around in society safely. In Chapter 2, we explore a text about how a haughty guest can arrive at your house, enjoy the meal you have prepared, then quickly leave at the end, maybe without much word of thanks. In this study, I have freely offered some analytical remarks, because I think we can only fully appreciate and extract the full meaning of each manuscript by taking such a liberal approach to commentary.

At the same time, every interpretive comment made in this study is based on the concrete words that appeared in the material being analyzed. If the reader accepts the supporting phrases taken from the text as valid, then the interpretive comment follows as logical. If the reader is skeptical or unsure about this chain of interpretation, I invite other interpretations at each point of the analysis, assuming it is based on careful consideration of the textual and supporting material. One of my goals in this study is to make the authors of the handwritten texts as well as the people who read them and who understood their message real, so that we can see them as genuine, living human beings, with their foibles and personalities, hopes and struggles as they progressed through their life's journey. In this way I want to animate the written materials just as they were linked to the animated lives of the common people. Doing this

study has been great fun for me. It has given me energy and the wish to continue in this vein of analysis. I hope the reader experiences similar enjoyment upon reading this book and will be intrigued and delighted.

## A List of *Chaoben* in the Author's Personal Collection Used in This Study

*The majority of items in this list are handwritten, unless otherwise noted. A few are woodblock prints or lithographs. Many of the handwritten chaoben had no cover or title page, in which case I use the first few words on the first readable page as the title. The items are listed below in alphabetical order based on the English-language titles.*

*This list includes all the chaoben mentioned in this book, fifty-seven titles, but my full collection comprises about 250 chaoben. For a more complete discussion of the contents of the ones discussed in this book, please see the notes to the respective chapters.*

**Anhui Collection** [*Anhuiji* 安徽集]. This consists of nine handwritten volumes, dating from 1896, 1924, 1930, 1931, 1932, and 1940. They include many ritual books [*keyiben* 科義本] and other material as well as what appears to be personal reflections. One of the copyists whose name is on later volumes was Cheng Zhenping 程震平, and he may have written or copied all the books. The handmade paper in most of these volumes is of poor quality, made of bamboo with straw mixed in. The calligraphy also indicates a person(s) with limited formal education or practice in calligraphy. I bought the set at the Hangzhou Collected Treasures Market [*Shoucangpin shichang* 收藏品市場] in June 2014. The dealer who sold it to me was from Wanhuangshan 皖黃山, Yin 歙 County, Anhui 安徽 Province, and he told me this collection was from Huizhou 徽州.

**Ancient Texts Explained** [*Guwen shiyi* 古文釋義] is a hand-copied work intended to be used as a textbook for high school or university-level students studying model essays on historical persons and episodes. It is 9–5/8 inches (24.33 cm) h × 5 inches (12.7 cm) w, a good size for a study manual. It has fifty-nine pages plus a front and back cover with text and was purchased in Beijing in September 2005. Its contents are 144 selections of prose from the Qin 秦 (221–206 BCE) through the Ming 明 (1368–1644 CE) dynasties. The woodblock edition of this collection was originally published in 1743. My handwritten copy is titled vol. 5, and the specific date of copying is given: “This book was copied on February 31, 1900, and is listed as vol. 5, Containing Twenty-Two Essays” [*Guangxu ershiliunian eryue sanshirizhi. Jiwuxueshu gongji ershierpian* 光緒二十六年二月三十日止. 輯五學書共計二十二篇]. Among the essays in my manuscript copy is “A Record of One’s Emotions” [*Chenqingbiao* 陳情表], by the Jin official Li Mi 李密 (224–287 CE). The essay discusses the rise of a person of humble birth to high office. Chapter 2 also

comments on the interesting story written on the inside of the back cover, a story probably then circulating among students around 1900, and the response written by another student on the outside back cover. Those items were not part of the standard collection of works included under this title.

**Astrologer's Predictions 1899** (no clear title in Chinese). This colorful and illustrated handwritten horoscope was prepared for an infant whose guardians were concerned about his future. The subject of this horoscope was born in 1898. An August and Accurate Chart of Fate [*Ziwei mingpan* 紫薇命盤] appears on pp. 2 and 3, graphically illustrating the fate of the person whose future was being calculated. The circle was constructed of five concentric rings, meant to be read from the center of the circle outward, following one of the “spokes” in the circle. The following pages contain predictions for each year from 1899 to 1952, using many references to water and water transport. Because of the references to water and the place name Wenzhou that appears in the text, I have assumed this was written for a person living in the Wenzhou area. It is 9½ inches (24.1 cm) h × 5¼ inches (23.5 cm) w and has twenty-two pages. I bought it at the Confucian Temple Sunday Market in Shanghai in January 2012.

**Basic Primer** [*Gyemongpyon* 계몽편 啟蒙篇]. A hand-copied textbook intended to introduce Chinese classical learning to Korean students, it was produced in Korea for Korean students. The *chaoben* opens with the classic text *Lunheng* 論衡 [Balanced Inquiries], by Wang Chong 王充 (27–100 CE?), beginning with “Above is heaven, and below is earth. Between heaven and earth lives man” [*Shang youtian, xia youdi. Tiandi zhijian you renyan* 上有天，下有地。天地之間有人焉]. It might be from the late Choson 朝鮮 period (1895–1910) of Korea. This booklet has grammatical phrases added to the Chinese *wenyanwen* 文言文 text in *hangul* 한글 so that Korean students can understand the phrases written in Chinese characters. The markers were *hangul* phrases, such as *hago* 하고 [and]; *ira* 이라 [a sentence ending], so that it would sound more like a Korean-language work. The handmade paper was bleached and is thicker than most handmade Chinese paper of the era. It is 9½ inches (24.13 cm) h × 8 inches (20.32 cm) w, a shape that looks more square than oblong, whereas most Korean books are square. I bought the twenty-four-page *chaoben* in Seoul in September 2005.

**Cao Suosen** 曹鎖森 is a name written on the cover. This book is a list of incantations to deal with illnesses and other human afflictions, many of which are accompanied by a talisman character [符 *fu*] that will mobilize the deities to help the afflicted. It is written in a quite passable hand. The Celestial Lord Who Relieves Suffering [Taiyi juiku tianzun 太乙救苦天尊] is on p. 11. This deity is usually associated with death, because he descends to Hell to search for and free tortured souls. See p. 18 for summoning General Ding 丁將軍 [Ding *jiangjun*], and p. 19 for summoning

General Heng [Heng *jiangjun* 衡將軍]. They are spirit generals [*shenjiang* 神將] who can command their ghostly soldiers [*yingbing* 陰兵] to defeat evil and troublesome [*sha* 煞] forces. Snakes [*she* 蛇] are talked about on pp. 21–26, viewing the snake as a frequently curative agent. Talisman are drawn on various pages. It is 9 inches (22.86 cm) h × 5 inches (12.7 cm) w, has seventy-seven pages, and was purchased in Shanghai in 2014.

**Ceremonies** [*Liben* 禮本] is a handwritten booklet listing in some detail the various protocols and ceremonies to be followed, especially in a Chinese wedding that will follow traditional practices. It was written by Wu Shubi 吳書壁, probably in 1945. Newlyweds stopping before the stove god is explained on p. 14; the stove god (or the god of the kitchen) is seen to represent the bonds and actions that tie a family together. This was a brave attempt to preserve and continue the complex and established wedding rituals in 1945, at a time when the war with Japan had ended or was about to end, and the Chinese Civil War between the Nationalists and the Communists was about to begin in earnest. It is 7¼ inches (18.41 cm) h × 5½ inches (13.97 cm) w and has seventy pages. I bought it in Beijing in January 2015.

**Celebrations Pawnshop** [*Qingjidang* 慶記當]. This shop was headquartered in Changchun 長春 in the 1920s. Its owner was registered as Luo Ruitang 羅銳棠, and it was located on the main road [Big Horse Road; Dama lu 大馬路]. In the two volumes in my collection is vol. 1 from January 1928, which has a tax stamp issued by authorities in the Republic of China [Zhonghua minguo 中華民國] and vol. 2 from January 1945 as it continued to operate when the region was occupied by Japan and Changchun was the capital of Manchukuo [Manzhouguo 滿洲國], recording its accounts in national currency [*guobi* 國幣]. Customers were each assigned a coded designation, such as *ji* [吉; vol. 1, p. 36], or *zao* [造; vol. 2, p. 46]. Vol. 1 from 1928 is 8¾ in (22.21 cm) h × 7¼ in (18.42 cm) w and has seventy-six pages. Vol. 2 from 1945 is 8½ in (21.59 cm) h × 6¾ in (17.12 cm) w and has 196 pages. Vol. 2 lists the year as Kangde 12 [Kangde *shì'er* 康德拾貳], referring to the reign of Manchukuo's puppet emperor Puyi 溥儀. Kangde 12 was 1945, and it appears this volume was completed at the end of 1944, perhaps by the lunar calendar, but the year designation of 1945 adopted by the Japanese was written on the cover because the Japanese followed the Western calendar. I bought them in Changchun in December 2012.

**Ceremonies for the Dragon Kings** [*Longwang fashi* 龍王法事] is concerned with many Buddhist dragon kings. It explains how to approach them by preparing memorials [*zou* 奏] and official requests [*die* 牒] that are then ceremoniously presented to ask for their help. It is dated *renyin nian* 壬寅年, that is, 1902, and has thirty-four pages of handwritten text, which tend to refer to the dragon kings by their Buddhist (Sanskrit) names. In

Hindu thought, many dragon kings often took the shape of a snake; this concept carried over into Buddhist thought, which postulated many dragon kings and was also appreciated by the Chinese Daoists for its symbolism. Dragon kings have a dual personality because they can bring nourishing rains or wreak havoc through powerful floods. It is 9 in (22.86 cm) h × 5¼ in (13.33 cm) w and was purchased in January 2010 in Beijing.

**Chants of Repentance to the Three Primes** [*Sanyuan fa chan* 三元法懺]. These are prayers, petitions, and confessions to ask for help and forgiveness from the Three Officials [*Sanguan* 三官] honored by Daoists. This fifty-one-page *chaoben* is used as a ritual text [*keyiben* 科儀本] for the popular Daoist (and Buddhist) practice of reciting chants [*chan* 懺] to atone for past transgressions. On the second to last page (p. 49), the copyist gives his name as Wang Shuxiang 王恕鄉 and tells us he copied the book in 1909, in the second month of the first year of the Xuantong era [*Xuantong jiyou yuannian eryuezhong wanggerri chaocheng* 宣統己酉元年二月中望二日抄成]. On the last page (p. 51), the copyist used a brush to pen “Recorded by Wang Shoudao” [Wang Shoudao *ji* 王守道記]. This is likely to be the religious or temple name of the copyist, since the name means to “Protect the Dao.” However, on the first page of the book and at many points throughout the text, “Copied by Wang Youda” [Wang Youda *ji* 王有達記] is stamped in black ink. We can assume that these are all names of the same copyist. The many personal seals placed throughout the text indicate that he was an active ritual specialist and certainly was proud of his work. The book is 9¼ in (25.46 cm) h × 5½ in (13.97 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in January 2008.

**Characters for Elementary Education** [*Zhengmeng ziyi* 正蒙字義]. This is a woodblock printed dictionary that goes well beyond what would have been considered an appropriate level for elementary education. It would have been a useful reference dictionary for a student preparing for a government examination and the degree to be awarded under the traditional system. The title was brushed in, but the printed title on each woodblock sheet says *Zi yi* 字義 [*The Meaning of Characters*]. Part 1 [*shangpian* 上篇] is fifty-one folio leaves, and part 2 [*xiapian* 下篇] is thirty-plus folio leaves. The very pliant quality of the bleached paper and the sharp printing indicate this quality volume is most likely from the late Qing period. My copy does not have any publishing information on it, but a woodblock edition of this title was published in 1901 by the Chongqing Zhengmeng Academy [Chongqing Zhengmeng gongshu 重慶正蒙公塾]. The woodblock edition appears from records to have had reprints of famous “Family Instructions” [*jiaxun* 家訓]. It is 9½ in (24.13 cm) h × 6 in (15.24 cm) w, and I bought it in Shanghai in January 2013.

**Collected Scripture of the Deeds of the Jade Emperor** [*Gaoshang Yuhuang benxing jijing* 高上玉皇本行集經], with an additional short text of six pages titled “Scripture of

Repentance" [*Chanhuijing* 懺悔經]. This is a hand-copied collection of prayers and text honoring the Jade Emperor, based on one of the standard canonical texts recognized by Daoists. Vol. 1 [*shang* 上] has forty-five leaves; vol. 2 [*zhong* 中] has thirty-eight leaves; and vol. 3 [*xia* 下] has forty-one leaves. The entire handwritten version is in three twine-bound volumes on bleached handmade paper and was written in a practiced and attractive though not elegant hand. On the cover page of each volume, the place of copying is given as the Hall of Profound Virtue [Houdetang 厚德堂]. The total of 124 leaves (folded pages), or 248 individual pages, was lovingly written by Gu Yitang 顧義堂 (which may have been his "religious" or "ordination name") in the spring of 1879. The cover of each volume is stamped with a large seal that says "The Three Treasures of the Dao, the Scriptures, our Teachers" [*Daojing shi bao* 道經師寶]. Much good karma must have accrued to Mr. Gu. It is 9½ inches (24.13 cm) h × 5 in (12.7 cm) w. I bought this in Shanghai in 2010.

**Congratulatory Phrases for the Household** [*Jiayong zhuci* 家用祝詞]. This 112-page handwritten book is filled with all sorts of sample letters, matching couplets, family announcements, and so forth, covering all typical family transitions. What appear to be sample letters in some damaged pages are followed by announcements concerning funerals and to have the elder's son or the grandson take charge of the ceremony and the reading of the eulogy, on pages eight to sixteen. Various sample contracts for selling land or manipulating the size of plots, etc. are on pp. 28–48. Other topics covered are marriage [*xinhun* 新婚] on pp. 62–71, and congratulatory phrases for the birthdays of elders [*shou dan* 壽誕] on pp. 72–78. Matching couplets for the deities of popular religion are on pp. 79–91. Two addresses to deliver at a ceremony honoring students who are graduating on pp. 98–101. On this last page is the date of the Tenth Year of the Republic [*Zhonghua minguo shinian suici* 中華民國十年歲次], which is 1921. This book is 9 inches (22.86 cm) h × 5–7/8 inches (14.68 cm) w. I bought it in Hangzhou in May 2012.

**Criminal Inquest** [*Salok jueinchang* 살옥죄인장/殺獄罪人狀] has this title because of one of the items that immediately caught my attention. The books were written in classical Chinese, as was the custom for educated Koreans when using a brush in the 1800s. In vol. 1 on pp. 26 and 27, the writer copied the text of a legal document titled "Criminal Case of Death of the Defendant in Kwangju, Fourth Reading" [*Kwangju salok jueinchang, sajae* 광주살옥죄인장사제/廣州殺獄罪人狀四題]. This was an adjudication, the fourth one, rendered by a provincial governor after reviewing an inquest report compiled by a country magistrate from the county where the drowning death of Yi Tong-ae 이동애/李東崖 took place. It appears that Mr. Yi was stressed out because of the demands of creditors who wanted him to repay his debts, and because of his wife's persistent nagging. The couple got into a fight near a river, throwing sand at

each other, and Tong-ae was acting in a crazed manner. Somehow, by accident, the couple fell into the river and drowned. The court found that Mr. Son 孫, perhaps the creditor who had been constantly dunning the Yis to repay what they owed him, was not guilty of killing Mr. Yi, but he was punished with one round of beating because his constant pressure had caused Yi to become irrational. I assume this incident took place around 1879. Vol. 1, containing the criminal inquest, is 10 inches (25.4 cm) h × 5¾ inches (14.61 cm) w and has thirty pages. Vol. 2 is 12 inches (30.48 cm) h × 6½ inches (16.51 cm) and has twenty-four pages.

**Domestic Gold and Silver** [*neizao jinyinsu* 內造金銀素]. This *chaoben* has lost its cover so I have no information about its name or location or the date of the document. I assigned it this title based on the first words of the extant text. It is from a trading company that dealt in woven products of cotton, brocade, and wool. It also sold animal skins and furs for clothing. In addition, it was a dealer of precious stones used for jewelry and ornamentation. The company listed the products it offered for sale, which had been acquired from all over China as well as from abroad. The first section, cloth and woven products, is on pp. 1–17. Each item is described by the point of origin of the product and the lengths in which it was available. The second section, animal skins [*pi lei* 皮類], is on pp. 17–19. The third section is precious stones [*baoshi lei* 寶石類], on pp. 30–43. This section includes a discussion of how to distinguish precious stones from less valuable stones and how to determine their market value. The geographic place and references used mark this *chaoben* as being from the Qing era. Among those place names are Shuntian *fu* 順天府 (p. 10), Korea [*Chaoxian guo* 朝鮮國; p. 10], Huguang 湖廣 (p. 13), Gaoli 高麗 (p. 17), Fengtian *fu* 奉天府 (p. 21). The book is 10½ inches (26.67 cm) h × 8¼ inches (20.96 cm) w. The paper used, which is as thin as cloth with many imperfections, dates it to the mid-Qing; however, considering the wide areas from which the products came, it might be from the late Qing and could have been based in almost any part of the country. The forty-three-page *chaoben* was bought in Beijing in 2012.

**Eight Effective Formulas** [*Ba qinkoujue* 八親口訣]. The final character 決 [*jue*] should probably have been written 訣. This is a handwritten collection of incantations addressed to the Eight Evil Great Generals [*Basha dajiangjun* 八煞大將軍]. Because they are so powerful and frightening, the text also includes many magic talisman [*fu* 符] that can be used to command and control the generals. These talisman contain many characters and make good use of calling upon the thunder god [Leigong 雷公] to keep the spirit generals under control. It calls upon the Spirit Generals and their troops and horses for help in dealing with unwanted ghosts [*gui* 鬼] and evil forces [*sha* 煞]. The generals themselves are evil but can be commanded to suppress the evil forces. This is a representative portion:

The spirit soldiers with horses, go under the bridge; soldiers without horses, march under the bridge. Soldiers who arrive at the altar, remove your armor. As horses arrive at the altar, take off their saddles. At this time your follower will burn incense to ask a thousand soldiers and ten thousand horses to attend the altar.

*You ma shenbing, qiaoxia guo; wuma shenbing, qiaoxia xing. Bing daotanqian, xiexia jia. Ma dao tanqian, xiexia an. Jinshi, dizi fenxiang, qing qianbing wanma, fu tantang.*

有馬神兵，橋下過；無馬神兵，橋下行。兵到壇前，卸下甲。馬到壇前，卸下鞍。今時弟子焚香，請千兵萬馬，赴壇庭。

p. 19

Drawings of some *sha* forces are on pp. 47–52, with talismanic characters dealing with *sha* on pp. 43–46. This fifty-three-page text is 9¾ inches (24.76 cm) × 6¼ inches (15.87 cm) w. It was written and illustrated in October 1904, and I bought in Beijing in January 2015.

**Eulogies** [*Mansa* 만사/輓詞]. The front and back covers are missing from this fifty-five-page handwritten manuscript bound in twine. It is a lengthy and detailed commentary on the proper way to hold a funeral and burial. The text contains two funeral orations [*chaemun* 제문/祭文], which appear to be eulogies written by the author of the text or by a relative but copied into this text. These have useful information to help us place the entire manuscript in the context of its location and the family described. The book is 9¾ inches (24.76 cm) h × 9–7/8 inches (25.02 cm) w, giving it an almost square shape, which was uncommon in Chinese *chaoben*. I bought it at the Sŭngmun'gak 승문각/承文閣 in Insadong 인사동/仁寺洞, Seoul in December 2010.

**Exchanging Conventional Greetings** [Hanwon ch'arok 한원차록/寒暄筭錄], a guide about how to properly address government documents, letters, and official reports. The text was compiled in 1606, but this woodblock reprint appears to be latter Yi Choson 이조선/李朝鮮 (i.e., 1800s). It is 10¾ inches (27.3 cm) h × 7½ inches (19.05 cm) w, and was purchased in Seoul in December 2010.

**Family Registry** [*Jiabu* 家簿]. This is a seven-page handwritten family history that was written in 1742 during the reign of the Qianlong emperor (1735–1796). It was prepared by Zhao Xing 趙星 from Quwo 曲沃 County in Shanxi 山西 Province. He has basic listings for five past generations, but for his father's generation (generation number six) and his own (generation number seven), he lists several uncles (along with the surname of their wives and the number and sex of their children), and he lists his

three brothers along with their wives and children. Zhao Xing and his three brothers had single-character [*danming* 單名] given names, but each name had a “sun” [*ri* 日] element. His brothers were named Min 旻, Yu 昱, and Jing 景, and he was named Xing 星. The large size of the pages indicates this may have been a family of some standing that showed its social status by producing the genealogy in this oversize format. Chun Shum 沈津, while the rare book librarian at the Harvard-Yenching Library, confirmed that the bark-fiber paper appeared to date from the Qianlong era. This work, bound in twine, is 15½ inches (39.4 cm) h × 10 inches (25.4 cm) w and was purchased in Beijing in April 2009.

**Fifty Days to Encounter the Five Spirits** [*Wushi zhiri feng wudao* 五十之日逢五道]. This is an example of written material that might be used by a yinyang master [*yinyang-shi* 陰陽師] or an exorcist. It contains a sixty-day cycle (actually here a fifty-day cycle) explaining the goblin that might cause physical distress on each particular day. It gives the name of the noxious spirit, the kinds of physical ailments it will cause, and the location in or near the household where it hides. This is clearly not an elegant work but one meant to be used by a person not of high social standing. The paper is of bamboo with some straw mixed in, but it is smooth and soft and so can be considered good paper. Bought in December 2012 at Beijing’s Panjiayuan market, this nineteen-page handwritten *chaoben* is 7¼ inches (18.41 cm) h × 5 inches (12.7 cm) w and bound with twine.

**Fortunes** [*Ming* 命]. This 196-page account was written with a fountain pen and then a ballpoint pen, covering the period from the 1950s through the 1970s. It appears the fortuneteller used these pages to calculate the fate of the people who came to ask his advice and to write down his prediction about their fate. The book is 9¾ inches (24.76) h × 6¾ inches (17.15 cm) w. I purchased it in Harbin 哈爾濱 in June 2011.

**Funeral Orations** [*Jiwen* 祭文]. The cover page has fallen away from this book, so it has no title. Funeral orations were eulogies that were read out at funerals, before the ancestral altar or in front of the grave at memorial services. They usually are from the point of view of the “unfilial son” [*buxiaozi* 不孝子] and recall the hard work and self-sacrifice of the departed, usually a parent, whose life is being memorialized. Sometimes, when the reader recalls memories of past events from earlier days, the text becomes quite personal. It likely dates from the early Republic, because the text contains the phrase Great Han Republic [Dahan minguo 大漢民國, which later became the standard Zhonghua minguo 中華民國]. Among the smaller number of handwritten *chaoben* that I found at Korean markets, composing eulogies for departed relatives seems to have been considered an important part of honoring the departed, and they seem to be more common in Korea than in China. The funeral orations are on pp. 5–19, followed by a poetic rhyming section on pp. 21–54, based on the *Kangxi Dictionary*

[*Kangxi zidian* 康熙字典]. It is not unusual to find a *chaoben* with information on several subjects within its pages because *chaoben* like this one can be seen as reference notebooks used by the person who wrote out the text. This *chaoben* is 7½ inches (18.41 cm) h × 4¼ inches (10.79 cm) w, and I bought it in Guilin in September 2005.

**The Golden Bough** [*Dajinzhi* 大金枝]. This story that has several names, the more common ones being “Striking the Golden Bough” (*Dajinzhi* 打金枝, which has the same pronunciation as written in the *chaoben* in my collection but uses a different character), and “Striking the Golden Bough While Drunk” [*Zui dajinzhi* 醉打金枝]. It is a well-known story based on actual historical figures. Guo Ai 郭曖 (725–800) was the sixth son of the well-respected General Guo Ziyi 郭子儀 (697–781). In the year 765 the thirteen-year-old Guo Ai was married to the Princess Royal Shengping [Shengping *gongzhu* 升平公主], who was similar to him in age. They had a passionate relationship in both their intimate relations and in their quarrels. The story has been made into traditional operas of all types, as well as into stage plays, movies, and television dramas. The text in my collection tells the story with dialogue and singing. It also has stage directions for all of the opera performers written throughout. The book of forty pages is 8½ inches (21.59 cm) h × 7¼ inches (18.38 cm). My colleagues suggested this was from a southern-style opera [*yueju* 越劇] version. Inside on p. 22 is the name Zhang Jishan 張繼善, which might have been that of the owner of the manuscript, the copyist, or one of the performers who thought of himself as notable. It was purchased in Hangzhou in June 2012.

**Household Almanac** [*Jujia biyong* 居家必用]. This is a handwritten almanac intended for people in Gaomi County, Shandong Province, based on an address written on the last page (p. 155): Great Qing, Shandong Laizhou *fu*, Gaomi *xian*, Zemin *xiang*, Dianxi *she*, Immortal Li Village [Da Qingguo, Shandong, Laizhoufu, Gaomixian, Zeminxiang, Dianxishe, Lixianzhuang 大清國，山東，萊州府，高密縣，澤民鄉，店西社，李仙庄]. The Gaomi County designation also appears on pp. 20 and 74. This is a quick compendium of things a farmer might need to know, such as how to write numbers in the traditional or complex style, or as so-called Suzhou numbers [Suzhou *mazi* 蘇州碼子] based on an ancient rod system that was once popular in Chinese marketplaces and used by merchants or for commercial purposes. It also gives the major crops grown, information about the growing season, a glossary of many words for items of everyday use, types of dwellings, medicines, the deities worshiped, and so on. It also describes ghosts that can afflict a person, calculated for a thirty-day period. This lists the ghosts by day, surname of ghost, and location in the home where the ghost can be found sitting. This section of the manuscript (pp. 139–150) is titled “List of Sick Days” [*Fabingshu* 法病書]. The date this was copied is given as 1935 (p. 155), but the original date of the

manuscript dates from the Qing dynasty. The book is  $7\frac{3}{4}$  inches (19.68 cm) h  $\times$  5 inches (12.7 cm) w. I bought this 155-page *chaoben* in Beijing in June 2010.

**How to Cure Illness** [*Bing zhi fang* 病治方]. A woodblock printed text of sixty-eight highly illustrated pages written (based on the name stamps inside) by Hao Liugui 郝留桂. This looks like a Qing-era work. Can animals be responsible for certain emotional and mental irregularities? The illustrations in this booklet sometimes show a person curled in a fetal position, with the drawing of a scary insect above them and a brief explanation of the presenting symptoms on the page. The small book is 6 inches (15.24 cm) h  $\times$   $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches (10.79 cm) w. It was purchased in Beijing in 2013.

**An Illustrated List of Common Words** [*Huitu suyan zazi* 繪圖俗言雜字]. This is a *zazi* intended primarily to teach how to write characters that could be used for self-study. Each page has illustrations of clothing, goods for daily use, utensils, and items for religious occasions. The student who rebound the book in 1941 wrote its title as “List of Common Agricultural Terms” [*Sunong zazi* 俗農雜字, a title in common use], with his name: Liu Weisheng 劉衛生. This book of nineteen folio leaves is 8 inches (20.32 cm) h  $\times$   $5\frac{1}{4}$  inches (13.34 cm) w. It was printed in Andong 安東, Manchukuo, in 1936.

**Illustrated Precious Jade Calendar to Save the World** [*Huitu Yuli baochao quanshi-wen* 繪圖玉曆寶鈔勸世文] (Shanghai: Jinzhang tushuju, 1921?). This publication has appeared in China for decades. It contains stories of people who have turned to the deities for help with sincerity and have been rewarded with good fortune. The stories seem to be drawn from real life and are updated in the various published editions, so that, whereas the version listed here gives stories from the Qing through the early Republic, modern versions currently available in China have stories that took place in the 1920s, the 1970s, and so on. This book is treated as a “precious book” [*shanshu* 善書] and is reprinted by many temples in China and given away free. The book also has an illustrated section portraying the netherworld of Hell to which sinners are condemned to suffer. In this edition, the illustrations are on pp. 7–18. This is a printed edition. The book is  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches (21.21 cm) h  $\times$   $5\frac{3}{4}$  inches (14.61 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in June 2013.

**Incantations to Send Off Ghosts** [*Songgui chongzhou* 送鬼崇咒]. This title has 112 pages (including partial pages) and is dated 1887. It was copied by Qu Runtian [Qu Runtian *ji* 曲潤田記; cover, p. 1]. All the days in a sixty-day cycle of each of the heavenly stems and earthly branches are listed, including the symptoms of the afflicted person and the benevolent spirits that can be called upon for help. The book is  $7\frac{3}{4}$  inches (19.68 cm) h  $\times$  6 inches (15.24 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in June 2014.

**Internal and External Medical Complaints** [*Neiwaikē yānkē zāzhēng* 內外科眼科雜症]. Diseases of the eye, or oracular medicine, is also included in the title [*yānkē* 眼科]. This seems to be the collected writings and notes of Dr. He Jinliang 何錦樑, who practiced in Shanghai in the 1930s and 1940s. He was an herbal doctor. Based on these collected writings, he also seemed to have been a practicing Daoist ritual specialist. In the text, he turns from copying down prescriptions for various medical afflictions to suggesting some Daoist rituals to remove noxious forces. Moreover, he was possibly a landlord who collected rent from tenants west of Shanghai. It is possible Dr. He owned some properties [called *zhuang* 庄] near Hangzhou, but confirmation of this awaits more research. Instead of properties, might these have been small pharmacies? Or was *zhuang* a code word for people who owed him money?

It seems as if at some point he took a lot of his writings on varying sizes of paper and bound them together. It is equally possible that his students bound them together after Dr. He's death. Some differing calligraphic styles are evident in this collection, which measures 8 inches (20.32 cm) h × 5¼ inches (13.33 cm) w. Tucked inside the pages was a small pamphlet of common medical terms and their manifestations, titled "Popular Medical Advisor" [*Minzhong yiyao guwen* 民眾醫藥顧問]. It was distributed free by the Shanghai United Friendship Society [Shanghai lianyishe 上海聯誼社] and is dated 1945. This eleven-page pamphlet is 5¾ inches (14.61 cm) h × 3¼ inches (8.26 cm) w. I bought Dr. He's writings in Hangzhou in May 2012.

**Invitations and Matching Couplets** [*Tieshi duilian* 帖式對聯]. This handwritten text could be used as a practical reference work on how to word invitations and social notices politely in a rather stylized, perhaps even then outdated manner, and it also contains sample texts of various matching couplets [*duilian* 對聯] to be used on celebratory occasions. The *chaoben* is dated 1907. Its sample texts distinguish all categories of relationships, each calling for the use of a particular relationship term. This is one of the *chaoben* I bought in South China that has covers (endpapers) of a red-orange color. This type of paper was used from the Ming and Qing dynasties in Guangdong 廣東 and other southern provinces. It was treated with insecticide, a mixture consisting of red lead [*hongdan* 紅丹], sulfur, and saltpeter. Its bright color was called "Ever Red" [*wannianhong* 萬年紅]. It was toxic to bookworms and was meant to protect the inside pages of the book. Indeed, the pages of this book do not show the typical holes made by worms or insects typically found in old *chaoben*. The stamp of the owner Dong Gongda 董恭燿 is on various pages in accountant's ink, which was blue or purple. The basic quality of the paper, made from bamboo, is good. The discoloration around the edges of the pages was caused by an oily substance, but the paper remains strong and intact nonetheless. It has 114 pages and measures 5½ inches (13.97 cm) h × 5–7/8 inches (14.73 cm) w. I bought it in Guilin in September 2005.

**Items for Mourning** [*Ch'osang ch'egu* 초상제구初喪諸具]. This handwritten book from Korea of seventy-six pages devotes most of its text to funeral and mourning rituals. On page 67, the author includes a chart of all the Yi Choson kings, ending with the “current” [*kümsang* 금상/今上] King Ch'öljong 철종/哲宗, who reigned from 1849 to 1863. By listing him as the current king, we know this text was written before 1863. Perhaps this was a type of “subversive” text that would have been dangerous if found by certain factional leaders, and so its author hid its observations of political party factionalism within a book about funeral arrangements? The paper is made from white mulberry (referring to the category of the plant, but not its color). It is pure white mulberry bark paper. Paper made from bark is thicker and sturdier than other types of handmade paper. A sieve with a wide woven pattern was used in making it. After the Song dynasty, in general the Chinese produced less paper using mulberry bark, preferring less expensive materials, such as rice or bamboo. The book is  $7\frac{3}{4}$  inches (19.68 cm) h  $\times$   $5\frac{1}{4}$  inches (13.34 cm) w. I bought it in Seoul in September 2005.

**Land Contracts of the Tang 湯 Family of Hanyang** [*Hanyang Tang-shi diqi* 漢陽湯氏地契集]. Their property was located in Hubei 湖北 Province, Hanyang 漢陽 *fu*, Huangpi 黃皮 *xian*, Xi 西 *xiang*, near the Tianjing 天井 temple. The handwritten land contracts in my collection date from 1775 to 1948, and the names of the contract writers, guarantors, and witnesses will allow, among other information, the reconstruction of the male members of the clan over that 173-year period of time. This collection contains over thirty handwritten land contracts, some tax receipts, and three requests to a Daoist temple for religious services on behalf of a family member. I acquired this collection in Shanghai in 2008.

**Land Documents** [*Densho meitsuki shōmon Mukai* 田所名附證文向]. These are handwritten records from Japan that describe the sale, transfer, and disposition of land. The lands referred to in this collection were located in Echigo 越後, an area on the central [*chūbu* 中部] and western side of the main Japanese island of Honshū 本州, roughly equivalent to the present-day prefecture of Niigata 新潟. The specific address, as written on p. 79, was Echigo, Koshi-gun, Takanami-hiro [越後古志郡高浪 [広?]]. The records were written by a retainer [*omi* 臣] to the lord of the area. The *omi* was named Senji 仙兒. His seal appears below his name on page 79, which lists him by his correct title as “Retainer” [*Shinshi* 臣子]. This collection was prepared in 1849. The book is  $10\frac{3}{4}$  inches (27.31 cm) h  $\times$   $9\frac{3}{4}$  inches (24.76 cm) w. I bought it in Tokyo in 1995.

**A List of Characters to Teach the People** (*Shenqun shunzi* 申群順字). This is a vocabulary list (*zazi* 雜字) intended primarily to teach written characters. It could be used without a teacher for self-study. This work of twenty-four pages was purchased in Beijing in January 2008. It is  $6\frac{3}{4}$  inches (17.14 cm) h  $\times$  4 inches (10.16 cm) w. This is a handy

“pocket” size. The title page contains the words, “Written on 12 June 1930 (in the intercalary month of June), in the summer.” In the student’s poor calligraphy is written the inspirational phrase “The Mountains are High and the Rivers Long.” (*Minguo shijiunian runliuyue shi'erri xiali. Shangao shuichang* 民國拾玖年閏六月十二日夏立。山高水長, page one.) The text follows ideas of conventional morality: “Respect heaven and honor the earth, Honor your ancestors and make offerings to the gods; Be obedient to your parents, Increase your children and grandchildren,” (*Jingtian lidi, jizu sizong; Xiaoshun fumu, fada zisun* 敬天禮地，祭祖祀宗；孝順父母，發達子孫, pages twenty-two and twenty-three). Some scholars have suggested this item could be titled “Words (Written) by Shen Qunshun.” That is because the first three characters form a commonly used name and the complete title still would read the same as I have given for this *chaoben*. On the first page it gives its title as “Four Word Vocabulary List” [siyan zazi 四言雜字], which although a generic title, can be taken as its title. In that case the title I have given above would read “Written by Shen Chunshun” [Shen Qunshun *zi* 申群順字].

**Liu Fengge** 劉鳳閣 [Liu Phoenix Hall, or the name of the author of this text]. This name is stamped on the cover of both volumes in purple ink. This is a handwritten text about how to prepare woodblocks in terms of the calligraphy of the wood measurements and carving text into it. It appears to have been written in late 1936, with notes and the date of January 1937 added. The earlier date Kangde 康德 3 (1936) refers to the Manchukuo 滿洲國 period. Vol. 1 is thirty-two pages, using lightweight, probably machine-made paper. Vol. 2 has forty-six pages. Each volume is 8 inches (20.32 cm) h × 5¼ inches (13.34 cm) w, purchased in Harbin in January 2013.

**Ma Family Land Contracts** [*Mashi diqi* 馬氏地契]. This is a bound collection of land contracts (deeds). The Ma family property was in Hebei 河北 Province and was referred to as “our village” [*jiangcun* 蔣村, a phrase that appears in most of these contracts; p. 15]. Twenty contracts are bound together covering 1879 to 1943. They are all white deeds with no seals of any kind, though it is clear the Ma family played a central role in writing and verifying each deed, including measuring the land [*guanchi* 官尺] to be rented or sold. The cover pages had blue accountant’s cloth pasted over them, as was typical in commercial ledgers. The collection is 10½ inches (26.67 cm) h × 9–7/8 inches (25.02 cm) w. It has forty pages and was purchased in Beijing in June 2013.

**Ma Jiwu** 馬驥伍. This is a collection of observations on life. It is an eighty-eight-page handwritten collection produced in 1924. Mr. Ma. He appears to have lived in Manchuria. Among other topics, he wrote about sexual activity at the time and the intersection of sex and money. He was studying Japanese (pp. 60–82). In 1927 another person acquired this work and wrote that Mr. Ma had moved to Lanzhou 蘭州, Gansu

甘肅 Province, to become an official. “The official appointment took away his free time” [*Guan ranshi zhi suishibian* 官任事止隨時變; p. 86]. The book is 7–7/8 inches (19.94 cm) h × 5½ inches (13.97 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in May 2010.

**Mr. Bai’s Notebook** [*Bai xiansheng zhi chaoben* 白先生之抄本]. The booklet had no title, so I named its author Mr. Bai [*Bai xiansheng* 白先生]. This *chaoben* is filled with some standard poetry, with an essay, but the majority of items are sample texts for matching couplets divided into categories. This was a working text, often consulted, with new information added at various points. It is a good example of the notebook kept by a *xiucai* 秀才 scholar in the course of his business dealings, which were based on the scholar’s ability to read and write, earning income as he catered to the needs of the less-literate masses. It has forty-three pages and was written in late 1912 or early 1913. Mr. Bai’s book is 6 in (15.2 cm) × 7¼ (18.4 cm) and was purchased in Beijing in May 2012.

**Mr. Qian’s Notebook** [*Qian xiansheng zhi chaoben* 錢先生之抄本]. This handwritten notebook had no title. Mr. Qian’s working notebook is filled with sample texts for matching couplets, divided into categories that reveal the prosperous and economically active community in which he lived. We think this community was Kaiping 開平 County, Guangdong 廣東 Province. The calligraphy was neatly done, the book is clearly organized, the pages are clean and of better than average quality. The cover and earliest pages are missing, but the pages intact are well prepared and the only calligraphy is that of Mr. Qian. The sixty-two pages of this book measure 6¾ inches (17.1 cm) h × 4–7/8 inches (12.4 cm) w. I bought it in Hangzhou in June 2012.

**A New Collection of Regular and Commercial Couplets** 共和普通商用對聯新編 [*Gonghe putong shangyong duilian xinbian*], ed. Master of the Qingyunxuan [*qingyunxuan zhuren* 清雲軒主人] (n.p., 1915). This is a printed book of sample celebratory matching couplets that might have been used in Tonghua 通化, a city in southern Jilin Province, as indicated by the fact that the cover has that name on it. This is an example of printed editions of sample couplet texts available to anyone in 1915, around the time Mr. Bai in Chapter 7 was producing and selling celebratory scrolls. Collections such as this were useful for people who wished to write the scrolls for themselves or to earn income by writing these texts for paying customers. It is two volumes bound together, vol. 1 of nineteen folio pages, and vol. 2 of twenty-three folio pages. I bought this *chaoben* in Changchun in December 2012.

**On the Foundation of Marriage (This Edition) Free of Mistakes** [*Hunyuanjiang wushi* 婚元講勿失]. The text claims to lay out all the elements that must be in place to secure a successful marriage. Because spirits and forces abound, every precaution must be taken

to carry out each small detail correctly in the planning and execution of the wedding. This text would have been used by a fortuneteller, a yinyang master, or a ritual specialist to calculate the most propitious time and manner to conduct the ceremonies. These specialists might have been the same person, because their skills and knowledge were not always sharply distinguished or specified. The text would have been a complete reference work for the task, because it even includes talisman [*fu* 符] on pp. 52–54. This work of sixty-eight pages is 7 inches (17.8 cm) h × 4½ inches (11.43 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in September 2005.

**One Thousand Three Hundred Words** [*Ch'on sambaekcha* 천삼백자/千三百字]. At first glance, this fifty-eight-page manuscript from Korea, neatly copied onto handmade rice paper, appears to be a typical Chinese vocabulary list. My conclusion is that the book was written in 1966. The term “ceasefire” [*chǒngjin sǒnǒn* 정전선언/停戰宣言] was in common use in South Korea after the Korean War. Assuming this was used in the 1960s, perhaps by a village school teacher to instruct his students in learning Chinese characters, which were in great use at that time, this document shows the extension of the Korean *chaoben* tradition well into modern times. The book is 8 inches (20.32 cm) h × 7 inches (17.78 cm) w and was bought in Seoul in January 2011.

**Petitions to the Thunder Altar** [*Fengzhi chiling leitan* 奉旨敕令雷壇]. The title page and earlier pages have fallen away from this sixty-seven-page book, so I assigned the title based on the first talismanic character to appear on the first extant page. The text is written on printed red-lined writing or accounting paper with columns marked in red lines. On the fold (the outer edge of the pages) of the paper is written “Increase wealth, gather treasures” [*Zengjin jiyu* 增金積玉], printed by the Hall of Stability [Tailintang 泰臨堂]. This type of printed paper format was popular from the late 1800s through the Republican era. Drawings of some of the malevolent [*sha* 煞] forces are on pp. 2–5. Various spirit generals [*shenjiang* 神將] are described, along with incantations [*zhou* 咒] for approaching them to request their help. Based on dates appearing in the text, this was likely written between 1886 and 1900. Bought in Beijing in January 2015, this is 9 inches (22.8 cm) h × 10 inches (25.4 cm) w.

**Popular Knowledge, Volume 3** [*Tonggam, gwanji sam* 통감 권지삼/通鑑卷之三], a history of the Chinese Eastern Han Dynasty (194–128 BCE), dated 1890. It is 12 inches (30.48 cm) × 8¾ inches (20.95 cm) w, and was purchased in Seoul in January 2011. This appears at first glance to be a woodblock print done in a complete woodblock edition style. But a closer examination shows it to be entirely hand-copied. It was perhaps a student's workbook. In which the text is very clear and all the characters are carefully written.

**Prayers to the Dragon King** [*Longwang fashi* 龍王法事]. The inside cover page has a more descriptive subtitle: “Recommended Memorials, Petitions and Certificates for a Religious Service” [*Gongjin biao shu die fashi* 貢進表疏牒法事]. It describes the sorts of memorials [*zou* 奏] and official requests [*die* 牒] that can be prepared to call upon the dragon kings for help. The dragon kings are addressed in this text by their Buddhist (Sanskrit) appellations. These deities are approached for help to bring rain and could also be requested to control floods. The text was written in the *renyin* 壬寅 year, and 1902 seems a reasonable date, judging from the handmade paper and the twine binding of the work. Based on the cover title on red paper and subtitle inside on red-purple paper, plus abundant red circles in the text for punctuation, this was clearly used by a ritual specialist. It has thirty-four pages and measures 9 inches (22.86 cm) h × 5¼ inches (13.33 cm). I bought it in Beijing in 2010.

**Precious Mirror of the Li Family** [*Lishi chuanjia baojian* 李氏傳家寶鑑]. This was written in 1907 by Li Yaguang 李亞廣. A handwritten record of 144 pages, it contains fairly detailed entries for all the generations, including additional paragraphs on the family property and business interests of family members. It could have been the written text in preparation for a printed edition. It has good comments about this family, which was proud of its commercial activities and real estate. The *chaoben* is 6¼ inches (15.9 cm) h × 5-1/8 inches (13 cm) w and was purchased in Beijing in January 2008.

**Precious Repentances to the Three Primes** [*Sanyuan baochan* 三元寶懺]. This handwritten account of seventy-five pages was rebound in heavier paper sometime in the 1950s or 1960s, and it appears the title and the name of the altar where it was held were cut from the original cover and pasted onto the heavier new cover. In the same red paper as the title, the altar is given as Record of the Altar of the Mysterious Thunder Deity [*Xuanmiao leitan zhi* 玄妙雷壇誌]. The book is organized into three volumes, and each volume calls upon one of the Three Officials [*Sanguan* 三官] for assistance. On the first page of text, the title is given as “Precious Repentances to the Yoga Three Primes, Complete” [*Yujia sanyuan baochan quanbu* 瑜伽三元寶懺全部]. Yoga refers to the practice of meditation followed by Buddhists, Hindus, and Daoists. This text was copied in the autumn of 1863, “Respectfully given by Mr. Tian Yicheng for use on the altar” [*Jing yu Tian Yicheng xiansheng tanzhong yingyong* 敬於田一澄先生壇中應用; p. 75]. The book is 9¾ inches (24.76 cm) h × 5½ inches (13.97 cm) w.

**Records Prepared in 1811** [*Bunka hachinen fuyu okakitsuki* 文化八年冬御書附]. The subtitle on the front cover of this *chaoben* from Japan is “Records Handed to the Official at the Time of His Transfer” [*Odaikan kōtai no toki no hōsesōrōbun* 御代官交代之時之報請候分]. This handwritten collection of documents was prepared for the officer in

charge of the shogun's lands [*bugyō* 奉行] at the time the officer was transferred from the rural estate to the capital at Edo. This collection was then given to the new officer in charge, who proceeded to the estate. On pp. 48 and 49, we see that these documents were copied out by Watanabe Seihei 渡邊瀨兵衛, who was the shogunal administrator of Osaka (then called *Ōsaka machi* 大坂町). His seal in black is on this collection. On the back cover is the phrase "A total of thirty sheets have been put together here" [*uwagami tomo sanjūmai* 上紙共三十枚; p. 54]. This collection is pure bark paper made from white mulberry. It shows many insect holes. The paper deteriorates very slowly, leading to the popular conclusion that bamboo paper will last for five hundred years, but mulberry bark paper will last for one thousand years. The book is 9¾ inches (24.76 cm) h × 6¾ inches (17.15 cm). I bought it in Tokyo in August 2007.

**The Red Shore** [*Hongpu* 洪浦] is a manual used by a professional [litigator] [*songshi* 訟師]. He might have set up a table at a periodic market or at a temple fair where he was approached by people needing his services. Common people sometimes had a grievance they wanted to take to the officials at their local government office [*yamen* 衙門], hoping for an official sanction of their complaint and some redress to their problem. Sometimes relatives fought among themselves, and the only way to settle the issue would be to consult with a litigator outside the family. In more serious cases of theft, or rape, or repudiation of a recognized agreement, papers could be prepared by the litigator and presented to the local officials. Six brief legal cases are outlined in this handwritten *chaoben* on pp. 1–16. The remainder of this booklet until p. 44 goes into detail about a system of fortunetelling by casting dominoes. It appears the man who worked as a litigator was also a fortuneteller, and this was a reference book he probably wrote and used. The paper is bamboo, with some straw and some bark mixed in. The paper is thin, and not of bad quality. The booklet is 6¼ inches (15.87 cm) h × 4½ inches (11.43 cm) w. It was purchased in Guilin in September 2005.

**Repentance in Homage to Heaven, Complete** [*Chaotian chan, quan quan* 朝天懺，全券]. This is a handwritten text addressed to the Jade Emperor. It was copied in the Hall of Heaven's Emolument [Tianlutang 天祿堂]. The full title of the text, written on the first and final inside pages is "Correct Way, Thirty-Eight Apologies of Repentance in Homage to Heaven" [*Zhengyi chaotian sanba xiezui fachen* 正一朝天三八謝罪法懺]. The phrase "correct way" or "orthodox unity" [*zhengyi* 正一] probably refers to the Zhengyi sect of Daoism, which today is more popular in South China than in North China. This is possibly a Republican-era text written on machine-made paper. It has sixty-three pages and measures 10½ inches (26.67 cm) h × 5–2/3 inches (14.6 cm) w. It was purchased in Beijing in March 2009, but is originally from Hengyang 衡陽, Hunan 湖南.

**Repentances to the Supreme Three Primes to Forgive Sins** [*Taishang sanyuan youzui fachen* 太上三元宥罪法懺; written on the inside pages as *Taishang sanyuan miezui miaochan* 太上三元滅罪妙懺]. The collection is in three volumes, totaling forty-seven pages. Each volume addresses one of the Three Officials [*Sanguan* 三官] and gives the text of memorials [*zou* 奏] that can be written to approach them, often with the words following the text “after delivering this memorial, it is burned” [*toubiao fenhua* 投表焚化; p. 30]. This includes the phrase “To Revere Heaven on the 15th day of the first month ...” [*Tianzungyan zhengyue shiwuri* ... 天尊言正月十五日 ...; p. 3]. This shows the conflation in which the beginning of the first *yuan* [*yuanyao* 元宵] on January 15 is also addressed to the First Yuanguan [*Shang yuanguan* 上元官], as discussed in Chapter 1. This text was copied in the Hall of Auspiciousness [*Ruitang* 瑞堂], and it was copied by Qin Yicheng 秦一誠, who was searching for the Dao but had not yet achieved it, as he wrote of himself at the end of vol. 2, p. 30, “have not achieved the Dao” [*mo Dao* 末道]. The text is 9¾ inches (24.76 cm) h × 8¼ inches (20.95 cm) w and was purchased in Beijing in March 2009, though it originally came from Hengyang 衡陽 in Hunan.

**Repentances to the Three Officials** [*Sanguan chan* 三官懺]. This text was hand-copied in September 1876. The title as given on the inside pages is “Ceremony of Repentances to the Three Primes” [*Chaoli Sanyuan chanfa* 朝禮三元懺法]. The participant is frequently advised to “Carry out the ceremony with a determined heart” [*Zhixin chaoli* 志心朝禮], and, for emphasis, someone put three red circles above this phrase in vol. 1, p. 24 and elsewhere in the set where the phrase appears. The copyist identified himself by his given name as Mr. Yuruo [Yuruo *shi* 兩若氏] of the Clear World Pavilion [*Shiqingtang* 世清堂]. Vol. 1 [*zheng* 正] has thirty-five pages; vol. 2 [*zhong* 中] has twenty-two pages; and vol. 3 [*xia* 下] has twenty pages. Its volumes are 8¼ inches (20.96 cm) h × 5¼ inches (13.33 cm) w. This is another of the books originally gathered in Hengyang, Hunan. I bought the three string-bound volumes in Beijing in 2010.

**Rhyming Dictionary** [*Yinyun ziyi* 音韻字義]. The copyist’s name was Dong Chengxiang 董成祥. The undated book lists together characters that have the same sound, with an explanation for each sound or a compound where it is used. The dictionary could be used to write poetry, or it could be for the purpose of increasing vocabulary. The handmade paper is of medium quality. All the characters are written in the complex form. This appears to be a Republican-era text. The forty-eight-page book is 8¼ inches (20.96 cm) h × 4½ inches (11.43 cm) w, bound in twine. I bought it in Beijing in May 2010.

**Riches Bestowed** [*Qianjinfu* 千金賦]. This was likely intended as a reference book to be read, perhaps as a text used by a yinyang master [*yinyangshi* 陰陽師]. Sections

of the booklet cover marriage and childbirth, and most sections make reference to supernatural forces, such as stars and deities that influence human affairs. Based on its use of the phrases “big foreign money” [*dayangpiao* 大洋票] and “national currency” [*guobi* 國幣], both terms used in the Republican era (p. 69), this is probably a Republican-era text. A list of the streets in the town in which the writer was working is on p. 73, so old city maps would help to pinpoint the city. Some of those street names were: Min jie 民街, Huigong jie 惠工街, Sunjiawan jie 孫家灣街, Chongde jie 崇德街 (p. 73). My research indicates that the city was Chaoyang 朝陽, Fengtian 奉天 Province. This is a work of seventy-four pages written in a very good calligraphic hand on poor-quality handmade paper. The ink still looks crisp. It has a section along the outer folded edge where a goat or a rat took a bite out of the book and the animal's saliva stained the surrounding paper. The paper is of bamboo with some long bark fibers. It is 8½ inches (21.59 cm) h × 5¼ inches (13.34 cm) w, a size convenient to be a reference book. It was purchased in Beijing in August 2005.

**Ruili Accounts** [*Ruili qingchaozhang* 芮裡清抄賬]. This company operated like a bank or a moneylender in Shandong 山東 Province. Next to many of the business or individual names listed in the volume are the names of the local community, often a village or small hamlet. By placing all these locations geographically, we can see the area in which the Ruili Company operated; thirty-six place names are given. Each account is listed with the name of the responsible individual, and sometimes the account is listed by the name of the company. The Ruili Company recorded commitments and accounts in this volume between 1924 to 1932. Like most commercial ledgers, this uses running-hand script [*xingcaoshu* 行草書], making it hard to decipher many of the characters and numbers. The paper used was machine-manufactured accountant's forms with columns in red ink and marked “Increase Disciplined Flourishing” [*Zengshunxing* 增順興]. The book is 7¼ in (18.41 cm) h × 6 in (15.24) w. It has 298 pages and was purchased in Beijing in 2011.

**Secret Text for Summoning the Snake** [*Shechuan miben* 蛇傳秘本]. The bulk of the twenty-nine-page handwritten work is incantations calling on Laozi for assistance. It is based on the idea the venerable Laozi assumed the shape of a snake, which has often been seen as one form that a dragon could take. On pp. 3–4 and 9–18 are ten incantations [*zhouyu* 咒語] all addressed to Laozi 老子 by his official title Most Ancient Noble [Taishang laojun 太上老君]. They are all titled “respectfully submitted” [*fyi* 伏以] and end with the words “I petition” [*wu feng* 吾奉] as well as the standard phrase used to conclude Daoist incantations and ritual petitions to the deities, “Promptly, promptly, decree in accordance with the statues and ordinances” [*Jiji ru lvling* 急急如律令]. The paper is of poor quality. Many pages are on paper with a grid printed in red, which is common in account books and diaries in the late Qing or the early Republic.

The phrase in the fishtail of the outer folded edge of each page is “From One Dollar, [One Can] Earn Great Profit” [*Yida wanli* 一大萬利]. It is 6¾ inches (17.14 cm) h × 7¼ inches (18.41 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in June 2014.

**Selected Essays** [*Jingxuan shiwen* 精選時文]. I assume this *chaoben* was kept by an instructor at the Home Study Academy [*Jiaxiu tang* 家修堂], and the date on the cover is the *bingzi* 丙子 year. Judging from the topics of the essays, I think 1876 is a reasonable date for this collection because essays from the 1920s and 1930 had nationalistic rhetoric, but these essays seem to look more to classical tales for inspiration. The instructor’s comments critiquing the essays were pithy and useful for the students. For example, “The style is good. Don’t include too many points” [*Se dangxing; bude duojian* 色當行；不得多見; p. 22]; “Keep your eye on the peak. Pull together your energy. You will do well in the exam!” [*Yangao yuding; lida yushen. Tongshizhong jiezuoye* 眼高於頂；力大於身。童式中傑作也; p. 28]. The book is 7 in (17.7 cm) h × 5 in (12.7 cm) w. It has 244 pages and was bought in Beijing in May 2012.

**Six-Word Vocabulary List** [*Luyanzazi* 六言雜字]. This is a work of twenty-three pages, bound with string, and written on handmade paper that contains a lot of chaff but took the ink well. The copy was made by Wang Juhe, who wrote “earnestly recited by Wang Juhe” [Wang Juhe *qin song* 王聚和勤誦], which could mean he copied and studied the text or that he actually wrote it. This is probably a Republican-era copy. The author uses many nonstandard [*suzi* 俗字], popular forms of the characters in this text. A particularly interesting section is the concluding pages (pp. 21 and 22), where writer Wang Juhe had an out-of-body experience by dreaming he had died but could see everything going on around him. The paper is made from bamboo with some bark mixed in and makes a sharp sound when lightly crinkled. A lithograph vocabulary list with this title was published in the Republican period (1912–1949) by Putong shuju in Shanghai. I compared some phrases from that work to the copy discussed here, and they do not seem to be the same. This vocabulary list was purchased in Beijing in 2015 and measures 7¾ inches (19.68 cm) h × 4¾ inches (12.06 cm) w.

**Shortcut to Vocabulary Words** [*Jiejing zazi* 捷徑雜字]. This is a woodblock printed volume of fifty-four pages. A handwritten cover gives it a date of January 1, 1950, but the pages and the paper of the text indicate a date more than thirty years earlier. The cover was written by Yan Shuwen [Yan Shuwen *dushu* 顏書文讀書; p. 53] and was also used by his relative Yan Xibang 顏錫榜, whose name is on the front cover as well. They have also written some words on the cover that might have appeared on the original: “Popular Pocket Edition” [*Jiayong xiuzhen* 家用袖珍]. “Guizhou for felt rugs and silk” [*Guizhou jijuán* 貴州鬪絹] and “*magua* jacket to protect from the wind” [*magua pifeng* 馬褂披風] are listed on p. 46. These give clues about the origins of

this text. The reference to Guizhou might indicate it was written in Southwest China, although products from Guizhou likely had a national reputation. The *magua* was a Manchu-style short coat that became very popular in China and was worn throughout this period. In contemporary China, it is often called a “Tang-style coat” [Tang *zhuang* 唐裝], which is not historically correct but shows how the Chinese people have made this Manchu import their own. A vocabulary list with this title was published as a lithograph copy in 1871 issued by Yue Chongde 岳崇德 and edited by Yue Heng 岳衡. The title is very generic, however, and, since I have not seen the lithograph copy to compare the contents, I cannot tell whether they are similar. This book is 8¼ inches (20.95 cm) h × 5 inches (12.7 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in July 2011.

**Song by the Wenchang Emperor Advocating Filial Piety** [*Wenchang dijun qinxiao ge* 文昌帝君勤孝歌]. It was copied in the Hall of Respecting Goodness [Zongshan tang jinglu 宗善堂敬錄]. This thin book has fourteen pages written in a quite good hand, indicating a person who was comfortable and accomplished at using the writing brush. It is bound in twine, and the paper seems of mediocre quality, rather rough and coarse. Wenchang is one of the deities in popular Daoism in China who is associated with those in professions that use the writing brush, such as accountant, government bureaucrat, teacher, and student. In this text, the popular Daoist deity is called upon to teach sons and daughters how to follow the important Confucian value of filial piety [*xiao* 孝], or respect for one's parents and family members. The back cover mentions a date: “Respectfully recorded in the late summer of 1886” [*Kan zai bingxu nian mengxiaxia huangonglu* 看在丙戌年孟夏下浣恭錄; p. 14]. The term *xiahuan* [下浣] means during the last ten days of the month. The *bingxu* 丙戌 year fell in 1826, 1886, and 1946. I think this manuscript was copied in 1886. The manuscript was physically copied, as recorded on the back cover, in the Studio of Orderly Study [Luyu siqixue shi 錄於思齊學室], probably the copyist's studio. On pp. 10–13, some characters that are apparently miswritten indicate clearly that this text was copied from another manuscript, possibly by a student whose teacher then made the corrections in red. The book is 9 inches (22.86 cm) h × 4½ inches (11.43 cm) w and was bought in Beijing in September 2005.

**Standard Elementary Education** [*Zhengyi qimeng* 正義啓蒙] is a lithographed text, but the pages appear in the format of woodblock pages, with a border around the text and the title in a column on the outer fold of each page. The book actually discusses classical phrases taken from the *Lunyu* 論語 [*Analects of Confucius*] and how to write *bagu* 八股, the eight-legged essays that were once used as part of the official government examinations. The section on eight-legged essays is in vol. 2, side 1B to 2B, and is dated June 1898. Most sections are brief and useful as an introduction for students at the beginning of their studies. It is two volumes bound as one (vol. 1, sixteen folio leaves, vol. 2, fifteen folio leaves). On vol. 1, side A, is the preface from an earlier

edition of the book titled “Preface to Beginning History Studies” [*Shilun chujie xu* 史論初皆序]. This preface is dated June 1898. A date of 1901 appears in the text on vol. 1, side B, but the volumes, the only two available to me at the time, were published in Shanghai by Guangyi shuju in 1916. A possible one-time owner of this book was Liu Zhilong 劉志龍, who wrote his name on the first page, in fountain pen. I bought this in Guilin in September 2005.

**Student Li Hongduo** [*Xuesheng* Li Gongduo 學生李洪鐸]. He was born in 1937. This is his diary/workbook from 1951, when he was a middle school student in Ruichang 瑞昌, Jiangsu 江蘇 Province. The thirty-four-page *chaoben* tells both about his lessons and the pro-Russian atmosphere at the school. He wrote down his weekly schedule, and his name is proudly stamped on p. 13. He also tells us the names of his best friends. It is bound in twine on poor-quality browned paper. It is 7¾ inches (19.68 cm) h × 5¼ inches (13.34 cm) w. It was bought in Beijing in July 2011.

**Supreme Morning Text for Becoming an Immortal** [*Taishang xiuzhen chenke* 太上修真晨課]. This is a handwritten copy of a Daoist text meant to be recited in the morning as part of the devotions that begin the day, and at places in the text are indications that a particular phrase should be spoken three times: “Ever pure, ever serene, most supreme heavenly worthy, three times” [*Changqing changjing wushang datianzun, san sheng* 常清常靜無上大天尊，三聲; p. 2], along with prayers to “cleanse my heart” [*jingxin shenzhou* 淨心神咒; p. 3], “cleanse my mouth” [*jingkou shenzhou* 淨口神咒; p. 3]; “cleanse my body” [*jingjing shen shenzhou* 淨淨身神咒; p. 4]. It proceeds to address the land god [*tudishen* 土地神; pp. 4–6] and the Three Officials [*Sanguan* 三官; pp. 11–48]. These prayers must have produced a fresh and clean and confident feeling in the person reciting them. The text was written in a good hand, probably by a Daoist monk or a ritual specialist (in a style called the sutra script or block standard [*xingkai* 形楷] often used by religious-affiliated persons in the Qing and Republican periods). The forty-eight-page handwritten text is not dated and could be a late Qing (1890–1911) document as easily as a mid-Republican-era (1920s–1930s) *chaoben*. I bought this in Shanghai, but someone (in the 1940s or later) wrote in ink the place name Kui 奎 Village, Wujin 武進 County. Today this area is called Wuzhou 武洲 District, Changzhou 常州, Jiangsu 江蘇 Province. The book is bound in twine. The book is 8¾ inches (22.22 cm) h × 5 inches (12.7 cm) w. I bought it in January 2012.

The section on “cleanse my heart,” “cleanse my mouth,” and so on, is a standard introduction to beginning the chanting of a sutra text. A similar set of practices appears in **Morning Altar Text** [*Zaotan gongke* 早壇功課], an eighty-three-page hand-copied text. The original front and back covers have fallen off, which means the loss of the last page, which normally has the date and the name of the “hall” or “studio” name where the text was copied. The introductory cleansing portions of the text are on pp. 2–4. This

text highlights the names of several Daoist deities. The second half of the book, pp. 53–83, is an **Evening Altar Text** [*Wantan gongke* 晚壇功課] that begins by addressing the Celestial Lord Who Relieves Suffering [Taiyi jiuku tianzun 太乙救苦天尊; discussed in Chapter 8], and it goes on to address other deities. Judging from the paper quality, very clean appearing almost machine-made, this text might be from the 1930s. It is 8½ inches (21.59 cm) h × 5¾ inches (14.61 cm) w. It was bought in Beijing in January 2015.

The standard cleansing text continues to be used today, as can be seen from the text in “The Efficacious True Sutra of the God of Medicine” [*Lingying Yaowang zhenjing* 靈應藥王真經] on pp. 4–6. This forty-six-page offset printed pamphlet was compiled and printed jointly by the Hubei Province Taishanguan Monastery of Shiyang City [Hubeisheng shiyangshi, saiwudang daoxie, taishanguan 湖北省，十堰市，賽武當道協，泰山觀] and the Beijing Imperial Fire God Temple [Beijing chijian Huode zhenjunmiao 北京敕建火德真君廟], in 2014. The book is labeled a precious book admonishing people to do good deeds [*shanshu* 善書] that is not to be sold but distributed *gratis*. This pamphlet is 8 inches (20.32 cm) h × 5½ inches (13.97 cm) w.

**Sutra of the City God, Sutra of the Dead** [*Chenghuang jing Duwang jing* 城隍經度亡經]. The Sutra of the Dead of the title is inside this text, labeled as the Sutra of the Six Hells [*Liu yu jing* 六獄經], on pp. 17–43. This is actually composed of several shorter Buddhist-inspired texts. For example, the Precious Sutra of the Correct Teaching of the Dizang King [Dizang wang 地藏王] about the Blood Mountain as Revealed by the Buddha [*Foshuo dazang zhengjiao xueshan miaojing* 佛說大藏正教血山妙經] begins on p. 18. An unfortunate woman's soul [*hun* 魂] was consigned to this purgatory because she had died in childbirth and had lost a lot of blood. As described in the Sutra of the Six Hells she might have to experience a mountain of blood [*xue shan* 血山; pp. 18–25], a lake of blood [*xue hu* 血湖; pp. 26–29], a sea of blood [*xue hai* 血海; pp. 30–33], a pool of blood [*xue chi* 血池; pp. 33–37], or a vessel of blood [*xue pen* 血盆; pp. 37–43]. Although the adjectives used to refer to these places tell of filth and dirt [*huiwu* 穢污] and filthy blood [*huixue* 穢血; p. 34], and although the various tortures and the ghosts who rule this realm, the judges and small ghosts [*panguan xiaogui* 判官小鬼; p. 35] are in the unwelcome place, still there is redemption, as shown by the phrase “Look into the vessel and pond of blood and there are five lotus blossoms coming forth” [*Kanjian xuepen chizhong you wuduo lianhua chuxian* 看見血盆池中有五朵蓮花出現; p. 41]. The lotus is a pure white flower that grows in the mud, a Buddhist symbol of forgiveness and of overcoming the filth of the world to reach a higher sphere. The Dizang King was a deity able to descend to the netherworld in order to free the souls there and speed their rebirth. A date that appears is the *wuzi* 戊子 year, which is either 1888 or 1948. Based on the text and the paper, a date of 1888 seems reasonable. At some point, the booklet was falling apart, so it was pasted onto a notebook of machine-made paper, making a date of 1948 also possible. The text may have been written by Xia Linchang 夏林昌, whose

name appears. Xia was in Quanzhou 全州, Guangxi 廣西 Province, about 100 miles northeast of the often-visited tourist spot of Guilin 桂林. Quanzhou was a key market city and trading center and was seen as the transportation entrance to Guanxi, linking it with Hunan 湖南 Province. This text may have been written on the unused side of Mr. Xia's ledger. It is folded like a typical Buddhist sutra in the "accordion-fold" style, in this case with forty-three "pages." It is 9 inches (22.86 cm) h × 4¼ inches (10.79 cm) w. I bought it in Beijing in May 2012.

**Talking about Vocabulary Lists** [*Shuo zazi* 說雜字]. These are the first words of the text, which I selected as the title in the absence of a cover. Its official title as printed on the fishtail [*yuwei* 魚尾, typically used in woodblocks straddling the outer fold to print the title or perhaps a motto of some sort] of the folded pages is *Sanyan zazi* 三言雜字 [*Three-Character Vocabulary List*]. The focus of this vocabulary list is opening a business, calling friends together to help, dealing in a correct way with officials, and conducting oneself as an upright business owner. Most of the middle pages in the text list the types of shops and stores that one could open. This is an extensive list that allows us to reconstruct a late Qing or Republican-period commercial street in China. The examples given are for various types of retail stores. Judging by the contents, the paper used, and the lithograph process, this printed book was produced between 1912 and 1927. This is a lithographed print of ten folio leaves that I bought in Hangzhou in 2012. The book is 6¾ inches (17.14 cm) h × 4¾ inches (9.52 cm) w.

**Tang Family Genealogy** [*Tangshi jiapu* 唐氏家譜]. This is a handwritten genealogy of only thirteen pages. The cover has no writing on it and no title. The entries for each generation are brief and generic. My research indicates that this family could trace its roots to the Ming dynasty and in 1944 (when I think this was written) was in its twenty-first generation. I believe both the father and his son surnamed Tang 唐 wrote the final pages of this work together. Their view of the family was the standard inherited idea of a patriarchal family, in which the men might sometimes give themselves honorific names [*hao* 號] and enjoy concubines. At the same time, the son in his entries followed his heart, rather than strict reporting rules. He wrote about his female cousins who may have died or married into another family. Female family members were often omitted from their own family's genealogy and entered, instead, in their husband's family record after their marriage. This work is 9½ inches (24.1 cm) h × 5½ inches (14 cm) w, and I bought in Ji'nan, Shandong, in March 2009.

**Three Items for Mr. Xu** [*Xushi sanzong* 徐氏三種]. This is a good example of handwritten materials copied and bound by a professional scribe, who then put his shop's seal on the work. The materials were to be used by Teacher Xu for his classroom, except perhaps for the recipe for an herbal sleeping aid, which would have been more suit-

able for someone middle-aged. Because this has five binding strings, I believe it was bound by a Korean, and we know that at the time many Koreans lived in Panshi 磐石, Jilin 吉林 Province, where the copy shop was located. It contains a recipe for an herbal sleeping medicine, a complete text of the *Qianziwen* 千字文 [*Thousand-Character Classic*], a riddle [*dasizi* 打四字], and some list of names most likely of his students, their addresses, and comments on their names. This is 9¾ inches (24.76 cm) h × 8¾ inches (22.22 cm) w, which gives it a square shape, similar to Korean string-bound books. The book has 103 pages including the front and back cover. I bought it in Beijing in September 2005.

A woodblock publication with the same title appeared in the early Qing. It consists of three volumes, each containing a text popularly used in elementary education: the *Sanzijing* 三字經 [*Three-Character Classic*], the *Thousand-Character Classic*, and the *Baijiaxing* 百家姓 [*Hundred Surnames*]. The set was based on a collection from an earlier Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279) edition compiled by Wang Yingling 王應麟. The Qing collection was annotated by Wang Xiang 王相 and edited by Xu Shiye 徐士業. It was reissued in 1821 by the Fuchuntang 富春堂 in 1821. Therefore, when Teacher Xu made a copy (I assume in about 1883) to use in his classroom as a textbook, he was likely familiar with the title because the reissued edition was still in circulation, so kept that title for his copied materials. Indeed, he had the *Thousand-Character Classic* reproduced, but the other copied items were for his own use in the classroom. Was that because he did not have much money and could not pay to have the other two titles copied?

**Using the Western Calendar as a Guide to Writing (Your Fortune) through the Five Stars** [*Xiyang dili liangtianchi feixie wuxing* 西洋地曆量天尺飛寫五星]. The astrologer who prepared this horoscope wrote in a distinctive calligraphic script, using the calligraphy style known as the “sutra script” or “block standard” [*xing kai* 形楷], in which certain strokes are bold. He also affixed many seals in red to make this work visually attractive. He also praised his own abilities, calling himself “an award-winning master” [*bizi zhongshang* 筆資重賞; p. 3]. This predicts the fortunes of a man named Zeng Bingyan 曾炳炎. It appears that Mr. Zeng was born in 1871. In 1921, when he was fifty years old, he asked the fortuneteller to predict the next ten years of his life. This analysis is indicated by his birth date on p. 4 and a sentence on p. 20: “Now you are fifty-one years old” [*Mujin wushi yi sui* 目今五十壹歲]. Thus this booklet was probably written in 1921 and contains predictions for 1922 to 1931. It is a work of thirty pages, 8¾ inches (22.22 cm) h × 5¼ inches (13.33 cm) w. I purchased it in Beijing in September 2005.

**Various Words Offered to the People** [*Kuanzhong zazi* 款眾雜字]. This vocabulary list begins by talking about the forces of the universe, the stars, and the deities. It goes on to present lists of words for plants, animals, and government and then talks about

the family and adds comments about conventional morality, which tells young men to avoid fighting in the streets and forcing themselves on women. Three poems by one of the Guo family who prepared this booklet conclude it on the last page (p. 30). The book was copied by Guo Changyun 郭長雲, who added the word “copied” [*ji* 記] after his name. At a later point, his relative Guo Shengkui 郭生魁 wrote (different brush and ink) his name and indicated his ownership of this particular volume, by adding the words “recorded” [*jishu* 記書] next to that of the original copyist on the front cover. This is a handy pocket-size booklet, purchased in Beijing in August 2007, which measures 5-1/5 inches (13.97 cm) h × 4¾ inches (12.06 cm) w.

**Vocabulary for Young Students** [*Youxue zazi* 幼學雜字] with the handwritten cover written by Yan Hailin 閻海林. This is a printed work, with the full title printed on the first page as “A New Vocabulary List Illustrated for Young Students” [*Huitu Zhonghua youxue xinzazi* 繪圖中華幼學新雜字]. This book of eighteen folio leaves appears to have been printed during the early years of the Republic, probably while Yuan Shikai was president (1912–1915). Each vocabulary word is illustrated. On side A of the first leaf, the titles of the official offices in the new government are listed, each with a simple drawing that seems to represent the official. The flag is the five-colored flag of the new Republic. A drawing of “Jesus” on side A of the second leaf might be one of an Arab merchant. The booklet includes a great list of late Qing and early Republic items of daily use, all illustrated with a simple line drawing. It is 7¾ inches (18.64 cm) h × 5 inches (12.7 cm) w, and I purchased it in Beijing in May 2010.

**Vocabulary List in Five-Character Verses** [*Wuyan zazi* 五言雜字]. The text originated in earlier times, probably in the Qing period, but the edition I have was copied in 1982. It was written by Zhang Degong 張德恭, who used a brush to write traditional complex characters [*fantizi* 繁體字]. The thirty-eight pages were copied on modern machine-made paper, bound in string. A few other brush-written works by Mr. Zhang dated between 1983 and 1992 were available from the same bookseller. A reference to mutton and dog meat (p. 23) and to Manchuria makes me think the original text was written in North China. It is 8 inches (20.32 cm) h × 6 inches (15.24 cm) w. I bought this in Beijing in June 2013.

**Vocabulary List of the Local Dialect** [*Fangyan zazi* 方言雜字]. The cover tells us the book was copied by Wang Tian [Wang Tian *shudu* 王田書讀] and read and recited by (probably his relative) Wang Zhen [Wang Zhen *songdu* 王禎誦讀]. It was probably copied in 1915, based on texts from an earlier period. The phrase “local dialect” in the title means “common” or “colloquial.” The cover indicates it dates to the *yimao* 乙卯 year, which could have been 1855, 1879, 1915, or 1939. The text, which refers to a cold northern climate, speaks of raising children, following the annual ceremonial cycle,

and dealing with fellow human beings. This work is 8½ inches (21.59 cm) h × 5 inches (12.7 cm) w, 128 pages bound in string. I bought it in Beijing in January 2010.

**We Petition** [*Fuyi* 伏以]. This work has no cover or title, so I assigned this title based on the first characters on the first page of text. The work includes talisman [*fu* 符] and incantations [*zhou* 咒] to approach the deities and request their help. The thunder god [Leiting 雷霆 or Leigong 雷公] is addressed (pp. 31–33), followed by the snake [*she* 蛇] linked to the Nine Dragons [*Jiulong* 九龍] who bring rain (pp. 34 and 35). Drawings of various ghosts to be petitioned and controlled by Daoist priests are in this *chaoben*. Drawings of many deities and marshals or spirit generals [*yuanshuai* 元帥] who can assist humans in need are listed (pp. 37–48), along with talisman that are effective with them. A book of this large size would be good for instructional purposes. It is 11 inches (27.94 cm) h × 7½ inches (19.05 cm) w and has sixty-six pages. I bought it in Beijing in January 2015.

**Writing Talisman** [*Shu fu fashi* 書符法事]. This *chaoben* was “copied in the autumn of 1895 during the Qing dynasty” [*Daqing guangxu yimo ershiyi nian meng qiuyuezhong huanchaoteng* 大清光緒己未二十一年孟秋月中浣抄謄] by Huang Yongyuan 黃湧泉, whose religious name was Huang Daozong 黃道宗 [Huang of the Dao Faith]. He placed his seal prominently on the cover of the book and equally prominently throughout the text. When using either seal, his name was followed by *ji* 記, meaning he was the copyist or writer. He also stamped one of his seals on the inner fold of every page. He may have done this to gain merit with the deities for having written the text and certainly to record the fact that he had produced the work. Finally, it appears Huang was in a trance when he wrote pp. 18–21, likely possessed by the spirits, and he began writing talisman in a larger and wild script. This was probably done in public, with other believers watching him. The ceremony was likely conducted for the benefit of a customer who desired guidance from the spirits. Huang must have been a ritual specialist of some renown who had his stamps and writing brush prepared to receive the spirit's responses and to record them. The idea that he called the deities down to earth, thus reversing the places of heaven and earth (because the heavenly deities were now down on earth) as part of his trance state, can be seen in the phrase “Rotate heaven and earth, heaven and earth are rotated; The many gods and evil spirits, are all displaced” [*Lunzhuan tiandi. tiandi lunzhuan; zhuduo shensha haihuibi* 輪轉天地，天地輪轉；諸多神煞，還迴避; p. 18]. It appears a donkey took a large bite out of one corner of this booklet. This work of twenty-one pages is 8 inches (20.32 cm) h × 5½ inches (13.97 cm) w and was purchased in Beijing in September 2005.

**Xue Family Genealogy: Carefully Copied with Additions by Sixteenth-Generation Xue Zhonghe** [*Xueshi jiapu: shiliu shisun Xue Zhonghe jinchao bingbu* 薛氏家譜：十

六世孫薛中和謹抄并補]. This copy, dated 1982, uses bleached machine-made paper of good quality. Mr. Xue, age sixty-eight when he wrote this copy, used traditional complex characters [*fantizi* 繁體字] throughout, although simplified characters had been officially taught and used in China since the 1960s. The family claims its origins from Emperor Wu 武 (r. 141–88 BCE) of the Zhou dynasty, and its geographic origins were in Lin 臨 City in southern Shandong Province, as indicated in Mr. Xue's introduction. At some point, the family relocated to Jiading 嘉定, an important commercial transfer point and an area where many Confucian scholars were produced. Today Jiading is considered part of the northern suburbs of Shanghai. Jiading is famous as the city that resisted the Manchus strongly, provoking them into carrying out a three-day massacre [*Jiading sanri tusha* 嘉定三日屠殺] of its residents because of their loyalty to the previous Ming dynasty. Mr. Xue copied most of this history from an uncle, who was living in Shanghai just before the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), and writes that the manuscript barely survived that political upheaval and the Red Guards, who came to search for such examples of “feudal” thinking. The work has handwritten maps to family graves in the Jiading area. This work of nineteen folio (folded) pages is 11 inches (27.94 cm) h × 6½ inches (16.51 cm) w and was purchased in Shanghai in January 2013.

**The Xue Family Hideout, Part 6; Court Cases of Magistrate Shi** [*Xuejiawo, di liu juan; Shi gong'an* 薛家窩，第六卷：施公安]. Shi Shilun 施世綸 (d. 1722) was a county magistrate in Fujian 福建 Province. Despite considering these fictional court cases, they have plots that are similar to those in adventure and martial arts stories. It is generally accepted that the original author of the stories was a poorly educated person on the fringe of the official class, which means he was considered to be a member of the *pingmin*. Huang Tianxia 黃天霞 (note the pun on his name, which sounds like “Huang Is Everywhere”) is the hero, who solves all the mysteries. The Xue family is a group of water-borne river pirates who belong to the Jiangxi Gang [*Jiangxi bianzi* 江西扁子]. This *chaoben* is an example of a storyteller's text [*pingshu* 評書]. The text was meant to be read aloud, so it contains rhyming poetry mixed in with the dialogue in the story, which is written in a simplified classical style that was close to spoken Chinese. Some scholars classify these as written versions of oral stories [*huaben* 話本]. This volume used paper likely made from bamboo that is browned, with many impediments in the paper; it was bound with string. It is 10¼ inches (26.04 cm) h × 5¾ inches (14.61 cm) w and has fifty-three pages. I bought it in Beijing in 2007.

**Zha Fushen** 查輔紳. Vol. 1, which is fifty-eight pages, is titled “Drafts” [*Gaojian* 稿件] and is dated 1923, and vol. 2, which is eighty pages, is titled “Lecture Notes” [*Jiangyan gao* 講演稿] and is dated 1924. Cha was a teacher at the No. 2 Teacher Training School in Anhui Province [*Anhui sheng di'er shifan xuexiao* 安徽省立第二師範學校]. This school was

known for being innovative and incorporating modern methods into its teaching. His family was from Wuyuan 婺源 County, Jiangxi 江西 Province. In addition to the drafts of many letters and a few lesson plans, we find a eulogy [*jiwen* 祭文] to his grandmother in vol. 2, pp. 55–58. The seal on the cover to vol. 2 might have belonged to the writer. It reads: “Held by the study of many perspectives” [*Guandizhai zang* 觀沓齋藏]. Because these are letters and drafts of letters, the writing style departs from the standard [*kaishu* 楷書] style and instead follows a running-hand [*xingcaoshu* 行草書] style. The books are 9 in (22.86 cm) h × 7½ in (19.05 cm) w. I bought this set in May 2012 in Hangzhou 杭州.

## Various Categories of *Chaoben* Not Discussed in the Text

*In this study, I use a number of chaoben from my personal collection as material to reconstruct pingmin culture in China between 1850 and 1950. The materials I use were drawn from a number of categories of chaoben based on their major contents. These were primarily vocabulary lists and Daoist writings from popular religious practices. Chaoben prepared by a yinyang master, a litigator, a fortuneteller, and a schoolteacher are other categories covered in the texts. In each of these categories, I have more in my collection that are not discussed in the chapters here because I have not yet studied them systematically. No doubt they will reveal even more about pingmin culture.*

*My collection of chaoben includes those in still more categories that were omitted from the chapter discussions. I briefly describe several of these categories below to give an indication of the wide range of chaoben available in the markets today.*

### Land Contracts [*diqu* 地契]

For the majority of people, land was the single most valuable tangible item that anyone could own, or rent. They depended on land to earn a living. All over China, people regularly prepared handwritten land contracts when they transferred ownership, either to an outside party or among relatives, rented out the land, mortgaged it, or divided it up into smaller portions. The typical land contracts were known as “white contracts” [*baiqi* 白契] because they did not contain personal or official seals, which would have been stamped in red. This means that typical farmers or small landholders did not always have a seal for use with public documents. In contrast to the white contracts, “red contracts” [*hongqi* 紅契] had an official stamp, usually from the local government yamen. Sometimes land contracts for a particular location or by a particular family were collected and bound together as a *chaoben*. Many *chaoben* contained sample contracts to help others prepare their own land contract according to the proper format. Indeed, land contracts from the Qing and the Republican era followed a similar format for most of the period.

Likewise, when a family divided family property and possessions in order to begin branch families, they prepared detailed lists of the family’s assets and their disposition. My collection includes such a *chaoben*, **Tian Family Divides the Estate** [*Tian shi fenjia* 田氏分家]. In this case, the descendants of Tian Maoqiu 田茂秋, recently deceased,

divided all the family property in two parts, which they designated the Upper Group [*Tianzi hao* 天字號] and the Lower Group [*Dizi hao* 地字號]. The physical property, including land, buildings, and furniture, was listed in detail, along with the agreement to administer the property responsibly and, according to the agreement, which called for the family graves outside the gate to be jointly maintained in perpetuity. This document, signed in February 1871, was twenty-seven pages and measures 10¼ inches (26.04 cm) h × 6¼ inches (15.88 cm) w. It was purchased in Ji'nan 濟南, Shandong 山東, in March 2009.

Another not yet fully researched *chaoben* in this category is a large collection of **Land Contracts of the Tang 湯 Family of Hanyang** [*Hanyang Tang shi diqiji* 漢陽湯氏地契集] whose property was located in Hanyang *fu* 漢陽府, Huangpi *xian* 黃皮縣, Xi *xiang* 西鄉, Hubei Province 湖北, near the Tianjing 天井 temple. The Tang family was very active in selling and reclaiming its property, usually among family members or relatives by marriage. The handwritten land contracts in my collection date from 1775 to 1948, and the names of the contract writers, guarantors, and witnesses, among other information, allow the reconstruction of the male members of the clan over that 173-year period. This collection contains over thirty handwritten land contracts, some tax receipts, and three requests to a Daoist temple for religious services on behalf of a family member. The price I paid for this collection was not high because the bookseller in Shanghai had not found a buyer, even after he held the set for two years.

**Ma Family Land Contracts** [*Mashi diqi* 馬氏地契] is a bound collection of land contracts (deeds). The Ma family property was in Hebei 河北 Province and was referred to as “our village” [*jiangcun* 蔣村, a phrase that appears in most contracts in this collection; p. 15]. Twenty contracts covering the years 1879 to 1943 are bound together, but they are arranged in only rough chronological order. Fourteen of the contracts are from the late Qing dynasty, and the remaining six from the Republican era. They are all white deeds with no seals of any kind, though it is clear the Ma family played a central role in writing and verifying each deed, including measuring the land [*guanchi* 官尺] to be rented or sold. The forty-page collection, was purchased in Beijing in June 2013, is 10½ inches (26.67 cm) h × 9–7/8 inches (25.02 cm) w. The cover pages had blue accountant's cloth pasted on them, as was typical in commercial ledgers.

### Medical Writings

The *chaoben* mentioned in this book frequently feature recipes for herbal medicine. Herbal doctors treated their medical knowledge as valuable information passed on from their teachers and they wanted to control the flow of that information. Handwritten medical texts from the late Qing and the Republican period are often offered for sale at antiques and flea markets and are regularly accompanied by drawings showing

the human body, acupuncture meridians, pressure points, and areas where pains and ailments usually occur. Many of them are purchased by foreigners who cannot read Chinese, because of their intriguing drawings. Chapter 3 discusses the writings of Dr. He Jinliang 何錦樑 in his collected **Internal and External Medical Complaints** [*Neiwaike yanke zazheng* 內外科眼科雜症]. He was primarily an herbal doctor, but, as the chapter mentions, he was also a Daoist practitioner, and perhaps a landlord.

Several handwritten and hand-illustrated medical texts that I bought deal with mental and psychological issues, which came as something of a surprise. Sometimes, such maladies are accompanied by a physical ailment or simply by erratic or worrisome behavior. The problematic behavior is often attributed to a malevolent spirit, and the ways to relieve the symptoms are emphasized, instead of searching for their origin. Can animals be responsible for certain emotional and mental irregularities? Hao Liugui 郝留桂 seems to think so, as seen in his woodblock print of sixty-eight highly illustrated pages in **How to Cure Illness** [*Bing zhi fang* 病治方]. This looks like a Qing-era work. Some of the illustrations show a person curled up in a fetal position, with a drawing of a scary insect above and a brief explanation of the symptoms. The small book, purchased in Beijing in June 2013, is 6 inches (15.24 cm) h × 4¼ inches (10.79 cm) w.

### Fortunetelling Texts

Because individual fortunetellers wanted to protect the wisdom they had received from their teachers and did not want to distribute it widely, *chaoben* in this category are often handwritten. Chinese people often talk about the uncanny perceptiveness or unusual accuracy in the comments of a fortuneteller they have met, and being able to give predictions about the future fate of a person is a skill treated with respect among most Chinese. I have not bought many *chaoben* in this category, but because I want to know more about individual lives, rather than the methods used to calculate fortunes or to predict the future, I have looked for horoscopes or the written fortunes of individuals that have been produced—for example, in Chapter 5: **Using the Western Calendar as a Guide to Writing (Your Fortune) through the Five Stars** [*Xiyang dili liangtianchi feixie wuxing* 西洋地曆量天尺飛寫五星]. In Harbin in June 2011, I purchased a handwritten narrative text by a fortune-teller about his analysis and predictions, which I titled **Fortunes** [*Ming* 命]. The 196-page account was written in fountain pen and then ballpoint pen, covering the years from the 1950s through the 1970s, mostly in traditional characters. Sometimes a talisman is written (p. 150) or a chart of fate [*mingpan* 命盤; p. 62]. It appears the fortuneteller used these pages to calculate the fate of the people who sought his advice and his prediction about their fate. The book is 9¾ inches (24.76 cm) h × 6¾ inches (17.15 cm) w.

### Instructional Texts

At the flea markets, one can find textbooks or other instructional materials, such as papers, exams, and even diaries, copied by students about mathematics, basic science, or road building. Also included in this category are texts on geomancy [*fengshui* 風水], some of them well illustrated with types of physical land formations to show the placements crucial for the optimal flow of energy [*qi* 氣]. Among such materials is the diary/workbook of **Student Li Hongduo** [*Xuesheng* Li Hongduo 學生李洪鐸] who was born in 1937; the diary dates from 1951, when he was a fourteen-year-old student at the middle school in Ruichang 瑞昌, Jiangsu 江蘇 Province. The thirty-four-page *chaoben* tells about both his lessons and the pro-Russian atmosphere at the school. He wrote down his weekly schedule and the names of his best friends as well as proudly stamping his name on page 13. Bought in Beijing in July 2011, the *chaoben* is made of poor-quality brown paper and bound with twine, measuring  $7\frac{3}{4}$  inches (19.68 cm) h  $\times$   $5\frac{1}{4}$  inches (13.34 cm) w.

A **Rhyming Dictionary** [*Yinyun ziyi* 音韻字義] was also prepared by a student, an assumption based on the quality of the calligraphy, which shows a hand that is practiced with the brush but has yet to gain complete control, resulting in some heavy strokes and unbalanced characters. The copyist's name was Dong Chengxiang 董成祥. The book lists together pairs of characters, all written in complete form, that are homophones, with an explanation for each sound or a compound where it is used. The dictionary could be used when writing poetry or for the purpose of expanding vocabulary; the characters presented are often commonplace so they would be suitable for a typical rhyming couplet. The *chaoben* is undated, but appears to be from the Republican era. The forty-eight-page book, bought in Beijing in May 2010, is  $8\frac{1}{4}$  inches (20.96 cm) h  $\times$   $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches (11.43 cm) w, of handmade medium-quality paper and bound with twine.

**Student Essays.** From the late 1800s through the Republican era, students at the middle- or high-school level were assigned to write short essays, often on topics that reflected a social or political concern of the times, collectively called “contemporary essays” [*shiwen* 時文]. The students wrote these in notebooks of handmade paper and bound with string. The essays were written with a brush and in classical Chinese, perhaps modified with punctuation. The teacher's comments were added after each essay in an elegant hand, clearly showing the difference in calligraphic ability between the teacher and the student. These evaluations were usually perceptive and on target, commenting on the direction of the argument or the power of the student's calligraphic style. Sometimes, the comments critiquing the essays were pithy—for example, “The style is good. Don't include too many points” [*Se dangxing; bude duojian* 色當行；不得多見; p. 22]; “Keep your eye on the peak. Pull together your energy. You will do well in the exam!” [*Yangao yuding; lida yushen. Tongshizhong jiezuo ye* 眼高於頂；力大於身。

童式中傑作也; p. 28]. Many teachers collected and retained the essays of their favorite students as indicated by how many of these collections are for sale in a number of markets in China. The essays are very dated in terms of the topics selected for study, such as encroachment of foreign powers or the call to mobilize the people for the sake of the nation, and in the arguments used by the students, but they are important because they reflect the times and concerns and perceptions of China's younger generation at that moment. My collection in this category includes a *chaoben* titled **Selected Essays** [*Jingxuan shiwen* 精選時文], which I assume was kept by an instructor at the Home Study Academy [Jiaxiu tang 家修堂]. The date on the cover is the *bingzi* 丙子 year, which fell in 1816, 1876, and 1936; judging from the essay topics, 1876 is a reasonable date for this collection because *shiwen* essays from the 1920s and 1930 had nationalistic rhetoric, but these essays seem to refer more to classical tales. The calligraphy style in the essays varies, and it is hard to tell whether one person was writing in different but related styles or the essays were written by several different students. This *chaoben*, bought in Beijing in May 2012, totals 244 pages and is 7 inches (17.1 cm) h × 5 inches (12.7 cm) w.

Japan's National Diet Library has digitized a collection of *shiwen*: Aoyanagi Atsuhisa 青柳篤恒, *Shina jibun kihan* 支那時文軌範 [*Chinese Model shiwen*], Kokuritsu kokkai toshokan Digital Collection 国立国会図書館デジタルコレクション—支那時文軌範 [National Diet Library Digital Collection], <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/869346/>, accessed August 10, 2017.

## Personal Writings

By definition, *chaoben* were personal notebooks and the writing in them was for personal use. Sometimes, the text is in fact a literary novel that someone was drafting. Other texts in this category were diaries, with observations and commentary about ongoing events, which is extremely useful for placing the writing in terms of geographic location or point in time. A manuscript in my collection titled **July 1, 1924** [*Minguo shisan nian qiye chuyiri* 民國十三年七月初一日] was written by a “seventy-five-year-old man” [*qiwu laoren ji* 七五老人記]. He was living in Beijing at the time of the November coup by the warlord Feng Yuxiang 馮玉祥. The writer may have been a newspaper reporter. This 101-page handwritten *chaoben* appears to be a diary with observations of current events kept possibly as notes for a future autobiography or a book about the chronology of events in the city at that time. Bought in Beijing in June 2014, the *chaoben* measures 10 inches (25.4 cm) h × 6 inches (15.24 cm) w.

Also in this category is a two-volume set of personal writings by **Cha Fushen** 查輔紳. Volume 1, with fifty-eight pages, is titled “Drafts” [*Gaojian* 稿件] and dated 1923, and volume 2, with eighty pages, is titled “Lecture Notes” [*Jiangyan gao* 講演稿] and dated

1924. It appears that Cha was a teacher at the No. 2 Teacher Training School in Anhui Province [*Anhui sheng Di'er shifan xuexiao* 安徽省立第二師範學校]. He may have been a teacher of Chinese language. From the writings we learn that Cha's family was from Wuyuan 婺源 *xian*, Jiangxi 江西 Province. In addition to the drafts of many letters and a few lesson plans, we find a eulogy [*jiwen* 祭文] to his grandmother in volume 2, pp. 55–58. Five of Cha's brothers and cousins, who all shared the same generational character Fu 輔, put their names on the eulogy, which may have been written by Fushen. The seal on the cover of volume 2, “held by the study of many perspectives” [*guandizhai cang* 觀沓齋藏], might have belonged to the writer. Because these are letters and drafts of letters, the writing style departs from the standard [*kaishu* 楷書] style and instead uses running-hand [*xingcaoshu* 行草書] style. (The bookseller from whom I purchased this set claimed this was a valuable collection, but I did not believe many people other than me would be interested in it, and subsequently the price fell from RMB 2,000 (US\$ 328) to RMB 200 (US\$ 33).) The volumes are 9 inches (22.86 cm) h × 7½ inches (19.05 cm) w. I bought this set in May 2012 in Hangzhou 杭州.

Another collection of *chaoben* in my collection, which I call the **Anhui Collection** [*Anhui ji* 安徽集], comprises the writings of a Daoist priest. The nine handwritten volumes—dating from 1896, 1924, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1940—contain many ritual books [*keyiben* 科義本] and some other materials that seem to be personal reflections. The Cheng 程 family is mentioned: One of the copyists whose name is on the later volumes was Cheng Zhenping 程震平, though he may have written or copied all the books. The set needs more study, which might lead me to reclassify it as all religious writings. I bought the entire set at the Hangzhou Collected Treasures Market [*Shoucangpin shichang* 收藏品市場] in June 2014. The dealer who sold me the entire set, for RMB 400 (US\$ 65), was from Wanhuan Shan 皖黃山, Yin 歙 County, Anhui 安徽 Province, and he told me this collection was from Huizhou 徽州.

Personal writing always holds the promise of being a treasure trove of useful insights. **Ma Jiwu** 馬驥伍 is an eighty-eight-page handwritten collection of observations on life produced in 1924 by Mr. Ma, who lived, I believe, in Manchuria. Among other topics, he wrote about sexual activity at the time, and the intersection of sex and money. He was studying Japanese, which would not have been unusual, considering that in the 1920s the Japanese were very active in Northeast China. In 1927 someone else acquired this work and wrote that Mr. Ma had moved to Lanzhou 蘭州, Gansu 甘肅 Province, to become an official. “The official appointment took away his free time” [*Guan ranshi zhi suishibian* 官任事止隨時變, p. 86]. The book, bought in Beijing in May 2010, measures 7–7/8 inches (19.94 cm) h × 5½ inches (13.97 cm) w.

## Legal Texts

Some standard criminal legal cases used by a litigator [*songshi* 訟師] are briefly outlined in *The Red Shore* [*Hongpu* 洪浦], discussed in Chapter 1. More complete, thorough, and procedural handwritten legal texts can occasionally be found at flea markets, usually offered by one of the more “professional” and therefore “expensive” booksellers, who realize that legal texts might not have wide appeal, compared to the other materials being sold, but are not as common and can thus command a higher price.

Among such texts are *chaoben* I found in June 2011 in Seoul, Korea. While exploring *chaoben* available in the shops there, I bought two volumes of handwritten booklets I titled **Criminal Inquest** [*Salokjueinchang* 살옥죄인장/殺獄罪人狀] because of one item that immediately caught my attention. Volume 1, containing the criminal inquest, is 10 inches (25.4 cm) h × 5¾ inches (14.61 cm) w and has thirty pages. Volume 2 is 12 inches (30.48 cm) h × 6½ inches (16.51 cm) w. and has twenty-four pages. The books were written in classical Chinese, typical of educated Koreans in the 1800s. In volume 1, p. 1, the text is labeled “withered day” [*kochoil* 고초일/枯焦日], and it has various numerical/calendrical designations, as if an astrologer were using the progression of these two units to classify the day, followed by some genealogical name listings and drafts of letters. Other items are in this volume and volume 2, such as land agreements and directions for public meetings. Both volumes appear to be made up of loose sheets bound together with twine. In Volume 1, pp. 26 and 27, the writer copied the text of a legal document titled “Criminal Case of Death of the Defendant in Kwangju, Fourth Reading” [*Kwangju salok jueinchang, sajae* 광주살옥죄인장사제/廣州殺獄罪人狀四題]. This was an adjudication, the fourth one, rendered by a provincial governor after reviewing the results of an inquest compiled by a country magistrate from the county where Yi Tong-ae 이동애/李東崖 had drowned to death. For insight, I consulted with Harvard Professor Sun-joo Kim 김선주/金善珠, who has published excellent studies of late Choson (1800–1910) legal documents concerning criminal matters. She hypothesized that Mr. Yi was stressed out because of the demands of creditors who wanted him to repay his debts and because of his wife’s persistent nagging. The couple got into a fight near a river, throwing sand at each other, and Tong-ae was acting in a crazed manner. Somehow the couple fell into the river by accident and drowned. The court found that Mr. Son 손/孫, perhaps the creditor who had been constantly harassing the Yis to repay what they owed, was not guilty of killing Mr. Yi, but he was punished with one round of beating because his constant pressure had caused him to become irrational. Another person, perhaps also named Yi, had been harassing the drowning victim, and he was punished with thirty lashes. Based on my examinations of this and a related text mentioned below, I believe this incident took place around 1879.

When I bought these volumes, I realized that the writer had used printed calendars from 1816 and 1819 as writing paper for both of them. The ink had faded away on one

calendar, and he turned the calendar pages of the other inside out to write on the blank side. In fact, as was typically the case with woodblock printing on handmade paper, the ink had seeped through, so a reverse impression of the calendar could be seen on the “blank” side. The calendars were organized in a format common in Chinese almanacs of the period. Both calendars included a “Diagram of the Position of the Spirits for the Year” [*Nianshenfangweizhi tu* 年神方位之圖]. Volume 1 was written on a calendar from 1816, and volume 2 was written on a calendar from 1819. Both the text in these two sets of handwritten pages and the old almanac calendars on which they were written were equally intriguing.

### Performance Texts

It is logical that handwritten materials would be useful for people engaged in public performance. Unlike printed materials, handwritten texts could be adapted for the type of audience and style of performance. The individuals who prepared and performed these materials all came from the ranks of the common people, based on all the information and anecdotes we have about them.

**The Golden Bough** [*Dajinzhi* 大金枝] is a story also known by other names, the more common ones being “Striking the Golden Bough” [*Dajinzhi* 打金枝] and “Striking the Golden Bough While Drunk” [*Zui dajinzhi* 醉打金枝]. It is a well-known story based on actual historical figures. Guo Ai 郭曖 (725–800) was the sixth son of the well-respected General Guo Ziyi 郭子儀 (697–781). In 765, the thirteen-year-old Guo Ai was married to the Princess Royal Shengping [Shengping *gongzhu* 升平公主], who was of similar age. They had a passionate relationship in both their intimate relations and in their quarrels. In 777 Guo Ai’s father was celebrating his eightieth birthday, but Princess Shengping refused to kowtow [*koutou* 叩頭] before the elderly general. In their private quarters, she told Guo Ai that she was a member of the imperial line, while his father came from common stock, an issue that had often been raised in the course of the general’s career. Guo Ai was drunk and angry, and he violently slapped his wife.

The story has been made into traditional operas of all types, as well as into stage plays, movies, and television dramas. The text in my collection tells the story in dialogue and song. It also has stage directions for all the opera performers throughout. The manuscript showed signs of frequent use: several pages were falling apart, and the outer folds of every page had deteriorated so that the pages opened as single rather than as folded sheets. The handmade paper is of slightly lower than medium quality, but the writing is crisp on every page and would have been easy for the performer to read. It has protective red-colored cover paper, as used in South China and described in Appendix A, and it was purchased in Hangzhou, so my colleagues there suggested this

was from a *yueju* 越劇 southern-style opera edition. On p. 22 is the name Zhang Jishan 張繼善, which might have been that of the owner of the manuscript, the copyist, or one of the performers who believed himself to be notable. The forty-page book is 8½ inches (21.59 cm) h × 7¼ inches (18.38 cm) w. It was purchased in June 2012 at the open weekend fair held at the Hangzhou Collected Treasures Market [Shoucangpin *shichang* 收藏品市場].

### Storyteller's Text [*pingshu* 評書]

A storyteller's text was meant to be read aloud, so it contains rhyming poetry mixed in with the dialogues of the story, which is written in a simplified classical style that was close to the spoken version of Chinese. Some scholars classify these as written versions of oral stories [*huaben* 話本].

One example is **The Xue Family Hideout, Part Six; Court Cases of Magistrate Shi** [*Xue jiawo, di liu juan; Shi gong'an* 薛家窩，第六卷；施公安]. These stories became very popular in the late Qing and the Republican era. Shi Shilun 施世綸 (d. 1722) was a county magistrate in Fujian 福建 Province. The first of these stories was published in 1798. Although these are considered fictional court cases, the plots are similar to those in adventure and martial arts stories. The original author of the stories was generally assumed to be a poorly educated person from the fringes of the official class. Many sequels to the original stories have appeared. In this story, the hero is Huang Tianxia 黃天霞 (notice the pun on his name, which sounds like “Huang Is Everywhere”) who solves all the mysteries. The Xue family is a group of river pirates who belong to the Jiangxi Gang [Jiangxi *bianzi* 江西扁子]. The story is set in the late 1600s or early 1700s. Narrative sections (for an example, see p. 4) begin with the phrase “It is said” [*Qieshuo* 且說]. The account ends on a positive note, saying, “After that, for a generation the river was safe” [*Zicihou, helu yidai bao'anning* 自此後，河路一代保安寧; p. 53].

This fifty-three-page volume used paper that was probably made from bamboo and is brown with many impediments, and it was bound with string. Bought in Beijing in August 2007, it is 10¼ inches (26.04 cm) h × 5¾ inches (14.61 cm) w.

### Commercial Ledgers [*Zhangshu* 賬書]

It was normal for businesspeople and commercial establishments to keep their records in string-bound books, which became notebooks, records of transactions of goods, and ledgers of all of the activity conducted. Most commercial establishments bound these collections in a blue soft canvas-like cloth that I call accountant's cloth. Companies liked to clear all their accounts at the end of the year, which is when they went through

their ledger, and when the accounts had all been settled, they considered it a record of their transaction for the year just concluded.

Ruili Company in Shandong 山東 Province operated like a bank or a moneylender. In its account book, *Ruili Accounts* [*Ruili qingchaozhang* 芮裡清抄賬], next to many of the business or individual names listed are the names of the local community, often a village or small hamlet. By listing all these locations geographically, we can see where the company operated; thirty-six place names are given. Each account is listed with the name of the responsible individual, and sometimes the account is listed by the name of the company. By looking at these company names, we can conjecture what type of business they engaged in. The business of the Liu Family Oil-Pressing Factory [Liuja youfang 柳家油坊; p. 242] was clear, and other businesses were silver shops that melted silver into ingots, stored them, and transported them (mentioned in Chapter 7). Other firms were called Ever-Prosperous Virtue [Yongxingde 永興得; p. 83], House of Protecting Prosperity [Baoxinglou 寶興樓; p. 217], and Receiving Spring Profits [Dechunli 德春利; p. 253] and yet others extended credit and transferred funds [*piaohao* 票號], named, for example, Virtue and Flourishing Blessings [Dexengfu 德興福; p. 15], Virtue and Peace [Detaihao 德泰號; pp. 257 and 265], Blessing Peace and Profit [Futaili 福泰利; p. 263], and Flourishing Virtue [Defenghao 德豐號; p. 269]. One client that was probably a brothel was Hall of Supplying Vigor [Zoujiantang 奏建堂; p. 207], and it seems likely another one was Ever Flourishing [*Changxingyong* 長興永; p. 229].

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), this company and its operations would have been condemned as feudal and an agent of the capitalist class. The person who operated the company and who owned this book would have been subject to bullying, beatings, even torture and confinement. As a way of protecting themselves against an accusation of being anti-Maoist, someone wrote a number of quotations from Chairman Mao in the upper margins of several pages. This desperate measure helped the *chaoben* survive, but we do not know whether its owner was spared.

The Ruili Company recorded commitments and accounts in this volume between 1924 to 1932. Like most commercial ledgers, it is written in running-hand [*xingcaoshu* 行草書] style, making it hard to decipher many of the characters and numbers. The paper used was machine-manufactured accountant's forms with columns in red ink and labeled "Increase disciplined flourishing" [*Zengshunxing* 增順興]. The 298-page book, purchased in Beijing in July 2011, is 7¼ inches (18.41 cm) h × 6 inches (15.24 cm) w.

One trading company dealt in woven products of cotton, brocade, and wool and sold animal skins and furs for clothing. In addition, it was a dealer in precious stones used for jewelry and ornament. In its *Domestic Gold and Silver* [*neizao jinyinsu* 內造金銀素] (because of no cover, the title was assigned based on the first characters of the first page) the company listed the products it offered for sale, goods that had been acquired from all over China as well as from abroad. Cloth and woven products are on

pp. 1–17. Each item is described by its point of origin and the lengths in which it was available. For example: Suzhou brocade, 40 *chi* long [*Sujin, shisi chi* 蘇錦拾四尺; p. 4]; Tianjin white cloth, length 42 *chi*, width 2 *chi* 4 *cun*, weight 60 *liang* [*Tiansu, chang sishi'er chi, kuan er chi si cun, zhong liushi liang* 天素，長四十二尺，寬二尺四寸，重六拾兩; p. 7]; woolen fabric from Tibet, length 56 *chi*, width 8 *cun* [*Pulu, chuyu Xizang, chang wushiliu chi, kuan ba cun* 氈氍，出於西藏，長五拾六尺，寬八寸; p. 15]. One *liang* equals 50 grams or 1.76 ounce; 60 *liang* equals 6.4 commercial pounds. A *chi* is slightly shorter than a British-American foot, 12 inches; a *cun* is slightly longer than an inch.

The category animal skins [*pi lei* 皮類; pp. 17–19] included Siberian fox skins, in several styles of coloring, with belly fur that is as white as a Heavenly Horse [*Sha huli benshen, maodao gefenjiyang, xiongtang wei tianmapi* 沙狐狸本身，貓道各分幾樣，胸膛為天馬皮; p. 17]. A long discussion follows on the various types of animal skins available in the marketplace (on pp. 20–31), with some of the products from specific markets described. The markets mentioned include Fengtian *fu* 奉天府 and Russia [p. 21], north of Shengjing [Shengjing *beikou* 盛京北口; pp. 22 and 23], South China and foreign markets are discussed on pp. 26–30, with a discussion of dyeing the furs and combining fur with woven cloth material to make fur-lined clothing. The third category is precious stones [*baoshi lei* 寶石類], covered on pp. 30–43. This section includes a discussion on how to distinguish precious stones from less valuable stones and how to determine their market value.

From the geographic place and references used, this is a Qing-era manuscript. Among the place names used during the Qing are Shuntian *fu* 順天府 (p. 10), Korea [*Chaoxian guo* 朝鮮國] (p. 10), Huguang 湖廣 (p. 13), Gaoli 高麗 (p. 17), and Fengtian *fu* (p. 21). Mention is made of the Japanese pirates (*wodao* 倭盜; p. 30), who liked to decorate their clothing with precious stones. This term was familiar to southern Chinese. From the paper used, very thin, like cloth with many imperfections, this appears to be a mid-Qing document, although considering the wide areas from which the product were sourced, its content relates to late Qing commercial activity. The forty-three-page book is 10½ inches (26.67 cm) h × 8¼ inches (20.96 cm) w and was bought in Beijing in May 2012.

### Pawnshop Records

Pawnshops [*dangpu* 當舖] proliferated in the late Qing and remained active in the Republican period. Celebrations Pawnshop [*Qingjidang* 慶記當] in the 1920s was headquartered in Changchun 長春 on a main road [Big Horse Road; Dama lu 大碼頭]. Its owner was registered as Luo Ruitang 羅銳棠. In my collection is volume 1 from January 1928, which has a tax stamp issued by authorities in the Republic of China, and

Volume 2 from January 1945, as it continued to operate after the region was occupied by Japan and Changchun was the capital of Manchukuo, and was recording its accounts in national currency [*guobi* 國幣]. Customers each had a coded designation, such as *ji* 吉 (vol. 1, p. 36), or *zao* 造 (vol. 2, p. 46). Each account lists the amounts of money lent and repaid but does not list the items, if any, that were pawned. Both of these were covered in blue accountant's cloth. For both volumes machine-made accountant's paper was used, with the columns marked in red ink. Volume 1 used paper produced by Renmaohao 仁茂號, and volume 2 had paper produced by Xinjing dehe yizhi 新京德和義製. Xinjing was the Japanese name for Changchun, pronounced in Japanese as *Shinkyō*. The running-hand script was used, and Suzhou numerals [Suzhou *mazi* 蘇州碼子] were used in both volumes. Volume 1, from 1928, is 8¾ inches (22.21 cm) h × 7¼ inches (18.42 cm) w and has seventy-six pages. Volume 2, from 1945, is 8½ inches (21.59 cm) h × 6¾ inches (17.12 cm) w and has 196 pages. Volume 2 lists the year as Kangde 12 [Kangde *shiernian* 康德拾貳], referring to the reign of Manchukuo's puppet emperor Puyi 溥儀. Kangde 12 was 1945. It appears this volume was completed at the end of 1944, perhaps by the lunar calendar, but the year designation as adopted by the Japanese of 1945 was written on the cover because the Japanese followed the Western calendar. I bought these in Changchun in December 2012.

### Sample Writings

Until about 1950, Chinese formal writing called for the use of poetic and historical references, along with the use of highly stylized phrases that were not employed by most people in the course of daily life. For the majority of people who had little formal education, composing a polite written communication was nearly impossible. The people had recourse to the scribes, clerks, or former *xiucai*, who could write the needed document for them. Certain situations called for these communications from anyone who strove for a sense of normalcy, along with those who were hoping for upward social mobility. The necessary situations were marriages, birth or funeral announcements, and any communication with one's social superior, such as the landlord or local factory boss. Because the manner of phrasing these crucial communications was so foreign to most people, many books offered sample texts. Chapter 3 discussed the booklet **Invitations and Matching Couplets** [*Tieshi duilian* 帖式對聯], which contained some sample polite announcements. In Chapter 9, **Ceremonies** [*Liben* 禮本] also included many polite announcements pertaining to wedding celebrations. In fact, a number of *chaopen* regularly had sample letters, announcements, or contracts that could be used to compose acceptable and correct formal documents.

**Copy These, Or, Feel Free to Copy These Examples** [*Xingjie suanke ye* 行揭算可也] is volume 2 of a handwritten book of sample letters and polite notes. The written

style of these notes is more relaxed than the strict classical style, as is the topic of the letters. The collection begins with a letter about “Asking a Friend to Sell Some Fruit for You” [*Tuoyou daixiao shuiguo* 託友代銷水果; pp. 1 and 2]. This is followed by a sample reply. The second sample letter is “Inviting Shareholders to Start a Company” [*Yaoqing gudong kaiban gongsi* 邀請股東開辦公司; pp. 3–7], with an answer afterward. The writer assumes that the reader is not especially familiar with classical illusions or set phrases and so offered explanations in the upper margins about the meaning of some phrases. In a sample letter to congratulate a friend upon his marriage, the suggested text has the phrase “singing to the zithers” [*geqinse* 歌琴瑟; p. 29], so the writer helpfully adds in the upper margin that this is a phrase from the *Classic of Songs* [*Shijing* 詩經]. The two place names mentioned in the text are Wuchang 武昌 (p. 3) and Jilin 吉林 (p. 20). On the last page (this manuscript has no covers) is a sample land contract, which includes a date, 1934, which is consistent with the machine-made paper used. The book is 7 inches (17.78 cm) h × 4¾ inches (12.06 cm) w and has thirty-three pages, originally bound in twine and then stapled. I bought it in Ji’nan, Shandong, in March 2009.

**Congratulatory Phrases for the Household** [*Jiayong zhuci* 家用祝詞] is a handwritten book filled with all sorts of sample letters, matching couplets, family announcements, and so forth covering all typical family transitions. The beginning pages are crumpled and torn, to the point that I have only saved portions of them, so I began numbering the pages from those following the damaged section, yielding a *chaoben* of 112 pages. What appear to be sample letters in the damaged pages are followed by announcements concerning funerals and asking the elder’s son or grandson take charge of the ceremony and reading the eulogy (pp. 8–16). Various sample contracts for selling land or manipulating the size of plots, and so forth are on pp. 28–48. Other topics covered are marriage [*xinhun* 新婚; pp. 62–71] and congratulatory phrases for the birthdays of elders [*shou dan* 壽誕; pp. 72–78]. Matching couplets for the deities of popular religion are on pp. 79–91. We find two addresses to deliver at a ceremony honoring students who are graduating on pp. 98–101. It is there we find the date of the Tenth Year of the Republic [*Zhonghua minguo shinian suici* 中華民國十年歲次], which is 1921. It was copied by someone who was comfortable enough with the brush to depart from the strict standard style [*kaishu* 楷書] of writing usually found in *chaoben* written by Chinese. The writing style and the topics covered, which were clearly for an extended family concerned with social proprieties, indicate that the copyist was a member of the elite or educated class. Bought in Hangzhou in May 2012, this *chaoben* is 9 inches (22.86 cm) h × 5–7/8 inches (14.68 cm) w.

## Korean and Japanese *Chaoben*

*In the period 1850–1950 covered by this book, China had a vibrant chaoben culture that extended into almost every facet of life for the common people. By contrast, chaoben culture in Korea and Japan was much more limited. I draw this conclusion from my investigations of the markets for handwritten books and booklets in Korea and Japan and from the types of handwritten materials available in antiques stores and flea markets there.*

*In premodern times, people in both Korea and Japan usually wrote with a brush and black ink on handmade paper. They also wrote in classical Chinese [wenyanwen 文言文], generally omitting punctuation marks. In Korea, following Chinese practice, the name of the copyist, the date of the copy, or its location were usually omitted. It is often possible to find clues in the text to give some likely answers to these questions. In the “official” or “semiofficial” handwritten materials I have gathered, such as tax records (not discussed in this study) or the Japanese chaoben discussed below, names, dates, and locations are regularly given, although this is not the case for items of an unofficial nature.*

*Among the chaoben produced in Korea that I have seen, almost every category of subject represented in the Chinese handwritten materials was also produced in Korea: copying of Buddhist or Daoist religious texts, genealogies, fortunetelling texts, examples of letters and social announcements, herbal medical recipes, etc. The differences compared to material from China that I perceive were that people in Korea who could write in Chinese with good calligraphy were in general from the educated and elite classes, not from the lower economic or social strata. Therefore, their interests focused on propagating and endorsing the highly respected Confucian ritual behavior prescribed for all critical life transitions—of which funerals and weddings were the most important. Korean elites made great efforts to learn the numerous details and procedures for ceremonies such as those relating to funerals, and as a result they produced lengthy and detailed descriptions of all aspects of funerals, and they kept records of the money offerings made by guests at funerals and of the eulogies delivered at the funeral or later at the gravesite during a memorial service. I have found many such handwritten materials in Korea, but they are much less common in China.*

*Korean scholars preferred to follow the Chinese practice of writing in the standard [zhengkai 正楷] style of calligraphy. Chinese friends have sometimes told me the classical Chinese texts of the Korean writers were “strange” or “incorrect” compared to the classical Chinese they had learned in school. The penchant for paying great honor to Confucian rituals and their many requirements is also reflected in the woodblock prints from the Choson period of the 1800s to 1910 available in the marketplace. The Koreans reprinted/republished*

many classical Chinese texts concerning ritual behavior. They also did this for mid- to late Qing compendiums that could be useful for the elites or for government officials or for schoolteachers. The titles of some Choson-era woodblock prints I have collected illustrate these areas of elite interest: Standard Literary Styles [Samun ryujung 사문류중/事文類眾], a compendium of general knowledge on official and government affairs; **Popular Knowledge, Volume 3** [Tonggam, wonji sam 통감 권지삼/通鑑卷之三], a history of the Chinese Eastern Han Dynasty (194–128 BCE), dated 1890. It is 12 inches (30.48 cm) h × 8¼ inches (20.95 cm) w, and was purchased in Seoul in January 2011. An example of a text produced in Korea and aimed at the same higher strata of Koreans, is **Exchanging Conventional Greetings** [Hanwon ch'arok 한원차록/寒暄筭錄], a guide about how to properly address government documents, letters, and official reports. The text was compiled in 1606, but this reprint appears to be latter Yi Choson 이조선/李朝鮮 (i.e., 1800s). It is 10¾ inches (27.3 cm) h × 7½ inches (19.05 cm) w, and was purchased in Seoul in December 2010.

The handmade paper used in Korean and Japanese chaoben tended to be of a better quality than that used for typical Chinese chaoben. The Korean and Japanese paper regularly had fewer impurities. It was whiter than that used in most Chinese examples. It was heavier, meaning the paper was slightly thicker or more durable; mulberry bark was the favored ingredient in much Korean handmade paper. But like most handmade paper, it was more like light cloth than is true of machine-made paper in common use today. Both the Koreans and the Japanese occasionally used twine or twisted paper to bind the pages, and leaves were larger sheets of paper folded in half, with the folded edge being the “outer” edge of the page while the loose edges were the ones bound together along the right edge of the book.

The most noticeable difference between Chinese and Korean chaoben and those from Japan is that the Japanese preferred to write using running-hand script [xingcaoshu 行草書/gyōsho 行書] style. This made the text flow nicely, especially when Chinese characters [kanji 漢字] were mixed with the Japanese phonetic kana 仮名かな script. This practice was (and still is) regularly seen in diaries and poetry. I had great difficulty in reading Japanese handwritten texts, though many educated Japanese can read these texts. Japanese official documents, often largely or entirely using characters, are less difficult to read.

Japanese handwritten materials appear to have rapidly fallen out of use by most people beginning in the twentieth century, just as did the printing of woodblock books. Along with other Western practices eagerly adopted in the Meiji 明治 period (1868–1912), commercial printing machines for lithography and typography came into common use.

Below are a few examples of chaoben I have collected from Korea and Japan. These examples are also listed in **Appendix A** in order to make Appendix A a complete listing of the chaoben mentioned in this book.

### Korean *Chaoben*

**Eulogies** [*Mansa* 만사/輓詞]. The front and back covers are missing from this fifty-five-page handwritten manuscript bound with twine. It is a lengthy and detailed commentary on the proper way to hold a funeral and burial. Pages 1 to 44 invoke the words of Confucius, “the Master said” [*chawal* 자왈/子曰] to outline every step in the correct ritual process. A diversion from this explanation (pp. 44–53) discusses the ritual for weddings [*hollye* 혼례/婚禮], and the final extant text then returns to the topic of honoring the deceased.

The handwritten text includes two funeral orations [*chaemun* 제문/祭文], which appear to be eulogies written by the author of the text or by a relative and then copied into this text. They have information that is useful for placing the entire manuscript in the context of its location and the family described. The family home was in Yangju 양주/陽州, a place originally located in the Chosŏn 조선/朝鮮 period east of Seoul [Hanyang 한양/漢陽] near the Great East Gate [Tongdaemun 동대문/東大門] of the city. The place name was later transferred further eastward and today is located between the cities of Ŭijŏngbu 의정부/議政部 and Tongduch'ŏn 동두천/東豆川 [originally written Tongduch'ŏn 동두천/東頭川]. One of the families involved in this text was surnamed Hŏ 허/許. The first eulogy was written for the writer's maternal grandfather, whose name was Hŏ Kasŏn 허가선/許嘉善. The family house in the grandfather's time was located in Meiho 매호/梅湖. The name Sanp'ungsŏng 산봉성/山朋城 also appears in this eulogy.

In the second eulogy, on pp. 53–54, the deceased is a female relative, the wife of an official named Kang 강/姜 from Posan 보산/普山, whose name is given as Madame Pak from Miryang 밀양/密陽 [Posan Kang sukpuin, Miryang Pak ssi 보산강숙부인, 밀양박씨/普山姜淑夫人, 密陽朴氏]. The polite phrase *sukpuin* 숙부인/淑夫人 was used in traditional Korea to refer to the wife of an official. We find in the first eulogy on pp. 26–27 that several members of the family achieved the status of *saengwŏn* 생원/生員, the equivalent of the Chinese status of *xiuca*秀才. They had the surnames Chŏng 정/鄭 and Sŏ 서/徐. This information reinforces my interpretation that the people who could read and write classical Chinese in Chosen Korea came from the educated higher classes. The dates given in the text [*ŭlsa* year 을사년/乙巳年 and *pyŏng'o* year 병오년/丙午年] were 1845 and 1906. Judging by the use of red-orange circles and lines used in the text to indicate critical portions, as in other *chaoben* from Korea in my collection, and the quality of the paper, dating it around 1906 is reasonable. The book is 9¾ inches (24.76 cm) h × 9–7/8 inches (25.02 cm) w, making it almost square, which was uncommon in Chinese *chaoben*. I bought it at the Sŭngmun'gak 승문각/承文閣 in Insadong 인사동/仁寺洞, Seoul, in December 2010.

**Items for Mourning** [*Ch'osang ch'egu* 초상제구/初喪諸具]. This 76-page *chaoben* is devoted mostly to funeral and mourning rituals, and it cites the Chinese Confucian

scholar Zhu Xi (1130–1200), who helped to codify these rules. Such sentences begin with the phrase “Master Zhu said” [*Chuja wal* 주자왈/朱子曰].

On page 57, the book cites the National Code [Kyöngguk taejön 경국대전/經國大典], a comprehensive collection of laws and explanations of the administrative structure of the government issued in 1485. The text uses this as a basis for a discussion of government and how to govern the country. On pp. 57–61, the book details Korean factional politics from 1676 to 1718. The section “Discussing the Parties of the East and West” [*Tong-sö myöngdang non* 동서명당론/東西明黨論] describes the chief government officials and the faction leaders. The entire late Choson period was a time of intense factionalism and party/clan rivalry among the Yangban 양반/兩班 elites. They fought among themselves, assassinated or exiled rivals, and self-righteously proclaimed their own sincerity. These constant changes in power are outlined on pp. 61–67. On page 67, the author includes a chart of all the Yi Choson kings, ending with the “current” [*kūm-sang* 금상/今上] King Ch’öljong [Ch’öljong wang 철종왕/哲宗王; r. 1849–1863]. Because he is indicated as the current king, we know that this text was written prior to 1863.

Included with this *chaoben* is a promissory note dated 1872 [*imja nyön* 임자년/壬子年]. The note concerns Yang Hongjin 양홍진/梁洪鎭, who borrowed money from Kim Ch’unsöng 김춘성/金春成 to conduct a funeral. It is possible that he borrowed this book for use in the rituals. It is also likely that he put this note inside the book as he was referring to it at the time of organizing a funeral. Also inserted was the corner of an envelope with the name Yi Sanggyu 이상규/李常圭 with his seal. It is unclear whether this was the author or owner of the book—or whether this was a type of “subversive” text that would have been dangerous if found by certain factional leaders and therefore hid its observations on political party factionalism within a book about funeral arrangements. The book is 7¾ inches (19.68 cm) h × 5¼ inches (13.34 cm) w. I bought it in Seoul in September 2005.

**One Thousand Three Hundred Words** [*Ch’on sambaekcha* 천삼백자/千三百字]. Neatly written on handmade rice paper, this fifty-eight-page manuscript appears at first glance to be a typical Chinese vocabulary list. The four-word rhymes actually total 1,160 words. The target audience is young students, perhaps ages ten to fourteen. The text begins with all the basics of the Chinese worldview: “Father, mother, siblings; male, female, elder, young, gentleman, lady, wonderful blessings; virtuous wife, filial offspring” [*Pumo hyöngje, namnyö noso; pubu haengbok, hyönch’ö hyoson* 부모형제, 남녀노소; 부부행복, 현처효손/父母兄弟, 男女老少; 夫婦幸福, 賢妻孝孫; p. 1]. This text was in fact used by a schoolchild, as can be seen from markings made with a pencil or pen on certain pages. Purchased in Seoul, it was bound with light cord in the five-ring Korean style. Further on in the text, it is clear the text was written for Korean schoolchildren. For example, “Tan’gun descended, and organized his royal court” [*Tan’gun kangnim, chöngsin tan’gyöl* 단군강림, 정신단결/檀君降臨, 廷臣團結; pp. 10–11]; “The great Korean valiant fighters,

protect the fatherland” [*TaeHan kõna, choguk suho* 대한건아, 조국수호/大韓健兒, 祖國守護; p. 11]. Tan’gun [Tan’gun wanggõm 단군왕검/檀君王儉] is considered the legendary founder of Korea.

The more difficult questions to answer were: When was this text written? In what context was the text prepared? The text gives various clues. “Uphold the constitution, the central government, democracy and independence” [*Hõnbõp ùigõ, chungang chõngbu, minju tongnip* 헌법의거, 중앙정부, 민주독립/憲法依據, 中央政府, 民主獨立; pp. 11 and 12]. “Wash your hands, be cool and composed; advance hygiene, protect everyone with inoculations” [*Sesu chinjõng; chinbo wisaeng, yebang chusa* 세수진정; 진보위생, 예방주사/洗手鎮靜; 進步衛生, 預防注射; p. 36]; “Bring the episode to an end; peace is announced” [*Cheap chongmak, chõngjõn sõnõn* 제압 종막, 정전선언/制壓終幕, 停戰宣言; pp. 55 and 56]. The cover is made of heavy brown paper, of the type often used for bags of rice, and seems to have been cut and sewn by machine; on the cover the date written is “twelfth month of the *pyõng’o* year” [*Pyõng’o nyõn sibiwõl* 병오년 십이월/丙午年拾貳月]. The *pyõng’o* year fell in 1906 and 1966. In 1906, as far as I can tell, Koreans did not use the terms central government or constitution, but at that time the Japanese did. In 1966, Koreans used all the terms here and had suffered upheavals at the end of World War II in 1945 and the Korean War in the early 1950s, so the contents of the text would fit the historical circumstances of those times. But textbooks used in 1966 were rarely of the rice-paper, Chinese-style type displayed in this document.

My conclusion, however, is that the book was written in 1966. The phrase “ceasefire” [*chõngjin sõnõn* 정전선언/停戰宣言] was in common usage in South Korea after the Korean War. Moreover, assuming this was used in the 1960s, perhaps by a village schoolteacher to instruct his students in learning Chinese characters, which were commonly used at that time, then this document shows the extension of the Korean *chaoben* tradition well into modern times. The book is 8 inches (20.32 cm) h × 7 inches (17.78 cm) w and was bought in Seoul in January 2011.

**Criminal Inquest** [*Sarok choeinjang* 살육죄인장/殺獄罪人狀]. This handwritten document from Korea is discussed in Appendix B and is included in the complete *chaoben* list in Appendix A.

### Japanese *Chaoben*

**Records Prepared in 1811** [*Bunka hachinen fuyu okakitsuki* 文化八年冬御書附]. The subtitle on the front is “Records Handed to the Official at the Time of His Transfer” [*Odaikan kõtai no toki no hõsesõrõbun* 御代官交代之時之報請候分]. This handwritten collection of documents was prepared for the officer in charge of the shogun’s lands [*bugyõ* 奉行] at the time the officer was being transferred from the rural estate to the

capital at Edo. This collection would then be given to the new officer in charge, who would proceed to the estate.

The fifty-three pages contain records from 1657 to 1811. Pages 1–12 contain a list of documents, possibly placed in a case, that were being turned over; they were prepared by Tate of Awa [堅安房; it is unclear how to read this inscription], probably an official. The record on pp. 17–26 is 1783 and was “copied by brush” [*mōgaiki* 毛外記]. The record on pp. 41–47, undated but probably from 1811, seems to be an account of the general state of affairs. It makes reference to girls gathered to perform *jōruri* 浄瑠璃, narrative music that is accompanied by the *shamisen* 三味線, on p. 45. I was unable to read the running-hand script preferred by the Japanese and used on these pages. On pp. 48–49, we see that these documents were copied by Watanabe Seihei 渡邊瀬兵衛, who was the shogunal administrator of Osaka (then written as *Ōsaka machi* 大坂町). His seal in black is on this collection. On the back cover, p. 54, is the phrase “A total of thirty sheets have been put together here” [*uwagami tomo sanjūmai* 上紙共三十枚]. The book is 9¾ inches (24.76 cm) h × 6¾ inches (17.15 cm). I bought it in Tokyo in August 2007.

**Land Documents** [*Densho meitsuki shōmon Mukai* 田所名附證文向]. These are handwritten records that describe the sale, transfer, and disposition of land. The sale of government-owned land is recorded on pp. 24–26. Records concerning who will be responsible for managing and working the land among family members are on pp. 30–43. This eighty-page collection contains nine records, each of which indicates the names of the individuals involved. The lands referred to in this collection were in Echigo 越後, an area lying on the central [*chūbu* 中部] and western side of the main Japanese island of Honshū 本州, roughly equivalent to the present-day prefecture of Niigata 新潟. The region has mountainous areas, flat land for agriculture, and shoreline onto the Sea of Japan.

The specific address, as written on p. 79, was Echigo, Koshi-gun, Takanami-hiro 越後古志郡高浪(広?). The official responsible for this location was Hayashi Kyūe 林久恵, who was the headman in charge of the Urase Extended Village. This is written in the record as “Kagumi Urase-mura jūnin Hayashi Kyūe shū 加組浦瀬村住人林久恵主.” [In 1889 this village was incorporated with other villages and renamed Yamamoto Village 山本村, and in 1954 it was made a part of Nagaoka City 長岡市, an area that covers much of central Niigata Prefecture. The city boundaries stretch from the mountains to the seashore.] The records were written by a retainer [*omi* 臣] to the lord of the area. The *omi* was named Senji 仙児. His seal appears below his name on p. 79, which lists him by his correct title as “retainer” [*shinshi* 臣子]. This collection was prepared in 1849. The book is 10¾ inches (27.31 cm) h × 9¾ inches (24.76 cm) w. I bought it in Tokyo in 1995.

## Full Translation of *Fifty Days to Encounter the Five Spirits*

*Wuyin* 戊寅 Day. For those afflicted on this day, the ghost is surnamed Yan 閻, named Zhao 肇. It has one body with four arms, holding a large ax. When it encounters humans it begins chopping. It causes the person to be unable to raise their four limbs, to feel cold and suddenly hot. This ghost is setting in the northeast direction on something metal. It will be good if it departs.

*Wuyinri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Yan ming Zhao. Yishen sishou zhidafu. Fengren jikan. Lingren sizhi buju, huhan zhare. Gui zai dongbei tieqi shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

戊寅日病者得之，其鬼姓閻名肇。一身四手執大斧。逢人即砍。令人四肢不舉，忽寒乍熱。鬼在東北鐵器上坐。去之則吉。(p. 1)<sup>1</sup>

*Yimao* 乙卯 Day. The person afflicted on this day is by the ghost surnamed Gu 顧 or Hu 胡. Its body is like a wild beast searching for someone in the distance and acts like it wants to eat their heart and liver. It causes people to get a headache and fever, and the eyelids to swell and the stomach becomes hot. The ghost is in the south or northwest sitting on a rock or lying down to sleep. Good to have it gone.

1 All the descriptions listed below enumerate the affliction to be experienced when one of these ghosts is encountered. Plagues, illness, and physical misfortune were regularly linked to troublesome or malicious ghosts. For some scholarly comments on this situation with plague gods, see Paul R. Katz, “The Pacification of Plagues: A Chinese Rite of Affliction,” *Journal of Ritual Studies*, 9, no. 1 (Winter 1995); idem, “Divine Justice in Late Imperial China,” 2: 872–873. Another listing of the ghosts that afflict people, calculated for a thirty-day period, is given in *Household Almanac* [*Jujia biyong* 居家必用], a *chaoben* of 157 pages that I bought in Beijing in June 2010. This lists the ghosts by day, gives the surname of the ghost, location in the home where the ghost can be found. The date written in the booklet is 1935 (p. 155), but the original date of the manuscript dates from the Qing dynasty. It is intended for residents of: Great Qing, Shandong Laizhou *fu*, Gaomi County, *Zemin xiang*, *Dianxi she*, Immortal Li Village [DaQingguo, Shandong, Laizhoufu, Gaomixian, Zeminxiang, Dianxishe, Lixianzhuang 大清國，山東，萊州府，高密縣，澤民鄉，店西社，李仙庄]. Gaomi has achieved some prominence as the home of the 2012 Nobel Prize winner for literature Mo Yan 莫言. Gaomi is 41 miles (66 km) from the port of Qingdao 青島. This section of the manuscript (pp. 139–150) is titled “List of Sick Days” [*Fabingshu* 法病書]. The book is 7¾ in (19.68 cm) h × 5 in (12.7 cm) w. The importance of having the ghosts named is referred to in Lin, *Materializing Magic Power*, 35.

*Yimaori bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Gu, Hu. Xing ru mengshou, yuanshexunren, renyaochi xingan. Lingren toutong xinteng gunei, yanbaozhang, faganre. Gui zai zhengnan, xibei shitou shang zuo, daoze zuowo. Quzhi zeji.*

乙卯日病者得之，其鬼姓顧，胡。形如猛獸，遠舍尋人，人要吃心肝。令人頭痛心疼膜內，眼胞脹，發肝熱。鬼在正南，西北石頭上坐，倒側坐臥。去之則吉。(p. 1)

*Gengchen* 庚辰 Day. The person afflicted on this day is by the ghost surnamed Lu 魯. Its body is thin and frail, as if it were a sick person. It gets up and falls down headfirst. It causes the person's body to feel heavy, to speak strangely in nonsense syllables. The ghost is in the southeast wall, roaring and loudly calling out. Best to get it gone.

*Gengchenri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Lu. Shenti shouruo, xing ru bingrong qizuo diandao. Lingren shenti rongzhong, huyanluanyu. Gui zai dongnan qianghounei, huhuan. Quzhi zeji.*

庚辰日病者得之，其鬼姓魯。身體瘦弱形如病容，起坐顛倒。令人身體沉重，胡言亂語。鬼在東南牆內，呼喚。去之則吉。(pp. 1 and 2)

*Xinsi* 辛巳 Day. The person afflicted on this day is by a ghost surnamed Lin 林. Its body is like that of a soft maiden, tarted up like a prostitute. It causes the person's body to become heavy, flashing hot and cold and not at ease. The ghost is in the southeast setting on a round grain basket. Best to have it gone.

*Xinxiri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Lin. Xingru jiaonv, meimao fengliu. Lingren shenti chenzhong. Hanre bu'an. Gui zai dongnanqi shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

辛巳日病者得之，其鬼姓林。形如嬌女，美貌風流。令人身體沉重。寒熱不安。鬼在東南器上坐。去之則吉。(p. 2)

*Renwu* 壬午 Day. The person afflicted this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Ma 馬. Its shape is round like a threshing stone spinning in no fixed spot. It makes people lose their appetite. Their four extremities become heavy. The ghost is in the southeast crack of the wall. Paste over the opening and that will be good.

*Renwuri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Ma. Xing ru lu x.<sup>2</sup> Zhuandong buding. Lingren yinshi bugan, sizhi rongzhong. Gui zai dongnan bishang fengnei. Zhihuzhi, zeji.*

壬午日病者得之，其鬼姓馬。形如碌口轉動不定。令人飲食不甘，四肢沉重。鬼在東南壁上縫內。紙糊之，則吉。(p. 2)

2 *Lu* written with the radical for stone shi 石 and you 由. The following character is undetermined and therefore represented with an x.

*Guiwei* 癸未 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Zhao 趙 and named Xiao 小. Its appearance is that both eyes are blind and it cannot see. It causes the body to become weak and achy, speak incoherently and walk about randomly. The ghost is hiding in an old shoe in the southeast. It will be good to have it leave the shoe.

*Guiweiri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Zhao, ming Xiao. Xing ru rongshuangxia kebujian. Lingren bianshen tongteng luanyan, xing buding. Gui zai dongnan jiu-iezong cangzhi. Quxie zeji.*

癸未日病者得之，其鬼姓趙，名小。形如容雙瞎客不見。令人遍身痛疼亂言，行不定。鬼在東南舊鞋中藏之。去鞋則吉。(p. 3)

*Jiashen* 甲申 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Sui 隨 or Lu 遂. Its shape is like a centipede that wants to eat people's brains. It causes people to get a headache and the four limbs have no strength. It causes the brain to become absent-minded. The ghost is on the spike sticking out of the brick wall, crying. It will be good to get him off the spike.

*Jiashenri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Sui, Lu. Xing ru youyan, yaochi rennaozi. Lingren touteng, sizhi wuli, xinnei huanghu. Gui zai dongnan qiangjuezi shang, zeku. Qu juezi ziji.*

甲申日病者得之，其鬼姓隨，遂。形如蚰蜒，要吃人腦子。令人頭疼，四肢無力，心內恍惚。鬼在東南牆橛子上，則哭。去橛子則吉。(p. 3)

*Yiyou* 乙酉 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed He 赫, or Gao 高. Its shape is like the claw of an oriole. It causes the four limbs to become heavy, and the brain to become depressed. The ghost is on the eastern wall [*qiang* 牆, a wall around the property] or western wall [*bi* 壁, a flat side of a wall], sitting on the lip of a gourd. [The original author wrote this character incorrectly, transposing the *gu* 古 and *yue* 月 sections.] Have it leave, that will be good.

*Yiyouri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing He, Gao. Xing ru yingjiao. Linren sizhi chenzhong, xinnei menluan. Gui zai dongqiang, xibi shang, hulutou zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

乙酉日病者得之，其鬼姓赫，高。形如鶯腳。令人四肢沉重，心內悶亂。鬼在東牆，西壁上，葫蘆頭坐。去之則吉。(p. 3)

*Bingxu* 丙戌 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Xuan 軒. Its shape is like a corpse lying on a bed, whimpering like a dog. Its causes people to be unable to eat or to speak, to be chilled but hot in the morning, to speak incoherently. The ghost is in the northwest sitting on a container for salt and oil. Best to have it leave.

*Bingxuri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Gan. Xing ru sishi wochuang, quan ku. Lingren bushi buyu, fahan chao* [this character was written without the water

radical 彳 that it ought to have] *re. Kounei luanyan. Gui zai xibei yanyouqi shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

丙戌日病者得之，其鬼姓軒。形如死尸臥床，犬哭。令人不食不語，發寒潮熱，口內亂言。鬼在西北鹽油器上坐。去之則吉。(p. 4)

*Dinghai* 丁亥 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Cheng 程. Its shape is like a carp with a wide mouth to swallow humans in one gulp. It causes people to vomit. Their mouth gets dry and the tongue burns, they cannot raise their arms or legs, which keep feeling both cold and hot. The ghost is sitting on a shoe in the northwest direction. Get rid of the shoe and that will be good.

*Dinghairi bingzhede zhi, qi gui xing Cheng. Xing ru liyu zhangkou tunren. Lingren outu, kougan she re, sizhibuju, hanre buzhi. Gui zai xibei xie shang zuo. Quxie, zeji.*

丁亥日病者得之，其鬼姓程。形如鯉魚，張口吞人。令人嘔吐，口乾舌熱四肢不舉，寒熱不止。鬼在西北鞋上坐。去鞋則吉。(p. 4)

*Wuzi* 戊子 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Sun 孫. Its shape is like a large dog with a large mouth and long fangs. In its hands it holds a cudgel to frighten the family and the spirits guarding the family. It causes the marrow of the bones to ache. The ghost is sitting on top of one of the house pillars. Have him be gone and that will be good.

*Wuziri bingzhede zhi, qi gui xing Sun. Xing ru daquan, jukou changya. Shouzhi gunbang, jingdong jiaqin zhaishen. Lingren gurou tongteng. Guizai dongbeifang jiatang zhoumu shang zuo. Quzhi, zeji.*

戊子日病者得之，其鬼姓孫。形如大犬，巨口長牙。手執棍棒，驚動家親宅神。令人骨肉痛疼。鬼在東北方家堂軸木上坐。去之則吉。(p. 4)

*Jichou* 己丑 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Fu 父. Its shape is like a powerful and nimble dragon that will frighten [startle] everyone in the house. It causes people to vomit, their heart hurts and feels tight. The ghost is sitting on a water vessel. Get rid of the ghost and that will bring great good.

In addition, the person afflicted on this day can be bothered by a ghost named Lian 廉. It looks like a ghost, with three eyes, one hand and one foot, holding a large hatchet to chop people. It causes people to have a headache, the brain gets confused, and one always sleeps without waking up. The ghost is sitting in the east on base of a bamboo rod near the woven mat next to the *kang* [warmed sitting/sleeping area made of brick, used in northern homes]. Have it leave and that will be good.

*Jichouri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Fu. Xing ru jiaolong, jingdong jiaqin. Lingren outu, xinteng menluan. Gui zai shuiqi shang zuo. Quzhi daji.*

*Youfang bingzhedezhi, qigui xing Lian. Xing ru rong, sanyan yishou yizu, zhe dafu kanren. Lingren toutong naomen, changshui buxing. Gui zai zhugan xilian kangbian shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

己丑日病者得之，其鬼姓父。形如蛟龍驚動家親。令人嘔吐心疼悶亂。鬼在水器上坐。去之大吉。

又方病者得之，其鬼姓廉。形如容，三眼一手一足，折大斧砍人。令人頭痛腦悶，常睡不醒。鬼在竹桿席簾坑邊上坐。去之則吉。(p. 5)

*Gengyin* 庚寅 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Ming 明. Its shape is like a fox, entering the house to scare the family and do bad things. It causes people to become upset. The ghost is in the northeast direction, sitting on a beam. It is good to have it be gone.

*Gengyinri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Ming. Xing ru huli ruzhai huren, zuoguai. Lingren xinshen buding. Gui zai dongbei wuliang [this character is written without the wood radical 木] tou shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

庚寅日病者得之，其鬼姓明。形如狐狸入宅唬人，作怪。令人心神不定。鬼在東北屋樑頭上坐。去之則吉。(p. 5)

*Xinmao* 辛卯 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Zhang 張. Its shape is like a beautiful maiden weeping unceasingly. It causes people's bodies to feel heavy and they can't sit or sleep well. The ghost is in the south or the southeast sitting on a metal object. It is good to have it gone.

*Xinmaori bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Zhang. Xing ru meinv tiku buzhi. Lingren shenti chenzhong, zuowo buan. Gui zai zhengnan, dongnan tieqi shang zuo. Quzhi, zeji.*

辛卯日病者得之，其鬼姓張。形如美女啼哭不止。令人身體沉重，坐臥不安。鬼在正南，東南鐵器上坐。去之則吉。(p. 6)

*Renchen* 壬辰 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Shi 史, named Lai 來. Its shape is a long snake that entered the house to frighten all the family members and even the kitchen god. It causes the body to feel heavy, the four limbs have no strength, the heart is confused. The ghost is sitting on a bottle in the corner of the room howling, shaking its head and clapping its hands. Great happiness when it goes away.

*Renchenri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Shi ming Lai. Xing ru dashe rutang jingdong jiaqin zaoshen. Lingren shenti chenzhong, sizhi wuli, xinnei huanghu. Gui zai wujiao pinghuo shang zuo, yaotou paishou. Quzhi daji.*

壬辰日病者得之，其鬼姓史，名來。形如大蛇入堂驚動家親皂神。令人身體沉重，四肢無力，心內恍惚。鬼在屋角瓶吼上坐，搖頭拍手。去之大吉。(p. 6)

*Guisi* 癸巳 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Zong 宗 or Song 宋, and named Zhi 智. Its shape is like a dog or deer [jackal?]. It causes the limbs to feel heavy, the body aches and feels upset. The ghost is hiding behind the gate. Have it be gone, that will be good.

*Guisiri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Zong, Song, ming Zhi. Xing ru quanlu. Lingren sizhi chenzhong, shenti tongteng, huanghu buning. Gui zai menhou cangzhi. Quzhi zeji.*

癸巳日病者得之，其鬼姓宗，宋，名智。形如犬鹿。令人四肢沉重，身體痛疼，恍惚不寧。鬼在門後藏之。去之則吉。(p. 6)

*Jiawu* 甲午 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Qin 秦. Its shape is a person wearing mourning clothes but naked underneath whose hair is disheveled and it is wailing. It causes the body to feel heavy, to have aches in the stomach, intestines and head. The ghost is hiding in a hole in the west wall. Cover it over with mud and that will be good.

*Jiawuri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Qin. Xing ru xiaofu shenshang wuyi pitou, tiku. Lingren shenti chenzhong, duchang touteng. Gui zai xiqiang juezi kunei cangzhi. Nizhi zeji.*

甲午日病者得之，其鬼姓秦。形如孝服，身上無衣披頭，啼哭。令人身體沉重，肚腸頭疼。鬼在西牆橛子窟內藏之。泥之則吉。(p. 7)

*Yiwei* 乙未 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Huang 黃. Its shape is like a hungry fish. People feel hot and cold, they are confused and unsettled. They are agitated. The ghost is sitting on the stove pipe in the kitchen. It sits chanting to the Buddha. Have it be gone and that will be good.

*Yiweiri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Huang. Xing ru eyu. Ren fahan chaore huanghu buding, xinshen menluan. Gui zai jiatang xianglu shang. Zuozhi, nianfo zuofu. Quzhi zeji.*

乙未日病者得之其鬼姓黃。形如餓魚。人發寒潮熱恍惚不定，心神悶亂。鬼在家堂香爐上。坐之念佛作福。去之則吉。(p. 7)

*Bingshen* 丙申 Day. People afflicted on this day are bothered by a ghost surnamed He 何 or Qu 曲. Its shape is like an ape that gets up and falls down again like it was crazy. It causes people to be confused and unsettled, the body feels heavy. The ghost is hiding in a hole in the south wall wailing. Cover up the hole with mud.

*Bingshenri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing He, Qu. Xing ru yuanhou qizuo diankuang. Lingren huanghu bu'an, shenti chenzhong. Gui zai nanqiang hounai cangzhi. Ni.*

丙申日病者得之，其鬼姓何，曲。形如猿猴起坐顛狂。令人恍惚不安，身體沉重。鬼在南牆內藏之。泥。(p. 7)

*Dingyou 丁酉 Day.* The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Zhang 張, named Zhenqing 真青. It appears with a red face and hair; its hand holds a fire wheel. It causes people to feel uncomfortably dry and hot without sweat, with continual vomiting. The ghost is on the south wall sitting on a gourd. Best for it to be gone.

*Dingyouri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Zhang, ming Zhenqing. Mianhongfa, shouzhi huolun. Lingren zaore wuhan, outu buzhi. Gui zai nanqiang hulu shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

丁酉日病者得之，其鬼姓張，名真青。面紅髮，手執火輪。令人燥熱無汗，嘔吐不止。鬼在南牆葫蘆上坐。去之則吉。(p. 8)

*Wuxu 戊戌 Day.* The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Nie 聶. Its hand holds a bow and arrow. It causes people to have a back ache, their body feels like being crushed by a stone, they speak but no sound comes out, they shake their head and act strangely. The ghost is sitting on a tree in the north direction. Have it be gone and that will be good.

*Wuxuri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Nie. Shouzhi gongjian. Lingren shenbei tongteng, tiru shiya, zhangkou wusheng, yaotou zuoguai. Gui zai zhengbei mutou shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

戊戌日病者得之，其鬼姓聶。手執弓箭。令人身背痛疼，體如石壓，張口無聲，搖頭作怪。鬼在正北木頭上坐。去之則吉。(p. 8)

*Jihai 己亥 Day.* The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Wu 武. Its shape is like a large soft-shelled turtle that sees people then moves away. It causes people to get diarrhea, a headache, their legs feel sore and the eyes turn black. The ghost is in the northeast direction leaping about on an oil bottle with garbled speech. Take some medicine. Have it gone, that will be good.

*Jihairi bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Wu. Xing ru dabie, jianren jizou. Lingren shuixie, touteng, tuisuan yanhei. Gui zai dongbei youpingyou luantiao yanyu. Chiyao. Quzhi zeji.*

己亥日病者得之，其鬼姓武。形如大鱉，見人即走。令人水瀉，頭疼，腿酸眼黑。鬼在東北油瓶油亂跳言語。吃藥。去之則吉。(p. 8)

*Gengzi 庚子 Day.* The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Qiao 喬, named Pei 裴. Its body is floating. It causes people to become confused

and unsettled, frightened, to feel hot and cold, makes the body feel hot. The ghost is hiding inside the afflicted person's clothing. Put the clothing in a high place. Burn it and that will be good.

*Gengziri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Qiao, ming Pei. Shenti qingfu. Lingren huanghu buding, jingkong hanre. Bianshen fare. Gui zai bingren yifunei cangjiang. Yifu fangzai dashang. zhizhi, zeji.*

庚子日病者得之，其鬼姓喬，名裴。身體輕浮。令人恍惚不定，驚恐，寒熱。遍身發熱。鬼在病人衣服內藏將。衣服放在大上。爻之則吉。(p. 9)

*Xinchou* 辛丑 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Zhao 趙. Its shape is like a flying bird. It causes people's soul to fall upside down. They get a headache, the mouth is dry and the tongue is bitter, the hands feel numb or tingling, the hands and feet have no strength. The ghost is sitting on a metal object next to the afflicted person. Have it be gone, that will be good.

*Xinchouri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Zhao. Xing ru feinia. Lingren menghun, diandao, touteng, kougan shese, shouma, shouzu wuli. Gui zai bingrenshenbang teiqi shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

辛丑日病者得之，其鬼姓趙。形如飛鳥。令人夢魂顛倒，頭疼，口乾舌澆，手麻，手足無力。鬼在病人身傍鐵器上坐。去之則吉。(p. 9)

*Renyin* 壬寅 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Kong 孔, named Fu 福. Its shape is like that of a door god [guardian spirit]. It causes the body to feel heavy, the four limbs have difficulty moving, there is no appetite for food or drink. They feel as if they had been doing hard physical labor. They have a headache; the body feels cold. The ghost is sitting on a metal object on top of the gate. Have it be gone, that will be good.

*Renyinri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Kong, ming Fu. Xing ru menshenyang. Lingren shenti chenzhong, sizhi nanxing, busi yinshi, yin dongtu xiuzao dezhi. Touteng shenleng. Gui zai menhu tiwu shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

壬寅日病者得之，其鬼姓孔名福。形如門神樣。令人身體沉重，四肢難行，不思飲食，因動土修造得之。頭疼，身冷。鬼在門戶鐵物上坐。去之則吉。(pp. 9-10)

*Guimao* 癸卯 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Liu 劉, named Hui 輝. Its shape is that of a sick person covered with sores. It causes the body to feel heavy, to breathe with difficulty and have a dry cough; the mouth is dry, the tongue is dry. Above the bed hang a ball made of five-colored silk. The ghost will go, that will be good.

*Guimaori bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Liu ming Hui. Xing ru bingfu bianti xuechuang. Lingren shenti chenzhong, chuansou kougan shezao. Gui zai chuangshang wuse sixian daodiao. Quzhi, zeji.*

癸卯日病者得之，其鬼姓劉名輝。形如病夫遍體血瘡。令人身體沉重，喘嗽；口乾舌燥。鬼在床上五色絲線倒弔。去之則吉。(p. 10)

*Jiachen* 甲辰 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Yin 尹, named Mo 莫. Its shape is like a swan or goose. It causes one to lose their appetite, to feel hot and cold and unsettled. The ghost is on the clothes hanger acting strangely. Have it gone, that will be good.

*Jiachenri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Yin, ming Mou. Xing ru hongyan. Lingren yinshi wuwei, hanre bu'an. Gui zai yifu jiashang zuoguai. Quzhi zeji.*

甲辰日病者得之，其鬼姓尹名莫。形如鴻雁。令人飲食無味，寒熱不安。鬼在衣服架上作怪。去之則吉。(p. 10)

*Jisi* 己巳 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Kong 孔, named Mo 莫. Its body is red, with a large mouth, its body is large, its hand is made into a fist to strike people. One can feel their heart burning and the stomach swelling, the person becomes disoriented. The ghost is on the top of the bed hiding in a nail hole. Plaster it over, that will be good.

*Jisiri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Kong, ming Mo. Bianshen tonghong, kouda, shenguang. Shouzhi quan daren. Lingren xinre duchang, xinshen huanghu. Gui zai chuangtoushang juezi yanneicang. Zi nizhi zeji.*

乙巳日病者得之，其鬼姓孔，名莫。遍身通紅，口大身光。手執拳打人。令人心熱肚腸，心神恍惚。鬼在床頭上橛子眼內藏。子泥之則吉。(pp. 10–11)

*Bingwu* 丙午 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Qiu 仇. Its shape is like a lion that sometimes walks and sometimes jumps. It causes a headache, a lot of sweat, the four limbs feel heavy, people cannot stand upright. The ghost is sitting on a bamboo object in the southeast direction. Have it be gone, that will be good.

*Bingwuri bingzhedezhi, qigui xing Qiu. Xing ru shizi, zoutiao buding. Lingren touteng duohan, sizhi chenzhong, zhanli buzhu. Gui zai dongnan zhuqi shang zuo. Quzhi, zeji.*

丙午日病者得之，其鬼姓仇。形如獅子，走跳不定。令人頭疼多汗，四肢沉重，站立不住。鬼在東南竹器上坐。去之則吉。(p. 11)

*Dingwei* 丁未 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Geng 耿, named Yin 因. Its appearance is that of a beautiful woman who smiles occasionally. It causes a headache, the body to feel heavy, the mouth is bitter without a sense of taste. The ghost is hiding in the flower-patterned [colored or woman's] clothing. Have it be gone, that will be good.

*Dingweiri bingzhede zhi, qi gui xing Geng, ming Yin. Xing ru meiren shichang haoxiao. Lingren touteng shenzhong, kouku wuwei. Gui zai bingren huayang yifu nei cang. Quzhi zeji.*

丁未日病者得之，其鬼姓耿，名因。形如美人時常好笑。令人頭疼身重口苦無味。鬼在病人花樣衣服內藏。去之則吉。(p. 11)

*Wushen* 戊申 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Liang 梁. Its shape is that of a wheel that keeps spinning without stopping. It causes a headache, the cheeks to get red [because of fever], there is no appetite for drink or food. The ghost is hiding in the afflicted person's hair. Comb it out and the ghost will leave, that will be good.

*Wushenri bingzhede zhi, qi gui xing Liang. Xing ru chelun, qudong buan. Lingren touteng, saihong, busi yinshi. Gui zai bingren toufa nei cangzhi. Shuqu zeji.*

戊申日病者得之其鬼姓梁。形如車輪去動不安。令人頭疼，腮紅，不思飲食。鬼在病人頭髮內藏之。梳去則吉。(p. 12)<sup>3</sup>

*Jiyou* Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Miao 苗 or Lv 呂. Its shape is that of an orangutan or a fox [i.e., it is furry]. It acts coquettishly. It causes the body to feel hollow [light and empty] with a headache. The ghost is inside the south wall lying down, uncomfortably singing. Have it be gone, that will be good.

*Jiyouri bingzhede zhi, qi gui xing Mo, Lv. Xing ru xingxing, huli meimao duo-jiao. Lingren shenti xuanlu, touteng huoluan. Gui zai nanfang qiangnei gangxia shichang. Quzhi zeji.*

己酉日病者得之，其鬼姓苗，呂。形如猩猩，狐狸美貌多嬌。令人身體懸廬，頭疼霍亂。鬼在南方腔內牆下時昌。去之則吉。(p. 12)

*Gengxu* 庚戌 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Xian 鮮. Its shape is as a fierce tiger. It causes the fingers and feet to ache, the stomach to feel empty, the mouth is bitter with no sense of taste. The ghost is standing on the cover of the cooking pot [*guo* 鍋] frightening the stove god. Have it be gone, that will be good.

3 Until the end of the Qing dynasty in 1912, both men and women tended to keep their hair long. A trend toward shorter hairstyles for both men and women became more common in China in the 1930s. Hairstyles have long been a topic of interest to the Chinese, especially for children and women. Some of the popular practices still in effect in the period 1850–1950 among them are given in *Shiyong Zhongguo fengsu cidian*, 332–333. Much of the emphasis in premodern times was in covering the head and hair, as seen in Wan Hong 萬虹, ed., *Tujie minsu Daquan* 圖解民俗大全 [Collection of Popular Customs, Illustrated] (Hulunbeier: Neimenggu chubanshe, 2012), 40–44, 74–78.

*Gengxuri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Xian. Xing ru menghu. Lingren shouzu bingteng, fu'e, kouku wuwei. Gui zai guogai shang zhan, jingdong zaoshen bu'an. Quzhi zeji.*

庚戌日病者得之，其鬼姓鮮。形如猛虎。令人手足病疼，腹餓，口苦無味。鬼在鍋蓋上站，驚動皂神不安。去之則吉。(pp. 12–13)<sup>4</sup>

*Xinhai* 辛亥 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Su 蘇, named Dian 顛. It has three heads and six arms.<sup>5</sup> The person feels confused, with no strength in the four limbs, no appetite for drink or food, with violent nightmares [*paimeng* 拍夢; that cause the body to move, the hands to pound against the bed or to awaken the sleeper], and with wild speech. The ghost is sitting on a metal object above the bed. Have it be gone, that will be good.

*Xinhairi bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Su, ming Dian. Xing ru santou liubei. Lingren xinnei huanghu, sizhi wuli, buwei yinshi, paimeng luanyan. Gui zai chuanguitou tieqi shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

辛亥日病者得之，其鬼姓蘇，名顛。形如三頭六背。令人心內恍惚，四肢無力，不胃飲食，拍夢亂言。鬼在床頭鐵器上坐。去之則吉。(p. 13)

*Renzi* 壬子 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Can 參. Its shape is like a leopard, frightening everyone in the family. It causes the body to feel heavy, the legs to ache. The ghost is sitting on a vessel used for oil. Have it be gone, that will be good.

4 The stove god was symbolic of the peace, harmony, and security of the household, since one function of the stove god was to continuously provide food for the family members. Newlyweds would stop to worship before the stove god in their new home as part of their wedding ceremony. This practice is described in a *chaoben* I bought in Beijing in January 2015 titled *Ceremonies* [*Liben* 禮本], written by Wu Shubi 吳書璧 probably in 1945. Newlyweds stopping before the stove god is on p. 14. *Ceremonies* is 7¼ in (18.41 cm) h × 5½ in (13.97 cm) w. It has seventy pages. Women especially needed to follow strict protocols in relation to the stove god, as is explained in Ren Cheng 任聘, *Zhongguo jinji fengsu* 中國禁忌風俗 [*Chinese Common Taboos*] (Zhengzhou: Henan wenyi chubanshe, 2013), 183–187. The description by the yinyang master discussed in the *chaoben* examined here indicates that the goblin causing trouble is upsetting the household to its very foundations. In this description, the yinyang master wrote the word *gai*, which means “cover” and should have been written 蓋 but was, instead, written 該 but eliminating the *yan* 言 radical. It is an example of a miswritten or nonstandard character.

5 The phrase “six arms” is written *liubei* 六背. The word means “back” and is usually pronounced *bei*, but in some parts of China is pronounced *bi*. It is used here to mean “shoulders,” which I translate as “arms.”

*Renziri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Can. Xing ru baozi, jingdong jiaqin. Lingren shenti chenzhong, tuiteng. Gui zai youqi shang zuo. Quzhi, zeji.*

壬子日病者得之，其鬼姓參。形如豹子，驚動家親。令人身體沉重，腿疼。鬼在油器上坐。去之則吉。(p. 13)

*Guichou 癸丑 Day.* The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Yao 要. Its shape is like an earthworm. It causes both the feet and the legs to swell. It feels like bugs are crawling on the back of the head. The ghost is in the northeast direction sitting on a water vessel. Have it be gone, that will be good.

*Guichouri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Yao. Xing ru qiyin. Lingren zhijiao juteng, naohou chongheng. Gui zai dongbei shuiqi shang zuo. Quzhi, zeji.*

癸丑日病者得之，其鬼姓要。形如蚯蚓。令人腿腳俱疼，腦後蟲行。鬼在東北水器上坐。去之則吉。(p. 13)

*Jiayin 甲寅 Day.* The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Lu 魯. Its shape is like a dog that is on fire. It causes the body to feel like it is on fire, to feel hot and cold, with constant vomiting and no appetite. The ghost is in the southeast direction, on the wall sitting on the pan of an oil lamp hanging on the wall. Have it be gone, that will be good.

*Jiayinri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Lu. Xing ru quan, bianshen sihuo. Lingren bian sihuozhi, bian sihuozhi, fachaore, outu buzhi, yinshi wuwei. Gui zai dongnanfang qiangshang gangpen shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

甲寅日病者得之，其鬼姓魯。形如犬，遍身似火。令人遍似火之，遍似火之，發潮熱，嘔吐不止，飲食無味。鬼在東南方牆上釘盆上坐。去之則吉。(p. 14)<sup>6</sup>

*Yimao 乙卯 Day.* The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Fu 符 or Ren 任. Its shape is that of a toad that wants to eat people's blood.<sup>7</sup> It causes a headache, the four limbs have no strength, one becomes disoriented. The ghost is in the southeast direction sitting on a metal implement. Have it be gone, that will be good.

6 In the *chaoben* translated here, the phrase "It causes the body to feel like it is on fire" [*bian sihuozhi* 遍似火之] appears twice in the original, but I have translated it only once. I don't know whether the copyist simply made a mistake and repeated the phrase or it was repeated to stress its strong effect on the afflicted person.

7 The frog or toad represents continuous eating. It is normally a positive symbol of always having enough food to eat. In this case, it could imply that the toad will continually drain a person's blood.

*Yimaori bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Fu, Ren. Xing ru xiana, haochi renxue. Lingren touteng, sizhi wuli, xinshen huanghu. Gui zai dongnanfang tieqi shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

乙卯日病者得之，其鬼姓符，任。形如蝦蟆，好吃人血。令人頭疼，四肢無力，心神恍惚。鬼在東南方鐵器上坐。去之則吉。(p. 14)

*Bingchen* 丙辰 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Jiang 蔣. It is shaped like a spider.<sup>8</sup> It causes the body to feel heavy, cold and hot and unsettled, many nightmares. The ghost is sitting inside the northeast wall howling. Have it be gone, that will be good.

*Bingchenri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Jiang. Xing ru zhizhu. Lingren shenti chenzhong, hanre buan, mengduo jianguai. Gui zai dongbei qianghounai. Quzhi zeji.*

丙辰日病者得之，其鬼姓蔣。形如蜘蛛。令人身體沉重，寒熱不安，夢多見怪。鬼在東北牆吼內。去之則吉。(p. 14)

*Dingsi* 丁巳 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Hao 郝. Its shape is a jackal/wolf that can make the door gods and the kitchen god leave their posts.<sup>9</sup> It causes the four limbs to feel heavy, to lose one's appetite. The ghost is in the southeast or northeast sitting on a pottery vessel. Have it be gone, that would be good.

*Dingsiri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Hao. Xing ru chailang nenggong menshen zaoshen liwei. Lingren sizhi chenzhong, busi yinshi. Gui zai dongnan, bei, ciqi shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

丁巳日病者得之，其鬼姓郝。形如豺狼，能供門神皂神離位。令人四肢沉重，不思飲食。鬼在東南，北，磁器上坐。去之則吉。(p. 15)

*Wuwu* 戊午 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Qu 曲. It has a white body and a large face with white hair. It causes people to move about randomly, to speak in strange ways, often to fall down, the hands and feet have no strength. The ghost is sitting on a wooden peg behind the gate. Have it be gone, that will be good.

*Wuwuri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Qu. Shenbai, mianda, baitoufa. Lingren huzou, kuangyan luanyu, shenghao daodiao, shouzu wuli. Gui zai menhou mujue shang zuo. Quzhi, zeji.*

8 According to my Chinese friends, in China spiders are generally considered scary creatures.

9 This phrase “can make the door gods and the kitchen god leave their posts” [*nenggong menshen zaoshen liwei* 能供門神皂神離位] means it causes them to abandon their duty as guardians of the house and of the family dwelling there.

戊午日病者得之，其鬼姓曲。身白，面大，白頭髮。令人胡走，狂言亂語，身好倒吊，手足無力。鬼在門後木橛上坐。去之則吉。(p. 15)

*Jiwei* 己未 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Bo 薄, named Xiao 曉. It looks like a Buddhist monk with no legs or feet, it keeps vomiting unceasingly. People get chills and a fever and it is hard for them to breathe. The ghost is in the southeast direction sitting on a bundle of straw. Have it be gone, that will be good.

*Jiweiri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Bo, ming Xiao. Xing ru sengren, wushouzu, outu buzhi. Lingren fahanchaore, xiongge bushun. Gui zai dongnanfang caoba shang zuo. Quzhi zeji.*

己未日病者得之，其鬼姓薄，名曉。形如僧人，無手足，嘔吐不止。令人發寒潮熱，胸膈不順。鬼在東南方草把上坐。去之則吉。(pp. 15–16)

*Gengshen* 庚申 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Xiao 肖, named Chang 常, it was born of a Daoist master, its hand holds a torch. It causes people to feel dry and hot without sweating, the mouth is dry, the throat feels thirsty.<sup>10</sup> The ghost is sitting on the colorful clothing of the afflicted person. Have it gone, that will be good.

*Gengshenri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Xiao, ming Chang, daoshi chushen, shouzhi huoba. Lingren zaore wuhan, kougan houke. Gui zai bingren wuse yifu shang zuo. Quzhi, zeji.*

庚申日病者得之，其鬼姓肖，名常，道士出身，手執火把。令人燥熱無汗，口乾喉渴。鬼在病人五色衣服上坐。去之，則吉。(p. 16)

*Xinyou* 辛酉 Day. The person afflicted on this day is bothered by a ghost surnamed Qi 齊. Its shape is like a flying fish holding a cudgel to hit people. It causes the entire body to feel hot like burning oil. The ghost is sitting at the head of the bed on various items of clothing. Have it be gone, that will be good.

*Xinyouri bingzhedezhi, qi gui xing Qi. Xing ru feiyu, chigan daren. Lingren manshen fare, rensi youjian. Gui zai chuangtou yifu huayang shang zuo. Quzhi, zeji.*

辛酉日病者得之，其鬼姓齊。形如飛魚，持桿打人。令人滿身發熱，人似油煎。鬼在床頭衣服花樣上坐。去之則吉。(p. 16)

10 The text has the character 金 [*jin*, gold], but most likely it should be *ling* [令, causes], as in the phrase *lingren* 令人 [to cause people to].

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