A SOCIO-CULTURAL HISTORY OF SITES IN MING HANGZHOU

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation takes a fresh approach to the study of place for parsing Ming society. Through a close analysis of the construction and representation of five famous places in the former imperial capital of Hangzhou – a pair of official shrines, a Buddhist monastery, the city god temple, and West Lake – I develop the dual idea of the “site” as a physical place that people made and maintained, and also as an imagined place that had important meanings in the cultural landscape. I argue that no individual group – not even the Ming state – was able to maintain a site on its own, nor was it able to control the meanings ascribed to it. Rather, members of different social groups participated in the construction of a site and the production of its historical meanings, and drew on particular meanings to advance their own concerns. This place-based history was an open resource that was constructed, used, and contested by multiple parties. While it could prompt people to contribute towards the restoration or maintenance of a site, in some cases it also provoked violent engagement with it. This included the intended destruction of statues of villains who engineered the death of a loyal hero, and also the unintended (and mistaken) smashing of religious carvings to punish a nefarious monk.

This place-based analysis presents new possibilities for understanding the dynamics of Ming society by focussing on the interactions between its constituent groups. Each site had a particular place within the political order of the state, and also its own relevance to wider society. The interplay of cultural imagination and physical engagement that underlay the making of historical sites reveals the multiple voices involved in the production of meaning in Ming society, and the cooperation, negotiation, and contestation among the groups to whom those voices belonged.
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LIST OF CHINESE CHARACTERS

ancha sì (surveillance commission) 按察司
Bai Juyi 白居易
baishi (prayer stone) 拜石
Bao Zheng 包拯
Beijing 北京
bijī (miscellaneous jottings) 筆記
bo (earl) 伯
buzheng sì (provincial administration commission) 布政司
Chang Yuchun 常遇春
Changhua 昌化
Chen Jiru 陳繼儒
cheng shì shì ye (sincere poetry is history) 誠詩史也
Chengde 承德
chenghuang (walls and moats, city god) 城隍
chenghuang miao (city god temple) 城隍廟
chengshi yishi (urban consciousness) 城市意識
chóngxìng (restoration) 重興
Chu 楚
címiao (shrines and temples) 祠廟
cóngshū (collectanea) 叢書
Dadu 大都
dǎo (the Way) 道
dàoxué (Studies of the Way) 道學
dàoxué (Studies of the Way) 道學
dàixiòng bāodìan (Great Hall) 大雄寶殿
dēng gāo lán shēng (climb up high to survey the sights) 登高覽勝
dì (earth) 地
dìfāng (place) 地方
dìfāng zhì (local gazetteer) 地方志
dìlì (principles of the earth, geography) 地理
dīng (adult male) 丁
dōngxún (eastern tours) 東巡
Dīng Bīng 丁丙
Dìzàng (Kṣitigarbha) 地藏
Dōng Zhōngshū 董仲舒
dū zhīhuì (regional military commissioner) 都指揮
dūfū (governor general) 督撫
Ezhōu 鄂州
Fān Chengdā 范成大
fāng (house) 房
hua (picture, painting) 畫
huaben (storyteller’s chapbook) 話本
huaigu (meditations on the past, reminiscences, nostalgia) 嚴古
Huanduzhai 還讀齋
Huangshan 黃山
Huating 華亭
Huili 慧理
Huzhou 湖州
ji (collected writings, belles lettres) 集
ji (grain spirit) 櫻
ji (site, trace, vestige) 跡
Ji Gang 紀綱
jianchen (nefarious minister) 奸臣
Jianghuai 江淮
Jiangnan 江南
Jianyang 建陽
Jiaxing 嘉興
jin bei (prohibition stele) 禁碑
jin zhong bao guo (requiting the state to the extremes of loyalty) 盡忠報國
Jinhua 金華
jing (prospect) 景
Jingci si 淨慈寺
jingshi (statecraft) 經世
jinshi (presented scholar) 進士
jinyi wei (embroidered guard) 錦衣衛
juan (fasicle) 卷
Jude 聚德
jun (commandery) 郡
junwang (noble prince) 郡王
juren (elevated person) 舉人
Kaifeng 開封
Kuaiji 會嵇
Lang Ying 朗瑛
leishu (encyclopedias) 類書
leng mian han tie (cold-faced and cool as iron) 冷面寒鐵
li (benefit, profit) 利
li (rites, ritual propriety) 禮
li (Chinese measure of distance) 里
li (ward) 輪
Li Bai 李白
Li Mi 李泌
Li Min 李旻
Li Shizhen 李時珍
Li Yangbing 李陽冰
liang (tael) 鍾
lianzhong (cherish loyalty) 憐忠
Lin Bu 林逋
Lin’an 臨安
ling (efficacy) 靈
lingchi (death by slicing) 凌遲
Lingyin si 灵隱寺
litan (altar to restless spirits) 厲檀
Liu Bang 劉邦
Liu Jin 劉瑾
lixue (study of principle, Neo-Confucianism) 理學
lucheng yilan (route book) 路程一覽
Mai Xiu 麥秀
min (the people) 民
minsheng (the people’s livelihood) 民生
mingsheng (famous sites) 名勝
mofa (decline of the Dharma) 末法
Moqi Xie 万俟髙
mou fan (plotting rebellion) 謀反
mou da ni (plotting sedition) 謀大逆
mou pan (plotting treason) 謀叛
mu (Chinese measure of area) 穀
Murong Yan 慕容儁
Nanjing 南京
Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修
Ouyi Zhixu 藹益智旭
Pan Jixun 潘季驯
Penglai 蓬萊
pi (obsession) 癖
Pishamen (Vaisravana) 毘沙門
Putuoshan 普陀山
qian (copper cash) 錢
Qian Chu 錢俶
Qian Liu 錢鏐
Qiantang 錢塘
Qin Gui (Qin Hui) 秦檜
qing (Chinese unit of area) 頃
qingming (spring tomb-sweeping festival) 清明
Qiu Jun 邱浚
quanhao (powerful local people) 權豪
ren (human) 人
ren (benevolence, humaneness) 仁
Renhe 仁和
riyong leishu (encyclopedia for everyday use) 日用類書
San Mao guan 三毛觀
Santai shan 三台山
senglu si (central Buddhist registry) 僧錄司
sengguan (monk officials) 僧官
shanchuan (mountains and rivers) 山川
shang you tiantang, xia you Su Hang (above are the halls of heaven, below are Suzhou and Hangzhou) 上有天堂，下有蘇杭
Shangdi (Lord-on-High) 上帝
Shanghai 上海
shanze (mountains and marshes) 山澤
she (soil god) 社
sheji (altars to the soil and grain, the state) 社稷
sheji chen (a minister who acts entirely in service of the state) 社稷臣
sheji gong (an act that benefits the state without regard for the individual) 社稷功
shen (spirit) 神
Shen Li 沈鯤
shenyou (spirit travel) 神遊
shi (literati) 士
shi (official history) 史
shi e (ten abominations) 十惡
Shi Quan 施全
shiji (events and traces) 事跡
shuibu (bureau of waterways) 水部
shuili (hydrology) 水利
shuiyong (water barrier) 水墉
sidian (sacrificial statutes) 祀典
Song Lian 宋濂
Songjiang 松江
su (popular customs, vulgar) 俗
su min (solemn and grieved) 肅愍
Su Shi 蘇軾
Sun Long 孫隆
Sun Wukong 孫悟空
Suzhou 蘇州
Taihe 泰和
taimiao (great temple to imperial ancestors) 太廟
Tang Sanzang 唐三藏
Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀
tian (heaven) 天
Tian Rucheng 田汝成
Tian Yiheng 田藝蘅
tianxia (All Under Heaven, the realm) 天下
Tianzhu 天竺
tongpan (assistant prefect) 通判
tu (map, image, illustration) 圖
Tu Long 屠隆
tudi (earth god) 土地
Tumu 土木
tuntien (military farm) 屯田
weng (prince) 王
Wang Anshi 王安石
Wang Ao 王鏊
Wang Hua 王華
Wang Qi 王圻
Wang Shixing 王士性
Wang Shizhen 王世貞
Wang Shouren 王守仁
Wang Siyi 王思義
Wang Xizhi 王羲之
Wei Shun 魏順
wen (cultured) 文
Wen Tianxiang 文天祥
Wen Zhengming 文徵明
wenji (collected writings, belles lettres) 文集
wenzong (provincial education commissioner) 文宗
woyou (travel while reclining, armchair traveller) 臥游
wu (things) 物
Wu Zhijing 吳之鯨
Wu Zixu 伍子胥
Wu Zun 吳尊
Wulin 武林
Wushan 吳山
wushan (five mountains) 五山
Wuyue 吳越
Wuzhou (Jinhua) 婺洲(金華)
Xi Shi 西施
Xia Jinghe 夏景和
xian (county) 縣
xian (worthy) 賢
xiang (icon, image) 像
Xiao He 蕭何
Xici (appended writings to the Yiijing) 繫辭
Xie Qian 謝遷
Xihu 西湖
Xijiang Lu sou (Old Man Lu of the West River) 西江魯叟
Xinchang 新昌
xingzai (temporary capital) 行在
Xu Da 徐達
Xu Hongzu 徐弘祖
xun’an yushi (regional inspector) 巡按御史
xunfu (grand coordinator) 巡撫
ya (elegant, refinement) 雅
yamen 衙門
Yang Erzeng 楊爾曾
Yang Lianzhenjia 楊璽真加
Yang Mengying 楊孟瑛
Yang Shen 楊慎
Yangzhou 揚州
yao (individual hexagram lines) 爻
Ye Sheng 葉盛
Ye Xianggao 葉向高
yi (profit, increase) 益
yi chuandao (postal service circuit) 驛傳道
yinci (illicit shrine) 淫祠
Yinping 銀瓶
yitong (unification, unity) 一統
youdao (way of travelling) 遊道
youguan (touring and sightseeing) 遊觀
youji (travel record) 遊記
youlan (sightseeing) 遊覽
yousi (resident officials) 有司
Yu (the Great) (大)禹
Yu Mian 於冕
Yu Qian 於謙
Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道
Yue 越
Yue Fei 岳飛
Yue Ke 岳柯
Yue Yun 岳雲
Yuhang 餘杭
Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲洙宏
zha (locks, sluice-gates) 閘
Zhan Ruoshui 湛若水
zhang (Chinese measure of length) 丈
Zhang Dai 張岱
Zhang Han 張瀚
Zhang Jun 張俊
Zhang Shicheng 張士誠
Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫
Zhejiang 浙江
zhen (market town) 鎮
Zhenhai lou 鎮海樓
zhenshou (grand defender) 鎮守
zhi (resolve) 志
zhong (loyal) 忠
zhongcheng (vice censor-in-chief) 中丞
Zhongyuan (Central Plains) 中原
Zhou Xin 周新
zhu (master, lord) 主
Zhu Di 朱棣
Zhu Guozhen 朱國禎
Zhu Jizuo 朱繼祚
Zhu Xi 朱熹
Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋
zhuchi (presiding cleric, abbot) 住持
Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮
Zibo Zhenke 紫柏真可
Ziyang 紫陽
zong (origin) 宗
zongdu (supreme commander) 總督
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DEDICATION

To my parents
Yuk Kam Liu Cheung 張廖玉金 (1952-) and Kee Wai Cheung 張祺威 (1947-2007),
who have supported my studies in so many ways since, as a child,
I managed to persuade them that Sundays were not meant for Chinese school;

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who encouraged me to pursue my goals even when they took me far from home;

&

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whose hardened joy and cooking I dearly miss.
Introduction

Imagining Hangzhou in the Ming

Beyond dispute the finest and the noblest [city] in the world ... so great that it hath an hundred miles of compass. And there are in it twelve thousand bridges of stone, for the most part so lofty that a great fleet could pass beneath them.¹

With such extravagant words did the Venetian traveller Marco Polo (1254-1324/5) describe the famous city of Hangzhou, which he visited during the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279-1368). Although some historians have doubted the veracity of Polo’s travels in China, his writings certainly played a central role in conjuring up for Europeans an image of the country as the most prosperous kingdom on earth.² Within this European imagination Hangzhou was the grandest city in China – and therefore in the whole world – where innumerable “guilds … palaces and mansions … abbeys and churches” rose up from the shores of the celebrated West Lake. In pursuit of China’s fabled wealth Christopher Columbus (c.1451-1506) himself wrote in his ship’s log just days after arriving in the New World in October 1492 that he would soon proceed to Japan and thence on to China, where he hoped to present his royal patrons’ letters to the Great Khan in Hangzhou.³

This image of Hangzhou as a city of unrivalled wealth was reinforced by illustrations that circulated in the works of great cartographers of the age. One notable example (Figure 1) appears in the world atlases of Pierre d’Avity (1573-1635) and the Theatrum Urbium Celebriorum (Theatre of More Famous Cities) by Jan Jansson (1588-1664).⁴

¹ Polo, The Travels of Marco Polo, vol. 2, pp. 185-6.
² The question of whether Marco Polo actually went to China has caused some controversy since the appearance of Frances Wood’s book Did Marco Polo Go to China? in 1995. Numerous scholars have clamoured back in the affirmative, including most recently Stephen Haw with his Marco Polo’s China. Questions about the man notwithstanding, the work attributed to him was extremely influential in shaping early European views of China. See Larner, Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World.
⁴ This image of Hangzhou is the sole depiction of China in Jansson’s work. Min-min Chang, China in
The illustration exhibits an embellished style, widely used by European cartographers of the period, that celebrates the civic order of the ideal city. It is thus not a realistic rendering of the Chinese city, but an idealization of Hangzhou as a great city in the European mould with countless bridges, churches, public squares and monuments. Its pavilions and palaces echo Polo’s praise of the city’s majestic edifices, and the depiction

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*European Maps*, pp. 133 (Plate 52), 187.

5 The pioneering model for early modern urban mapping projects was the multi-volume work, *Civitates orbis terrarum* (Cities of the world), published in Cologne in 1572-1617. The goal of its editors, Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, was to produce accurate illustrations of every major city in the world according to a standard, printed cartographic format. Its perspective was, like in Jansson’s map, from an elevated point far above the city, from which one could see the orderly plan of its streets, squares, and principal buildings and monuments. Cosgrove, *Geography and Vision*, p. 176. See also Swift, *Mapping the World*. 

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Figure 1 "Xuntien alias Quinzay" (Hangzhou) in Pierre d’Avity, *New Archontologia cosmica*, 1646. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
of its ships, harbours, and waterways represents the commercial activity on which the city’s legendary wealth was based.

Of course, any charge of historical inaccuracy would miss the point. Europeans of the time had limited information about China; what they did know was often confused or out of date – a fact evident in the different names by which Hangzhou was known. What is significant is that Hangzhou came to represent the epitome of China’s wealth in the early modern European imagination, at a time when a growing number of printed works depicting cities all over Europe and throughout the world were helping people to imagine places they might one day visit.

As for Chinese themselves, Hangzhou also had a prominent place in the popular imagination, neatly captured by the saying: “Above are the halls of heaven, below are Suzhou and Hangzhou” (Shang you tiantang, xia you Su Hang). This well-known phrase, which evokes the legendary beauty of Hangzhou and Suzhou for countless visitors today, originated in the Tang period, during which the celebrated poets Li Bai (701-762) and Bai Juyi (772-846) compared the two cities with the Penglai Islands and other paradises of the immortals. After Hangzhou became capital of the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279) subsequent writers continued to praise its ethereal allure. The saying in its present form was set by the Yuan era and often repeated thereafter. In the Ming period (1368-1644), even though no longer the foremost city of the realm, Hangzhou remained firmly fixed in the popular imagination.

Moreover, while most Europeans could only fantasize about faraway Chinese cities and few Chinese of earlier eras ever had the opportunity to travel, the later part of...
the Ming saw more and more people heading off to destinations throughout the realm—especially to places like Hangzhou. For Hangzhou offered its visitors scenic views and historical sites aplenty, as is evident in an illustration of the city’s celebrated West Lake (Figure 2), taken from the 1609 touring guide *Hainei qi guan* (Marvellous Sights within the Seas) of Hangzhou publisher Yang Erzeng. Whereas the European imagination focussed on the city’s buildings, waterways, and commercial traffic, in Yang’s image West Lake takes centre stage⁸, skirted by the city wall and hills, and surrounded by over one hundred historical and scenic spots. Rising up from Hangzhou’s cultural landscape, all these places were inscribed with storied pasts that animated people’s imagination of and visits to the sites.

Figure 2 "Hu shan yi lan tu" (Illustration of Lake and Hills in One Glance), in Yang Erzeng, *Hainei qi guan*, juan 3; pp. 210-211.

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⁸ The Avity-Jansson illustration might represent Hangzhou as sitting in the middle of the lake, but that is more reminiscent of Polo’s native Venice than the reality of Hangzhou.
For centuries these representations of Hangzhou have strongly influenced how Chinese and Europeans imagine the city. Yet behind its European image as a city of unparalleled prosperity and its Chinese reputation as a paradise adorned with famous sights, Hangzhou was of course a real place – it was home to many thousands and a major administrative and economic centre of the Ming. And its celebrated spots, so well established on the traveller’s circuit, were not merely sights for tourists. They were concrete places that occupied prominent positions in the city’s landscape. They were historical sites grounded in Hangzhou society, with significance for local people as well as the greater Ming order that went far beyond their status as travellers’ destinations.

This dissertation explores Ming society through an analysis of five historical sites in Hangzhou: a pair of official shrines, a Buddhist monastery and its rock formations, the city god temple, and West Lake. All of these sites were important for people of the Ming, who built and rebuilt them over time. But what was their significance? What meanings did people attach to them and did those meanings vary among different groups? Who funded the building and rebuilding of the sites? Who opposed them? What role did the sites have in the institutions of the state? Who ultimately controlled and defined the sites? This study seeks to answer these questions and thereby uncover the dynamics of interactions between different social groups as they played out at important sites in Ming Hangzhou.

The purpose is also to forge a fresh methodology for the history of place by combining social and cultural history approaches. Central is the dual idea of the site as both a physical site that people made and maintained, and also as an imagined place imbued with meaning on the cultural landscape. These two facets of sites are distinct, but also interdependent. The meanings of sites lay in their histories, which were recreated and remembered through the erection of buildings, the installation of statues, and the carving of texts on stelae put up in situ for all to see. These actions provided ways for people to create and recreate a site and its history. And beyond its physical location, a historical site occupied a place on the wider cultural landscape. This cultural landscape consisted of the history and lore of notable places throughout the realm (and the people and events associated with them) that circulated both orally and via the written word. The accelerated rise of the printed text in the Ming era produced a wide array of texts that
provided rich information on the history of places like Hangzhou. The great age of travel of the late Ming further consolidated this awareness of historical sites and enriched their places in the popular imagination. People might read about and imagine the shrine to Yue Fei and the history of that celebrated Song general before visiting it, and then after arriving be spurred to spit on the statue of the minister held responsible for Yue’s death, thereby joining in the punishment of that reviled figure (chapter 2). In such ways people could both imagine and participate in a site’s history.

Significantly historical sites could take on multiple meanings, which might compete with or contradict one another, for different people or at different times. Multiple meanings of a given site might derive from its physical features or from specific aspects of its history. The dominant message at the shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian was loyalty, but the extent to which the actions of Yue or Yu were loyal or expedient was interpreted differently over time and according to political viewpoint (chapter 2). Lingyin Feilaifeng engendered multiple meanings through its different physical components. It was a major Chan monastery whose legendary founder lived on in Ming memory. Its bizarre rocks and caves made it a site of Daoist practice and literati wonder. And its association with a notorious Yuan monk made it a reminder of the Mongol conquest (chapter 3). There were also different views of Hangzhou’s city god, Zhou Xin – including his very identity. But even though the state may not have been able to control those meanings, together they served to reinforce the importance of the god for local people (chapter 4). As for West Lake, it was celebrated first and foremost for its great beauty, immortalized in centuries of poetry. But its significance as a source of water for Hangzhou was also acknowledged, not least by the literati officials who praised it in verse. Contestation arose at the site when its economic value was monopolized by local power-holders at the expense of the wider community. It was then that the lake’s different meanings were harnessed in support of competing interests (chapter 5).

Beyond yet encompassing their physical and cultural dimensions, historical sites were therefore social sites where the interests of different groups intersected. Each site analyzed here represents a different configuration of social groups that participated in the making and remaking of the site and asserted their preferred interpretations of the site’s history to advance their particular concerns. They include agents of the court, regional
and local officials, intellectual elites, local power holders, and the people at large. No single group – not even the Ming state, which claimed authority over the sites by incorporating them into its institutions – was able to create a site on its own, nor was it able to control the meanings inscribed on it. In some cases the interests of different groups might converge at a site and lead to their complementary efforts to promote it. In other cases opposing claims might lead to competition and contestation at a site. But even though there may not always have been a consensus over the meaning of sites, all could agree on their importance: such sites were important for both local society and the greater Ming order. This dissertation demonstrates that groups from across Ming society helped to create and maintain these historical sites, by providing funds, bricks, and labour and by assuring that the sites’ histories would continue to be told. These sites were thus crucial components of the Ming order and also arenas in which different groups interacted to negotiate and construct that order. This place-based history focussing on social interactions and cultural intersections therefore offers new possibilities to construe Ming society and to consider the roles of the different groups within it. The following paragraphs elaborate on key concepts underlying this study and its connexions with and contributions to existing scholarship. An overview of the chapters completes this introduction.

A New History of Sites

My analysis of the making and representation of historical sites is informed by concepts in the Chinese tradition as well as by perspectives from social theory, geography, and other fields of scholarship. To an extent my approach might be seen against the backdrop of the “spatial turn” that became apparent across diverse disciplines by the late 1990s. Overall that work sought to reveal the ways in which “space is a social construction relevant to the understanding of the different histories of human subjects and to the production of cultural phenomena”. I agree with the general assertion of the importance

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9 For a recent review of the effects of this development across disciplines, see Warf and Arias, *The Spatial Turn*. A foundational text that drove this new emphasis on space is Edward Soja’s *Postmodern Geographies: the Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London, Verso: 1989.

of geography, but my purpose is less to determine any spatialization of social power than to analyze the locations of group interests and interactions in Ming society. Or to put it simply, I am more concerned with places than spaces. Nonetheless, my thinking about socio-cultural sites has been stimulated by works treating both space and place in a variety of ways.

Philosopher Henri Lefebvre’s parsing of space into the physical and the non-physical has been useful for my study of Hangzhou’s sites. Lefebvre discerns three different levels of space: the physical, the mental, and the social.\(^{11}\) According to this triple scheme, the physical dimension of space refers to the material and natural site itself. The mental level deals with ideology and the perception and representation of a space, including the symbols and meanings written onto and projected from it. The social dimension is concerned with how social and political forces engender and seek to control a space and its uses and meanings. My analysis of Hangzhou’s sites at the physical level will mainly be concerned with how they were built and maintained. I follow Lefebvre in seeing the mental and social levels as closely related to the physical space, for different groups sought to impose and reproduce their own meanings in a space in their own interest. To the extent that the sources permit, I explore all three levels in analyzing the making and remaking of the five Hangzhou sites.

Also instructive is the work of political geographer John Agnew, who has identified three aspects of place: locale, location, and sense of place. Locale refers to the structured, material settings for everyday social interaction within a place. Location refers not only to a place’s geographical position, but also to its relationship with other places, and how that relationship affects ideas and practices in the place itself. Sense of place refers to the subjective orientation that can be engendered by living in a place.\(^ {12}\) While I am not – and cannot be, due to the nature of the sources – concerned with the sense of place, the ideas of locale and location are helpful.\(^ {13}\) The idea of locale emphasizes the

\(^{11}\) Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 11-14, 26-27; also discussed in Robson, *Power of Place*, pp. 7-8.

\(^{12}\) Agnew, *Place and Politics*, pp. 5-6; also discussed in Cresswell, *Place*, p. 7.

\(^{13}\) A sense of place has been important in anthropological and phenomenological analyses which are not possible for a historical project like this one. In any case, the sites studied here, with the exception in part of Lingyin monastery, were not places of abode.
material setting of the sites in which interactions between different social groups that maintained the physical site and gave it meaning took place. A broader sense of location is also helpful because the sites studied are not just significant in the locality, but also had political and cultural importance in the greater Ming order of which they were a part.

There are terms in the Ming lexicon that qualify the idea of a site and elucidate its cultural dimension. The term *guji* (ancient site) was well established by the Ming and often used as a category in gazetteers. In Hangzhou’s prefectural gazetteer of the Wanli era for instance *guji* have their own *juan*. The ancient sites there date mainly to the Wuyue and Song periods and include buildings such as temples and palaces as well as objects including ancient trees, tripods and Buddhist carvings.\(^{14}\) They are all ‘traces of the past’ (another possible translation of the term), although many of them no longer have any material presence – they are *fei* (abandoned or no longer extant). The sites studied here are similar to *guji* in that the past remains in them, but they are much more substantial than many *guji* in terms of their materiality and what they represented. These sites consisted of physical structures that required constant attention, and they also embodied a history that was preserved and reinforced through the site itself. So our sites are not so much *guji*, as simply *ji* (site, trace, vestige). They have a definite presence on the landscape, but they are more than landmarks. To borrow from Eugene Wang’s analysis, a site is a *ji* and a *ji* is a *topos* because it both marks a locus and serves as a topic. The topic lies in the history behind the site and that history is highly textualized: it is written about in gazetteers, poems, travel records and other works.\(^ {15}\)

For centuries literati constructed Hangzhou in the cultural imagination through their writings. Bai Juyi (722-846) and Su Shi (1037-1101) are only the two most famous poets whose versifications were inscribed onto the sites of Hangzhou; many others wrote about the place. As Stephen Owen has elegantly demonstrated in the case of Nanjing, that city was richly layered in the poetic imagination of its places and events. Poets wrote as much in reference to the portrayals of their predecessors as from their own experiences of

\(^{14}\) Chen Shan, *Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi*, juan 50. The sites discussed below are not, however, found within the *guji* section of the gazetteer (despite the antiquity of some of them), but come under other categories such as *cimiao* (shrines and temples) and *shanchuan* (mountains and rivers).

the places, interweaving literary and historical memories as meditations on the past (huaigu). Indeed the poetic city, once firmly entrenched in the cultural imagination, could last far longer than the stones and bricks of the city itself. Poets who had never visited the place could join in its cultural representation and build on it. Sites thereby become foci of history and remembrance.

In this connexion, Pierre Nora’s notion of lieux de mémoire, or sites of memory, is suggestive. When French people visit sites like Reims, Versailles, or Verdun, they inevitably engage with images of the past, for these places are “the ultimate embodiments of a commemorative consciousness”.

Similarly, when Chinese visited or imagined established sites in places like Hangzhou, they were reminded of the pasts interwoven in and narrated through those sites. But there are significant differences between our Hangzhou sites and the French sites studied by Nora and his colleagues. First, Nora’s concept is much broader. Lieux de mémoire include not only places, but also street names, Proust, the Tricolore flag, Joan of Arc, and French gastronomy. Moreover, these broad symbols – all manifestations of quintessential “Frenchness” – are traced to the conscious creation of collective memories for the national community that began in the nineteenth century.

In Ming Hangzhou memory was not replaced by history as in nineteenth-century France; both memories and histories were important for the making of the sites. Indeed, sites were so laden with memories and histories that even where there were official efforts to shape their meanings (albeit less coordinated a construction of some collective consciousness than in the case of the modernizing state), they still appealed to different groups within society who may or may not have been attached to the official meaning.

In analyzing the varied meanings of sites and the relationships between them, I have benefitted from studies of religious cults in late imperial China. In a classic essay on

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16 Owen examines the ways in which writers had to engage with episodes of Nanjing’s past that became established as thematic topoi. Owen, “Place: Meditation on the Past at Chin-ling”, pp. 417-457.

17 Nora, Realms of Memory, Vol. 1, p. 6. The sites are discussed in Nora, Realms of Memory, Vol. 3.

18 Nora, Realms of Memory. Moreover, Nora’s project is informed by the idea of a break between memory and history (whereby the end of the former in the modern era necessitated its study through the practice of the latter) that is not apposite for this study. For a summary of these ideas, see Nora, “Between Memory and History”.
the subject, James Watson argued that the Qing government “standardized the gods” by imposing a structure of unifying symbols over local cults. Taking the official promotion of the cult of Tianhou, the Empress of Heaven, in South China as his example, Watson suggested that different groups were able to retain their particular readings of the goddess (which varied according to one’s social position) within the sanctioned structure. Thus the state managed to effect a cultural integration of the religious realm. Watson’s thesis has been qualified by other scholars, notably Prasenjit Duara and Michael Szonyi, who caution against any general application of Watson’s model for understanding the complexity of religious cults in late imperial China. Nevertheless, while the degree of standardization or control may have differed according to the cult in question, the overall point that different groups read different meanings into a particular deity remains valid.

In a similar fashion, the appeal of the sites examined here rested to a large degree on their associated figures, whose colourful lives and varied meanings – some of which were at odds with any official meaning – captured the popular imagination. At the shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian each figure came to represent the virtue of loyalty, though the interpretation of loyalty varied over time and between different groups (chapter 2). Lingyin Feilaifeng attracted visitors because of its legendary Buddhist founder but also due to the crimes of a Yuan monk (chapter 3). As for Hangzhou’s city god, while he was an official and presumed enforcer of the divine bureaucracy, he was also a popular deity

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19 Watson, “Standardizing the Gods”.
20 For instance, boat people worshipped the deity because she afforded mastery of the seas and protection from storms; for the landed elite she symbolized territorial control and social stability; while the Qing state promoted the cult because of its “civilizing” effects. Ibid, p. 293.
21 From his examination of the Guandi cult, Duara concludes that myths were “simultaneously continuous and discontinuous” and that symbols were superscribed with different and coexistent meanings. Duara “Superscribing Symbols”, pp. 778-780. In the case of the cult of the Five Emperors in the Fuzhou area, Szonyi asserts that beneath an apparent cultural unity of state-sanctioned deities, there persisted not only a local distinctiveness but also a confused conflation of different cults, some of which were less than orthodox. Szonyi, “The Illusion of Standardizing the Gods.” The analyses of all three scholars have their merits, but it should be pointed out that the three cults were distinct for being national (Guandi), regional (Tianhou), and local (Five Emperors) phenomena.
22 Indeed, many a historical site was not famous because of any inherent physical qualities, but because of the people associated with it. For example, Mount Xian was famous not due to its size – Ouyang Xiu called it a “little mountain” – but “because of its people” (yi qi ren). Owen, Remembrances, p. 26. Similarly, the reputations of cultural figures associated with Ming gardens were far more important than the gardens’ intrinsic physical features. Clunas, Fruitful Sites, pp. 30-38.
of hazy origins who was held to champion justice for the masses (chapter 4). In the case of West Lake, the most celebrated figures were the poet-officials Bai Juyi and Su Shi. In their literary guise they evoked images of the cultured refinement afforded by the lake. But their authority as officials who had carried out important hydrological projects was invoked by a Ming prefect who sought justification for his own restoration of the lake (chapter 5). Thus the sites bore no singular standardized meanings, but were significant to different groups in a variety of ways.

Finally we should briefly unpack the idea of “cultural landscape”, which appears throughout the dissertation. The term took hold among geographers as early as the 1920s, and entered the parlance of botanists, biologists, and ecologists soon afterwards. At the heart of “cultural landscape” is the idea that human societies leave enduring traces on their physical surroundings; therefore close scrutiny permits the student of the landscape to detect evidence of the structures and forces at work within societies past and present. In the past few decades the term has gained currency in a growing number of disciplines including political science, anthropology, archaeology, conservation studies, and environmental ethics.

As for history, environmental historians have (unsurprisingly) wrestled with the implications of the cultural landscape in their analyses of past societies’ interactions with their natural environments. But the study of landscapes has occupied other historians too. Cultural landscapes have been examined as social constructions that reflect attitudes and ideologies as much as actions. Studies have suggested that the ways in which people envision, experience, and interact with landscapes depend on a host of

23 For a brief “genealogy” of the term from the 1920s onward, see Schein, “The Place of Landscape”, pp. 660-664.

24 Scientists working in these disciplines are concerned overall with the impact of human interactions with the environment. Birks et al eds., The Cultural Landscape – Past, Present and Future, pp. 1-2.

25 For examples of how scholars working in these diverse disciplines have made use of the term, see respectively: Bender, ed. Landscape: Politics and Perspectives; Stewart and Strathern, eds. Landscape, Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives; Christie ed., Landscapes of Change: Rural Evolutions in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages; Longstreth, ed. Cultural Landscapes: Balancing Nature and Heritage in Preservation Practice; and Plumwood, “The Concept of a Cultural Landscape.”

26 Whyte, Landscape and History since 1500, p. 13; Hughes, What is Environmental History?, p. 3.

27 For some reflections on the historical study of landscapes in (mostly) Western societies, see Whyte, Landscape and History since 1500.
variable factors including their age, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and race. Thus the meanings that people have imagined landscapes to hold for them have been subject to scrutiny. And for many historians, it is not just a matter of individuals reading landscapes from their personal situations. Imprinted on landscapes are deeper structures of societies such as feudal or capitalist modes of production. Shaped by dominant groups, landscapes may even become instruments of cultural power that assert the ideology and interests of nationalists, capitalists, or imperialists.  

Some of these approaches have been applied to late imperial China. In his examination of the cultural landscape of Taihe County, Jiangxi over the course of the Ming period, John Dardess explains its three distinct zones (horticultural, agricultural, and nemoral) in terms of settlement patterns and economic use. He also shows that landscape appreciation in Taihe was a social and cultural activity that fostered local people’s identification with the county and also with one another. Moreover, the landscape was inlaid with Confucian aesthetics and moral values as well as promises of Daoist transcendence.  

Historians have also interpreted China’s cultural landscapes as projections of authority and power. Fei Si-yen has argued that the Ming founder, Zhu Yuanzhang, reshaped Nanjing to be the capital of his new dynasty and a symbol of his achievements. He reordered Nanjing’s urban structure and built a new wall to emphasize the greatness of his imperial capital in comparison with other historical cities. The Hongwu emperor also produced a richly illustrated atlas to reinforce his vision so that even those who did not visit might imagine its grandeur. Textual representation continued to be important after the city ceased to be the primary capital in the Yongle reign (1403-1425). In the early seventeenth century a group of prominent Nanjing families produced a set of texts 

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28 Ibid, pp. 7-21; cf. Cosgrove and Daniels, “Introduction: Iconography and Landscape.” A good example of how an exploration of the cultural landscape can bring together cultural, environmental and colonial history is Cynthia Radding’s comparative study of two frontiers of the Spanish empire in Latin America. Radding, Landscapes of Power and Identity.

29 Dardess, A Ming Society, pp. 33-44. By the late Ming, however, landscape appreciation attenuated and became supplanted by a preference for artificial gardens, a change that Dardess links to increasing social pressures.

30 Fei Si-yen, Negotiating Urban Space, pp. 131-135. The classic account of the transformation of Nanjing into the Ming capital during the late fourteenth century is Mote, “The Transformation of Nanking”, especially pp. 126-153.
(an urban guidebook illustrating scenic spots, an historical atlas, and a collection of poems) that sought to describe and define the city. This elite vision of the city was also intended to impose particular meanings on the landscape and to shape how people saw the city through “imaginary eyes”.  

For the Qing, the most striking study is Philippe Forêt’s *Mapping Chengde: The Qing Landscape Enterprise*. Forêt’s book is a significant contribution to the (now firmly established) “New Qing History”, one of the basic premises of which is that the Qing was a multiethnic empire and should be studied as such. From this perspective the city of Chengde on the edge of the steppe just beyond the Great Wall was not just the location of the Qing summer court, but an Inner Asian capital where the Manchu emperors engaged with the diverse peoples of the Qing empire, including Tibetan clerics, Mongolian chieftains, and Turkic rulers. Forêt’s particular argument is that the Kangxi (r. 1661-1722) and Qianlong (r. 1736-95) emperors (and especially the latter) deliberately and carefully constructed a cultural landscape (Forêt’s usage) at Chengde that was laden with the symbolism of Tibetan Buddhism as well as textured with Chinese aesthetics and ritual concerns. Moreover, the Qing emperors created their multiethnic imperial vision not only through building temples and palaces and physically shaping Chengde’s landscape, but also through producing architectural and cartographical representations of Chengde and its sites. While Chengde may have been the most elaborate case of cultural landscaping, the same venerated duo of Qing rulers imprinted their imperial authority all over the Chinese landscape, especially through the practice of imperial touring and the erection of stelae – usually inscribed with calligraphy from the imperial brush – that commemorated their visits. Both the Kangxi and Qianlong emperors visited and left their mark at Hangzhou on several occasions.

32 For a good review of this growing scholarship, see Waley-Cohen, “The New Qing History.”
33 See the various contributions in Millward et al ed., *New Qing Imperial History: the Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde*.
35 The Kangxi emperor made six “Southern Tours” (*nanxun*) to Jiangnan to visit holy mountains and religious shrines, and to “soothe” his Han and non-Han subjects. These extended excursions were also means to ascertain local conditions, to check on local government, and to promote loyalty to the dynasty.
My own reading of Hangzhou’s cultural landscape benefits from the various approaches just outlined, but it does not follow any of them fully. My main contention is that the people of the Ming imagined a cultural landscape stretching across the realm and coming to the fore in places like Hangzhou. An intricate projection of histories and memories onto space, the cultural landscape was anchored in the many historical sites located on the physical landscape, and reinforced through countless texts that described and celebrated those sites. Through visiting and reading about such sites, Ming people recalled and imagined their histories, drawing out the meanings that were most significant for them.

Rather than focussing on the concerted imprinting of authority onto the landscape or the control of its meanings, I try to show that the cultural landscape was more multivalent than the projections of rulers and elites. To be sure, many texts were aimed at fixing particular meanings onto the landscape. Yet if we read a broader set of texts about significant sites, it is possible to discern a wider range of voices that represent different segments within Ming society. People visited, built, and rebuilt historical sites because of their social, political, and cultural importance. Places embodied numerous meanings that were not concerned with the production and maintenance of imperial visions. Hangzhou’s cultural landscape offered a rich array of historical sites that were not located in a centre of imperial power. Its past did include strong currents from earlier dynastic narratives, but even those could be turned against contemporary political interests. The concerns of diverse groups converged and sometimes collided at Hangzhou’s sites of history. Even when sites intersected with the political order of the state – and all of those studied here did – they were ultimately local spheres of social interaction that people could negotiate and (at least try to) fashion on their own terms. An analysis of the making and remaking of these sites will reveal the social and political processes underlying their existence and the workings of the greater Ming order.

Matching his filial devotion towards his grandfather with his trademark extravagance, the Qianlong emperor made six much larger-scale tours of Jiangnan, five visits each to Qufu in Shandong and Mount Wutai in Shanxi, four excursions to Mount Song and Kaifeng in central Henan, and four “Eastern Tours” (dongxun) to the secondary capital of Shengjing (Mukden) in the Manchu homeland. Symons, “Qianlong on the road”, pp. 55-61. Michael Chang’s A Court on Horseback is a detailed study of Qing imperial touring that focuses on Jiangnan.
Situating the Study

Taking Ming Hangzhou as its setting, this study might naturally be placed under the broad umbrella of Chinese urban history. Yet the present approach does not fit so neatly within the established scholarship, partly due to the continued hold of a problematic derived from European history and the resultant limitations on research and lack of overall coherence. While it is helpful to situate the study in the broader field, it makes a more direct contribution to more recent research on social and cultural questions.

Three figures have dominated the study of Chinese cities in English-language academia: the sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920), the historian Frederick W. Mote (1922-2005), and the anthropologist G. William Skinner (1925-2008). Weber’s analysis of cities contributed to his macrohistorical explanation of the unique rise of capitalism in Europe. Focussing on pre-modern political and cultural structures, Weber asserted that the European city, specifically the “urban community”, was foundational to the formation of capitalism. For Weber only the autonomous cities of Europe with their free citizens who were equal before the law and their corporate self-rule dedicated to the public interest, combined with an intellectual environment conducive to the rationalization of legal procedure and economic calculation, could give rise to the modernity with which the “genuine” city was associated. As for China, Weber discovered modes of administrative rationality in its bureaucratic system but not an economic rationality that could lead to capitalism. He argued that Chinese cities were encumbered by the weight of the imperial state, which prevented the autonomy of the aristocratic and merchant classes while allowing a degree of social mobility and accumulation of wealth. Furthermore

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36 This is not to suggest that European urban history is a uniform field. Hohenberg and Lees have long pointed out that there is no agreed definition for the term ‘urbanization’, and that its historical study has led scholars to examine varied problems including the origins of cities; models of ideal types of urban places; the sociological effects of urban settings; and cities as nodes within networks of production and exchange. Hohenberg and Lees, The Making of Urban Europe, pp. 2-4.

37 I focus this brief discussion to scholarship on the Ming and Qing era before the modernization of cities on Western models began in the nineteenth century. For a state of the field essay on the development of scholarship in the United States and in China on late imperial Chinese cities through to the twentieth century, see Liu and Stapleton, “Chinese Urban History.”

38 Jack Goody offers a useful overview of this debate in his Capitalism and Modernity.

39 Rowe, Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, p. 3.

40 Brook, “Capitalism and the Writing of Modern History in China”, pp. 140-141.
Chinese were so tied down by family interests and their attachment to their native villages that there was no room for broader social organization in the city. Accordingly there was no urban class or identity, there were no burghers or citizens.\(^{41}\) Weber concluded that genuine cities appeared only in the West, and that “the cities of Asia were not urban communities at all even though they all had markets and were fortresses.”\(^{42}\) Of course, Weber’s assessment was based on an ideal type of city that manifested the singularity of Europe’s historical trajectory. Weber’s definition of the “urban community” was so narrow that it may scarcely have existed in Europe, let alone elsewhere. But the questions that Weber set out continued to have an influence on historians even after the narrative of European uniqueness had been rejected.

Mote and Skinner led the way in responding to Weber’s critique of Chinese cities and the greater structure of which they were a part. In a set of essays taking the cities Nanjing and Suzhou as his case studies, Mote explored the nature and notion of the city in Chinese history.\(^{43}\) To counter Weber’s twin charge that Chinese cities were dominated by the central bureaucracy and restricted by ties to the countryside, which together prevented the formation of an urban merchant class, Mote argued that there was in fact no single great urban centre that was “both the acme and microcosm of Chinese civilization”, and that Chinese society was marked by a rural-urban continuum that distinguished China from urban traditions elsewhere.\(^{44}\) Basing his assessment on the administration and physical form of cities, styles of architecture and dress, evidence about elite and popular attitudes towards the urban and the rural, as well as a range of cultural and economic activities, Mote contended that there was no sharp division between the urban and the rural as in Europe. For Mote the Chinese city was thus more open than its European counterpart, though he did concede that it was the rural component of Chinese civilization, which he saw as more or less uniform, that defined the Chinese way of life. Mote’s sweeping view of Chinese urbanism since the Tang-Song

\(^{41}\) Rowe, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City*, pp. 1, 4-6.
\(^{43}\) See Mote’s “The Transformation of Nanking, 1350-1400”, and “A Millennium of Chinese Urban History.”
urban revolution was also reliant on a universalized type of city, though one quite different from Weber’s. But as an historian of China, Mote’s work was founded on a wealth of evidence and his interpretation has continued to influence scholars of urban society and culture.\footnote{A significant renewal of Mote’s urban-rural continuum thesis from the perspective of popular religion and culture may be found in David Faure and Taotao Liu eds., \textit{Town and Country in China: Identity and Perception}. They contend that urban-rural distinctions did not become a significant part of an individual’s identity in China until the twentieth century when political reforms separated cities and towns as agents of social change, and villages were seen as the source of backwardness. \textit{Town and Country}, pp. 1-3. See also Zhao Shiyu’s \textit{Kuanghuan yu richang} on how temple fairs linked towns with surrounding areas.}

Like Mote, Skinner also took a sweeping approach to the study of Chinese cities, but with a focus on economic cycles and structures and the function of cities within them. Skinner attributed the two main cycles of urban growth in the medieval and late imperial eras to periods of demographic and commercial expansion together with administrative consolidation.\footnote{Skinner also pointed to the increased monetization of tax and trade, growth in the numbers, wealth, and power of merchants, and a softening of social and official constraints on the merchant class in the Tang-Song era. Skinner, “Introduction: Urban Development in Imperial China”.}

Central to Skinner’s analysis was his argument that the cycles of urbanization were regional rather than empirewide phenomena. Thus the medieval cycle of urban growth was centred on Kaifeng, which was later succeeded by Beijing. This observation contributed towards his greater argument about the “structure of Chinese history”: not only urbanization per se, but all cycles of economic growth are regional phenomena.\footnote{Skinner, “The Structure of Chinese History”. In the same article Skinner discusses the two cycles of trade and economic growth along the Southeast Coast from the eleventh to eighteenth centuries.}

The crucial concept that underlies Skinner’s structural approach to Chinese history is the macroregion.\footnote{See Skinner’s essays in his edited volume, \textit{The City in Late Imperial China}, and Skinner, “The Structure of Chinese History.”} Skinner divided late imperial China into ten essentially autonomous macroregions: distinct physiographic areas defined in terms of drainage basins. Each macroregion had its own economy, characterized by a hierarchy of cities and towns that formed internested central places and peripheries oriented around a macroregional core. The exchange of goods and services within each macroregion was more significant than exchanges with neighbouring regions, and the resources of each region – including human resources, goods, and capital investments – ultimately moved
towards and became concentrated in the macroregional core. With this emphasis on economic structures and functions Skinner managed to counter Weber and reclaim a place for cities in Chinese historical development.

All three scholars (Weber, Mote, and Skinner) had an enduring influence on Chinese urban history. William Rowe was the most explicit in his efforts to refute Weber, while also taking up Mote’s problem of urban and rural cultures and Skinner’s concern with the economic life of cities. In his two-volume study of Hankou Rowe examined in depth the city’s commercial life and the formation of urban communities in the later Qing period. He concluded that Hankou merchants were more than adept at rational capital accounting. Moreover, over the course of the nineteenth century merchants assumed, especially through the work of the guilds, increasing responsibilities in public affairs that amounted to the emergence of an autonomous urban community that transcended kinship and native-place ties. Although subsequent historians may not have so overtly tackled the arguments of the earlier scholars, their legacy can be seen in numerous studies that deal with the essential features of Chinese cities, market networks, urban administration and institutions and especially the roles of merchants and commercialization in Chinese urban history.

For the Ming-early Qing period, good examples are the work of Antonia Finnane and Michael Marmé. Finnane’s study of Yangzhou reveals how the official salt monopoly shaped the city’s growth and its relations with its hinterland. While Finnane does discuss various images of the city, Yangzhou’s salt merchants, who were increasingly dominating

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50 See Rowe’s Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City and Hankow: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City.

51 Rowe went so far as to suggest that, if left to itself, China might ultimately have developed into an industrial capitalist society comparable to that of the West. Rowe, Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, p. 345.

52 The contributions in Skinner’s landmark volume include pioneering articles examining the cosmology and morphology of cities, urban administration, and institutions including academies, guilds, and temples. Skinner, ed., The City in Late Imperial China.
the city’s leading classes of gentry and merchants, are at the heart of her book.\textsuperscript{53} Merchants also play a leading role in Marmé’s study of Ming Suzhou, which narrates the development of that city and its hinterland into an important centre of regional and national commerce, peaking in the fifteenth century. For Marmé, in spite of – even partly because of – the state’s fiscal demands on it, Suzhou came to stimulate the commercialization of the lower Yangzi region.\textsuperscript{54} Indeed this region, also commonly referred to as Jiangnan\textsuperscript{55} (in which Hangzhou is also situated) has dominated our view of the Ming as its leading commercial and cultural region.\textsuperscript{56} Perhaps the most outstanding exception in this regard is Susan Naquin’s \textit{Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900}. That monumental study of the Ming-Qing northern capital is a rich and multifaceted view of the city that focuses on temples.\textsuperscript{57} Naquin demonstrates that because of their multiple religious and social functions temples were central to the fabric of urban society. And in her in-depth discussion of temples as venues for a variety of community and associational activities, echoes of Weber may still be detected.

The present study contributes to a dynamic subfield of urban history that explores the intersections of the social, cultural, and political dimensions of cities. While the questions that have long dominated studies of Chinese cities just outlined have pushed us to understand China’s urban history against the European experience and from a macrohistorical perspective, the newer scholarship provides insights into the social and cultural life of cities as experienced by the countless people that visited and inhabited them. Cultural interpretations of the city are integral to Fei Si-yen’s study of the urbanization of the Jiangnan city Nanjing, which served briefly as the primary dynastic capital in the early Ming.\textsuperscript{58} Fei analyzes the dynamic processes underlying the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{53} Finnane, \textit{Speaking of Yangzhou}.
\bibitem{54} Marmé, \textit{Suzhou: where the goods of all the provinces converge}.
\bibitem{55} Literally meaning “south of the river” Jiangnan denotes the region lying south of the lower reaches of the Yangzi river and includes parts of today’s Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, and Jiangxi provinces. Dominated by Shanghai today, in the Ming other major cities included Hangzhou, Suzhou, and Nanjing.
\bibitem{56} For example, see also Elvin, “Market Towns and Waterways: The County of Shanghai from 1480 to 1910”, and Johnson, \textit{Cities of Jiangnan in Late Imperial China}.
\bibitem{57} Naquin uses temples as a generic term for a variety of establishments, including guildhalls and native-place lodges, that differed greatly in terms of size and their religious affiliations and ritual practices.
\bibitem{58} Fei Si-yen, \textit{Negotiating Urban Space: Urbanization and Late Ming Nanjing}.
\end{thebibliography}
institutional and conceptual constitutions of urban space in which both state and society engaged. Significantly for Fei – and for my study of Hangzhou sites – “urban space was not only a geographic location but also a point of social contention, open to political negotiation and cultural creation”.

Fei’s discussion of how elites produced texts to promote their own version of an “imagined Nanjing” over the vision projected by the state in a kind of political competition is also very relevant to my work.

Two other studies of urban sites are pertinent here. First is Peter Carroll’s book on Suzhou in the late-Qing to Republican era. Although Carroll is concerned with a different set of questions – namely the impact of modernization and urban construction on the people of Suzhou – his approach of scrutinizing urban sites (a new road, the prefectural Confucian Temple, and historic monuments), their changing meanings and functions, and the competition between groups for control of them, has much to offer my study of Hangzhou. But it is with Tobie Meyer-Fong’s Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou that the present study has the closest affinities. Meyer-Fong also studies city sites, though in a different period and place: Yangzhou in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century. Time and place are not the most significant differences, however. More importantly, Meyer-Fong’s study concerns the conscious and concerted efforts of Yangzhou’s elites to rebuild sites of elite culture in order to present new narratives for the city following a violent dynastic transition. When the Manchus conquered China they destroyed Yangzhou and massacred tens of thousands of its residents. Meyer-Fong argues that Yangzhou’s elite groups – including literati, officials, and various ‘loyalists’ – deliberately forged connections between sites in the city and famous historical and cultural figures as well as the new Manchu rulers in order to mask the bloody recent past with representations of cultural refinement. By doing so, the city was able to leave behind the spectre of its violent history and prosper once more.

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60 Peter Carroll, *Between Heaven and Modernity: Reconstructing Suzhou, 1895-1937*.
61 Among the sites analyzed by Meyer-Fong are Red Bridge, which was associated with the famous early Qing scholar Wang Shizhen (1634-1711) and Pingshan Hall, which was closely connected with the renowned Song official Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072). See Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou*, chapters 2 and 4 respectively.
The aims and arguments of this dissertation are quite different. My concern is not with any conscious construction of Hangzhou’s cultural landscape by elites. Instead I argue that while sites were constructed and imbued with meaning in the cultural imagination, the narratives written onto them were multiple and dissonant and represented the concerns and interests of different groups. Despite the fact that all surviving sources come from literati, voices from members of other groups may be discerned in them. Hangzhou’s residents and visitors helped to construct the sites, and contributed towards the histories and meanings of those significant places. While some narratives may have been dominant, there was no monopoly over the sites, no literati networks around figures like Wang Shizhen, as in Meyer-Fong’s Yangzhou. Studying the history of Hangzhou’s sites in this way offers a new way to analyze Ming society and the interactions between different groups that constituted it.

**Dissertation Overview**

Chapter 1 provides an outline of the history of Hangzhou down to the Ming era, highlighting the most prominent periods in its past. It also discusses the reasons for locating this study in Hangzhou. The latter two sections of the chapter describe how the emergence of a flourishing print industry and the rise of travel in the Ming promoted a heightened awareness of places and their histories. Scholarship on both of these phenomena, especially on the rise of print, is also discussed.

The four core chapters that follow take five different Hangzhou sites as their subjects. I examine the sites’ cultural construction as well as the social, institutional, and political contexts in which each was built and rebuilt over time. Of each site I ask a number of questions: What were its origins and how did it change over time? Was it an official project of the state? What were the economic and institutional arrangements for maintaining it? What meanings did people attach to it? Did its significance change over time or vary among different people? Who built and rebuilt it over time? Through answering these questions I seek to reveal and explain the ways in which different groups interacted and created meaning at the sites.

The five sites vary in nature and position within the Ming order, and represent broad sections of Ming society. First, the nature and purpose of the sites differ
considerably and include official shrines to loyal statesmen, a Buddhist monastery and its rock formations, the local city god temple, and West Lake. Second, each site intersected with the political order of the state to a different degree. The shrines and city god temple were both part of the politico-ritual order, but their origins and place in the state ritual system varied greatly and reflected different groups interests. The Buddhist monastery was not part of the official politico-ritual order, but was nevertheless subject to state control. While West Lake was part of the state’s hydrological order, conflict over it remained a largely local affair. Third, each site represents a different configuration of social groups involved in making and remaking it. Although all the sites intersected with the political order of the state, they were separately also the concern of competing constituencies within officialdom and local society. Overall, the chapters accrete interactions between different social groups and progress to reveal a broadening scope of interests (at least in the initial establishment of the sites) from individual families, to a Buddhist institution, to the Hangzhou people at large. However, all the sites came to encompass the interests of the larger community. By focussing on interactions between groups and the dissonance in meanings they inscribed onto the sites, these different social configurations present a new way of understanding the constitution and dynamics of Ming society.

In Chapter 2 I demonstrate that official sites dedicated to paragons of loyalty – the ultimate political virtue – required the support of wider society for their continued existence and enduring appeal. The Hangzhou shrines and tombs of the Southern Song general Yue Fei (1103-1141) and the Ming statesman Yu Qian (1398-1457) were initiated by family members to commemorate their unjustly executed forbears. In both cases official rehabilitation and recognition were necessary to safeguard the establishment of the shrines. Yet having been incorporated into the state’s politico-ritual order and inscribed with the narrative of loyalty, the shrines required the regular involvement of officials, members of the court, local elites, and the wider populace to maintain their physical existence and to survive as meaningful sites. It was not a straightforward narrative of loyalty, however, because both men had been condemned and executed for being the very opposite – disloyal. The problematic legacies of Yue and Yu meant that the meanings of their histories were open to conflicting interpretations. In fact this openness
enabled commentators to debate differing meanings of loyalty depending on contemporary political demands. At the same time, the figures of (especially) Yue Fei and Yu Qian grew in the popular imagination. Physical additions to their Hangzhou sites – including a tree and bronze statues representing those held responsible for Yue Fei’s death – enabled visitors to engage directly with the histories of the pair and to act out their own assessment of their loyalty, and thereby participate in the continued construction of the histories and meanings of the two figures.

Chapter 3 analyzes a Buddhist site of Hangzhou: Lingyin Monastery and the adjoining karst rocks and caves of Feilaifeng (Fly Hither Peak). Buddhism was a rich stream in Hangzhou’s history that stretched back to the early phase of the religion’s spread in China. It was in the third century that Lingyin Monastery had been founded by the Indian monk Huili. As a Buddhist site, unlike the other places examined in this study, Lingyin Feilaifeng was not part of the central political order. Moreover, more than any of the other sites it was an institution with its own personnel and existence outside regular society – within the Buddhist Sangha, particularly under the Chan lineage. Nonetheless, its institutional existence apart, Lingyin Feilaifeng remained both subject to political control and dependent on the support of patrons, including members of the court, government officials, and local society. As a consequence of the site’s position at the intersection of political and social interests, its history and meanings were also open to divergent interpretations. While stories about Lingyin Feilaifeng’s legendary founder Huili were well known, the site’s reputation within the cultural imagination rested on much that had little to do with its Buddhist history. Many visitors went to explore its caves and scenic spots rather than out of any inherent interest in Buddhism. Worse, Lingyin Feilaifeng was forever associated with a Yuan monk whose desecration of the Song imperial tombs caused later visitors to seek out statues of him at the site in order to smash them as punishment. This violent engagement with the site neatly demonstrates the multivalent nature of its history.

In Chapter 4 I focus on the only site examined here that was situated within the walls of Hangzhou: the city god temple at Wushan. This was an urban site partly due to its location, but also as a result of its close association with the city of Hangzhou and its people. Like the shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian the city god temple became an official
cult and part of the politico-ritual order. But unlike the two shrines, the cult had ancient and unorthodox origins that the Ming state was not able fully to bring under its ritual yoke. Accordingly the figure of an early Ming local official could be projected into the role of the city god because of his broad appeal. By examining legends about the god that circulated in fiction set in Hangzhou and other popular writings, this chapter shows that the city god’s reputation as an upright official, who was particularly dedicated to administering justice for the people, made his temple a popular site – arguably the most important for the local populace. The temple’s constituency was in theory the entire community of Hangzhou, but the god had special appeal to those who suffered injustice at the hands of officialdom. Because of this the city god temple may also be construed as a site of silent opposition to the political order.

Chapter 5 explores the dual representations of the most famous site of Hangzhou: West Lake. While the lake had long been celebrated for its scenic beauty and its rich literary evocations, it was just as important – arguably more so – as an embodiment of orderly administration and as a site within the state’s hydrological order, whose maintenance was crucial to the wellbeing of the people of Hangzhou. The most famous officials in Hangzhou’s history, Bai Juyi and Su Shi, had carried out major hydrological work at the lake, on the water of which residents were dependent, and the maintenance of the lake was often a struggle for valuable land and water resources that brought officials into conflict with local power holders. This chapter focuses on the efforts of the mid-Ming prefect Yang Mengying who fought hard to dredge and restore the lake, which had been reduced by chronic encroachment. Yang drew on a range of discourses to bolster his case. He argued for the benefit of all Hangzhou’s people against the private interests of the minority. He appealed to the precedents of Bai and Su, drawing on West Lake’s history to advance his own project. Yang won the support of regional and local officials to carry out his work, but he also came into conflict with local power holders whose interests he threatened. Despite the professed benefits of his project, the controversy over Yang’s restoration of West Lake ultimately contributed to his downfall.
Chapter 1
Placing Hangzhou, its History and Sources

While Hangzhou appeared wondrously in the European imagination as the greatest city in the world, Chinese declared it a heaven on earth. These images of the city, though fantastic, were not unfounded fabrications. For over the course of centuries, as China’s economic and cultural centres gravitated irrevocably southward, Hangzhou became a leading city in the lower Yangzi region, even assuming the role of dynastic capital during the Southern Song period. The city’s sometime political centrality was tied closely with its economic and cultural importance. Rising steadily from the Tang era onwards the city emerged as a leading centre for a number of industries, including tea and textiles, which produced goods that were traded all over China as well as overseas. The resulting prosperity also contributed towards the emergence of Hangzhou as a major cultural centre known for its great monasteries and temples as well as its literati culture. It was the city’s prominence in all these spheres (political, economic, and cultural) that gave it such a richly textured history. And it was its thriving publishing industry – itself a product of its political significance, prosperity and concentration of literati activities – that produced the abundant archive recording that history.

This chapter provides an overview of Hangzhou’s history to show how the city grew from a regional city to become a major political, economic, and cultural centre. This background account also provides the greater historical context in which the stories of the sites explored in the four ensuing chapters unfolded. The second part of the chapter discusses the growth of Hangzhou’s publishing industry and the three types of text that provide the main sources for this study. Finally the chapter deals with the expansion of travel through Ming times that arose from wider economic and cultural developments, and also helped to reinforce the place of the city’s sites in the cultural imagination of the realm.
1.1 Hangzhou through the Ming

Hangzhou is located at approximately 30º N in China’s Yangzi River delta. It sits on the banks of the Qiantang River just inland from Hangzhou Bay, and is 180 km southwest of Shanghai today. The mean annual temperature is around 16ºC and the mean annual rainfall is between 1,114 and 1,260mm. There is a monsoon pattern of wind and rain, with a period of intense precipitation from mid-June to mid-July known as the “plum rains” (mei yu).62

In an historical analysis of water control in the Hangzhou Bay area Shiba Yoshinobu subdivides the region into six zones in terms of its ecological differences. In order of elevation, these are 1) hills, 2) fan/slope complexes, 3) elevated plains, 4) low-lying plains, 5) sandy elevations, and 6) lowlands. To the south of Ming Hangzhou ran the Qiantang River, while to the west stretched a range of hills along a mostly north-south axis. To the north and east the city was surrounded by sandy elevation and, beyond that, low-lying plains and lowlands.63 Amid a changing landscape of alluvial plains, tidal flats and shallow sea, the hills were the only constant feature. And from the heights of the hills people could survey the waterways and paddies for which the area was known.64 Indeed, because of the large-scale production of rice by later imperial times, it is the lowlands that stand out. And it is the gradual conversion of lowlands into paddies in the tenth through fourteenth centuries that tells the greater story of human migration, a growing population, and the transformation of the area’s physical landscape.65

In the long run the formation of the landscape of the lower Yangzi delta was the result of human and natural processes. This is very evident at the coastline, where the long-term build-up of sediment carried by the Yangzi, Qiantang, and even the Yellow rivers gradually produced sandy plains.66 And, beginning in the eighth century, the

62 Elvin and Su, “Action at a Distance”, p. 348.
63 Shiba, “Environment Versus Water Control”, pp. 139-140.
64 Elvin and Su, “Man Against the Sea”, p. 11.
66 The Yellow River had the greatest effect on the Yangzi delta in the period from 1194 to 1855, during which it followed a southern course and debouched south of the Shandong Peninsula, and especially the years after 1579 when the hydrological engineering work of Pan Jixun directly caused the river to carry greater deposits into the sea. This sediment then moved southward along the Jiangsu and Zhejiang coasts.
building of long earthen seawalls along the eastern shorelines enabled the increasing reclamation of the delta area. These processes ultimately moved the coastline ten kilometres farther out from where they had been in prehistorical times. The technologies of land reclamation and water control developed in the littoral area were also applied inland as a growing population exerted greater demands on land use. By the Ming period increasing competition for control over natural resources often erupted into social conflict (see chapter 5). It is worth bearing this greater environmental story in mind as we turn to the political history of Hangzhou.

The walled city of Ming Hangzhou was the administrative seat of Hangzhou Prefecture and the two counties of Renhe and Qiantang. A further seven counties (Haining, Fuyang, Yuhang, Lin’an, Xincheng, Yuqian, and Changhua) fell under the prefecture’s jurisdiction. The new system of provincial administration established at the beginning of the dynasty, also made Hangzhou the administrative centre for Zhejiang, which consisted of a total of eleven prefectures. Thus Ming Hangzhou housed the three main tiers of regional and local government, some of whose buildings may be discerned in the administrative map that appears in the 1579 edition of the prefectural gazetteer entitled “Hangzhou fu Renhe Qiantang er xian zhi tu” (Map of Hangzhou Prefecture and the two counties of Renhe and Qiantang) (Figure 3). Other prominent features illustrated in the map include the city wall and its gates and water gates, through which flow canals that crisscross the city, running alongside the streets. In the southwest

See Elvin and Su, “Action at a Distance”.  

67 Shiba, “Environment Versus Water Control”, pp. 135-138. For instance before the Neolithic Age Lake Tai in the centre of the present-day delta was a bay that opened directly to the sea. On the infilling of the inner part of the estuary, see also Elvin and Su, “Man Against the Sea”.  

68 Chen Shan, Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi, juan 1, p. 173; Guo and Jin, Zhongguo xingzheng quhua tongshi, pp. 151-153. The other ten Zhejiang prefectures were: Yanzhou, Jiaxing, Huzhou, Shaoxing, Ningbo, Taizhou, Jinhua, Quzhou, Chuzhou, and Wenzhou.  

69 The map’s orientation is somewhat unusual. North is at the top of the page instead of the more usual south, which in traditional official maps represents the emperor’s south-facing gaze.  

70 The crenellated walls are shown to be more square than was actually the case, probably due both to the dimensions of the page and also to the general geometric idealization of city walls. But they are fairly realistic in that the eastern wall was in fact straighter than the western wall, which followed the contours of West Lake.  

71 The canals that ran through the city were used for consumption, irrigation, keeping fish, and transportation. See Zhou Feng, Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou, pp. 20-33.
corner of the walled city Wushan and the City God Temple (chenghuang miao) are clearly identified. Beyond the city walls West Lake to the west and the Qiantang River to the east also figure prominently. These features relate to Hangzhou’s political status, its hydrology and transportation, and its long history.

Hangzhou had undergone many changes in its political status over the centuries. As successive and contending polities incorporated the area into their rule, there were frequent shifts in Hangzhou’s administrative status alongside the ebb and flow in the fortunes of the city and its people. Its political significance peaked when it served as the capital city first of the Wuyue kingdom (907-978) and later of the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279), but its history reached back much earlier into the pre-imperial period.

According to tradition Hangzhou, or rather Yuhang (an older name, from which Hangzhou was derived, that became the name of one of Hangzhou’s constituent counties), was named after Yu the Great, the celebrated tamer of floods and founder of the Xia dynasty (trad. 21st C. to 17th C. BCE). Yu supposedly visited the area and the

Figure 3 “Hangzhou fu Renhe Qiantang er xian zhi tu” (Map of Hangzhou Prefecture and the two counties of Renhe and Qiantang), in Chen Shan, Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi, Vol. 1, pp. 120-121.
name Yuhang (meaning “remaining boat”) was given to the place where Yu left his boat and went ashore. Later on during the Western Zhou period (11th C. – 771 BCE) a fifth generation grandson of King Wu was enfeoffed in the area of Hangzhou, which eventually became the Wu State. Then in the late Spring and Autumn period (770-476 BCE) and the Warring States era (475-221 BCE), Hangzhou was variously part of the state of Wu and the neighbouring rival state of Yue, which frequently fought each other. Afterwards it was absorbed into the kingdom of Chu.

When the First Qin Emperor unified China in 221 BCE and established a centralized system of administration that comprised thirty-six commanderies (jun), Hangzhou took the form of four counties (Qiantang, Yuhang, Fuchun, and Haiyan) out of a total of twenty-four counties under Kuaiji Commandery. In the early Han period, Hangzhou was included in the fiefs of a succession of princes, before the centralized administration system was imposed again. Partly as a result of the ongoing transformation of marshes into coastal flatlands as well as increasing migration into the area, administrative boundaries were redrawn several times in the early imperial period leaving Hangzhou as a collection of counties under Qiantang Commandery. This political position did not alter significantly during the ensuing eras of the Three Kingdoms (220-265 CE) and Northern and Southern Dynasties (265-589). This age of disunity was, however, marked by cultural vitality, especially with the introduction and spread of Buddhism.

With the Sui (581-618) reunification and its restructuring of the administrative system, Qiantang Commandery was abolished in 589 and replaced by Yuhang Prefecture with six subordinate counties (Yuhang, Yuqian, Yanguan, Qiantang, Fuyang, Wukang). In the following year, the administrative centre was moved to Qiantang County, in the

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72 An alternative etymology holds that Yuhang was originally written 禹杭 meaning “Yu’s boat”, but that the first character was later erroneously changed to Yu 餘 (“remaining, surplus”). In both explanations, Hang 杭 is understood as variant of the character 航 meaning “boat”. Hangzhou scholar Zhong Yulong favoured the first etymology. Chen Shan, Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi, juan 1, p. 165; Zhong Yulong, Shuo Hangzhou, p. 10.

73 Chen Shan, Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi, juan 1, p. 166.

74 Chen Shan, Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi, juan 1, p. 167.

75 Chen Shan, Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi, juan 1, pp. 167-168; Zhou Feng, Sui Tang mingjun Hangzhou, p. 66.
southern part of what became the walled city of later imperial times. Although further administrative changes followed, the origins of Ming Hangzhou can be more firmly located in the Sui city.  

Emperor Sui Yangdi’s (r. 605-618) Grand Canal project brought commercial and demographic growth for Hangzhou, which had a registered population of 15,380 households in the Kaihuang era (581-600). But the city was also caught up in the fierce struggle between the central government and regional great families, and the rebellions that beset the short-lived dynasty.  

Hangzhou suffered extensive destruction in the Sui-Tang transition and it was only beginning in the reign of Tang Taizong (r. 627-649) that the city enjoyed a century-long period of growth and prosperity. Hangzhou’s population rose from 35,071 households and 153,729 individuals in the Zhengan era (627-649) to 86,258 households and 585,963 individuals in the Kaiyuan era (713-741). Bai Juyi (722-846), who served as Hangzhou prefect in the 820s, declared it the largest city in the southeast.  

Thanks to continued commercial growth and a prosperous foreign trade, by the reign of Emperor Xianzong (r. 806-820) Hangzhou had a population of 100,000 households and produced 500,000 strings of cash in tax revenue – roughly one twenty-fourth of the empire’s total. Hydrological projects also helped to sustain the growing Tang city. In particular prefect Li Mi’s (722-789) Six Wells secured the water supplies for the city and Bai Juyi’s restoration of West Lake provided for the area’s irrigation (chapter 5).  

Unlike the preceding Sui-Tang transition, the fragmentation of the empire at the end of Tang did not bring turmoil to Hangzhou. On the contrary, as the capital of the Wuyue kingdom (907-978) during the era of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960), Hangzhou enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity continuing the expansion of the Tang. King Qian Liu (r. 907-932) and his successors made important contributions to

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81 Qian Liu was enfeoffed as King of Wuyue at the beginning of the Liang (907-911). Chen Shan, *Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi*, juan 1, p. 170.
the city’s growth. Building on his own work as governor of the area before the fall of the Tang, Qian erected the Qiantang coastal dikes that ran over 100 li and helped to protect the area. In other hydrological work Qian installed two locks (zha) on the Qiantang river to guard against incoming tides, which reduced the salinity of the soil to aid irrigation and improved river transportation. He also dredged and restored West Lake, which had partly succumbed to marshland and encroachment in the century since Bai Juyi’s work. In addition, Qian dug more channels to supply water for the city’s residents. After Hangzhou became the Wuyue capital, Qian Liu began a major project of rebuilding the city walls extending their existing length of 70 li. As a result of urban growth, the city was divided into two counties: Qiantang and Qianjiang. The latter was renamed Renhe in the subsequent Song era, setting the names for the two prefectural counties for the rest of the later imperial period.\(^{82}\)

Hangzhou was fortunate to pass through another peaceful dynastic transition when Qian Chu (r. 947-978), the last of the Wuyue kings, submitted to the Song (960-1279) in 978 and thereby saved his land and people from war and destruction. Under the new Song system Hangzhou was demoted to become Lin’an County.\(^{83}\) Despite this lowering of its political status, the city continued to prosper as the population steadily grew and commerce expanded. When the Japanese monk Jōjin (1011-1081) visited the city in 1072 – drawn by its reputation as a major centre of Buddhism, of which the Wuyue kings were devoted patrons – he described a bustling night market where all kinds of goods were for sale and countless entertainers amused visitors. If Jōjin’s description is reliable, the marketplace he witnessed stretched a length of over thirty streets – or more than three and a half kilometres – east to west and north to south.\(^{84}\) However it was the relocation of the Song court to Hangzhou after the collapse of the Northern Song in 1127 that launched a period of soaring growth and prosperity that lasted through the remainder of the dynasty. There were two main reasons for moving the Song court to Hangzhou. First, Hangzhou was a safe distance from the front line facing the Jin enemy, unlike

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\(^{82}\) Hangzhou fu zhi, juan 1, p. 171.

\(^{83}\) Zhou Feng, Sui Tang mingjun Hangzhou, pp. 67-69.

\(^{84}\) Chen Shan, Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi, juan 1, p. 171.

\(^{84}\) Heng, Cities of Aristocrats and Bureaucrats, pp. 106-107.
Jiankang (Nanjing), which was another possible choice. Moreover, the watery topography of the Yangzi region around Hangzhou made it easier to defend against Jurchen cavalry. Second, the fact that Hangzhou had become a major urban centre in the southeast with a large population, thriving economy, extensive transportation network, and famous scenery made it an attractive choice. Accordingly, despite the difficulties in squeezing the Song court and administration into an already jam-packed commercial city, Lin’an County was promoted to a prefecture in 1129 and the court settled there for the rest of the dynasty.

The steady southward migration accelerated after the Jurchen occupied north China and the Song court moved south. Hangzhou’s own population rose sharply. In the mid-11th century during the Northern Song Hangzhou’s population did not exceed 100,000 households. When Su Shi served as Hangzhou prefect in the Yuanyou era (1086-1093) he estimated that the population was between 400,000 and 500,000 individuals. Estimations of the population of Southern Song Lin’an vary greatly – among contemporary observers and modern historians – between one and five million individuals. If we take Hangzhou’s population to be the combined total for the two counties of Qiantang and Renhe, then gazetteer figures show a huge increase from 261,692 households and 552,507 individuals in the Qiandao era (1165-1173) to 391,259 households and 1,240,760 individuals in the Xianchun era (1265-1274). Certainly, Hangzhou’s population was well in excess of one million, making it the most populated city in the world at the time.

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86 Lin’an Prefecture had nine subordinate counties: Renhe, Qiantang, Yanguan, Fuyang, Yuhang, Lin’an, Xincheng, Yuqian, and Changhua. Chen Shan, *Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi*, juan 1, p. 171. Hangzhou’s long and irregular layout was totally incongruous with the canonical demands of a geometrically perfect capital, Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, pp. 206-207. In 1148 the city walls were rebuilt and enlarged to a height of over ten metres and depth of three to four metres. Zhou Feng, *Nan Song jingcheng Hangzhou*, pp. 46-57. The imperial palace and halls were eventually built at the southern end of the city and around Phoenix Hill, see Zhou Feng, *Nan Song jingcheng Hangzhou*, pp. 14-31. This meant that the emperor, who according to theories of imperial cosmological was meant to sit ‘facing south’, had to turn his back on the city. Furthermore, the area was so cramped that a number of buildings were given multiple functions and had to have their name plaques changed to match their use at any given time. Heng, *Cities of Aristocrats and Bureaucrats*, pp. 141-142.
Just as Hangzhou’s population rose through the Southern Song, so did its commerce and industries prosper. Some of Hangzhou’s prosperity was spurred by the demands of the court. For instance, dedicated government kilns produced fine ceramics for the court’s use.\(^{88}\) Overall official and private production thrived in tandem. Building on strong foundations, the textile industry flourished. Government and private operations produced a wide range of luxury and everyday weaves and fabrics for the consumption of the court, elites and the common people.\(^{89}\) Hangzhou’s publishing industry also blossomed as official and private presses produced books for the use of the court and its academies and also for sale to the growing number of literati and the wider educated population.\(^{90}\) Handicraft industries and food producers provided an unsurpassed range of goods for sale at the city’s bustling markets and commercial districts. Long-distance trading networks connected Hangzhou to places throughout the realm and overseas as far as Korea, Japan, and India in this great age of commercial and urban growth.\(^{91}\) Song writers observed that Hangzhou was completely dominated by trade.\(^{92}\) Indeed, the period saw the rise of merchants in Song society to shape urban and cultural life in Hangzhou as they had in Kaifeng. Merchant families improved their social status through marriage with scholar-official families – affluent merchants even became the envy of scholar-officials.\(^{93}\)

Hangzhou experienced some turmoil in the Mongol invasion, but its fall was relatively bloodless (unlike that of the former capitals of Chang’an and Kaifeng and nearby Changzhou).\(^{94}\) Demoted from dynastic capital, it became the administrative centre of the Jianghuai circuit, renamed Zhejiang in 1291.\(^{95}\) Although Hangzhou ceased to be


\(^{91}\) Zhou Feng, *Nan Song jingcheng Hangzhou*, pp. 85-100, 120-123. For a colourful portrait of Hangzhou and its people’s customs and social life during the Southern Song, see Jacques Gernet’s *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion, 1250-1276*.

\(^{92}\) Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, p. 208.

\(^{93}\) Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, pp. 207-211.


\(^{95}\) Chen Shan, *Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi*, juan 1, p. 172; Zhou Feng, *Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou*, pp. 1-2.
“the hub of the universe”, it was still a major urban centre and one of the three great cities of the Yuan along with Helin (Karakorum) and Dadu (Beijing). 96 Foreign trade continued to flourish, especially when maritime routes became more important owing to the split of the Mongol empire impeding land routes. 97 One of the four Yuan maritime superintendancies, set up in 1277, was located in Hangzhou. 98 The city’s ten major markets continued to thrive with tens of thousands trading on market days. As handicrafts industries flourished thousands of workshops belonging to twelve large guilds were kept busy, as Marco Polo reported. 99 Hangzhou brought in the highest tax revenues of the realm and its population in 1290 was registered as 360,850 households and 1,834,710 individuals, surpassing even that of the Song. 100

Whereas Yuan Hangzhou was able to succeed Song Lin’an as a leading urban centre, the city went through a marked decline over the course of the longer Ming dynasty. In part this was due to Hangzhou’s reduced political status and a gradual loss of economic importance to other cities in the region – especially to Suzhou. But a series of political and social upheavals also knocked the city’s former dynamism. During the troubled last years of the Yuan, Hangzhou became part of the Wu regime of Zhu Yuanzhang’s archrival, Zhang Shicheng (1321-1367), and was caught up in their struggle for dominance. 101 Soon after founding the dynasty, Ming Taizu imposed heavy taxes on the Jiangnan area that had been Zhang Shicheng’s power base. 102 In 1370 Ming Taizu ordered some 4,000 households from the lower Yangzi districts of Hangzhou, Suzhou, Songjiang, Huzhou, and Jiaxing to move into the area of his native Fengyang, Anhui, whose population had sharply declined due to a series of epidemics and the violence of the Yuan-Ming transition. 103 The Jiajing emperor’s (r. 1522-1566) ban on maritime trade

97 Zhou Feng, Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou, p. 5.
98 The other three were in Shanghai, Ningbo, and Quanzhou. Brook, The Troubled Empire, p. 219.
99 Zhou Feng, Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou, pp. 5-6, 99 ff.
102 Zhou Feng, Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou, p. 102.
brought a wave of devastating pirate attacks. During the 1550s large-scale pirate raids ravaged Zhejiang and other coastal provinces. Groups of pirates established fortified bases along the coast and by 1556 the entire region from Nanjing south to Hangzhou was out of control. Hangzhou itself was attacked early in 1555 resulting in the massacre of thousands in the surrounding countryside. Zhejiang was not relieved of the pirate scourge until 1560.\footnote{Geiss, “The Chia-ching Reign, 1522-1566”, pp. 496-498.} The late Ming era also witnessed widespread unrest in Jiangnan’s cities. This came in the form of protests against the predations of eunuch tax collectors during the Wanli era (1573-1620), and also as uprisings against the injustices of the urban taxation and labour levy systems whose burdens fell largely on the lower classes of city dwellers.\footnote{Zhou Feng, Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou, p. 3.} In Hangzhou movements to reform these systems met with gentry opposition and resulted in a popular uprising in 1582. The uprising was put down and reforms were carried out, but not without considerable destruction and loss of life. The events exposed the gulf and animosity between the privileged members of the landowning gentry, and the workers and petty merchants who lived off their daily labours.\footnote{Historians of the uprising have detected a nascent political consciousness and opposition to the rule of the gentry among the city’s lower classes. Fuma, “Late Ming Urban Reform”; Von Glahn, “Municipal Reform and Urban Social Conflict”. For the 1609 popular movement in Nanjing for a new urban property tax to replace the huojia labour levy, see Fei, Negotiating Urban Space, chapter 1.}

To a degree these instances of unrest and dislocation are reflected in Hangzhou’s changing population figures – albeit only with a weighty caveat. The preceding paragraphs give population figures for Hangzhou from the Sui period onwards that are taken from historical records and frequently cited by modern historians as indicators of Hangzhou’s growth and prosperity. One may understandably be tempted to indulge in such an approach and to continue it through the late imperial era, not least because gazetteer records provide fairly regular entries for the registered population that have the appearance of real figures – i.e. not round numbers given as symbols of magnitude. Yet as Ho Ping-ti and scholars after him have shown, there are numerous thorny problems in using such historical data. For instance, the Ming state began in the Hongwu reign by attempting to register the entire population, but later shifted to covering only its tax-
pasty portions – all while under-reporting and evasion of registration became increasingly rampant.¹⁰⁷

But even without fumbling for accurate statistics or clean correlations, the overall contours of Hangzhou’s demographic change, at least for the first half to two thirds of the Ming period, are telling. (Beginning in the Wanli era [1573-1620], however, the consolidation of the “Single Whip” fiscal reforms, which profoundly changed registration practices to focus on the unit of the ding [meaning “adult male” but actually a complicated unit used for apportioning fiscal responsibilities related to land holdings and household sizes]¹⁰⁸ rather than on households and individuals, means that one can calibrate continuous demographic change with even less confidence.) Overall, there was a decline from 193,485 households and 720,567 individuals registered at the beginning of the founding Hongwu reign (1368-1398), to 193,281 households and 674,786 individuals in the Tianshun reign (1457-1464), and 226,492 households and 508,001 individuals at the end of the Longqing reign (1567-1572).¹⁰⁹ The sheer magnitude of the initial drop in population from the Yuan figure of over 1.8 million to slightly above one half million in the early Ming might make it difficult to accept, but we might tentatively propose a general trend of a decreasing population – punctuated with occasional rises – as the declining former metropolis endured a series of upheavals.

Despite its fluctuating fortunes, Ming Hangzhou remained a significant centre of commerce and industry. It was less central than it had been during the Song or Yuan, but it continued to have a place among Jiangnan’s major cities, which also included Suzhou, Nanjing, Yangzhou, Shanghai, Jiaxing, and Huzhou. Hangzhou was able to continue or revive former strengths in such industries as tea production, papermaking, printing, boat-building, and especially the manufacture and trade of handicrafts and textiles.¹¹⁰ In addition to furnishing the busy local markets, merchants sold Hangzhou goods


¹⁰⁸ For an incisive analysis of the meaning of ding in late imperial fiscal data, see Ho Ping-ti, *Studies on the Population of China, 1368-1953*, chapter 2. Ho notes that after 1578 figures for households (hu) and individuals (kou) were in most cases “compiled arbitrarily”, *ibid*, p. 20.


throughout the realm and overseas as far as Japan and Southeast Asia, despite the ban on maritime trade. They were able to do this by taking advantage of Hangzhou’s position as a major node in an extensive transportation system – Hangzhou became the southern terminus of the Grand Canal in the Yongle reign (1403-1424) – that spread across the empire and beyond.\footnote{Zhou Feng, Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou, pp. 154-155.}

The mainstay of Hangzhou’s continued prosperity was its textile industry. Having flourished during the Song, and only suffering minor disruptions from the Mongol conquest, Hangzhou’s textile industry continued to grow through the late imperial era and kept its lead in the national production of silk. Despite losing its political prominence, Hangzhou remained the centre of state silk production. Of the twenty-nine government silk production facilities in the Ming, ten were in Zhejiang and the most important ones in Hangzhou.\footnote{Zhou Feng, Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou, pp. 139-140.} But the private production of a wide range of textiles for commercial sale dominated. As the Wanli era Minister of Personnel Zhang Han (1511-1593), a Renhe native whose family had made its fortune in textiles, pointed out in his famous essay “Shanggu ji” (On merchants):

> Mulberry and hemp abound in the fields. This is where silk skeins, silk floss, and ramie are produced, and people from all over the empire procure what they need here. Even the big merchants from Shaanxi, Shanxi, Shandong, and Henan don’t consider several thousand li too long a journey, for those who seek gauze, Han damask, and silk fabrics must come to the eastern region of Zhejiang.\footnote{Zhang Han, “Shanggu Ji”, in Songchuang mengyu, pp. 83-84, translated in Brook, “The Merchant Network in 16th Century China”, p. 199.}

By the late sixteenth century, there were an estimated 20,000 private silk weaving looms in Hangzhou, about one quarter of Jiangnan’s total and thirty times that of government production facilities. Official agents would even hire private textile producers when they could not meet their quotas. It became quite normal for ordinary households to have a weaving loom.\footnote{Zhou Feng, Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou, pp. 142-143.} The growing number of textile workers brought an increasing specialization of skills. This resulted in a large pool of textile workers hiring out their labour, a development that was connected with the fiscal changes that replaced labour
levies with payments in silver. More specialized skilled workers also led to numerous innovations and improvements in different kinds of weave.\textsuperscript{115} Hangzhou textiles and especially silk became highly prized far and wide. Merchants from Anhui, Shanxi, and Fujian were all very active in trading Hangzhou silk on national and international markets. We do not know precise figures for the numbers of merchants active in Hangzhou, but the Renhe county gazetteer of the Kangxi era (1662-1722) claimed that more than half of the population of Hangzhou were merchants and traders. This is obviously an exaggeration even allowing that it takes into account many people who engaged in temporary trade during festival periods or during the slack seasons in the agricultural cycle. Nonetheless the statement underscores the importance of trade – especially the textile trade – in late imperial Hangzhou.\textsuperscript{116}

For these reasons Hangzhou in the Ming remained an important urban centre and regional hub despite no longer being the political capital of the realm. It was a city of historical, cultural, and economic importance and, as such, possesses three broad attributes that make the study of its sites a promising window for exploring the dynamics of Ming society.

First, Hangzhou had a long and rich history. The fact that Hangzhou’s history reached back to the pre-imperial period and that it was subsequently of dynastic and regional importance meant that Hangzhou’s landscape was laden with history. Layers of stories had accumulated at countless sites in and around Hangzhou and it was at these places that particular episodes of the past resonated through to the present. The past was of course asymmetrical; certain periods weighed more heavily on the landscape than others. Most prominent among these were periods during which Hangzhou was a regional or dynastic political centre: the Wu state of the later Zhou period; the kingdom of Wuyue, and the Southern Song. But Hangzhou’s narratives did not all concern the rise and fall of polities. Hangzhou was an important place in the history of Buddhism and Daoism, both of which flourished during the Northern and Southern dynasties and left many traces at

\textsuperscript{115} Zhou Feng, \textit{Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou}, pp. 144-148, 153.

\textsuperscript{116} Zhou Feng, \textit{Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou}, pp. 135-136.
sites in the area (chapters 3 and 4). Thus there were multiple pasts imprinted on Hangzhou’s cultural landscape that Ming people remembered and referred to.

Episodes of the past that people most readily cited involved salient figures and particular events that may have had special meaning for the present. Thus many referred to Yue Fei when discussing Yu Qian in a way that both compared the two loyal statesmen, and also drew parallels between the reduced Southern Song and the restorationist Ming, which continued to be threatened by northern invaders (chapter 2). Common people prayed to the city god for his assistance because he was known as an upright official (chapter 4). And Hangzhou prefect Yang Mengying could evoke the precedents of the famous scholar-officials Bai Juyi and Su Shi in support of his own West Lake project (chapter 5). In these various ways Hangzhou’s multiple pasts – and the multiple interpretations of former figures that were possible – provided a rich resource for Ming people to make claims about the present.

Second, Hangzhou’s status as a major centre of Buddhism and literati culture contributed to the richness of its history. Its prominent place on the cultural landscape drew countless visitors to its celebrated sights. In addition, Hangzhou long enjoyed a thriving publishing industry. This was due in part to it being the dynastic capital in the Southern Song period, during which the government sustained the industry and produced many publications for its use. But more important for cultural production were the long-established literati activities in the region. Thus was generated a large archive on Hangzhou’s history in the form of official and private historical writings, fiction, travel writings, guidebooks, poetry collections and other texts. These countless works circulated widely thanks to the thriving publishing industry. Many texts could also be found inscribed at the sites with which they were associated, alongside statues and other historical artefacts that helped to bring Hangzhou’s rich pasts to life for those able to visit in person.

Third, as a major regional centre of historical, cultural, and continued economic importance that also housed the three main levels of regional and local government, Hangzhou may be seen to represent large sections of the Ming state and society. Hangzhou was a place where members of many different social groups interacted. At the sites discussed in the chapters that follow, regional and local officials work together to
build and maintain sites, eunuchs intervene to rescue sites, local elites including literati and landowners help to commemorate the histories of sites or obstruct their restoration, while common people visit sites as pilgrims and devotees or engage in constructing sites *in situ*. But to purport that Hangzhou may be broadly representative of Ming society is not to suggest that it was a typical city of late imperial China. As already explained it continued to be a major urban centre after it lost its political pre-eminence. Hangzhou remained a leading city of Jiangnan, the most prosperous and populated region of the realm that has dominated the history of Ming China. Yet neither was Hangzhou unique. The present approach of reconstructing the history of urban sites could in theory be applied to other major cities with sufficient historical resources. In fact, however, relatively few places could match Hangzhou for its rich history and its vibrant publishing industry that helped to produce and sustain that history.

### 1.2 An Expanding World of Print

There had been a flourishing book trade in the Song and early Yuan periods but it had declined in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was not until the Jiajing era (1522-1566) that there was a new publishing boom that was to last through the nineteenth century. Indeed, the sixteenth century saw the imprint overtake the manuscript in the Jiangnan region (although, as Joseph McDermott notes, manuscripts remained important long after this “ascendance of the imprint”). But the lack of clear statistical evidence makes the number of books published during the Ming and how that compares with earlier periods uncertain. There is substantial evidence, however, that beginning in the early sixteenth century, there was a significant increase over the preceding two centuries both in terms of the quantities and varieties of titles published, and in the geographical and social reach of their distribution. Government, literati, and commercial publications blossomed to include not only works such as the Confucian classics, dynastic histories, and other educational texts and primers that were promoted by the state, but also local histories, medical and pharmaceutical handbooks, popular encyclopaedias, travel guides,

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117 McDermott, *A Social History*, pp. 48-49. Long after the sixteenth century many texts were still difficult to find.
etiquette manuals, almanacs, and fiction. Among this proliferation of texts, gazetteers, encyclopaedias, and travel texts were most concerned with particular historical sites and provide the most important sources for the present study. Before examining these sources in turn, the following paragraphs will provide an overview of the publishing industry in Hangzhou through to Ming times.

The mid-sixteenth century marked a turning point in the history of printing in terms of the quality of publications and the development of techniques. Colour printing was a Ming innovation and it was during the Jiajing period that it reached a peak, together with accomplishments in illustration by woodcut, the application of copper movable type, and the production of woodcut facsimiles of earlier editions. It was these accomplishments that allowed the publication of fine editions that appeared in the late Ming and were probably targeted towards relatively affluent readers. But not all books were of high quality. In the case of novels and short story collections, alongside the fine editions there also appeared cruder, smaller-format imprints that rose in number through the Qing period, suggesting a broadening of the reading public across the social spectrum in late imperial China. The increased publication of works from the vernacular and oral traditions and new audiences being addressed in the prefaces and commentaries of books also indicate that there was a diversifying reading public that went beyond learned elites.

Beginning in the Song period China’s publishing industry came to be dominated by Jiangnan, Sichuan, and Fujian. Among the leading centres was Hangzhou, where numerous publications had appeared by the end of the Tang period (618-907). Continuing through the stable Wuyue era (907-978), Hangzhou’s publishing industry flourished during the Northern Song (960-1127), when it produced half of the editions

119 Wu, “Ming Printing and Printers”.
122 The “Collected Writings of Bai Juyi” was one noted work that was published in Hangzhou during the Tang. Zhou Feng, Nan Song jingcheng Hangzhou, p. 124.
used by the Imperial Academy in Kaifeng.\textsuperscript{123} It was during the Southern Song (1127-1279), however, after Hangzhou became both the capital and the commercial centre of the empire that its publishing industry peaked. Not only did Hangzhou’s presses produce editions for the government and its academies, private commercial publishing also flourished with at least twenty publishing houses producing fine editions across a wide range of genres.\textsuperscript{124}

Political changes in the Yuan and early Ming eras had an adverse effect on Hangzhou’s publishing industry. When Beijing became the Yuan capital, it also took over as the education centre. Accordingly a proportion of the publishing industry moved with it. But publishing carried on in Hangzhou where scholars continued to play major roles in the production of works of history and the classics for the state. Private publishing houses, academies, and monasteries also continued to publish works.\textsuperscript{125} Similarly at the beginning of the Ming the dynastic founder Zhu Yuanzhang had the woodblocks of the Southern Song’s imperial university (\textit{Guozijian}), which had been housed at Hangzhou’s West Lake Academy, moved to his new capital at Nanjing.\textsuperscript{126} This was a loss for Hangzhou’s government printing projects. Nevertheless, numerous titles continued to appear from the private publishing houses, academies and monasteries of Hangzhou and the city’s industry seems to have enjoyed a recovery by the mid-sixteenth century. Hu Yinglin (1551-1602), an avid book collector from southern Zhejiang, noted that by the late sixteenth century Nanjing and Suzhou published the finest editions while the presses of Jianyang in northern Fujian produced in largest volume. Hangzhou was second in both respects and so continued to be a major centre of publication.\textsuperscript{127} In terms of the number of

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[123]{Zhou Feng, \textit{Nan Song jingcheng Hangzhou}, p. 124, citing Qing scholar Wang Guowei’s (1877-1927) \textit{Liang Zhe gu keben kao}.}
\footnotetext[124]{The Song writer Ye Mengde (1077-1148) remarked that “As for printing today, Hangzhou ranks first place, Sichuan is next, and finally Fujian”. Zhou Feng, \textit{Nan Song jingcheng Hangzhou}, pp. 125-127.}
\footnotetext[125]{Zhou Feng, \textit{Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou}, pp. 261-263. For example in 1324 the West Lake Academy published Ma Duanlin’s (1254-1323) famous study of Song history and institutions, the \textit{Wenxian tongkao}.}
\footnotetext[126]{Zhou Feng, \textit{Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou}, p. 265.}
\footnotetext[127]{Zhou Feng, \textit{Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou}, pp. 265-267. For an overview of Hu Yinglin’s book collection, see Gu Zhixing, \textit{Zhejiang cangshu jia cangshu lou}, pp. 118-120. Jianyang had as many print establishments as Nanjing, and many more than Suzhou, Hangzhou and Beijing. Having been established in the late Northern Song and declined through the Yuan period, Jianyang printing saw a resurgence in the late
\end{footnotes}
print shops, Hangzhou ranked fourth after Nanjing, Jianyang, and Suzhou. Significant publishing houses continued to operate in Hangzhou, including the family-run Huanduzhai. Hangzhou was still one of the four major cities for the distribution of books, the others being Beijing, Nanjing, and Suzhou. In the second half of the sixteenth century Hangzhou remained “a hub of the southeast” for the book trade. It had about thirty bookstores that were concentrated at four major intersections in the city and catered to the seasonal demands of tourists, provincial examination students, and temple visitors. Furthermore, the presence of prominent book collectors and private book collections in Hangzhou helped to sustain Hangzhou as a major centre of book culture.

Lucille Chia, who has carefully studied the Jianyang publishing industry and its imprints, emphasizes that by the late Ming a “unified market” had developed in central and south China with many characteristics shared by works from all the main publishing centers including Suzhou, Nanjing, Hangzhou and Jianyang. It was the growing and increasingly diverse number of printed works circulating in this region that enlarged the textual world and permitted the rise of a rich history of significant places. This dissertation draws upon a wide array of sources including official and unofficial histories, *biji* ‘miscellaneous jottings’, fiction, and works on ritual. Above all this research makes use of three kinds of place-making text that were especially widespread during the Ming era: gazetteers, encyclopaedia, and travel writings and guides to famous sights. All these grew out of Hangzhou’s vibrant urban culture that was underpinned by literati activities including the compilation and publishing of texts and the promotion and touring of historical sites. All these texts contributed to a growing knowledge about places throughout the realm – especially great historical centres like Hangzhou. The following paragraphs will introduce each of these kinds of text in turn.

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fifteenth century after which it flourished as a major producer of a wide array of texts. See Chia, *Printing for Profit*.


129 Widmer, “The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou.”


131 Zhou Feng, *Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou*, p. 268. For a study of Zhejiang book collectors from the Song through Qing eras, see Gu Zhixing’s *Zhejiang cangshu jia cangshu lou*.

132 Chia, *Printing for Profit*, pp. 149-150.
1.2.1 Gazetteers

Gazetteers (difang zhi) constitute a formal kind of historical writing in the Chinese tradition that focuses on and is primarily arranged according to place. Gazetteers were first produced for geographical areas, usually administrative units, followed by institutional and topographical works later in the evolution of the genre. Antecedents appeared as early as the Eastern Han period for the Hangzhou area, with significant developments through the Song, but it was in the mid-Ming that the gazetteer began to flourish in large numbers. The survival of thousands of gazetteers makes them important sources for the study of later imperial China.

The gazetteer, difang zhi, was basically a compilation of information about a locality – beginning with the county (xian), which was at the lowest level of the hierarchy of state administration. The county was the difang and, as often stated in prefaces to Ming gazetteers, a difang zhi was to a county as an official history (shi) was to the state. Gazetteers were also published for larger administrative units including prefectures, provinces, and ultimately for the whole state. Outside the framework of government, institutional (e.g. for monasteries and temples) and topographical (e.g. for mountains and lakes) gazetteers were also compiled. It is helpful to think of any gazetteer as having a threefold purpose: to provide information about a place; to promote the interests of the place and its people; and to exert authority over the place. Which of these factors was preponderant in a given case depended on the particular circumstances of the gazetteer and its subject place, including its position on the political, religious, or literary-cultural hierarchy of which it was a part.

The local gazetteer was a chorographic text that provided information on a place, including details of its administrative history, population figures, local customs, famous native sons, and topography. A gazetteer was therefore a very useful reference work for

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133 “'Treatise on a place’ might be a more accurate translation for difang zhi, but I will use the handier term ‘gazetteer’, which has become the convention in English-language scholarship. Dennis, “Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Histories in Ming China”, p. v.

134 A fuller list of gazetteer topic-headings would include: Administrative History (jianzhi yange); Historical Name of Prefecture (junming); Topology (xingsheng); Customs (Fengsu); Mountains and Rivers (shan chuan); Local Products (tuchan); Enfeoffed Domains (fanzheng) Official Buildings (gongshe); Schools (xuexiao); Academies (shu yuan); Palaces, Residences, Buildings (gongshe); Passes and Bridges (guanliang); Buddhist and Daoist Monasteries (siguan); Shrines and Temples (cimiao); Tombs (lingmu);
outsiders, from officials appointed to administer it to travellers or merchants passing through it. The usefulness of county gazetteers to state administration was clear to the Ming court, which mandated the compilation of gazetteers for every prefecture and county early during the founding Hongwu reign (1368-1398) and subsequently also in 1412, 1454, 1498, and 1522. However, this repeated official call for the compilation of local gazetteers might suggest that not all counties responded readily to the state’s demands. In fact it was not until the Jiajing period (1522-1566) that many counties produced their first gazetteer.

A gazetteer was foremost a product of the locality and required local people to produce it. If a county did not have local scholars with the required ability or the necessary funds, then it might go without its own history, despite the state’s requirement that it produce one. Thus both social and cultural resources were necessary for gazetteer production, and the appearance of a gazetteer often signalled that a place and its people had attained a certain standing.

Moreover a gazetteer could be turned to the advantage of its compilers. As Joseph Dennis has shown, in some cases local gazetteers in the Ming were nominally official texts in that their chief editorship was usually attributed to the incumbent magistrate, but actually their production might be fully in the control of local power holders. Under such circumstances the compilers could use the text strategically. For example in the production of the 1579 edition of the Xinchang (Zhejiang) county gazetteer, members of four prominent lineages took charge of compilation and turned the gazetteer into a “public genealogy” to enhance the position of their extended family in local society. Similar strategies were also adopted during the Southern Song period when, as Peter Bol suggests, there was a “localist turn” in literati culture. In a case study of Wuzhou (Jinhua Prefecture), Bol shows that families established their presence in the locality in order to

Ancient Sites (guji); Famous Officials (minghuan); Sojourners (liuyu); Personalities (renwu); Exemplary Women (lienü); Daoists and Buddhists (Xianshi); water management (shuili); canals (hefang); Disasters (zaiyi); Inscriptions (jinshi); Literary Writings (Yiwen). Gazetteer formats became more standardized by the Qing, see Wilkinson, Chinese History, p. 155.

135 Schneewind, Community Schools, pp. 139-140.
136 Dennis, “Between Lineage and State”; Dennis, “Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Histories in Ming China”, chapter 1. In the Xinchang case Dennis finds it especially revealing to read the gazetteer alongside the lineages’ genealogies.
shore up their position and influences there, as well as to establish a foothold to step back up onto the ladder of national significance. Their attention to local educational activities and their involvement in the production of three kinds of text, all with a demonstrably localist bent – the local gazetteer, the cultural geography, and the anthology of local biography and literature – added to their prestigious status of being literati (shi) and was part of this reorienting enterprise. In the case of Hangzhou Christine Moll-Murata has discerned a similar strategic use of gazetteers. Covering a longer period from the Song through Qing dynasties, she traces a shift in the function of Hangzhou prefectural gazetteers from serving as handbooks for regional administration to being instruments of self-representation for regional elites. She finds that individuals and groups are represented more prominently over time with an increase in the number of biographies relative to the other sections.

A gazetteer could thus be used to promote certain historical narratives and the interests of particular groups as well as provide information about a place. This use of a text was also found in institutional and topographical gazetteers. As will be seen in the chapters that follow, what information was included or excluded in gazetteer histories reflect the interests of specific groups and tensions in the historical record.

Of course, all local gazetteers were broadly concerned with a promotion of place. Historically and culturally significant cities such as Hangzhou had long seen the production of histories of the prefecture and its constituent counties as well as many of its sites such as temples, monasteries, and mountains. From the Southern Song period (1127-1279) when the city served as the dynastic capital, and rising through the Ming and especially the Qing eras, the promotion of the place culminated in the voluminous late-Qing compendium of texts about Hangzhou and its history, Ding Bing’s Wulin zhanggu congbian (Collected Works on Hangzhou’s History) of 1883. Many of the sources of this

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138 Like Bol, Moll-Murata sees this change as closely related to a reorientation of the elite away from the central government to the region. Moll-Murata, Die chinesische Regionalbeschreibung, English summary on pp. 405-8.
study, including the gazetteers of shrines, monasteries, and temples and writings about West Lake, have been preserved in this important collection.\textsuperscript{139}

This function of promoting a place was manifest at all levels of gazetteer writing. At the highest level, the \textit{Da Ming yitong zhi} (Unification Gazetteer of the Great Ming) of 1461 was a grand court-directed project involving almost sixty officials. National gazetteers emerged later than local gazetteers and the \textit{Da Ming yitong zhi} was in fact only the second such work of this kind, the first being the \textit{Da Yuan yitong zhi} (Unification Gazetteer of the Great Yuan), which first appeared in 1291. The key term of the title, \textit{yitong} (meaning ‘unification’ or ‘unity’), expressed the political purpose of these national gazetteers – they were to celebrate the dynastic achievement of unifying the realm.\textsuperscript{140}

Indeed, the greatest achievement of the first Ming emperor was to reunify the realm under Chinese rule for the first time in centuries. The \textit{Da Ming yitong zhi} was thus designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the realm and to celebrate Ming accomplishments. The founding emperor himself initiated the project, but it was not finished until the (second) reign of his great great-grandson Emperor Yinzong (r. 1436-1449, 1457-1464) who regarded it to be the completion of the work of his forbears emperors Taizu and Taizong. The work was to be read not only by the imperial descendants so that they would remember the achievements of their ancestors, but also for the education of scholars throughout the realm so that they might examine the past and thereby gain insights to assist them in their work in the present.\textsuperscript{141} The latter goal seems to have been realized to a degree for the work was one of the select titles produced and distributed by the court and made readily available in school libraries from the mid-fifteenth century onwards.\textsuperscript{142} Furthermore, at least three commercial publishers in the late Ming regarded it to be significantly valuable to print.\textsuperscript{143}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[140] Brook, \textit{The Troubled Empire}, pp. 27-28. The term \textit{yitong} came to be used in numerous expressions praising the Ming achievement.
\item[141] \textit{Da Ming yitong zhi}, Vol. 1, pp. 1-6.
\item[143] Two of these publishers were in Jianyang, northern Fujian. Chia, “Text and Tu”, p. 254.
\end{footnotes}
In a sense, the gazetteer was a textual embodiment of a place, from the county up to the whole country and beyond. The Da Ming yitong zhi was literally the gazetteer that manifested the unified empire. The structure of its ninety fascicles reflected both the administrative divisions of the realm, and also the broad vision of the Ming polity. Heading the work is the northern metropolitan region around Shuntian Prefecture (Beijing), followed by the southern metropolitan region centred at Yingtian Prefecture (Nanjing) and the Central Capital at Fengyang. Thereafter come the thirteen Provincial Administration Commissions (buzheng si), the Ming provinces, ordered according to their distance from the political centre. The prefectures and counties within each province are arranged according to a similar hierarchy. Together these constitute tianxia (All Under Heaven).  

This official projection of the realm in the national gazetteer was also emulated in privately produced works of history and geography, such as the Guangyu ji (Records of the Broad Realm) of 1600 compiled by Lu Yingyang, a private scholar from Huating in Jiangsu. Based on earlier geographical works, in some ways it supplements the Da Ming yitong zhi, but in twenty-four fascicles (juan) rather than a bulky ninety, it is much more concise. Like its official model though, reading it was “like seeing the mountains and rivers of a myriad li within one’s palm.”

A gazetteer was both a representation of how a place was, and a vision of how it was meant to be. It provided information that was useful for administering a place, as well as narrated histories that were important to particular groups. Through an examination of how gazetteers and other texts presented the histories of specific sites in Hangzhou, this dissertation will determine how these meaningful places reveal the interactions and interests of their creators and audiences within Ming society.

1.2.2 Encyclopaedias

Encyclopaedias (leishu) are a second kind of text that flourished during the late Ming and anchored the cultural imagination of places in the realm. The rise and spread of

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144 The contents are listed in Da Ming yitong zhi, Vol. 1, pp. 23-51. The last two juan of the work contain all ‘foreign peoples’ (wai yi) occupying 57 countries and territories. The hierarchy of provinces seems not to have been absolutely standardized throughout the Ming, however. See Farmer, “The hierarchy of Ming city walls”, p. 465.

145 Lu Yingyang, Guangyu ji, Preface.
encyclopaedias was a product of two trends: the expansion of the education system, which produced larger numbers of lettered men and literate masses, and the growth of woodblock publishing catering to the demands of an expanding market. The narrowing opportunities for employment in a bureaucracy that hardly grew, despite the population explosion, prompted many educated men to turn to other intellectual activities, including the writing of fiction and the production of books such as encyclopaedias that were not directly related to the affairs of government.146 Such works appealed to a growing number of readers who might consult them as sources of information and also as manuals for a wide range of matters (including family rituals, the drawing-up of contracts, arithmetic, and geomancy) pertinent to daily life.147

The texts that scholars usually discuss under the rubric “encyclopaedia” vary greatly in form and content. There are certain common characteristics, however, to justify use of the term. First, an encyclopaedia was a compilation that brought together information on given subjects, often excerpting from existing texts.148 Second, an encyclopaedia was a compilation of useful information. This ranged from “popular encyclopaedias” or “encyclopaedias for every day use” (riyong leishu) to specialist works in encyclopaedic form. Popular encyclopaedias, which were printed mainly in Fujian, appealed to a broad audience and included a wide range of knowledge deemed useful to daily life, including: guides to home rituals, clothing and implements; agriculture and cultivation; macrobiotic exercises; astrology; geomancy; calligraphy; plants, birds and beasts; and all kinds of historical, geographical, and folkloric matters. These diverse contents of popular encyclopaedia addressed the concerns of the wider society and made formerly restricted knowledge more accessible, at least for those who could afford the new publications.149 Other encyclopaedic works were concerned with particular branches of specialist knowledge and were compiled in an epistemological mode that drew upon

the ideal of “investigating things and extending knowledge” (gewu zhizhi) that reached back to Zhu Xi (1130-1200). A famous late Ming example is the Bencao gangmu (Systematic materia medica) of Li Shizhen (1518-1593). Third, both popular and specialist encyclopaedias were arranged according to broad categories of knowledge and specialist classification schemes that imposed an overarching order on their contents and facilitated their use as reference works.

The well-known early-seventeenth century work Sancai tu hui (Illustrated Compendium of the Three Powers) by Wang Qi (1565) and his son Wang Siyi is one of the encyclopaedias used in this project. A substantial work of 106 juan, it draws upon many earlier texts and images to present a wealth of information arranged according to three overarching categories: tian (matters pertaining to heaven); di (matters pertaining to earth); ren (matters pertaining to the human realm). This tripartite division was a common way of categorizing knowledge in Song period encyclopaedia and continued to be used through the Qing period.

Within the categories of the Sancai tu hui information about places in China (and beyond) appear under the overall heading of di. The categorization of information into different sections of di reflect the position of ‘place’ within the compilers’ schematization and the different kinds of place-related knowledge they deemed it important to know. In the case of Hangzhou, information about the city appears in three separate juan. The second juan of the dili (geography) section outlines Hangzhou’s basic structure in terms of administrative geography, listing its constituent prefectures and counties and the main mountain and water features. The importance of West Lake as a water source and part

151 Elman, On Their Own Terms, pp. 29-34. Carla Nappi places Li Shizhen’s monumental work at the intersection of natural history and medicine and identifies transformation as one of its central ideas. See her The Monkey and the Inkpot.
152 Elman also notes that this marked a significant difference between encyclopaedias and congshu (collectanea), which were collections of works on a common subject, but did not follow a unifying classification scheme. Elman, “Collecting and Classifying”, pp. 131-2, 153 n.2. Cf. Clunas, Empire of Great Brightness, pp. 112-136.
153 Bretelle-Establet et Chemla. “Introduction”, p. 13. A fourth category of wu (things) was often found too. For instance, Chen Yaowen’s Wanli era encyclopaedia, Tianzhong ji (Record from Tianzhong [Mountain]), was arranged according to the four categories of tian, di, ren, and wu. See Chen Yaowen, Tianzhong ji.
154 Sancai tu hui, p. 121.
of a transportation network is evident in the fifth juan of the *dili* section, which concerns statecraft matters (*jingshi*). However, the dominant image of Hangzhou in the *Sancai tu hui* is that of the traveller’s destination. Illustrations of many historical and scenic sights leap out from the pages of the work, among which there is a panoramic view of the city’s most celebrated sight of all: West Lake (Figure 17).

### 1.2.3 The Place of Illustrations

Many of the works that appeared amid the expanding world of text in the late Ming contained illustrations. Few volumes were as richly illustrated as the *Sancai tuhui*, but images were increasingly commonplace in a wide variety of texts, including encyclopaedia, fiction, gazetteers, and works of specialist knowledge such as *materia medica*. The ubiquity of images in the Ming world of print has prompted scholars to ponder the relationship between images and the texts they illustrated as well as their inherent meanings – how to read them and how to understand their purpose in context. Lucille Chia, for instance, has analyzed the relationship between text and illustration in an array of works to gauge the level of education of the intended reader in each case. She suggests that some illustrations could stand independently while others were more integrated into the texts that they accompanied. The purpose of an image clearly had a lot to do with the nature of the image itself and the context in which it was situated.

A recent volume by Francesca Bray and other scholars has gone furthest to analyze images that appear in a wide range of epistemic systems, including: ritual, cosmology, mathematics, history, agriculture, and medicine. Collectively they are concerned with technical images that were not merely decorative, but played an essential part in these different branches of learning. In taking this focussed view of *tu* (image,

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155 *Sancai tu hui*, pp. 203-206.
157 Drège, “Des ouvrages classés par categories”, p. 32. Another richly illustrated encyclopaedia of the late Ming is the *Tushu bian*, while the *Tianzhong ji* has few images.
158 Chia, “Text and Tu”, pp. 246-252. In trying to understand the relationship between text and image, one should note that many illustrated texts did not have their images commissioned for the work, but often drew upon existing works. Drège, “Des ouvrages classés par categories”, p. 32.

illustration) as instructive images conveying specialist knowledge, they distinguish them from hua (picture or painting) and xiang (icon or image), that accompany the text and depict the subject, but are not necessarily essential to conveying knowledge. Moreover, they discern two broad principles of representation used in these kinds of technical image: (i) diagrammatic or schematic tu guide the viewer along a specific trajectory through the symbolic space depicted, e.g. an image in a cosmological or ritual work; and (ii) representational tu present a direct image of an object in a manner close to a modern technical illustration, e.g. images of plants in a materia medica.160

Such perspectives offer significant insights for understanding the illustrations that appear in gazetteers, encyclopaedia, and travel texts examined in this study. While none of the images is strictly technical, neither are they merely decorative. Many of them have schematic qualities that were intended to convey particular ideas about the sites and figures they depict, and to shape how their viewers experienced them. My reading of these illustrations has also been informed by recent scholarship on the history of cartography generally and the study of Chinese maps in particular.161 Chinese maps – also called tu – have long been measured against the yardstick of mathematical precision. While scholars have identified a tradition of mathematical achievement in the history of Chinese cartography162, Cordell Yee has argued that “a quantitative interpretation of traditional Chinese cartography is inadequate for understanding what constitutes a map in

160 Bray, “The Powers of Tu”, pp. 1-4. One might be tempted to place the illustrations of Song Yingxing’s famous 1637 work on technological processes, Tiangong kaiwu (The exploitation of the works of nature) in this latter category, but for the most part its images are visual descriptions of people at work rather than technical guides.

161 See especially Cordell Yee’s essays on Chinese maps in J. B. Harley and David Woodward, eds., The History of Cartography, Volume Two, Book Two: Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies. For the history of cartography in other regions of the world, see the other volumes in this monumental series edited by Harley and Woodward. Noted works in this growing area of scholarship include: Dennis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels eds., The iconography of landscape; J.B. Harley The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography; and James R. Akerman and Robert W. Karrow Jr. eds., Maps: Finding our Place in the World.

162 In this regard, Luo Hongxian’s (1504-1564) Guangyu tu, building on Zhu Siben’s (1273-1333) Yudi tu, is usually praised as a milestone in the history of Chinese cartography. Its noted features include the employment of a grid (with each square purporting to represent 100 li, roughly 33 miles) that was much more accurate than in earlier maps and the use of a legend featuring twenty-four symbols of landmarks. See Zhang Zhejia, “Mingdai fangzhi de ditu”, pp. 184-187; Smith, Chinese Maps, pp. 29-33; Yee, “Reinterpreting Traditional Chinese Geographical Maps”, pp. 50-51.
Chinese culture”.¹⁶³ Instead, it is necessary to understand maps, their uses and purposes in their own historical context, free of preconceived ideas about accuracy or technical and technological capacities.¹⁶⁴

For instance, Ming gazetteer maps were highly schematic images laden with political meaning. Their representation of administrative centres and city walls exhibit a geometry and regularity that were often far removed from the physical reality.¹⁶⁵ In doing so they helped to idealize the political order that was also evident in the images of yamen compounds, Confucian schools, and other government structures that frequently appear in Ming gazetteers in highly stylized form.¹⁶⁶ These kinds of schematic map generally complemented the political message of the texts they accompanied, which could be gazetteers or other political documents such as Hangzhou Prefect Yang Mengying’s compilation concerning his restoration of West Lake (chapter 5).

Other kinds of maps and illustrations found in gazetteers, guidebooks, and encyclopaedias may display a higher level of craftsmanship or greater artistic merit, but should not be considered merely decorative because of it. Illustrations of famous places like Yue Fei’s shrine and tomb (chapter 2) depict noted features of the site that not only told a particular history, but also suggested what visitors to the site should do there to participate in that history. Such illustrations were thus replete with political messages and cultural values. Furthermore, illustrations printed in books were not isolated images, but often had much in common with depictions in other media. Cartography had its place in a unified conception of the arts and was closely related to calligraphy and painting, with which it shared a technology of production. Indeed, as Yee puts it, “both maps and paintings present informational content in the form of visual representations”.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ As Zhang Zhejia points out, Ming map-makers produced crudely drawn, simple maps that were far below their technical and technological abilities. Zhang Zhejia, “Mingdai fangzhi de ditu”, p. 179.
¹⁶⁶ Zhang Zhejia, “Mingdai fangzhi de ditu”, pp. 193-195. Such structures were usually depicted from an official perspective positioned within the yamen depicted on the map itself – not the view of an external photographic eye, ibid, pp. 201-202.
¹⁶⁷ See Yee, “Chinese Cartography among the Arts: Objectivity, Subjectivity, Representation”. The quotation is from p. 139.
Therefore it is often not possible, pace Bray and her colleagues, to make firm distinctions between *tu* on the one hand and *hua* (picture or painting) and *xiang* (icon or image) on the other. These different kinds of image all contributed towards a broader cultural imagination of the realm, noted sites within it, and the values and meanings attached to those sites.

In a study of images (*tu*) of major Jiangnan cities such as Hangzhou, Suzhou, and Nanjing (including imitations of Song artist Zhang Zeduan’s famous *Qingming shanghe tu* [Going up the river during the Qingming festival]), Wang Zhenghua suggests that there was a growing “urban consciousness” (*chengshi yishi*) in the late Ming period. Through the production and consumption of increasingly typified images, people came to recognize particular cities through depictions of their notable features.\(^{168}\) Nanjing was portrayed in a rather different way from Hangzhou and Suzhou. Multiple facets of the secondary capital appeared in representations of the city: its bustling commercial life, its festivals, as well as its city walls, palaces, government buildings, and celebrated sites. By contrast, Hangzhou and Suzhou were mainly depicted as cities dominated by historical and scenic sights. In the geography sections of the *Sancai tu hui*, for instance, famous sights situated outside the city walls spoke as cultural synecdoche for the entire cities of Hangzhou and Suzhou; they were not portrayed as multifaceted urban centres.\(^{169}\)

These urban visions in print were connected to painted images of cities. The famous sites and views of Suzhou became major themes of artists, especially members of the Wu School that arose in the sixteenth century led by regional luminaries such as Wen Zhengming (1470-1559).\(^{170}\) Indeed, landscape paintings of famous places were closely connected with the culture of travel and could provide inspiration for travelers or even, in the view of the collector He Liangjun (1506-1573), serve as a substitute for real travel.\(^{171}\) In the case of Huangshan (Yellow Mountain), James Cahill has found that some paintings of that famous mountain range in southern Anhui Province served as records of travel, or

\[^{168}\] Wang Zhenghua, “Guo yan fanhua”.


guides to travel, particularly for pilgrims. In this context, Cahill suggests that we should consider Chinese topographical pictures to follow schemata more than appearances; we should not be too concerned over whether it is a true depiction of a place. These topographical representations are more map-like than properly pictorial. One Ming picture-map discussed by Cahill “takes the viewer on a complete tour of the shores of West Lake at Hangzhou, enumerating in simple images the temples, villas, walls, boats, and the like that crowded the shores”.

This schematic quality of topographical pictures is also apparent in illustrations of places in gazetteers and guidebooks, which both contributed towards and were products of the cultural imagination of famous sights. Similar to the schematic depictions examined by Bray and her colleagues, these topographical images guided travellers and viewers through sites and scenes, pointing out what they should observe and even what they should do there. Which features of a site were included in its depiction – as well as what was omitted – reveal a particular history that was anchored in the site. With an expanding world of print and the rise of travel in the Ming, more people than ever before were able to experience noted sights of the realm through viewing illustrations of them or by visiting them in person. Through imagining the sights on the page or wandering around them in situ, people were able to recall the histories that were located in such places and to participate in those histories as part of an experience shared by countless others.

1.2.4 Travel Texts
In addition to gazetteers and encyclopaedia, topographical images also appeared in travel texts of the late Ming, which proliferated during an age of increased travel. There were two main kinds of travel text: guides to famous sights and travel records. Books of sights depicted famous places, usually without reference to actual trips to the locations, while travel records were accounts of travellers’ experiences composed during or after the

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172 Cahill, “Huang Shan Paintings”, pp. 246-292.
173 The picture-map is in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art, reg. no. 11.209. Cahill, “Huang Shan Paintings”, pp. 254-5.
travel itself and subsequently published. Both kinds of travel text are important sources for constructing ideas about places in the Ming.

Yang Erzeng’s *Hainei qiguan* (Marvellous sights within the seas) of 1609 was a new kind of travel book designed to capture a reader’s attention with its views of sights, landscapes, and scenes of social life.\(^{174}\) It was not a practical guide to travelling, but a richly illustrated book of famous places throughout the realm arranged according to ritual significance and geography. These include: the five sacred peaks; Confucius’ family estate at Qufu; and celebrated sights throughout the realm beginning with the metropolitan regions of Beijing and Nanjing. Jiangnan features prominently in this work and Hangzhou and Suzhou were among the top destinations of tourists.

As Hangzhou was also an established centre of the publishing industry (discussed above), it was perhaps no coincidence that the *Hainei qiguan* was published there. The work’s author, Yang Erzeng, was a native of Qiantang County (Hangzhou) where he ran two publishing houses. He was a scholar and a publisher, fully embedded in Jiangnan’s literati society.\(^{175}\) Works like the *Hainei qiguan* were very much part of elite culture, offering a broad range of literary references and geographical and historical information, often drawing from gazetteers and literary collections.\(^{176}\) Most guides to famous sights were in fact compiled from other texts. The Fujian scholar Cao Xuequan (1574-1646), for instance, spent ten years collecting and comparing texts throughout Jiangnan to compile his *Da Ming yitong mingsheng zhi* (Gazetteer of Famous Sights of the Unified Great Ming), completed in 1630 in 208 *juan*. That work, which consisted mainly of text unlike the richly illustrated *Hainei qiguan*, drew upon many historical and literary sources to describe well-known places throughout China.\(^{177}\) Such late Ming works were not therefore guidebooks in the current sense of the word, but rather sourcebooks of

\(^{174}\) Mote and Chu, *Calligraphy and the East Asian Book*, p. 142. Other examples of generously illustrated guides to famous sights include the c.1620-1640 *Hushan shenglan* (Conspectus of Sights of the lakes and hills) and the *Mingshan shenggai* of 1628-40.

\(^{175}\) Yang had quite catholic tastes. In addition to *Hainei qiguan*, he is known for publishing various literati writings, Daoist works and Chan poetry. Yang, Clart tr., *The Story of Han Xiangzi*, pp. xxiii-xxv.


\(^{177}\) Cao Xuequan, *Da Ming yitong mingsheng zhi*, author’s preface, pp. 2-12. Susan Naquin suggests that it was probably Cao Xuequan’s work that brought the term *mingsheng* (famous sites) into common parlance. Naquin, *Peking*, p. 254.
destinations that were suitable for literati visitors, who might wish to become more informed about such places.\textsuperscript{178} Just as they were compiled by scholars working with texts in their study, so were their users likely to enjoy them from the comfort of their home. The \textit{Hainei qiguan} was really a book for the armchair traveler and it is fitting that Yang Erzeng’s sobriquet was Woyou Daoren (Master of the Way who tours while reclining).\textsuperscript{179} The geography sections of the \textit{Sancai tuhui} encyclopaedia were aimed at a similar readership. Its compilers explicitly state that the work’s information on famous mountains and major rivers is for the enjoyment of the “reclining tourist” (\textit{woyou}).\textsuperscript{180}

The other main kind of late Ming text related to travel was the travel record (\textit{youji}). Unlike guides to famous sights, which were almost entirely compiled from existing texts, travel records included the personal experiences of their authors when they visited the places described. Of course, in keeping with modes of writing and cultural reference of the time, travel records also drew on existing texts, as suited the occasion and the writer’s individual interests. These included poems about the place visited that were composed by earlier writers, pieces expressing a sentiment similar to that experienced by the writer on his visit, and geographical or historical works about the location or figures associated with it. As Richard Strassberg points out, within the traditional Chinese classification of literature travel records were categorized either under the geography (\textit{dili}) subsection of the history (\textit{shi}) category, or under the belles lettres (\textit{ji}) category in the case of shorter, more personal pieces.\textsuperscript{181} Such categorizations reveal that travel records were seen as both sources of geographical-historical information, as well as literary records of personal experience and reflection. Travel writing became an increasingly important body of knowledge about how people saw and responded to places in the wider world.

With the expanding world of print in the Ming and the rising number of gazetteers compiled, many scholars were able to access these sources of historical and geographical

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\textsuperscript{178} Meyer-Fong, “Seeing the Sights”, p. 218.
\textsuperscript{179} Yang, Clart tr., \textit{The Story of Han Xiangzi}, p. xxiv.
\textsuperscript{180} Yang, \textit{Hainei qiguan}, preface, p. 342; Wang, \textit{Sancai tuhui}, Fanli, 1a, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{181} Strassberg, \textit{Inscribed Landscapes}, pp. 4-5. The subject of a \textit{youji} could be a day trip or extended travels lasting months, see Hargett, “Travel Literature.”
\end{flushleft}
knowledge about the places of the realm for their own study or in preparation for travel. The famous traveller Xu Hongzu (1587-1641) carried the *Da Ming yitong zhi* with him on his travels and checked what he read in the gazetteer about places he visited against what he actually experienced on his extensive journeys. In his efforts to ascertain and to verify information about places, Xu thereby embodied an interaction between the gazetteer and the travel text. According to Zhou Zhenhe, Xu Hongzu and Wang Shixing (1546-1598) were the pioneers in this new kind of geographical travel writing that was built on, but also differed greatly from, the existing tradition of travel writing that concerned the appreciation of scenic views and aesthetic responses to them. The new geographical travel writing involved the investigation of mountain ranges and river courses, and the detailed and realistic observation of local people and places.182 That is not to say that the new geographical mode of travel writing supplanted the earlier form; travel writers continued to write in a broad range of styles for varying purposes. The travel writings that inform this study exhibit both of these modes and enable us to see how Ming literati learnt about specific sites, and responded to the representations of those sites which held prominent places within the broader cultural imagination. Certainly, there was an outpouring of travel writings in the late Ming. A survey of collected writings (*wen ji*) by Ming authors, which constitute an estimated third of such works extant from the period, finds a total of 450 travel records that were mostly from the Longqing (1567-1572) and Wanli (1573-1620) periods.183 This rise in travel writing reflected the growing numbers of people taking to the road in late Ming times.

1.3 The Expansion of Travel in Ming Times

Chinese literati had long engaged in official travel, either as students travelling to take civil service examinations in administrative centres or, after entering the bureaucracy, being posted to some distant office that necessitated travelling across the empire. Travel for pleasure, however, did not become widespread until the late sixteenth century. Part of


183 The writings are found in the *Siku quanshu*, *Siku cunmu congshu*, and the *Siku jinhui congkan*. Zhou Zhenhe, “Wan Ming wenren”, pp. 185-203.
the reason was that non-official travel was not deemed an acceptable activity (zhengjing). Even in the mid-Ming period many regarded it to be a distraction from the proper course of study and state service, or other more elevated activities. The noted lixue (study of principle) scholar Zhan Ruoshui (1466-1560), for instance, was critical of gentry going on scenic travel, which he deemed far less worthwhile than staying at home and engaging in spirit travel (shen you), or heavenly travel (tian you) with the Way. But as part of an emergent zeitgeist gentry attitudes towards touring began to change after the mid-Ming. By the late sixteenth century travel for pleasure had become a popular gentry activity, even if it may have been seen as the gentry’s “one great weakness” – to borrow an expression from the poet Yuan Hongdao (1568-1610). Nevertheless the late Ming was an age of travel more than any previous age, and probably also more so than the subsequent Qing period.

Moreover, travel was not the prerogative of gentry and officials; the Ming also saw the spread of mass travel. In conjunction with urban and commercial growth, celebrated sights and scenic areas in the environs of cities drew local visitors of all social classes, especially at the time of festivals. In addition, the numerous temple fairs devoted to specific deities and pilgrimage circuits to famous mountains and monasteries also provided the common folk opportunities to visit celebrated spots. For instance, Glen Dudbridge’s study of pilgrimage to Taishan as depicted in seventeenth-century fiction presents a vivid portrait of the mass nature of a social and religious practice that was dominated by women. In late-Ming Hangzhou large crowds of male and female, young and old visitors, gathered at the bustling fairs of the three Tianzhu monasteries, Yue Fei’s Shrine, Wushan, Lingyin Monastery and Feilaifeng, and especially Zhaoqing temple just outside the city’s Qiantang gate.

185 Yuan’s younger brother, Yuan Zhongdao (1570-1624), similarly described his own fondness of mountains and rivers as an “obsession” (pi). Brook, Confusions of Pleasure, pp. 180-2; Zhou Zhenhe, “Wan Ming wenren”, p. 172; Wu Jen-shu, Pinwei shehua, p. 179.
186 See Dudbridge’s “A Pilgrimage in Seventeenth-Century Fiction” and “Women Pilgrims to T’ai Shan”.
187 Zhou Feng, Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou, pp. 440-442, citing the descriptions in Zhang Dai’s Tao’an mengyi.
Many literati travellers, however, preferred not to rub shoulders with the masses, whom they regarded to be their social and cultural inferiors and held responsible for vulgarizing the beauty of the scenic spots. In his essay “Xihu qi yue ban” (West Lake on the Fifteenth Night of the Seventh Month), the disdain that the late Ming scholar Zhang Dai felt towards less cultured parties out at West Lake watching the moon is quite evident. Zhang commented that for all the showiness of their moon-gazing parties accompanied by wine and song, most Hangzhou people “came out of the city … merely for the purpose of having something to brag about” and had no idea how to appreciate the beauty of a moonlit night – if indeed they actually looked up at all.\(^\text{188}\) On a separate trip to Putuoshan, Zhang Dai described his hellish experiences alongside the “unwashed, halitotic, defecating, urinating” crowd of pilgrims.\(^\text{189}\)

To avoid the crowds, many gentry chose to visit less frequented spots or to visit the more popular sights at quieter times outside festival periods and busier times of the day. To distinguish their elegance and refinement (ya) from the vulgarity (su) of hoi polloi, literati also developed a distinctive practice of travel: youdao (Way of travelling). They paid much attention to the implements and modes of travel, which included: clothing and other accoutrements, food and containers, writing equipment, and means of transportation.\(^\text{190}\) There were illustrated guidebooks for this Way of Travelling. Tu Long’s (1542-1605) Youju jian (Annotated Tools for Touring) showed gentry what they should use on their travels and Yang Erzeng’s Hainei qiguan suggested the places they should visit.\(^\text{191}\) This Way of Travelling fit within the broader cultural practices including connoisseurship that, as Craig Clunas and other scholars have shown, served to mark distinctions between social groups.\(^\text{192}\)

\(^{188}\) Zhang Dai distinguished five different groups of moon gazers, all of whom were too wrapped up in their own appearances and pleasures to appreciate the moon itself. Translation taken from Ye, *Vignettes of the Late Ming*, pp. 93-95. Cf. Kafalas, *In Limpid Dream*, pp. 88-93; Strassberg, *Inscribed Landscapes*, pp. 342-345.


\(^{190}\) Wu Jen-shu, *Pinwei shehua*, pp. 177-213.

\(^{191}\) The *Hainei qiguan* includes “close-up” illustrations accompanying poems about the most famous destinations in which literati travellers can be seen with the picnic baskets and portable stoves similar to those described and illustrated in Tu Long’s catalogue. Meyer-Fong, “Seeing the Sights”, pp. 221-4

\(^{192}\) Clunas, *Superfluous Things*. 
Literati also emphasized engagement with sites through cultural practices that sprang from the literary traditions in which they had been immersed. For instance, they might compose a poem that echoed one written by an earlier writer who had visited the site before him. Both the initial work and the later verses written in response might be inscribed onto the site. In relation, the collection of engraved texts through making rubbings of them was a scholarly practice that not only preserved and transmitted famous calligraphy, but itself became a pursuit of the connoisseur. While the masses engaged with sites in different ways, such demonstrations of literary accomplishment by scholars were probably what distinguished them most.

Even if lowlier social groups lacked this refinement, late Ming economic and commercial development and the rise of consumerism nonetheless allowed the broader populace to travel. They may not have had the leisure or the means to travel such great distances or for longer periods of time, but they also contributed towards the growth of travel. By the late Ming, something like a travel industry had emerged, with agents (yajia) offering travellers all manner of services including accommodation, transportation, and food. Around 1628, Zhang Dai took part on a trip to Taishan that was evidently run by an organised pilgrimage-tourism business equipped with guides, inns, and teams of horses. They also catered a range of meals, from simple dinners to sumptuous banquets, to suit every pocket. To inspire and aid the planning of their journeys, travellers could refer to the many new travel-related texts. As noted already Xu Hongzu took a copy of the Da Ming yitong zhi on his travels, but few probably saw it practical or necessary to carry such a voluminous work. More portable for the traveller was the route book (lucheng yilan), which provided basic information on how to get from one place to another and the transportation services available on various routes. From such texts and the travel accounts of Xu Hongzu and others, we also know that a wide

193 Wu Hung, “On Rubbings: Their Materiality and Historicity”.
194 However, loftier literati such as the late Ming cultural arbiter Qian Qianyi even complained that there was too much substandard poetry written about Hangzhou. Fei, Negotiating Urban Space, p. 153.
range of service personnel was available for help in making travel arrangements or to be hired as porters or assistants on the road.  

1.3.1 Famous Sights and Touring Routes

Ming travellers most commonly headed towards the many famous sights established all over the country as attractive destinations for travellers. These sights were notable for a number of reasons, including their association with historical figures or events, their ritual or religious importance, and their scenic beauty. Various terms were used for these sights, including mingsheng (famous sights), and jing (prospects). Whereas mingsheng seems to have been a broader category for famous sights, jing referred to places that were vaunted as prime vantage points for viewing idealized (and often conventional) landscapes. Famous sights featured prominently in gazetteers, encyclopaedia, and touring guides, and scholars recorded their experiences visiting them in their travel accounts. During the late imperial period, these sights grew in number to include an ever larger area. Moreover they became increasingly regularized and many were grouped together so that travellers could visit them following established routes. By the late Ming, there were many famous sights around Hangzhou, many of which have been rebuilt over the centuries through to the present age of popular tourism.

Of the various groupings of Hangzhou sights, the most famous was the Ten Prospects of West Lake (Xihu shi jing). The Ten Prospects of Qiantang (Qiantang shi

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196 But there was no guarantee for the reliability of such hired hands. Xu Hongzu bemoaned the extortionate prices and dishonest porters he experienced during his travels in Guizhou and Yunnan in the late 1630s. Brook, Confusions of Pleasure, pp. 174-6, 180. Brook, “Guides for Vexed Travelers”, pp. 32-76.

197 Brook, Confusions of Pleasure, p. 182.

198 Zhou Feng, Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou, pp. 228-229.

199 During the Republican period (1911-1949) Hangzhou was promoted as a leisurely place of literati culture to Shanghai residents. Wang Liping, Paradise for Sale, p. 253ff. Today, there are thousands of scenic spots that are officially recognised by the state and standardized and reproduced in guidebooks and brochures. Nyiri, Scenic Spots, pp. 6-9.

200 The ten prospects are (following the order given in Hainei qi guan): “Spring Dawn at Su’s Embankment” (Su ti chun xiao); “Watching Fish at Flower Harbour” (Hua gang guan yu); “Listening to Orioles by Willow and Wave” (Liu lang wen ying); “Lotus Breeze at Qu Winery” (Qu yuan feng he); “Sunset at Leifeng Pagoda” (Leifeng xi zhao); “Autumn Moon over the Still Lake” (Ping hu qiu yue); “Moon Reflected at the Three Stupas” (San tan yin yue); “Remnants of Snow at Broken Bridge” (Duan qiao can xue); “Evening Bell at Nanping” (Nanping wan zhong); “Twin Peaks Piercing the Clouds” (Liang feng chu hun). Cf. Wang, Sancai tu hui, juan 2, 3b; p. 121.
jing) was another noted set, particularly among local people, but the Ten Prospects of West Lake was most prominent nationally.\footnote{The Ten Prospects of Qiantang were also included in Hainei qi guan, probably because the work’s publisher, Yang Erzeng, was from Qiantang. Yang, Hainei qi guan, juan 4, pp. 414-418 (6.2a-15b). Another local writer, Lang Ying, also wrote of ten Qiantang prospects, although only seven of the items matched those given in Hainei qi guan. See Lang Ying, Qi xiu lei gao juan 31, pp. 479-481. Elsewhere Lang enumerated yet another local grouping: Eight Prospects of Jiacheng (Jiacheng ba jing). These eight prospects were grouped by a native son, who rose to be an official during the Yongle reign, and had greater appeal to the local common folk (shijing). Lang Ying, Qi xiu lei gao, juan 39, p. 570.} These famous views of West Lake had been established by the mid-thirteenth century during the Southern Song and appeared in various writings and representations thereafter (though not necessarily in the same order).\footnote{The first source for the Ten Prospects of West Lake is Zhu Mu’s Fangyu sheng lan (Survey of sights of the imperial realm) of 1240, which lists the Ten Prospects in the following order: Su ti chun xiao, Qu yuan he feng, Ping hu qiu yue, Duanchiao can xue, Liulang wen ying, Hua gang guan yu, Lei feng luo zhao, Liang feng cha yun, Nanping wan zhong, Xihu san ta. See Lin Zhengqiu, Nan Song gudu Hangzhou, pp. 75-79. Cf. Zhou Feng, Nan Song jingcheng Hangzhou, pp. 145-147.} They are listed in the Sancai tu hui, but feature more prominently in the Hainei qi guan.\footnote{Wang, Sancai tu hui, p. 121; Yang, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, 27a-36b.} In this book of famous sights, the third juan is dedicated to showcasing Hangzhou’s West Lake. It includes illustrations of all Ten Prospects accompanied by poems in a variety of styles of calligraphy (Figure 18). The illustrations show cultured gentlemen taking in the famous views, which are to be enjoyed throughout the four seasons around West Lake.

West Lake itself was indisputably the most famous sight of Hangzhou and stands out due to its size and centrality. It was itself a sight, a collection of sights, and also a central focus by which other sights were oriented. The illustration of West Lake in the guidebook Hainei qi guan (Figure 2) names one hundred twenty sights arrayed around an almost circular lake. In fact the shape of West Lake was far from regular, but its depiction as a circle draws attention to its centrality and may also reflect Hangzhou’s reputation as a heaven on earth, for in one tradition of Chinese cosmology heaven is round, the earth square.\footnote{My thanks to Tim Brook for suggesting this possible explanation.} This depiction also serves to focus the viewer’s attention on the lake itself, as well as having the practical function of fitting all the sights neatly on the page. The emphasis on West Lake as the centre of Hangzhou’s circuits of sights (which had been established by the late Ming) is even more evident if we compare the Hainei qi guan...
image with the illustration of West Lake in Hangzhou’s Chenghua gazetteer of 1475 (Figure 4). A product of the scroll tradition of Chinese art, the Chenghua image presents West Lake as a famous sight within a beautiful landscape. It is viewed from a point within the city, whose walls run along the lower edge. Noted features of the lake are illustrated, including Gushan and Su’s Causeway, but no sights are named and there is no evidence of touring circuits. In contrast the Wanli era Hainei qi guan image is accompanied by a text that introduces West Lake, then guides the reader along nine routes around the lake. Most of these routes begin at one of the city gates – the assumed starting points of the travellers. The routes take the user to many of the famous sights of Hangzhou and the text provides historical and geographical information as well as pointing out numerous vantage points for scenic views for the enjoyment of the

*Figure 4 "Xihu tu" (Illustration of West Lake), in Chen Rang and Xia Shizheng, 1475, Chenghua Hangzhou fu zhi (Chenghua era gazetteer of Hangzhou Prefecture), p. 13.*

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205 The image of West Lake was one of only four illustrations in the gazetteer, showing the importance attached to it in the Chenghua era. The others three were: the prefectural city, Hangzhou’s nine counties, and the Zhe River.
Even if the *Hainei qi guan* may have targeted armchair travellers, it was nonetheless useful to tourists who actually visited Hangzhou.

The writings of two famous Ming literati suggest that travellers did follow routes when visiting the sights of Hangzhou, or at least that such routes were firmly established, if mainly as a point of reference. Tian Rucheng’s 1547 *Xihu youlan zhi* (Record of touring and sightseeing at West Lake) and Zhang Dai’s *Xihu meng xun* (Searching for Dreams at West Lake) are the two most substantial travel texts about the sights of Hangzhou. Tian Rucheng (1503-1557), a Qiantang native who served in a variety of official posts before retiring to his native city, wrote a rich record of Hangzhou combining his personal experiences with hearsay, anecdote and history. Zhang Dai (1597-1684?) was an essayist and historian from Shaoxing who spent many years living in Hangzhou. Zhang’s *Xihu meng xun* is a collection of reminiscences of Hangzhou sights as he experienced them in the final years of the Ming. They were his ‘dreams’ in the sense that when he wrote his work in the early Qing, many of the sights had already been destroyed in the turmoil of the dynastic transition.

Both writers were greatly influenced by earlier writings about Hangzhou and often appended poems and other pieces by their predecessors into their own works. More significantly here, both Tian and Zhang organized the sights of Hangzhou into five different routes or sections. The two writers’ routes were not identical, but were variously organized in relation to West Lake, the surrounding ranges of hills, and the city itself. Zhang appears to have been influenced by Tian’s schema, although his work is narrower in scope and consists of fewer and shorter entries about sights. While Tian’s work is more comprehensive like a gazetteer, Zhang presents a selection of quintessential literati gathering spots. Their differences aside, the works of both Tian and Zhang are rich

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207 Song and Yuan eds., *Hangzhou lidai mingren* pp. 344-345; Zhou Feng, *Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou*, p. 561. Tian professed to write a record about Hangzhou because the city had some of the most beautiful sites in the realm, but it did not have its own gazetteer. Tian Rucheng, *Xihu youlan zhi*, preface.
208 For an evocative account of Zhang’s life and works, see Jonathan Spence’s *Return to Dragon Mountain*.
209 Zhang completed his work by 1671 when he was 75 years of age. Zhang Dai, *Xihu meng xun*, p. 1.
210 As the editors of the *Siku quanshu* pointed out, Zhang’s literary selections in *Xihu meng xun* are mostly drawn from representatives of the Gong’an and Jingling Schools of the late Ming, as well as two figures
sources for the study of Hangzhou in the Ming period. They reveal what people knew
about the sights of Hangzhou at that time. To be sure, Tian and Zhang spoke as local
writers, intimately familiar with the places they described. Few others could have
matched their knowledge of Hangzhou’s sights. But even if visitors to Hangzhou may not
have had the opportunity to visit all the sights that Tian and Zhang described, they
engaged with them in similar ways. Together the writings of both local writers and
outside visitors show which sights were significant, and why they were significant.
Above all, they reveal why specific sights held an important place not only in
Hangzhou’s landscape, but even in the broader cultural imagination of the realm.

who were important influences on those writers: Su Shi of the Song and Xu Wei of the Ming. Kafalas, In
Limpid Dream, pp. 189-190.
Chapter 2
Official Sites: the Hangzhou Shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian

2.1 Two Loyal Ministers

Facing each other across Hangzhou’s West Lake are the shrines and tombs of two famous figures with close ties to the city: the Southern Song general Yue Fei (1103-1141) and the Ming statesman Yu Qian (1398-1457). Many writers since Ming times have discussed the pair together because of the parallel meanings that their lives came to embody – both were famous officials that were initially executed for disloyalty, yet were ultimately remembered for loyally defending their country against the threats of northern invaders.211 The lessons of their firm resolve at a time of dynastic crisis reverberated through history and came to be reproduced in the landscape of Hangzhou. Their shrines and tombs became celebrated places that countless Ming travellers visited. In Yang Erzeng’s guidebook Hainei qi guan Yue Fei’s shrine and tomb are among a select number of famous sights around West Lake that have their own illustration (see Figure 7).212 Yu Qian’s site was less prominent213, but it was closely associated with Yue Fei’s shrine and the two sites and their histories came to complement and reinforce each other in the cultural landscape of Hangzhou.

The legend of Yue Fei (zi Pengju, 1103-1141) as the defender of the reduced Southern Song state from the incursions of the Jurchen has been spun into countless tales over the centuries. Yue came to represent the main hope for the recovery of North China,

211 For instance, former Hangzhou prefect Sun Changyi noted that whenever there was a discussion of former worthies, Yue Fei and Yu Qian would inevitably be mentioned as a pair. Sun Changyi, “Yu gong wen ji xu”, Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7182-7183; 11a-13b.

212 Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, 4b-5a; 216-217. At the beginning of the West Lake section there is a set of eight images. The first is an illustration of West Lake that names over one hundred sights around it. Seven additional images depict: the Zhaoqing and Great Buddha monasteries; Gushan and the Six Bridges; the Tomb of Prince Yue Wumu; the Lingyin and Tiantzhu monasteries; the Yanxia and Longjing monasteries; the Jingci and Hupao monasteries; and the Qiantang River.

213 Yu Qian’s site does not have its own illustration, but it does appear in the image of Gushan and the Six Bridges. Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, 3b-4a; 214-215.
a goal in which he failed only because the court of emperor Song Gaozong (r. 1127-1162, d. 1187) was dominated by a peace faction headed by Chief Councillor Qin Gui, who engineered Yue Fei’s execution.\footnote{Yu Qian (zi Tingyi, 1398-1457), one of Hangzhou’s most famous native sons of the Ming, rose up through officialdom to become Minister of War. In 1449, the young emperor Yingzong (1427-1465) personally led a military expedition north against the Mongols, which ended in disaster when the Ming forces were routed and the emperor captured. Yu Qian played a crucial role in defending the capital and arranging the installation of the captive ruler’s younger brother as the Jingtai emperor (r. 1450-1457) to stabilize the state. Ultimately the Mongol threat was averted,} Yu Qian (zi Tingyi, 1398-1457), one of Hangzhou’s most famous native sons of the Ming, rose up through officialdom to become Minister of War. In 1449, the young emperor Yingzong (1427-1465) personally led a military expedition north against the Mongols, which ended in disaster when the Ming forces were routed and the emperor captured. Yu Qian played a crucial role in defending the capital and arranging the installation of the captive ruler’s younger brother as the Jingtai emperor (r. 1450-1457) to stabilize the state. Ultimately the Mongol threat was averted,
but after the captive monarch returned, further intrigues led to the return of Yingzong to the throne and the execution of Yu Qian in 1457.\(^{215}\)

Both Yue Fei and Yu Qian were rehabilitated posthumously and came to be commemorated as loyal statesmen in shrines such as the two at Hangzhou discussed here. These were official sites, not only because they commemorated officials for their loyal service, but because their very existence was mandated by the state after they became part of the politico-ritual order of the realm. That did not mean, however, that the physical sites were maintained and controlled by the state alone, nor that the meanings ascribed to them – centred on ideas of loyalty – were a government monopoly. As we shall see, members of different groups in Ming society were involved in the building and rebuilding of the site, and people interpreted the meaning of the sites and the figures whose memory they preserved in multiple ways.

In fact, the Ming state was not able to maintain its official shrines on its own. Regular contributions from officials belonging to different levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy and also from local people were necessary to maintain the physical site – to ensure the upkeep of its buildings and to protect the land on which they stood. Moreover, the histories of Yue Fei and Yu Qian were expanded over the course of the Ming as further structures and monuments were added to their sites. This enabled their histories to remain vibrant and meaningful to elites and local people who interpreted those histories in ways that best suited them. Thus while there came to be a consensus in Ming society on the elevation of the figures of Yue Fei and Yu Qian within the politico-ritual system and wide support for the continued existence of their official sites, and although both came to be exemplars of loyalty in the broader cultural imagination, there was no consensus on what precisely that loyalty meant. This openness of the two sites and their histories contributed to their continued existence and enduring appeal.

Before examining how the two sites were established and expanded and how Yue Fei and Yu Qian were honoured and commemorated at them, this chapter first considers

\(^{215}\) For authoritative accounts of Yu Qian’s life, see Yu Jixian, “Xian Zhongsu gong nianpu” (Chronology of Our Ancestor Lord Zhongsu), Ding Bing, *Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu*, 7147-7157 (22a-43b); and *Ming shi*, juan 170. For an account of the Tumu disaster see Mote, “The T’umu Incident”. De Heer’s *The Care-Taker Emperor* provides a history of the Jingtai reign, focusing on the politics around the Tumu Incident and its aftermath and the institution of the emperor.
how the Ming politico-ritual order evolved and the place of figures like Yue and Yu within it. Following that a discussion of the historical meanings of loyalty will help to situate the interpretations that Ming commentators applied to both figures.

2.2 The Politico-Ritual Order of the Ming

The dynastic founder Zhu Yuanzhang (1328-1398, r. 1368-1398) established the Ming Sìdian, or “Sacrificial Statutes”\(^\text{216}\), at the core of his programme for implementing a politico-ritual order rooted in the orthodox classical and historical texts. This was a key component of his grand project to expel Mongol influence, to restore Chinese cultural traditions, and to effect the moral regeneration of the realm.\(^\text{217}\) The Sìdian were a body of ritual prescriptions that accumulated over the course of the Ming era and were written down in official texts, culminating in the revised Da Ming hui dian (Collected Statutes of the Great Ming), which was completed and given the imperial imprimatur in 1587. An integral part of the political order, the Sìdian set out the rites that the emperor conducted on behalf of the whole realm, and also the rituals that officials performed in their own jurisdictions throughout the empire to a host of celestial, terrestrial, and human spirits. The Sìdian came to include numerous historical figures who were elevated for the virtues they manifest, such as Yue Fei and Yu Qian, whose shrines were accordingly maintained as part of the politico-ritual order.

From the outset, Zhu Yuanzhang attended to the ceremony of empire, setting up ritual and music bureaux and seeking out experts in such matters. In the first year of his reign, he ordered the Chancellory, Hanlin Academy, and Office of Imperial Sacrifices (taichang si) to draft the Sacrificial Statutes. Ritual officials and Confucian scholars compiled ritual texts basing the Ming models on those of the Han and Tang dynasties, in a conscious effort to repair the perceived cultural damage inflicted by a century of neglect.

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\(^\text{216}\) This is Romeyn Taylor’s translation of the term, see his “Official Religion in the Ming”.

\(^\text{217}\) For the basic texts and dimensions in Zhu’s forging of the Ming Chinese order, see Farmer, Zhu Yuanzhang and Early Ming Legislation. For an analysis of the role of southern Confucian scholars in Zhu’s restorationist project, see Dardess, Confucianism and Autocracy. Despite the anti-Mongol rhetoric, a growing body of scholarship reveals that Ming Taizhu and his successors adopted numerous Mongol institutions and practices and even claimed the mantle of the Mongol khaghan. For recent scholarship in this vein, see David Robinson’s “The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols”, and Dora Ching’s “Tibetan Buddhism and the Creation of the Ming Imperial Image”.

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of ritual by the Mongol Yuan. In the following year the *Da Ming ji li* (*Collected Rituals of the Great Ming*) was completed setting the model for the major state rites. So important was orthodox precedence that of the eight universally mandated official cults established from the Hongwu period to the end of the dynasty, only one – that to the walls and moats (*chenghuang*) – did not have a Confucian origin in the classics and history.

The Sacrificial Statutes operated at the dynastic capital and at local government offices lower down the administrative hierarchy throughout the realm. At the capital the most important state rituals were to be presided over by the son of heaven himself, who was the pivotal figure maintaining the cosmological balance between heaven and earth. It was there that the state altars to Heaven, Earth, grain and various nature spirits were located. Also centred at the capital was the ancestral cult of the imperial family, which had a dual role: the imperial ancestors were honoured as the dynastic progenitors at the Great Temple (*Tai Miao*), and also received private filial devotion from the imperial family at temples within the palace complex. From the capitals, a network of official ritual sites spread out across the breadth of the empire. Major state altars were replicated on a smaller scale at the local level including altars to the soil and grain (*she ji*), nature spirits, military banners, and abandoned ghosts. Any administrator who had a sacred peak, ocean or great river, or the tomb of a former sovereign within his area of jurisdiction was also required to maintain the shrine to its spirit and to oversee the prescribed official sacrifices on behalf of the emperor.

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218 Long Wenbin, *Ming hui yao*, juan 6, 76-77.

219 Taylor, “Official Altars”, p. 101. For a discussion of the city god cult, see Chapter 4 below. However, many non-Confucian cults were so firmly established that they continued to flourish outside the mechanisms of the Sacrificial Statutes – some even enjoyed imperial favour. At the Hongzhi court in 1488 rites officials debated the propriety of many cults including those to Buddha, Laozi, the Ziwei star, the Thunder god, Zhang Daoling, Zitong, Xuanwu, Dongyue Taishan, and the Capital God of Walls and Moats. Officials recommended that those not strictly in accordance with the Sacrificial Statutes should be discarded. As a result, the emperor decreed that the Dongyue, Zhenwu, Chenghuang miao, and Lingji gong rituals would be kept as before, while others were to be modified or discarded. *Ming shi*, pp. 1307-1310.

220 *Da Ming hui dian*, juan 83-85; Long Wenbin, *Ming hui yao*, juan 8, pp. 103-127.

221 *Da Ming hui dian*, juan 86-90. The imperial ancestral temple was actually established before the formal founding of the Ming. Long Wenbin, *Ming hui yao*, juan 9-10, pp. 128-162.

The *Sidian* included ritual offerings for a substantial number of individual figures who were identified as having made major contributions to Chinese civilization broadly, including the Three Emperors and other culture heroes of antiquity, Confucius and subsequent sagely teachers including Mencius and Dong Zhongshu, and select rulers of former dynasties.\(^{223}\) Also included were historical figures who had performed remarkable service to particular dynasties, including “loyal officials, brave soldiers, persons able to withstand natural disasters or ward off calamities, who toiled in the founding of the state or died in its service, or other persons in cases in which a petition elicited an imperial patent.”\(^{224}\) It was among these latter categories that Yue Fei and Yu Qian were included and commemorated in the politico-ritual order.

During the Ming, the dynastic founder set the pattern for ritual offerings and shrines to individuals. At the very beginning of his reign, the Hongwu emperor sent officials from the Chancellory to the prefectures and counties to seek out the spirits that should receive offerings. The spirits of all figures that had merit (*gong*) to the state (*guojia*) and were favoured and beloved among the people, were to be included in the Sacrificial Statutes. The emperor ordered officials in the relevant jurisdiction to make seasonal offerings to them. The Hongwu emperor paid particular attention to the tombs of former emperors, probably as part of his efforts to establish his own authority and the legitimacy of the Ming. In the third year, he ordered officials to visit the tombs and temples of former emperors and to make images of them for his inspection. The following year he sent envoys to make offerings at those tombs, but only those which lay within the Central Plains (*Zhongyuan*) – the cultural heartland of China.\(^{225}\)

Zhu Yuanzhang also honoured those who helped him in his great enterprise by including them in the state ritual system. The dynasty’s Temple to Meritorious Officials (*gongchen miao*) was first established in the second year of the Hongwu reign at Jiming Monastery in Nanjing. It was explicitly to honour the generals and comrades-in-arms of


\(^{225}\) A few years later, he again sent officials to those tombs, numbering thirty-six in total. *Ming shi*, juan 50, pp. 1306-1311; Yu Ruji, *Libu zhi gao*, 30.15-16.
Zhu Yuanzhang who had helped to establish the dynasty. Initially twenty-one figures were included at the temple, headed by Xu Da, Chang Yuchun, and Li Wenzhong. Close to four hundred additional individuals were added to the list in the first reign, including living people.\textsuperscript{226} The Hongwu emperor also sought a broader recognition of worthy individuals. In the second year of the reign, he decreed that the shrines to the spirits of all meritorious figures that had been virtuous and brought benefit to the people were to be protected and included in the Sacrificial Statutes. In the third year, the titles of all recognized spirits were fixed and no further titular embellishments were permitted.

The most concrete manifestation of inclusion in the Sacrificial Statutes was for a figure to have a shrine established in his name. This might be accompanied by a tomb, as was the case for both Yue Fei and Yu Qian, and constituted the locus for ritual offerings and commemoration of the deceased. Yet despite status as an officially mandated site in the politico-ritual order, the maintenance of the physical site was a perennial problem. According to official guidelines, shrines were the responsibility of the local officials in whose jurisdiction they were located.\textsuperscript{227} This was no easy task. A Zhengtong decree of 1443 reveals the procedure for maintaining official buildings including shrines. Upon discovery of damage, all relevant officials were to supervise the task of repair, pooling together their resources and paying from the official purse. They might also depute wealthy households to contribute and hire craftsmen for the repairs. It was emphasized that they must not waste the people’s money (\textit{min cai}). If larger scale building work were necessary, as in the case of destruction by fire, then higher officials would also be involved. The Surveillance Commissioner (\textit{ancha shi}) and Provincial Administration Commissioner (\textit{buzheng shi}) should discuss the project with local prefectural officials and submit a plan for reconstruction to the throne. Upon completion of any building project, reliable men were to be selected to watch over the building and the local officials should conduct regular checks for damage so repairs could be carried out in a timely fashion.\textsuperscript{228}

\textsuperscript{226} Ming shi, juan 50, pp. 1304-1305; Long Wenbin, Ming hui yao, juan 10, pp. 166-167.
\textsuperscript{227} Da Ming hui dian, 9b-10a.
\textsuperscript{228} Da Ming hui dian, 10a-10b.
This meticulous concern with procedure and caution against wastefulness suggests that such projects were open to abuse or maladministration. While local officials were responsible for state mandated ritual sites, they were not usually allocated money to pay for the project from the throne. The problem of cost was an issue from the beginning of the dynasty. Early in the founding Hongwu reign the costs for establishing tombs to meritorious officials were to be covered by officials. But in 1393 the emperor changed the policy decreeing that upon the death of meritorious officials, their burial and tomb expenses were all to be borne by family members. The martial dynastic founder would only provide for those who died in battle fighting for the Ming.\textsuperscript{229} In the cases of the shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian we shall see that family members played crucial roles in their initial establishment and subsequent maintenance. But many others were involved in the upkeep and expansion of these official sites, including government officials, court eunuchs, and local people. Each group had their own reasons for contributing to the building and rebuilding of these sites, which were decidedly official, but whose meanings contributors could interpret for their own purposes.

In addition to the shrines themselves, other forms of ritual recognition were central to the construction of the site and its place in the cultural imagination. The emperor might bestow other honours on worthy individuals. For instance, worthies might receive a funeral text from the imperial brush. The industrious founding emperor personally composed texts for numerous deceased favourites, and the Chenghua and Jiajing emperors were also known to pen texts for senior ministers, including Yu Qian in the Chenghua reign. But for most of the dynasty such dedicatory texts were composed by Hanlin scholars and other court literati and offered in accordance with a standard prescription. Regardless of whether such a text had been authored by the emperor

\textsuperscript{229} \textit{Da Ming hui dian}, juan 203, 11a-b. For the most distinguished individuals the Hongwu emperor appointed ‘guardian households’ (\textit{shou hu}) to tend to tomb sites. The number of designated households ranged from 93 to 210. Such cases were rare, however, and the arrangement could not be sustained. By 1479 fourteen tombs outside Nanjing belonging to such luminaries as Chang Yuchun and Li Wenzhong had fallen into disrepair. Li Wenzhong’s great grandson Li E had to petition the throne for repairs. The emperor granted the request and assigned one guardian household for the tomb of everyone that did not have any descendants to care for it. \textit{Ming shi}, juan 60, pp. 1487-1488.
himself, it was still granted by the throne and brought great honour for the recipient. As a result, such texts were usually inscribed onto stelae which were erected at the tomb.\footnote{Ming shi, juan 60, p. 1483. The size and shape of such stelae were prescribed in ritual texts, according to the rank of the deceased. Those with higher rank might have stelae borne by a stone tortoise or topped by a lizard.}

It was the granting of posthumous titles, however, that brought the greatest honour for the dead and also much prestige for their families. The emperor bestowed posthumous titles on imperial princes and noble princes (jun wang), senior ministers, and officials of lower rank that had given exceptional service to the state – and may even have died doing so. In the most elevated cases, not only might an outstanding individual be granted a posthumous title, but the emperor might even favour the deceased’s ancestors. At the beginning of the dynasty, Chang Yuchun received a rare honour: not only Chang himself, but also his father, grandfather, and even his great-grandfather received posthumous titles.\footnote{Long Wenbin, Ming hui yao, juan 20, p. 331.}

The establishment of official shrines and the bestowal of commemorative texts and honorary titles elevated worthy individuals in the politico-ritual order of the realm, but such acts were not necessarily final verdicts on the deceased. The initial inclusion of an individual in the Sacrificial Statutes was subject to a process of discussion and verification of his merits, and even after these had been determined, they could be re-evaluated subsequently. Posthumous titles could be – and were – also subject to revision.

The inclusion of individual figures in the Sidian during the Ming was influenced by the founding emperor’s concern for ritual orthodoxy. Officials were responsible for making offerings on designated days to all figures that were included in the Sidian; conversely they were forbidden from involvement at shrines that were not included and deemed illicit (yin ci).\footnote{Ming shi, juan 50, pp. 1306-1311; Yu Ruji, Libu zhi gao, 30.15-16.} In order to ensure the orthodoxy of the official cult, the Hongwu emperor stipulated in 1394 that only historical figures with demonstrable merit be included. Officials proposing the inclusion of a past figure in the Sidian had to verify his merit by checking his life and deeds in the historical record before making the request to the Ministry of Rites for consideration. Ming figures could be also be included, provided...
that their feats were detailed in local records, or carved onto stelae, and that there was more than one corroborating source. Thus many famous statesmen and philosophers were included in the *Sidian* as former worthies, such as Zhuge Liang, Di Renjie, Wen Tianxiang, Yue Fei and Zhu Xi. Among Ming figures included was Yu Qian.\footnote{Ming shi, juan 50, pp. 1310-1311.}

There was a similar process for the bestowal of posthumous titles. Beginning in the early Hongwu reign, proposals were put forward and debated by Ministry of Rites and Hanlin Academy officials. By 1502 the system was set. Senior court or regional officials – though not family members – could petition for someone to be granted a posthumous title. The case would be channelled through either the ministry of war, or of personnel, depending on whether the deceased had been a military or civil official. Hanlin officials would then suggest possible titles before rites officials debated the case according to the merits of the deceased. Finally all cases required imperial approval.\footnote{Ming shi, juan 60, pp. 1488-1490; Long Wenbin, *Ming hui yao*, juan 20, p. 332ff.}

This process of official recommendation and debate was designed to assure ritual propriety in the elevation of the deceased. However, there were times when the system was abused, followed by efforts to correct and reform it. During the Wanli reign Minister of Rites Shen Li (*js* 1565), who expended much energy in ritual reforms, ran into conflict with numerous officials when he challenged the attempts of senior ministers and relatives of an imperial concubine to have their ancestors receive posthumous titles.\footnote{Ming shi, juan 217, p. 5734. Shen’s ritual reforms extended to correcting the ritual status of constitutionally controversial events early in the dynasty. He sought the official reestablishment of the Jianwen period and the recognition of Zhu Qiyu as the Jingdi emperor. He also worked to reform popular family rites as well as at ritual practice at schools.} According to Shen’s high standards, any recipient of a posthumous title must be a paragon of Confucian virtues. He held that there had been a bestowal of undeserved favour during the Zhengde and Jiajing reigns that continued through to Shen’s own Wanli era.\footnote{The Jiajing emperor granted titles to favoured magicians (*fangshi*). Ming shi, juan 60, p. 1490.} Shen bemoaned a situation where the sons and grandsons of officials ranking grade three and above could successfully petition for an ancestor to be granted a posthumous title – even if the deceased had been quite unremarkable or even seriously flawed. For Shen, posthumous titles had lost their true meaning and purpose. Pointing to historical...
precedents, he noted the inappropriate granting of the title ‘cultured’ (wen) in posthumous titles of his day, arguing that only scholars of the stature of Han Yu (768-824) and Zhu Xi (1130-1200) deserved it. Accordingly, Shen urged the emperor to return to a stricter ritual practice.237 Concern for ritual orthodoxy continued through the remainder of the dynasty. In 1603 a vice minister of rites started a debate over stricter procedures for granting posthumous honours that lasted through the Tianqi reign (1621-1627).

These cases show that, despite concern for ritual orthodoxy and the process of verifying the merits of the deceased, the Sidian system could be subject to abuse or at least controversy. Or it might be more useful to see ritual elevation as an inherently political process whereby the qualities of the deceased were open to interpretation and recognition of them was subject to negotiation. What was established at one time could be reassessed at another. This was the case with both Yue Fei and Yu Qian, both of whose posthumous titles were later changed.238 Central to the debates over Yue Fei and Yu Qian were their status as exemplary loyal officials; it was on account of their loyalty that they were included in the state ritual system and remembered by posterity at their Hangzhou shrines and other sites and in the cultural imagination more broadly.

2.3 Changing Meanings of Loyalty

Yue Fei came to be elevated as the symbol of loyalty par excellence in a long process that began in the Song and gathered pace during the Ming. Not only did he hold an honoured place in the Ming state pantheon, he was even worshipped as a Daoist deity and his popular cult was enforced by many plays and novels of the period.239 The figure of Yu Qian did not grow to such proportions, although he was still widely celebrated as a model

237 Yu Ruji, Libu zhi gao, 50.3-6.
238 According to Shen Defu (1578-1642), there were eight cases of posthumous titles being changed during the Ming, but he does not include Yu Qian’s case. Long Wenbin, Ming hui yao, juan 20, p. 337. In the case of Yue Fei and his rival, the peacemaking Chancellor Qin Gui, posthumous ritual status was overtly tied to politics at the Southern Song court. As the early Qing scholar-official Wang Shizhen (1634-1711) noted, general Han Tuozhou (1152-1207) supported the elevation of Yue Fei and the posthumous removal of Qin Gui’s title because he sought to re-conquer northern China in the footsteps of Yue Fei. But when Han failed and was executed to appease the enemy, Qin Gui’s noble titles were restored. Wang Shizhen, Chibei ou tan, p. 196.
239 Liu, “Yueh Fei”, pp. 294-6. In the twentieth century Yue Fei was invoked as a symbol of resistance against foreign invasion during the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance.
loyal official. Yet both Yue Fei and Yu Qian, though later upheld as paragons of loyalty, were condemned to death for being disloyal. James Liu places them among the “loyal men condemned as disloyal” in China’s long history of ironical tragedies. Yue Fei was admired for leading Song efforts to fight back the Jin forces, but was executed for disobedience and suspected disloyalty. Yu Qian was praised for safeguarding the capital and the dynasty, yet was put to death for not saving the captured emperor after the latter’s return to power. Certainly there were many political factors behind their condemnation, but there were also some basic tensions in the demands of loyalty which each faced that affected how each was later represented and remembered.

Loyalty (zhong) was not a uniform, unchanging virtue; its expectations depended on the political and cultural contingencies of the day. At the most fundamental level, loyalty concerned the relationship between a minister (or potential minister) on one side and his ruler and the state on the other. This was at times a reciprocal relationship, based on a contract of respectful employment and dutiful service. Such an allegiance could be switched by either party should one side not live up to expectations. At other times, the tie could be more rigidly hierarchical: the loyal minister should give unquestioning service to the ruler regardless of the latter’s conduct. Yet while a ruler might claim the unwavering loyalty of his minister, a minister might sometimes profess his loyalty to the state above the person of the ruler. In such a situation the ruler was not equated with the state, which was usually formulated as the sheji “state altars” or the guojia, and so loyalty was still maintained to the ruling dynasty. Or removing himself from political allegiances altogether, a minister might abandon both a ruler and his state and declare loyalty to a higher power such as the Way (dao), and draw upon moral arguments to trump political demands. The meaning and demands of loyalty changed over time along with the fluctuating relationship between minister and ruler and the Chinese political order itself.

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240 In a short essay “Zhong lian ji” (On the Loyal and Honest) late Ming high official Zhang Han (1510-1593) suggested that his fellow Hangzhou natives Yu Qian and Hu Duanmin were rare exemplars of loyalty and honesty. Zhang highlights Yu Qian’s incorruptible honesty by relating how Yu lived a most plain lifestyle with his wife in a simple house despite his high office and offers from the throne to award him with a mansion. Zhang Han, Song chuang meng yu, pp. 129-130.

And later writers could draw on historical precedents to reinterpret loyalty and offer models to follow in their own times.

The idea of loyalty (zhong) first emerged during the later Western Zhou (c.1050-771 BCE) era when the rigid relationships of earlier times had been thrown into chaos.242 As the Zhou system of interstate overlords unraveled, the position of ministers strengthened at the expense of their rulers, on whom they were increasingly less dependent. By the late Springs and Autumns period (770-476 BCE), it was widely held idea that a minister’s duty was first and foremost to the state altars, the sheji, and only second to the ruler. The minister was to act in the interests of the state even if it led to his death, but if his ruler were ineffective, the minister could defy and even remove him with the justification of serving the state altars and the people.243 Ministers rarely had such power later in Chinese history, but the idea that the minister’s first duty was to the sheji and not to the ruler continued to be a potent political ethic – it was the very argument made by Yu Qian in the fifteenth century. Ultimately, however, as was also the case with Yu Qian, realpolitik often decided the fate of both ruler and minister.

Numerous political theorists and sometime ministers wrote about the relationship between minister and ruler in response to the political situation of their day. Confucius (551-479 BCE) was the first to tip the balance in favour of the ruler, stating that the minister owed his utmost loyalty to his lord. Yet it was conditional on the benevolence (ren) of the ruler, who was expected to treat his minister with ritual propriety (li). Should he fail to do so, the minister was free to transfer his service to another ruler, as Confucius himself did.244 Mencius (372-289 BCE) reformulated the relationship to put lord and vassal on more even terms. He explicitly justified the overthrow of a ruler who was neither benevolent nor righteous.245 Han Fei (280-233 BCE) on the other hand, who

242 It started off as a bond of trust between people, not solely to denote the relationship between ruler and minister, and was associated with other political and moral virtues such as reverence (jing), filial piety (xiao), and trustworthiness (xin). Ning and Jiang, “Zhongguo lishi shang de huangquan”, pp. 79-80; Wang Zijin, “Zhong” guannian yanjiu, pp. 35-36.
243 This could mean the expulsion of the ruler from the state, and in reality included his death. Pines, Foundations of Confucian Thought, pp. 136-163.
244 Ning and Jiang, “Zhongguo lishi shang de huangquan”, p. 80.
245 Ning and Jiang, “Zhongguo lishi shang de huangquan”, pp. 81-82.
among pre-Qin philosophers most frequently used the term zhong, held that loyalty was the highest political virtue and demanded unquestioning obedience: under no circumstances should a minister disobey his ruler. Loyalty was no grounds for disobedience.  

The establishment of the unified empire of the Qin and Han brought an elevation of the ruler. Dong Zhongshu (c. 169-104 BCE) led the reformulation of the political order that affirmed the authority of the emperor as sole ruler, to whom there were no alternatives for ministers to direct their loyalty. While any contender could advance a Mencian argument and claim the Mandate of Heaven, only military success and not political argument based on a reinterpretation of loyalty could bring justification.  

In subsequent centuries, however, while the idea of empire endured, lengthy periods of political fragmentation brought the possibility of contested loyalties. From the third to sixth centuries none of the competing polities enjoyed exclusive claims to loyalty. The Tang rulers restored the unified empire and reinstituted loyalty as a political virtue for which ministers would be canonized in the ritual system.  

When the empire was again fragmented in the early tenth century and no single ruler could claim the Tang mantle unchallenged, ministers became free to declare their loyalty to their choice of ruler. Many Chinese even chose to cross the Song-Liao border and profess their loyalty to the Liao ruler while maintaining their Han cultural identity – a position that was for the most part unproblematic. By the eleventh century this was no longer the case. The Liao and Song states had both strengthened their regimes and were in open conflict. Song histories portrayed the Liao as the enemy and any Han who served them as disloyal traitors. Scholars elevated the position of the Song ruler and demanded life-long loyalty towards the culture, polity, and territory of China as represented by the Song and its emperor alone. This hardened rhetoric of loyalty was especially clear-cut

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246 Han also made distinctions between grades of loyalty based on utility. Small loyalties of self-sacrifice with no long-term benefit for the ruler or state were of no value. Great loyalty required much greater political acuity and judgment. Wang Zijin, “Zhong” guannian yanjiu, pp. 91-100.

247 Ning and Jiang, “Zhongguo lishi shang de huangquan”, 84-89; Standen, Unbounded Loyalty, pp. 48-51.

248 Loyalty in the Tang included a broader range of meaning. Standen, Unbounded Loyalty, pp. 52-55.

249 Standen, Unbounded Loyalty, pp. 57-58.
when the state to which ministers owed loyalty was destroyed. When the Song fell, its
ministers had three choices: to decide whether actively to resist and fulfill a political
loyalty; to withdraw from political life and fulfill a cultural loyalty; or to serve the new
rulers and meet a livelihood imperative, but be branded as disloyal collaborators.250 In
reality Song loyalism was not so straightforward. There were different expressions of
loyalty and the majority of Song officials actually surrendered and went on to serve the
Yuan.251 Yet the idea of the absolute loyalty of former Song subjects provided a powerful
precedent, especially for Ming loyalists, but even for Yuan loyalists.252

For Yue Fei and Yu Qian the dilemma lay not in deciding whether or not to serve a
new power, but in determining whether one’s loyalty should translate into absolute
personal commitment to the ruler, or should the welfare of the state have overriding
importance. James Liu sees the case of Yue Fei as illustrating a basic contradiction
embedded in the Confucian concept of political loyalty, manifest when these two options
failed to coincide. The tension was aggravated when the ruler was less than perfect or
unlikely to fulfill his role of securing the state.253

In popular versions of the history told since the Song dynasty, Yue Fei’s loyalty is
juxtaposed with the treachery of Chancellor Qin Gui, who headed the peace faction, and
the irresolution of emperor Gaozong. Cast as the “infamous villain versus the sainted
martyr”,254 Qin Gui is usually held responsible for Yue’s fall and execution. Ironically,
Qin Gui’s own destruction of the official historical record created a documentary void
that enabled the subsequent creation of historical myth vilifying Qin himself, and so it is

250 Standen, Unbounded Loyalty, pp. 41-42.
251 Jennifer Jay discerns three broad categories of loyalist in the thirteenth century: the zhongyi loyalists
who died at the fall of the dynasty or shortly after; yimin who survived the dynasty and refused to serve the
Mongol Yuan; and yimin recluses. In fact, many of those who initially refused to serve the conquerors, later
changed their position and went into service, or allowed their kin and close associates to do so. Jay, A
Change in Dynasties, pp. 5-6.
252 Jay, A Change in Dynasties, pp. 243, 259-60. Similar to the reality of the Song-Yuan transition, far more
Ming subjects surrendered than perished in the name of loyalism during the Manchu conquest. The famous
case of the Jiangyin loyalists, whose exceptionally steadfast resistance brought their bloody annihilation as
well as their mythic reputation as loyalists, only reinforces this fact. Wakeman, “Localism and Loyalism”.
not possible to construct an account of the “real” Qin Gui from the sources. What is certain is that reality was not so clear cut, as evidenced by the fact that there were positive evaluations of Qin at the time (some of which have survived until the present), despite the writings of Zhu Xi and his dao xue followers, which culminated in the condemnatory official biography of Qin as a “nefarious minister” (jianchen) in the Song History.

Writers also commented on the responsibilities of emperor Gaozong. In a poem about Yue Fei, Song imperial scion and celebrated painter Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322) suggested that it was a grave failure and weakness on the part of the Song emperors to lose northern China. This is particularly remarkable because Zhao was thereby reproaching his own ancestors. During the Ming, the fifteenth-century statesman and statecraft thinker Qiu Jun (1421-1495) noted in his Shishi zhenggang (The Correct Bonds in Universal History) that while everybody blames Qin Gui for Yue Fei’s death, emperor Gaozong must at least have been complicit. He was no “weak and deluded” emperor, so Qin Gui would not have dared to execute a senior general without his consent.

Similarly, in an essay on the rebuilding of Yue Fei’s Hangzhou shrine, the high minister Wang Ao (1450-1524) presents Song Gaozong as lacking resolve (zhi) to recover the north and avenge his forbears. According to Wang, Gaozong and Qin Gui were content meekly to hold onto their reduced kingdom despite the opportunities created by Yue Fei. As Wang put it, “the great loyalty of Yue Fei was taken to be disloyalty, and the disloyalty of Qin Gui to be loyalty”.

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256 Hartman, “The Making of a Villain” pp. 105-117. Zhu Xi attributed the failure of the Song to recover the north to Qin Gui’s moral failure, ibid, p. 128.
257 This sense of loss was compounded by his depiction of the peoples of the Central Plains eagerly awaiting news of Yue Fei’s victory in the north. Feng Pei, Yue miao zhi lie, p. 381; 5a.
258 Qiu Jun, Shishi zhenggang, juan 27, 16b-18a; 555-556. Qiu’s strongly moralistic opposition of China and barbarian peoples coloured his historical judgment. Inspired by Zhu Xi’s Zizhi tongjian gangmu (Outline and Details of the Comprehensive Mirror), Qiu’s history was a highly moralizing work intended to stir the conscience of contemporaries. In the work Qiu sought to reveal the meanings of past events in terms of the preservation of the three universally correct bonds: to draw a clear boundary between the Chinese and the barbarians; to explain and to establish the relationship between a ruler and his ministers; and to uphold the relationship between father and son. Ng and Wang, Mirroring the Past, p. 205.
While commentators criticized Qin Gui and Song Gaozong, there was no consensus that Yue Fei could actually have retaken the north. Wang Ao put forth a widely held view – inscribed onto a stele at the Hangzhou shrine – that Yue would have gone on to vanquish the Jurchen had he not been recalled.260 Qiu Jun, on the other hand, doubted whether Yue Fei could have recovered the north, despite the impressive victories of his forces and those of his fellow generals.261

Again, the realities behind the popular image of Yue Fei as a loyal hero were less straightforward and, as historian Tao Jing-shen points out, it is necessary to examine in full the political and military complexities of the period to assess Yue Fei, Qin Gui, and Song Gaozong. For instance, Yue Fei’s story was also one of the Southern Song court’s efforts to control the military, wherein Gaozong was at times more worried about his powerful generals staying loyal than the advance of the Jin.262 While urging care in judging the main figures in this history, Tao does point out that it was clear that Gaozong and Qin Gui did not want the return of captive emperor Qinzong as it would have been inconvenient for both of them.263 This fact alone was enough to draw reproach on moral grounds even though it was politically expedient. For Gaozong, the return of his elder brother from captivity would have threatened his own position. For Qin Gui and other ministers, the return of the former emperor would have demanded a choice of loyalty to the former ruler or to his replacement. Yet despite the fact that Qinzhong’s return would certainly have rocked the political situation of the Song court, it was also incumbent on Gaozong and his ministers to secure Qinzong’s safe return if possible.

On top of this dilemma between moral duty and political expediency was the question of safeguarding the state against a threatening enemy. In the parallel Ming case three centuries later, the need to protect the state above all else – including the captured emperor – was the very argument advanced by Yu Qian. In that history the return of the

261 Qiu notes that this was in some ways due to a lack of political resolve and leadership at the court, but he also questions whether Yue et al had an overall coordinated plan that could have led to victory. Qiu Jun, Shishi zhenggang, juan 27, 16b-17a, 17b-18a, and especially 26b-29a.
captured Ming emperor Yingzong brought a division of loyalties that eventually saw the restoration of the former captive. This brought the downfall of those who had failed to effect Yingzong’s release, but instead had worked to secure the position of his younger brother who replaced him as the Jingtai emperor. Herein lies a difference in the loyalties of Yue Fei and of Yu Qian. In a sense, Yue was trapped by his own loyalty as he obeyed the order recalling him from campaign that led to his execution on false charges. Yu Qian, on the other hand, disregarded his captured ruler, the Yingzong emperor, and chose instead to secure the state and serve the captive’s younger brother. These circumstances complicated any assessment of Yu Qian’s role in history, and the grounds on which he could be considered to be loyal.

![Portrait of Lord Yu Qian](image)

*Figure 6 "Yu Zhongsu gong xiang" (Portrait of Lord Yu Qian), Wang, Sancai tu hui, p. 717.*

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264 Wang Ao, “Hangzhou chong xiu Yue wumu miao bei”, *Zhenze ji*. Jay suggests that it was the tradition of absolute loyalty in the Southern Song that may explain Yue Fei’s obedience to the Gaozong emperor even though it led to his own death. Jay, *A Change in Dynasties*, pp. 94-5.
In terms of the legal code, there were three categories of capital crime that included any act that was harmful to the state, that intended harm against the person of the emperor or the imperial house, or that went against the safety and welfare of society as a whole. Heading the list of most heinous capital crimes called the Ten Abominations (shi e) were: plotting rebellion (mou fan), plotting great sedition (mou da ni), and plotting treason (mou pan). Yu Qian’s actions, particularly his neglect of the Yingzong emperor, could be interpreted as disloyalty and punishable under the provisions of these crimes. Yet under the exceptional circumstances around Yingzong’s capture and replacement by Jingtai, loyalty as a bond between minister, ruler, and state was split, since Yu’s actions could simultaneously be seen as disloyalty to the ruler and loyalty to the state.

The late Ming grand secretary Ye Xianggao (1559-1627) wrote that Yu Qian should be praised for his assertive action at a time of national crisis when so many others at court were proposing a flight to the south, as the Song had done centuries earlier. Ye’s assessment was founded upon the effectiveness of Yu’s action in averting the Mongol threat. He was less concerned with ritual propriety, constitutional, and moral questions. But Yu Qian was also accused of not doing more to preserve the ritual propriety of the dynastic house even after the Mongol threat had been averted. In particular, when the Jingtai emperor chose to replace the crown prince, Yingzong’s son and heir, with his own son, some critics charged that Yu Qian should have used his influence to deter Jingtai. In Yu Qian’s defence, Ye stated that not even the great Zhuge Liang with all his powers of persuasion could have restrained his ruler under such circumstances, and so Yu was not to be blamed for it.

Other commentators did not prioritize political expediency, but asked whether Yu Qian’s individual actions were justifiable. Judgments could be based on propriety and

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265 All were punishable by the most severe form of execution – “death by slicing” (lingchi), Jiang, *The Great Ming Code*, pp. 18-19, 154-155. Commenting on the Qing Code, which was largely based on its Ming forerunner (both were ultimately derived from the Tang Code), Paul Ch’en notes that these crimes come close to the notion of treason in European legal traditions. Ch’en, “Disloyalty to the State”, pp. 161-166.

266 Ye Xianggao, “Yu gong zou yi xu” 3b-6a. Wei Jirui (1620-1677) similarly argued that the Jingtai emperor’s refusal to give up the throne to his elder brother on the latter’s return and also his replacing the heir apparent were matters beyond Yu Qian’s power. Making an analogy with the Southern Song Wei asserted that because Song Qinzhong lost the north, it was only to be expected that the Gaozong emperor would keep the throne. Ding Bing, *Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu*, pp. 7161-7162.
whether Yu had fulfilled his duties as a minister, both to the ruler, and to the altars of state – the sheji. An act that violated the legal code but which secured the sheji could be defended, as was the case when the famous philosopher and statesman Wang Shouren was accused of crossing the border out of the Ming realm during his campaign to pacify Guangxi in 1527.267

Late Ming scholar Hou Fangyu (1618-1655) applied the notion of sheji to his assessment of Yu Qian in two ways: the sheji chen denotes a minister who does everything within his power in service of the state, and always in accordance with propriety; while an act that benefits the state without regard for the individual may be called sheji gong. The latter term was not found solely in intellectual discourse, for it also appears in Yang Erzeng’s guidebook to Hangzhou where it was used to describe Yu Qian’s actions of saving the state from the Mongol threat, for which Yu was popularly remembered.268 But for Hou, the sheji chen should not be measured by his deeds alone. A devoted minister should always act in accord with the Way and serve his lord faithfully. Hou, like Ye Xianggao, also allows that the exceptional circumstances of the time meant that it was not possible for Yu Qian to persuade the Jingtai Emperor to give up the throne to his elder brother upon the latter’s return. But unlike Ye, Hou faults Yu Qian for his failure to prevent the Jingtai emperor from replacing his nephew with his own son as the heir apparent. Given Yu’s influence over the emperor and the court, Hou believes that he could at least have done so much – as a sheji chen should have done. There was at most risk to his own person, though no risk to the state, so it was his duty to speak out and to ensure that the emperor acted in accordance with propriety.269 This separation of the act from the agent could bring compromise as well as complicate historical judgment.

As noted already, loyalty constituted a bond between minister, ruler, and state. It was a political relationship that bore moral obligations. While the conduct of the ruler and the wider political order were important factors, judgment over loyalty was on the

267 The alleged act was deemed subversive and subject to severe punishment, but the minister of Rites Huo Tao (1487-1540) defended Wang as acting for the peace and security (an) of the state (guojia) and for the benefits of the sheji. Brook, “What Happens When Wang Yangming Crosses the Border?”
268 Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, 19b-20a; 246-247.
269 Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, pp. 7158-7159.
minister alone. In life, Yue Fei and Yu Qian were judged disloyal and executed. After death they were rehabilitated as model loyal officials and different interpretations of their deeds came to be attached to their histories. Many of these views, both official and popular, were inscribed onto the physical sites that commemorated them and influenced how they were imagined and represented in the broader cultural imagination.

2.4 The Making and Remaking of Shrines to Loyal Ministers
The Hangzhou shrines and tombs of Yue Fei and Yu Qian came to be included in the Sacrificial Statutes of the Ming as sites for the commemoration and honouring of the two statesmen, both of whom became paragons of loyalty to the state. Their establishment in the politico-ritual order was not a straightforward process, however. Multiple groups – including their families, local and provincial officials, the local people and the court – were involved in the initial creation and subsequent maintenance, restoration, and expansion of each site. Although they were official sites, there was a broad and popular involvement in their physical and cultural construction, on the ground in Hangzhou and in the texts that represented the places and shaped how others imagined and experienced them. The histories of both sites grew through the Ming and drew visitors to participate in the commemoration in situ of the two figures and what they represented. The following sections will examine this process for the two sites, which largely paralleled each other, from the initial rehabilitation of their subjects, through successive remakings during the Ming era.

2.4.1 The Shrine and Tomb of Yue Fei in Hangzhou
The site of Yue Fei’s shrine and tomb in Hangzhou was only one of several sites in the realm that officially commemorated him. Hangzhou writer Lang Ying (c.1487-1566) counted five sites to Yue Fei included in the Sidian. All of the sites were places with which Yue had been personally associated and included: his native Tangyin County in Henan; Ezhou in Hubei, where Yue first rose to prominence; Gan in Jiangxi, where Yue had served with great merit; and the town of Zhuxian whence he had been recalled,
despite being poised to regain the north. But it was the shrine in Hangzhou, which had been the Southern Song capital of Lin’an in Yue’s lifetime and where he died and was buried, that was the most prominent.

The Song period establishment of Yue Fei’s tomb and temple was not without obstacles. In 1141 Yue Fei died in prison in Hangzhou after taking poison. Because he was suspected of disloyalty he did not receive an official burial. As late Ming writer Zhang Dai recounted the legend, Yue’s corpse was buried secretly at a spot north of the city by a prison guard by the name of Wei Shun. When Wei died he passed his secret on to his son. Eventually in 1162 Yue Fei and his family were rehabilitated, at which point Wei’s son revealed the secret and Yue’s remains – some accounts claimed that his body had the appearance of a living person – were officially transferred and buried, according to the ritual appropriate for an official of the first rank, south of Qixia Ridge by West Lake.

In this initial stage, Yue Fei’s grandsons Yue Fu and Yue Ke led family efforts to establish a temple to him. Despite the court granting permission for a merit chapel (gongde si), Yue’s family had trouble establishing it. The first choice was a certain Xianming si (Temple of Manifest Brightness) nearby. This, however, met with opposition from an official whose family used the temple for their ancestral offerings and so he feared that its dedication to Yue would prevent their own use. In memorials to the throne the official argued for the protection of ancestral plots against encroachment. He challenged the Yues’ plan on the grounds of geomantic disruption too. Thus the Yues were forced to look elsewhere. It was not until 1221 that the Zhiguo Guanyin si (Guanyin

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270 Lang Ying, Qi xiu lei gao, juan 36, p. 538. Wuchang, Jiaxing, and other towns also saw the establishment of shrines to Yue Fei, especially after the 1449 Tumu crisis when he became a symbol of resistance against the renewed Mongol menace. In addition to the main site by West Lake, there was another shrine associated with Yue Fei in Hangzhou. His former home was established as the Zhongyou Shrine (Loyalty Protecting Shrine) and it became well known for the legend that his only daughter committed suicide by jumping into it, clutching a silver vase. Feng Pei, Yue miao zhi lüe, 43, 1.3a.

271 As Feng Pei (js 1771), the Qing compiler of the gazetteer of the Hangzhou shrine and tomb noted (with some bias, to be sure): “The prince’s temples in Tangyin, Zhuxian, Wuchang, and Jiaxing are not the same. This temple on the edge of West Lake below Qijia Ridge has his tomb. Today’s temple has its origins in the Gongde Temple granted during the Song ... He has been publicly honoured here as a great exemplar up until the present. So how could the other temples compare with it?” Feng Pei, Yue miao zhi lüe, 39-40.

of Knowledge of Karma Monastery) on the northern hill was designated as the new merit chapel for Yue Fei. This time the Yue family was successful and an imperial plaque was granted bearing the words of the chapel’s new name “Bao zhong yan fu chan si” (Great Loyalty and Abundant Blessings Chan Monastery). Following the Song collapse, the temple was abandoned. Subsequently a sixth generation descendant by the name of Yue Shidi rebuilt the temple but soon after it again fell into dereliction. During the Yuan Zhiyuan Period (1271-1294) Hangzhou Registrar (jing li) Li Quanchu rebuilt the shrine, enlarging it and installing statues, and in the Zhizheng Period (1341-1368) a plaque was added reading “Baoyi” (Protecting Virtue). This, too, did not last.273

Figure 7 "Yue Wumu wang mu tu" (Illustration of the Tomb of Prince Yue Wumu), in Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, 4b-5a; pp. 216-217.

273 Feng Pei, Yue miao zhi lüe, 1.2a-b; 41-44 (citing the “Old Zhonglie Temple Gazetteer”); 63-72. Ding Yazheng, “Hangzhou Yue Fei mu miao”, pp. 363-4.
A surer existence for the temple came early in the Ming when it was restored, as part of the founding emperor’s program to rectify the Sacrificial Statutes (zheng sidian) discussed above. In 1371, rites officials reported to the throne that Yue Fei was a famous Song general that had been wrongly put to death, and so it was fitting for him to be included in the Sidian as a model of loyalty, filial piety and virtue. They proposed that he be called “Junior Guardian of the Song, Prince Wumu of the domain of E” (Song shaobao E guo Wumu wang) and that every year on the twenty-ninth day of the twelfth month, the anniversary of his death, offerings be made at his tomb. This was the beginning of official commemoration of Yue Fei at the Hangzhou site in the Ming.

By the Tianshun reign (1457-1464), the site had fallen into disrepair, as noted by Hangzhou’s new vice-prefect Ma Wei, who acted to elevate the shrine within the politico-ritual system and also to restore the physical site and to expand its popular meanings. Ma’s actions may be seen as part of wider efforts to build up the Yue Fei cult at a time of increased threats from the north following the disastrous Tumu Incident of 1449. In a memorial to the throne, Ma compared the Hangzhou site with the shrine to Yue Fei at Yue’s birthplace Tangyin County in Zhangde Prefecture, Henan. He observed from his visit to Tangyin that the temple there had been granted an imperial plaque and ritual text as well as regular spring and autumn offerings. Ma sought equal state recognition for the Hangzhou shrine, arguing for its importance as the burial place of Yue Fei. The request was approved by the court which granted a plaque bearing a new name of “Zhonglie ci” (Loyal and Brilliant Shrine) and an imperial offering text. Rituals for the anniversary of Yue’s birth were also replaced with the more regular spring and autumn offerings in accordance with the ritual model of the Sacrificial Statutes (Sidian). This new ritual status was important because it made the care of the shrine the responsibility of local administrators.274

Ma Wei also carried out repairs and extensions to the buildings at the site, paying for the expenses with his own official salary. Moreover, Ma took the first step in expanding popular representations of the Yue Fei story at the site. Ma planted symbolic meaning by taking a cypress tree, splitting its trunk into two and planting it in front of the

274 Feng Pei, Yue miao zhi lüe, pp. 76-77; 116-125.
tomb, naming it the “corpse-splitting cypress” (*fen shi gui*). The word for cypress (*gui*) was Song Chancellor Qin Gui’s given name, and so the riven tree represented Qin, who was blamed for Yue Fei’s death.\(^{275}\) As local writer Lang Ying put it, the tree was “intended to represent the treacherous [Qin] Gui torn apart, in order to avenge the death of Yue Fei.”\(^{276}\) The cypress was the first of several physical additions to the site that expanded the Yue Fei legend in the popular imagination. All came to be depicted in the illustration of the site in Yang Erzeng’s guidebook *Hainei qi guan* (Figure 7), which vividly likens the cypress/Qin Gui being split to “Lord Shang being pulled apart by chariots”.\(^{277}\)

Not only resident administrators, but also regional and metropolitan officials, and even eunuchs, contributed towards the construction of the Yue Fei site. In 1502, Grand Defender Eunuch Mai Xiu oversaw its renovation, which included the rebuilding of one of its main buildings. Moreover, Mai had two stelae erected that were a major addition to the cultural repertoire of Yue Fei’s commemoration. The subject of the stelae was two famous poems ascribed to Yue Fei himself: “Seeing off Zhang Ziyan going north on a campaign” (*Song Zhang Ziyan bei fa*) and “River full of crimson” (*Man jiang hong*). Upon reading “River full of crimson”, Mai was reportedly so moved by Yue Fei’s story and his steadfast spirit that he had the poem carved in stone. The other poem had already been carved onto a stele by a local scholar and so Mai, with the support of other ranking regional officials, had the pair of stelae placed at the site. According to Zhao Kuan, the Zhejiang education official who wrote a record to mark the occasion, the pair of poems illustrated not only Yue Fei’s virtue and heroism, but also his literary talents, which had theretofore been unduly neglected.\(^{278}\) Scholars have questioned the literary abilities of Yue Fei and the authenticity of poems attributed to him – especially “River full of crimson” with its memorable lines about Yue Fei’s desire to eat the flesh and drink the

\(^{275}\) Feng Pei, *Yue miao zhi lüe*, 46-47.

\(^{276}\) Lang Ying, *Qi xiu lei gao*, juan 45, p. 656. Zhang Dai also noted this symbolic punishment of Qin Gui, Zhang Dai, *Xihu meng xun*, pp. 52-53.

\(^{277}\) Yang Erzeng, *Hainei qi guan*, juan 3, 4b-5a, 12a. The reference is to Shang Yang (390-338 BCE), the Legalist philosopher and statesman of the kingdom of Qin in the Warring States period.

\(^{278}\) Feng Pei, *Yue miao zhi lüe*, 44, 491-494; Zhao Kuan, “Ke Man jiang hong ci bei ji” (Record on the “River full of crimson” stele), in Xu Jie, *Yue ji*, 261; 35a-36a.
blood of the Jurchen – but, thanks to the efforts of Eunuch Mai and others, the portrayal of Yue Fei as a Confucian literatus-general has loomed large in the popular imagination. Although the pair of stele was subsequently lost and only rediscovered and set up once more in the Qing Jiaqing (1796-1820) period, this image of Yue Fei has endured since Ming times.279

Just several years later, in 1509, further work was carried out at the site, again led by a eunuch. Liu Jing, head of the Directorate of Palace Eunuchs (nei guan jian tai jian), was serving as grand defender (zhen shou) of Zhejiang when, during a visit to the shrine, he noticed there were already signs of damage and the images were beginning to fade, despite the recent efforts of Mai Xiu. Accordingly Liu donated his official salary and in concert with regional inspectors Shi Jian, Chen Dingji, and Pan Nie, and with the support of all the prefectural and county office holders, they carried out a restoration and also erected a stone ceremonial arch bearing the new name of Jingzhong Shrine.

In addition to demonstrating the need for regular maintenance and the cooperation of different groups, the record commemorating this episode in the site’s history also shows how state prescriptions for inclusion of figures in the Sacrificial Statutes (discussed above) were followed on the ground.280 The record’s author was Wang Hua (js 1481), scion of the great calligrapher Wang Xizhi (303-361) and father of the famous Ming philosopher statesman Wang Shouren. Wang Hua was a prominent court scholar who rose to the position of Nanjing Minister of Rites.281 Probably because of his expertise in ritual matters, his record provided a detailed case for Yue Fei’s inclusion in the Sidian. Wang begins his record by stating that an individual should receive regular ritual offerings in accord with the Sidian if he meets any one of four criteria: 1) he is a model for the people; 2) he dies in service to the state; 3) he brings stability to the state; or 4) he guards the state against major threats and calamities. According to Wang, Yue Fei was exceptional because he met all four of these requirements. Wang then goes on to

279 Feng Pei, Yue miao zhi lüe, 61-62; 1.12a-b, citing the Jiu miao zhi. For a consideration of the attribution of “River full of crimson” to Yue Fei, see James Liu, “Yueh Fei”.
280 Wang Hua, “Chong xiu Zhonglie miao ji” (Record on the renovation of the Zhonglie Temple), Feng Pei, Yue miao zhi lüe, 502-508; 24b-27b.
281 Wang also contributed to the Veritable Records (shilu) of the Xianzong Emperor and the Da Ming hui dian (Collected Statutes of the Great Ming).
substantiate his case for Yue Fei by providing illustrations of Yue’s qualities as a model general who fought loyally and successfully to defend the Song state. According to Wang, not only history but also public opinion (*gonglun*) affirmed Yue Fei’s case for commemoration in the official ritual system.

Just as the official status of the Yue Fei cult was affirmed, so were popular representations of his legend expanded at the site in the sixteenth century. The history of the site grew to engage visitors with the story and message of Yue Fei *in situ* and even to act in ways that enforced that message. Qin Gui, the villain of the piece who had earlier been symbolized by a split cypress tree, was again represented at the site. In 1513 Military Commissioner (*du zhihui*) Li Long had three bronze statues made of Qin Gui, his wife Ms. Wang, and his accomplice Moqi Xie.
In the popular telling of the story these three, together with the minister Zhang Jun (of whom a fourth statue was added during the Wanli period) were held responsible for Yue Fei’s death. Their statues were all cast in a kneeling posture to indicate their crimes and to punish them posthumously.\(^{282}\) (Figure 8 shows today’s statues at the site.) The statues came to serve as a focus for anger at the injustice done to Yue Fei. As noted in the late Ming guidebook *Hainei qi guan* “no visitor does not grind his teeth and strike [at the statues] to vent their anger for the hero” – a comment that may be read as much an enjoinder as a description of popular engagement with the site.\(^{283}\)

Indeed many people did strike at the statues, resulting in their periodic destruction and need for replacement. The famous Hangzhou Buddhist master Yunqi Zhuhong (1535-1615) recorded a time when the statues disappeared. He wondered whether they had been destroyed in a working out of divine retribution for the quartet’s crimes, and also suggested that if they had had not yet been punished enough, then new statues ought to be cast. Despite his position as a Buddhist leader (he restored Yunqi Monastery and led a lay Buddhist movement), Zhuhong may be considered representative of popular views about the Yue Fei legend. He recalled a conversation that he once had as a child with a man named Qiu. Qiu suggested to the young Zhuhong that given the situation of the Song at the time of Yue Fei, it was impossible not to sue for peace, and so Qin Gui was not to be blamed. The young Zhuhong disagreed, remembering Yue Fei’s military prowess and victories and the fear he inspired in the Jurchen general Wuzhu. Zhuhong was incensed and held that Qiu must have been the same kind of person as Qin Gui to make such a shameful suggestion – accordingly he felt a deep hatred for them both.\(^{284}\)

Zhang Dai also wrote about popular aggression directed at the statues that led to their destruction not long after they were installed. When assistant surveillance commissioner Fan Lai replaced them with iron statues in the Wanli period, visitors simply hammered at them more wildly, knocking off their heads. According to Zhang, an official ventured that local people and visitors may have been more concerned for the

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\(^{282}\) Feng Pei, *Yue miao zhi lüe*, 1.4b-1.5a; 46-47.


\(^{284}\) Yunqi Zhuhong, *Zhidao lu* (Record of the Straight Path), 14b-15a in *Lianchi dashi quanji*, Vol. 4. For a study of Zhuhong’s life and work, see Yü Chün-fang’s *The Renewal of Buddhism in China*. 
preservation of the statues of Qin Gui and Moqi Xie than that of Yue Fei himself, given that the statues of Qin and his associates were made of metal, while Yue’s statue was only moulded in clay.\textsuperscript{285} Certainly the four statues of Qin Gui and his accomplices – pictured prominently in the \textit{Hainei qi guan} illustration of the site, in front of the main shrine and amid the visitors (Figure 7) – came to hold a central place both at the site and in the popular rendering of the Yue Fei story. At the site the statues of the quartet enriched the history of Yue Fei and even enabled latter-day loyalists to vent their anger by participating in their punishment.

The enlargement of the history of Yue Fei’s Hangzhou site was not only concerned with destruction. The Jiajing period (1522-1566) saw an addition to the site that was both a response to an earlier addition and an expansion of the Yue Fei legend. In the spring of 1535 Zhejiang Regional Inspector Zhang Jing visited Yue Fei’s shrine accompanied by local officials and gentry. The pair of stelae inscribed with Yue Fei’s poems, which Eunuch Mai Xiu had set up over thirty years earlier, had their effect. For upon reading them and seeing the image of Yue Fei, Zhang was moved to ponder Yue Fei’s life and to reflect on the story that Yue Fei had the four words “jin zhong bao guo” (requit the state to the extremes of loyalty) tattooed on his back as a constant reminder of his loyalty to the Song. Zhang proposed to the Provincial Administrator Ren Zhong, and Fan Lu, and Provincial Surveillance Commissioner Li Songxiang that the words be carved in stone to remind all who visited the site of Yue Fei’s exceptional loyalty. All three agreed whereupon Zhang asked Vice Commissioner Hong Zhu to write out the words and Assistant Education Intendant (tixue qian shi) Xu Jie to record the event.\textsuperscript{286}

The four large characters all over five square chi in size, were placed prominently in front of the split cypress tree representing Qin Gui.\textsuperscript{287} These famous four words, which became immortalized in the popular Yue Fei legend, also materialized in another form at the site: on a bronze wine cup. Created and engraved by Yue’s grandson Yue Ke, the cup

\textsuperscript{285} The official was named Ni Yuanlu. Zhang Dai,\textit{ Xihu meng xun}, p. 52.

\textsuperscript{286} In his text, Xu Jie discusses Yue Fei’s attributes and achievements and concludes that of all figures in history only Zhuge Liang was Yue Fei’s peer. Xu Jie, “Ke jin zhong bao guo bei ji” (Record on the carving of the “requiting the state to the utmost loyalty” stele), in Xu Jie,\textit{ Yue ji}, 262-263; 37a-39b; Feng Pei,\textit{ Yue miao zhi lüe} 498-502; \textit{Hangzhou fu zhi}, 1.4b-1.5a; 46-47.

\textsuperscript{287} Yang Erzeng, \textit{Hainei qi guan}, juan 3, 12a.
was used in family offerings to Yue Fei but disappeared in the fall of the Song. It was not found until the Ming Wanli period when it was returned to the shrine at West Lake. By the Qing Jiaqing period it was one of the few surviving Song period objects housed at the site that helped to evoke the memory of Yue Fei, so that ‘even lowly beggars and kitchen ladies could not but be inspired with admiration when passing by and seeing it’.

These four words were to inspire military success and a renovation of the site later in the Jiajing reign. At the time pirates and bandits were raiding Zhejiang and penetrating deep into the province. In 1554 Attendant Censor Hu Zongxian was appointed regional inspector of Zhejiang and given the powers of grand coordinator of military affairs to subdue the marauders. As soon as he arrived in Hangzhou, Hu paid a visit to Yue Fei’s shrine where he formulated his plans before setting forth to combat the bandits, rousing his troops with Yue Fei’s “spirit of requiting the state to the extremes of loyalty” (jin zhong bao guo zhi xin) of which he had been reminded by the recently added four-character inscription. Subsequently Hu defeated the pirates, capturing their leaders and presenting them to the throne. On his victorious return, Hu again visited Yue Fei’s shrine. Seeing its state of disrepair, he ordered the local officials to double their efforts to renovate it, for which he donated his own official salary. The front hall and the rear chambers were redecorated and in front of the hall an ornate building of four spans was added for ritual offerings. Images of Yue Fei in the corridors had peeled off so Hu ordered craftsmen to paint them anew. The renovations began at the end of 1558 and were completed by the fourth month of the following year. Hangzhou Prefect Chen Ke asked a certain Jin Lu to compose a record to commemorate Hu’s achievements in pacifying the seas and also his efforts in renovating Yue Fei’s shrine. As Jin noted, Yue Fei’s spirit was still present at his Hangzhou tomb and strengthened Hu Zongxian in his victories over the pirates.

Despite its formal ritual status and the broad attention it received from officials and the wider populace, the status of the site of Yue Fei’s Hangzhou shrine and tomb was

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288 Feng Pei, Yue miao zhi lüe, 54-63, (8b-13a).
289 Jin Lu, “Chong xiu E guo Wumu wang ci ji” (Record on the renovation of the shrine of Prince Wumu of the domain of E), Feng Pei, Yue miao zhi lüe 508-512; 27b-29b. Hu Zongxian’s victory is recorded in Chen Shan, Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi, juan 7, pp. 536-537.
by no means guaranteed. Competition over land had become especially fierce in Jiangnan by the Wanli era when almost any site could be subject to the predations of the locally powerful. Land was valuable and needed to be protected. This situation was probably one factor behind the actions of the eunuch Sun Long to safeguard the site. In the Wanli era, Sun, who held the important post of Director of Ceremonial, donated funds to buy up private residences and land to open up a way from the shrine to the edge of West Lake. This move secured and enlarged the site and gave it a grander appearance.\footnote{290}

There is evidence of other efforts to protect the site. For the ninth year of the Wanli reign, 1581, the gazetteer records detailed figures for the land registered as the property of the Yue Fei Temple in Hangzhou.\footnote{291} The information is for forty separate plots of land registered under four categories (cultivated land, uncultivated land, hill, and marsh) located in various wards of Qiantang and Renhe counties.\footnote{292} The size of each plot is given with precision – down to the very last hu (one hundred thousand hu making one mu, which was about one third of an acre). One reason for recording the land in such precise detail was for taxation. The founding emperor had mandated that a full census be taken once a decade and one was due in 1582.\footnote{293} Yue Fei’s Hangzhou temple and tomb seem to have been granted exemption from most taxes since the Ming Hongwu reign when Yue Fei was first included in the state ritual system. But accurate registration of land was still important for protection against encroachment, as clear from three Qing steles (two from the Kangxi period and one from the Qianlong period) tellingly called “prohibition steles” (jin bei).\footnote{294} The 1662 stele details grants of land and their

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291 Feng Pei, Yue miao zhi lüe, 126-141. Also given are a parallel set of figures for the Qing period of uncertain date.

292 The total of forty plots are listed by wards (tu) of the county and each plot is further identified by section, designated by a different Chinese graph (zi) and individual plot number (hao). For the place of the ward in Ming subcounty administration see Brook, The Chinese State, pp. 30-31.

293 While this requirement had long been neglected, fiscal changes that culminated with the Single Whip reforms of the 1570s necessitated the accurate measuring of land that had previously been entered into tax registers time and again by copying existing and inaccurate figures. Diligent administrators committed to Confucian statecraft and skilled in measurement and cartography might even draw up new maps of all lands registered to aid with their work. Brook, The Chinese State, p. 44 ff.

294 Feng Pei, Yue miao zhi lüe, 141-145.
measurements in order to assert the temple’s possession of them and so to protect them against encroachment, or “neighbours’ disturbances”. Land granted by edict was to be checked on by regional and prefectural offices. Both this and the second Kangxi era stele dated to 1718 noted Yue family involvement to protect the site. In the second case, a group of Yue Fei’s descendants sought reaffirmation of the shrine’s properties and tax-free status which they traced back to the Ming Hongwu period. Evidently there were real threats to the security of the site’s land.

While there was concern to protect the shrine’s land, the late Ming also saw the further expansion of both the site and the legend. As discussed above, the figures of Qin Gui and his associates had been added earlier in the history of the site. Members of Yue Fei’s family, his staff officers and other individuals associated with him came later. First to be added was a shrine to Yue Yun, son of Yue Fei, completed by 1608. Li Yangxian, author of the text commemorating the new shrine, explained that the lives of both Yue Fei and Yue Yun were intertwined with the fate of the Song dynasty. Like his father, Yue Yun also gave great service on the battlefield in defence of the Song, yet his efforts had been underestimated – even by his father. Ultimately, he unjustly met his death together with his father. While Yue Fei’s contributions had been recognised and honoured, above all with the shrine and ritual offerings, Yue Yun had no offerings especially dedicated to him. Deeming the appended rituals at Yue Fei’s shrine to be insufficient to honour the younger Yue, Gao Yingke, a native of Renhe County, requested a passing commissioner named Hu to address the matter. As a result, funds were raised from local people and a shrine dedicated to Yue Yun was established to the right of Yue Fei’s temple. A statue of Yue Yun was erected within and his son Yue Ke, who had played a key role in the initial establishing of the Yue Fei site, was also honoured there. It was finely decorated and adorned with a plaque bearing its name Zhong Xiao ci (Loyalty and Filial Piety Shrine).

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295 Li Yangxian, “Jizhong hou ci bei ji” (Record on the stele of the shrine to Marquis Jizhong), Feng Pei, Yue miao zhi lüe, 515-520; 31a-33b. Zhang Dai also wrote of Yue Yun’s feats – especially on the battlefield. Zhang also noted that the pair of iron mallets that became Yue’s trademark weapons had survived. Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, pp. 52-53.
Gao Yingke’s work at the Yue Fei site did not stop there. Some twenty years later in 1624, he sought the patronage of another imperial commissioner for a project that saw the addition of five shrines. Fu Zonglong of Kuocang was inspecting affairs in Jiangnan – his brief including the repair of dilapidated sites – when he passed by Gushan and saw the poor state of Yue Fei’s temple. He gave funds to renovate it and approved Gao Yingke’s suggestion to build an additional five shrines: Qizhong ci (Establishing Loyalty Shrine), which was dedicated to Yue Fei’s parents, daughter Yinping and grandson Yue Ke; Jizhong ci, which was to Yue’s eldest son Yue Yun and his wife, and had his four other sons and their wives appended; Yizhong ci (Defending Loyalty Shrine) to Shi Quan who had attempted to assassinate Qin Gui, Liu Yunsheng who spoke out for Yue Fei, and Wei Shun who saved Yue Fei’s body; and Liufang ting (Lingering Fragrance Pavilion), dedicated to ten other figures associated with Yue Fei.296

In this way, local scholars and the wider populace continued to expand the site of Yue Fei through the end of the Ming with the approval and support of officials. Just as the physical site was expanded, so did the history of Yue Fei grow to incorporate more of the figures involved in his life and legend.

2.4.2 The Shrine and Tomb of Yu Qian in Hangzhou

The history of the establishment and expansion of the Hangzhou shrine and tomb of Yu Qian paralleled that of Yue Fei’s site in numerous ways. Similar to Yue, Yu had been executed for disloyalty, but subsequently came to remembered as a loyal official who did his utmost to safeguard the state. After he was posthumously rehabilitated, a shrine was established to him in Hangzhou and he came to be included in the official ritual system. However, despite its official status, it was only through the many efforts of various family members, officials, and local people that Yu Qian’s shrine was maintained and expanded.

Like Yue Fei, Yu Qian garnered a national reputation and he was also remembered in various places with which he was associated, although he did not have multiple shrines

296 It seems that this shrine replaced the Zhongxiao ci so recently built also at Gao’s suggestion. The ten figures were: Zhao Shiniao, Han Shizhong, He Chou, Zhou Sanwei, Xue Renfu, Li Ruopu, He Yanyou, Fan Chengzhi, Cheng Hongtu, and Shi Hao. Shen Que “Zhonglie miao zeng jian wu ci ji” (Record on the building of five new shrines at the Zhonglie Temple), Feng Pei, Yue miao zhi lüe, 520-524; 33b-35b; Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, 12a.
dedicated to him as did Yue Fei. In Shanxi and Henan, where he served as the first grand coordinator between 1430 and 1446, Yu received offerings in the Shrine to Celebrated Officials (ming huan ci) that commemorated former administrators who had served ably in the locality.\textsuperscript{297} Yu Qian’s greatest presence, however, was in his native Hangzhou. There he was remembered at the Shrine Honouring the Virtuous (Jingde ci) in the Qiantang County seat alongside Yue Fei and a collection of eighty worthies including recluses, Confucian scholars, and officials of all ranks.\textsuperscript{298} Yu Qian’s main presence in Hangzhou was at Three Platforms Hill (Santai shan) on the southwest edge of West Lake. That was the site of Yu’s tomb and the main shrine devoted to him. Prior to the establishment of that shrine, Yu Qian’s former home in the city had also been converted to a shrine to him.

Following the coup that saw Yingzong return to the throne as the Tianshun emperor in 1457, Yu Qian was executed for not seeking that emperor’s release after he had been captured at Tumu in 1449, and for his role in establishing the Jingtai interregnum. After the storm at court calmed down, Yu was quietly buried by his adopted son Yu Kang at the family plot at Three Platforms Hill. However, it was not until the subsequent Chenghua reign (1465-1488) of Yingzong’s son, Zhu Jianshen (1447-1487), that Yu Qian’s name was cleared and his son Yu Mian and other associates were released from prison.

Soon afterwards Yu Mian sent up a memorial seeking redress for his father. Asserting that Yu Qian had served the Ming with devotion and had been put to death unjustly, the younger Yu requested that his father be granted a posthumous title and have spring and autumn sacrifices established for him on the model of Yue Fei.\textsuperscript{299} Freshly occupying the throne, the Chenghua emperor obliged and restored all of Yu Qian’s

\textsuperscript{297} The primary Henan shrine where Yu Qian was commemorated was in Kaifeng. The people of the two provinces even put up portraits of Yu in their homes and made food and drink offerings to him there. Ni Yue, “Taifu Zhongsu Yu gong shendao bei”, Ding Bing, \textit{Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu}, 7120 (13b). Yu Qian’s record of accomplishments as grand coordinator of Henan and Shanxi included work on the Yellow River, building roads, and organizing local granaries for famine relief. See Des Forges, \textit{Cultural Centrality}, pp. 22-23.

\textsuperscript{298} Nie Xintang, \textit{Wanli Qiantang xian zhi}, 26b. This shrine and those dedicated to celebrated officials were part of the ‘classical core’ of local shrines in the official Confucian cult. Taylor, “Official Altars” p. 101.

\textsuperscript{299} Ding Bing, \textit{Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu}, 1b-2b, 7114-7115.
positions and titles and also had his former Beijing residence transformed into a Shrine to the Loyal (Zhongjie ci). Moreover, in the twelfth month of 1466, he sent an agent (xingren) by the name of Ma Xuan to make an offering at Yu Qian’s tomb in Hangzhou and bestowed an edict to mark the occasion. In that text, the emperor praised Yu Qian’s service to the Ming, above all for his vital role of safeguarding the state altars (sheji) – an issue that became central to all debates about his historical significance and the morals of his ministerial conduct as noted above – and asserted that Yu Qian would long be remembered for his loyalty and the exemplary life he led.\(^{300}\) This formally marked the rehabilitation of Yu Qian and amounted to a revision of the official position on Yu by the new emperor who “cherished [Yu’s] loyalty in his heart” (lianzhong) and was effectively overturning his father’s judgment, but who filially claimed that “his late majesty knew of [Yu’s] innocence”.

The emperor’s act came to be remembered in popular accounts of Yu Qian including those recorded by Zhang Dai and in Yang Erzeng’s guidebook to Hangzhou.\(^{301}\) It also prompted the establishment of the first official shrine to Yu Qian in Hangzhou as recounted in Ni Yue’s (1444-1501) “Taifu Zhongsu Yu gong shendao bei” (Stele at the Spirit Way of the Grand Mentor Lord Yu, the Loyal and Solemn).\(^{302}\) This text, inscribed on a rock and erected on site in 1494, details the history of Yu Qian’s shrine from its inception to the time of Ni’s writing.\(^{303}\) It records that the elders of Hangzhou were so moved by the Chenghua emperor’s words that they made a request to the Regional Inspector (xun’an jiancha yushi) Liu Kui to convert the former residence of Yu Qian in the city into a shrine and to name it Cherishing Loyalty Shrine (Lianzhong ci) after the words the emperor had used in the edict.\(^{304}\) It is notable that this initial shrine was

\(^{300}\) “Ming Xianzong yu ji wen” (Imperial offering text from Ming Emperor Xianzong), Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7060, 10b-11a.

\(^{301}\) Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, p. 225; Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, 20a; 247.

\(^{302}\) Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7114-7121.

\(^{303}\) It was regarded by the compilers of the Siku quan shu as the most reliable for the site’s early history. Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao entry for Yu Zhongsu ji shisan juan (Collected Writings of Yu Zhongsu), 13 juan, cited in Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu.

\(^{304}\) Ni Yue, “Taifu Zhongsu Yu gong shendao bei”, Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7114, 1a-b. Most writers hold that Yu’s former residence was in Taiping ward, but Tian Rucheng gives Heqing ward while Wei Yuan has it as Zhongxiao ward.
established at the initiative of the local people in response to an imperial action, and that it was approved by a senior regional official. At this early stage of the commemoration of Yu Qian, local gentry (jin shen) also contributed funds. The site became a focus for remembering Yu Qian, and local people made offerings to him there at set times in the ritual calendar.

But the building of the main shrine to Yu Qian by his tomb at Three Platforms Hill near West Lake did not come until the early Hongzhi reign (1488-1505) more than twenty years later. Again Yu Mian played a key role in the process. In 1489, shortly after retiring from his position as Prefect of Yingtian, Yu Mian memorialised the throne, expressing his concern that the Cherishing Loyalty Shrine was too small and cramped and moreover, situated in the city, it was too far from the Yu Family’s ancestral burial ground at Three Platforms Hill. Yu Mian was also concerned with the fact that there were no more direct descendants to keep Yu Qian’s memory alive since Yu Mian was Yu Qian’s only son, and remained without an heir at the age of sixty-seven. Thus Yu Mian sought a new shrine for his father by the tomb itself and an arrangement to be made for its upkeep. In addition, he requested that a posthumous title be granted to reflect his father’s service to the state.

Yu Mian’s petition was supported by other officials. In 1490 Assistant Instructor (xundao) Chu Yan memorialised concerning Yu Qian’s achievements stating that it was fitting to bestow a posthumous title and to establish a shrine to him. Supervising Secretary of Rites (li ke jishizhong) Sun Ru declared that virtuous men of integrity such as Zhuge Liang, Zhang Xun, and Wen Tianxiang of earlier times, as well as more recent figures including Li Shimian, Liu Qiu, and Yu Qian deserved to have ritual offerings made to them and were fitting exemplars for posterity. Thus they recommended the approval of Yu Mian’s request. The Hongzhi Emperor granted the request and bestowed on Yu Qian several posthumous titles including the honorific “Solemn and Grieved” (su min). He ordered resident officials (you si) to establish a shrine at Three Platforms Hill at the Yu Family burial site and also bestowed a plaque bearing the words “Honouring

305 Kangxi Qiantang xian zhi, in Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7058.
306 Qianlong Hangzhou fu zhi, cited in Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7058.
307 Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 5b-17b 7097-7103; Ni Yue, “Taifu Zhongsu Yu gong shendao bei”, Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7114-7121.
Merit” (jing gong) which also became the name of the shrine itself. Local officials were to conduct spring and autumn offerings to him.308

Upon completion of the building project, Yu Mian invited Zhang Ning, Prefect of Dingzhou, to compose a record for the occasion. Zhang’s “Stele Record of the Shrine for Honouring Merit” (Jing gong ci bei ji) records the posthumous titles conferred on Yu Qian, and the vernal and autumnal rites established at the shrine in which the local prefectural and county officials participated. The bulk of the text relates Yu Qian’s actions around the Tumu Crisis and the court intrigues of the Jiajing period, praising him for his actions that saved the dynasty. Zhang declared that Yu Qian ought to be remembered for his loyal service to the state just as were the Tang chancellor Chu Suiliang (597-658) and Yue Fei, both of whom have ritual offerings dedicated to them in Hangzhou. The stele remains standing at the site of Yu Qian’s shrine today.309

Stone stelae were solid testaments to the lives and accomplishments of the worthies they commemorated. More than stylized laudatory texts, they often contained rich biographical and historical information concerning their subjects. Moreover, placed prominently to present a particular view of the past for all to see, they were centrepieces of a history built on a consensus between members of the wider community in which they were situated. Yu Mian took the lead in pushing for a positive official appraisal of his father, but he could not achieve this alone; he required wider support in officialdom and ultimately the emperor’s approval. Yu Mian’s success led to the building of the official site in Hangzhou. But for the site to be enduring, it also had to have relevance in the locality and support from multiple parties. On the reverse of the Ni Yue stele, there is another inscription (bei yin) by Yu Mian giving details of the stele’s erection, dated to Hongzhi 7 (1494), the eighth month, 28th day. Heading the list are the titles and names of ten men with official status, from a retired vice president of rites and a vice commissioner of the Zhejiang provincial administration commission to Hangzhou’s prefect and

308 Ni Yue, “Taifu Zhongsu Yu gong shendao bei”, Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7114-7121. The other titles were Te jin guang lu dafu (Specially Promoted Grand Master for Glorious Happiness), Chu guo (Pillar of the State), and Tai fu (Grand Mentor).
309 Zhang Ning, “Jinggong ci bei ji”, Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7122-7123, 16a-18a. Chu Suiliang was known as an able statesmen who served Tang emperors Taizong and Gaozong, but was dismissed for his opposition to Gaozong’s elevation of his father’s former concubine, who later became Empress Wu.
magistrates and also local education officials and government students. Such a list of supporters from the ranks of officialdom was necessary for any commemoration sanctioned by the state.

In addition, however, Yu declares that the establishment of his father’s tomb, spirit way, and stele was possible thanks to the support of many gentlemen of the prefecture, county, and town, the local people, relatives, and old friends. He states that they contributed from their official salaries or private funds, or gave of their time and effort and skills. Yu could not have brought about the commemoration of his father without the help of others, a fact he explicitly acknowledges and so expresses his gratitude to all who supported the effort, voicing the hope that his father may stimulate all posterity by his example. Although most of the figures who supported the project may only survive as inscribed names (or even be absorbed into nameless groups to whom Yu Mian extended a nod), Yu Mian’s inscription reveals that the preservation of Yu Qian’s memory at his shrine was a matter of concern to members of the wider community; it was not simply a family affair or the court’s rehabilitation of a martyred minister.310

Despite this widespread support for Yu Qian’s site, its long-term upkeep was a constant challenge, especially as there was no systematic arrangement for it. When it was first built, the shrine was said to be under the watch of Yu Qian’s grandson, Yu Yunzhong, who was a military officer in Hangzhou at the time. But the site fell into disrepair after only a few decades and it took the attention of a regional official passing by to bring about its reconstruction. In 1537 (Jiajing 16) Zhejiang Regional Inspector (xun’an yushi) Zhou Ruyuan visited the site to make offerings to Yu Qian. He lamented its sorry state saying: “The shrine is like the Junior Guardian [Yu Qian] himself, how can I not renovate it?” Accordingly he instructed Qiantang Magistrate Li Nian to repair it.

Following this, regional inspectors Fu Fengxiang, Yan Ling, Wang Shen, and salt-control censor (xunyan yushi) Gao Feng helped with its restoration in turn. Over a period of five years the site was wholly repaired, renovated and enlarged to include an annex to the shrine to provide for offerings to Yu Qian’s parents. In addition, the Lianzhong Shrine at Yu Qian’s former residence was also restored by local officials. A commemorative stele was erected in 1541 by a collection of regional and local officials.\(^{311}\)

Sporadic attention was not enough, however; occasional devotion could not guarantee a shrine’s longevity. One means to improve further the chances for a site’s maintenance was an endowment of land. Jiang Xiao (1482-1553), a vice minister of works and Hangzhou native son, made this very point in a record commemorating an

\(^{311}\) Zhang Ao, “Chongxiu Jinggong ci ji” (Record on restoring the Jinggong Shrine), Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7123-7124, 18a-21a.
endowment of land of 1548. According to Jiang, permanent property in the form of land was the only means to safeguard regular ritual offerings. In this case the ritual fields were donated by a certain Master Li. It is not clear who exactly Master Li was, nor whether he had any strong connection with Yu Qian or Hangzhou, but Jiang states that Li gave the land because he deemed Yu Qian’s merit to be very great. Li was clearly a man of some influence as he had the assistant prefect (tongpan) Liu Xizhao take care of the matter. Liu, in turn, carried out the business in concert with Hangzhou prefect Yan Kuan. Also involved was Yu Qian’s heir Yu Yifang who was a county student at the time. Only a healthy endowment, Jiang declares, can provide for ritual offerings in full accordance with the Sidian and building repairs when necessary. Master Li’s donation thus provided for the maintenance of the Jinggong and Lianzhong shrines to Yu Qian.312

The next episode in the rebuilding of Yu Qian’s Hangzhou shrine we learn from a memorial by the famous literatus Wang Shizhen (1528-1590). In an essay of 1569, Wang relates that in an effort to commend exemplary loyal ministers, an investigation was made to ascertain the current status of Yu Qian’s descendants and the condition of his shrine and tomb. According to the report, Yu Qian’s only son Yu Mian rose to the post of Prefect of Yingtian Prefecture before retiring without heir. His clan nephew Yu Yunzhong inherited the command of the Left Battalion of this Guard (zuo suo zhengqian hu) in the local battalion. Yu Yunzhong fathered Yu Yifang who inherited the same title and in addition was appointed Assistant Commander (zhihui qianshi). His eldest son Yu Yue died in battle. Yu Yifang rose to be appointed commander and vice prefect and then through further promotions became Assistant Regional Military Commissioner (du zhihui qianshi) of Guangdong. His second son Yu Song inherited the positions of Commander of the Front Guard of Hangzhou and Vice Prefect. Yu Song was therefore Yu Qian’s ritual heir. So although Yu Qian no longer had any direct descendants, this report confirms that his ritual line was maintained through his kin, who held a variety of official posts benefiting from their kinship to Yu Qian. Despite their existence and rank, it seems that they were in no position to maintain the shrine to their illustrious ancestor, or at least that

312 Jiang Xiao “Jinggong ci ji tian ji”, Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7134-7135, 41b-43a. Jiang points out that the Kaifeng Shrine for Protecting the People (Bimin ci), where Yu Qian was honoured, was endowed with fields to provide for its ritual requirements, but the shrine in Hangzhou was not.
they did not make it a priority. Therefore the shrine was rebuilt through the interventions of officials and local leaders unrelated to the Yu family as evident in the efforts of Zhou Ruyuan and Mr. Li.\(^{313}\) Wang Shizhen continued his record by noting the building of Yu Qian’s shrine at Qiantang County, Hangzhou, from 1490 onwards.

In 1560 the shrine underwent a restoration for which Wang Shizhen gives an unusually detailed account. Wang’s record casts light on the process of funding such work and how insufficient funds could mean that a project might not be completed, even if it had official support. The project was executed under the supervision of Supreme Provincial Military Commander (zongdu junmen) Hu. This was the same Hu Zongxian who had restored Yue Fei’s shrine in 1558, demonstrating that officials regarded the place of Yu Qian and Yue Fei in the landscape of Hangzhou to be similarly important. The total costs for work and materials had been estimated at four hundred seventy-nine taels, five fen and seven li. Particularly revealing is what Wang tells us about how the project was to be funded. For the first two hundred taels were collected as a penalty – perhaps the commutation of a more painful physical infliction – imposed upon a man by the name of Shen Wenyan. This sum was put forward initially to cover the cost of labour and materials for repairing Yu’s grave. In a curious comment we are told that a reassessment of the project found that a merchant had overcharged by the amount of eighty-one liang, four qian, eight fen and five li, which fortunately had not yet been paid to him and so the sum could be subtracted from the initial budget. Still, the remaining costs of one hundred ninety-seven liang, five qian, seven fen, and two li could not be met, not even by the official purse (guan yin) and so the project ground to a halt. That was nine years before Wang wrote his report and the work was still incomplete, most of the shrine buildings were in disrepair.\(^{314}\) Wang lamented the fact that the memory of so important a figure, who saved the dynasty and was known to all in the realm, had lain in tatters for so long.

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\(^{313}\) Wang Shizhen, “Yi chu Yu Sumin gong shi hao hou xiu jiu yi xiuji ci mu gao (Draft essay on Lord Yu Sumin’s descendants repairing his shrine and tomb after he received a posthumous title), Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7110, 31a-b.

\(^{314}\) According to the findings of Qiantang clerk Yuan Rong, half of the three-span inner hall was damaged; the three-span main hall was damaged in three corners; the top part of the three-span head gate had collapsed, and one and half spans originally tagged for repair had not been renovated. The stele pavilions to the left and right had collapsed as had a twenty-five zhang length of the surrounding wall. In addition, in each of the adjoining wings and guest rooms, some beam, pillar, rafter, or other piece of wood had rotted.
He asserted that the responsibility lay with the local officials who should personally investigate the situation and make careful plans to repair the site to safeguard Yu Qian’s memory.315

While the physical site was a challenge to maintain, there was also continued concern for Yu Qian’s place in official history and commemoration in the ritual system. In 1589 Zhejiang’s highest-ranking administrator, Grand Coordinator (xunfu) Fu Mengchun, sent up a memorial requesting that Yu Qian’s honorific title of “Solemn and Grieved” (su min) be changed on the grounds that the word “Solemn” did not sufficiently honour Yu’s achievements.316 Fu sought to change the honorific to “Loyal and Grieved” (zhong min) so that “the name might match reality and be sufficient to comfort [Yu’s] loyal soul amid the Nine Springs, to manifest the past and to exhort those in the future with a model for ten thousand generations.” Zhang Han, a grand secretary and Hangzhou native, supported Fu Mengchun’s proposal. A change was made, but not to the title favoured by Fu and Zhang. Following a court debate the matter eventually concluded with the decision to change Yu’s title to “Loyal and Solemn” (zhong su) instead, for “it should express what he achieved; it was not necessary to mourn the way he died.”317 This decision may have reflected a continued debate over Yu Qian’s history. While Yu could be held up for loyalty, he was executed by decree of Emperor Yingzong, and so to declare that he was an aggrieved figure in the official ritual system may have cast blame on the imperial ancestor. Accordingly in the following year, 1590, the Wanli emperor deputed Fu Mengchun to make an offering at and to sweep Yu Qian’s shrine and tomb, and also to declare the change in the honorific to “Loyal and Solemn”. Like the initial rehabilitation of Yu Qian and the ritual text bestowed by the Chenghua emperor, this occasion was also popularly known, and was noted in Yang Erzeng’s guidebook.318

316 This matter was retold in unofficial histories with much colour added to it. Fu Mengchun, it was said, once happened to spend the night at Yu Qian’s shrine at Santai Hill. In his dream there he saw Yu Qian venting his misery to him, complaining that the posthumous honorific bestowed on him was not suitable and asking for a change to it.
317 Zhang Han, Song chuang meng yu, p. 130.
318 Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, 20a; 247. Not everyone attached much importance to a change of title, however. In the frank opinion of the late Ming grand secretary Ye Xianggao (1559-1627), the
For the final Ming period renovation of Yu Qian’s shrine, we have a stele record – still standing today – by the well-known literatus, Chen Jiru (1558-1639). This project seems to have been funded from the pocket of a regional official. In 1614 Yang He of Wuling visited Hangzhou while serving as salt inspector. In the manner of a decisive and activist official, he paid a visit to Yu Qian’s tomb “as soon as he got off his chariot”. There he praised Wu Zixu, Yu Qian and Yue Fei as being the tripod of Zhejiang’s outstanding men. But seeing the state of the site, he regretted with some hyperbole that “even if visitors were to stoop down in the ritual positions to conduct their solemn ceremony and follow in harmony as they made their entry in and out of the temple, how could such a small patch of ground accommodate the hundreds and thousands of spirit chariots and horses?” And so he donated his official salary to pay for the renovation and expansion of the shrine which was completed in a mere three months. Chen Jiru pointed out that there were many ancients tombs on the hills and lake, containing many whose names were no longer known. Many still remembered Yu Qian, however, and visited his shrine. Yet only Yang He gave up his official salary to repair the tomb. Certainly, part of Chen’s brief would have been to praise the commemorator as well as the commemorated. But we should not dismiss his remark, given the problems over funding such repairs on previous occasions. Inspector Yang’s sponsoring of the project was crucial, providing both official approval and financial support. Both were required for the continued existence of the physical site, which provided the focus for the official commemoration and popular remembrance of Yu Qian.

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honorific title mattered less than what people really thought. Pointing to the parallel case of Yue Fei, who continued to be thought of as Wumu (Martial and Harmonious) even after his title had been changed to Zhongwu (Loyal and Brilliant), Ye held that Yu Qian would remain a model of loyalty, regardless of his title, and that is what he should be remembered for by all who passed by his shrine, as Ye himself did. Ye Xianggao, Yu gong zou yi xu, in Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7178-7179 (5b-6a).

319 Chen Jiru, “Chong xiu Yu gong ci bei ji” (Stele record on the restoration of Lord Yu’s Shrine), Ding Bing, Yu Zhongsu gong cimu lu, 7128-7129, 28a-30b. Zhang Dai also includes the text of Chen Jiru’s record, which praises Yu Qian’s handling of the post-Tumu crisis, drawing comparisons with events in the Spring and Autumn and Song eras. Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, pp. 226-238.
2.5 Conclusion: The Expanding History of Official Sites

The shrines and tombs of Yue Fei and Yu Qian in Hangzhou were both official sites in the politico-ritual order that were established to commemorate loyal ministers. But as the preceding accounts of the sites make evident, a wide range of officials and also members of other social groups contributed to building, rebuilding, and expanding both the sites and the histories that they embodied. Family members played important roles in the establishment and continuation of both sites, but only through winning imperial recognition for their ancestors could the sites acquire an official status that demanded their upkeep. Even then, only with the sponsorship of regional officials and local officials as well as local people could the sites survive and the histories of their subjects continue to animate Hangzhou’s landscape. Moreover, on three separate occasions Yue Fei’s site also benefitted from the patronage of senior eunuchs, who may be considered agents of the emperor and thereby members of the court, if distinct from officials. And officials may sometimes also have attended to the sites for personal as much as official reasons. This seems to have been the case with grand coordinator Hu Zongxian at Yue Fei’s shrine and salt inspector Wu Ling at Yu Qian’s shrine.

Members of different groups in Ming society also engaged with the sites in diverse ways. Officials and elites built and restored the shrine buildings and safeguarded its property. They also celebrated the sites and the figures of Yue Fei and Yu Qian through writing histories and commemorative records, some of which were inscribed onto stone and erected in situ. But, especially in the case of Yue Fei’s site, less literary elements were also added that captured the popular imagination and induced people to engage with the site. This engagement could be violent, as was the case with the statues of Qin Gui and his accomplices that were installed for the purpose of being attacked and, as a consequence, were repeatedly destroyed and remade. In the illustration of the Yue Fei site in Hainei qi guan (Figure 7), the statues are placed prominently in the middle of the avenue leading to the main shrine. Also clearly marked are the “corpse-splitting cypress” and the large inscription of “requite the state with utmost loyalty” (jin zhong bao guo). A variety of visitors are depicted in the image, including men, women, and children. Some appear to be members of the scholar-gentry class, but there are also servants and
entertainers. All are visiting the site and so able to engage in their histories. Visitors to the sites might even be said to be acting out the history of Yue Fei – or rather participating in the posthumous punishment of Qin Gui. The addition of the popular elements at Yue Fei’s site reflected and contributed to the expansion of the Yue Fei legend alongside the official promotion of the Yue Fei cult. While the site of Yu Qian did not expand to the same degree, it still enjoyed widespread support from members of different groups who helped to maintain the site and construct its meanings, at a time when threats from China’s northern neighbours remained very real.

It was this openness of the sites that afforded people the possibility to engage directly with the histories of Yue Fei and Yu Qian in a way that was meaningful to them. Incorporated into the Ming state’s politico-ritual order by being mandated in the Sidian Sacrificial Statutes, the two sites came to enshrine the virtue of loyalty. But the precise meaning of that loyalty was open to interpretation. This enabled Yue Fei and Yu Qian to appeal to a broad and varied audience. And although the Ming state could not control and monopolize the meanings of loyalty inscribed on those histories, their openness and broad appeal helped to strengthen the cults of Yue Fei and Yu Qian through the Ming, and bolstered the place of both in the wider cultural imagination.

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320 Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, 4b-5a, 216-217. Of the travel writings I have read, none describes actually drawing near to the tomb, and references to it in countless poems serve mainly to evoke the life and message of Yue Fei. It is possible that there was a taboo against approaching a tomb, or that it was closed to visitors for ritual reasons. Illustrations in the Hainei qi guan seem to support this idea. The tomb of Yue Fei and that of Shao Lin at Faxiang monastery are shown fenced off from the rest of the site and no visitors are depicted at them. Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, 7b-8a; 222-223.
Chapter 3

A Buddhist Site: The (Un)making and Remaking of Lingyin Feilaifeng

By Ming times Hangzhou had long been established as a major centre of Buddhism in China. Over the centuries the city in its various incarnations had seen the building of many Buddhist establishments, giving it one of the larger concentrations of monasteries in the realm. As Tian Rucheng (jinshi 1526) asserted:

Both within the city of Hangzhou and outside it around the lake, there were 360 monasteries by the Tang period; on through the Qian family’s reign and the Song move to the south, the number increased to 480. Of all the great cities within the seas, none had more [monasteries] than this.321

A late-Ming survey of Buddhist establishments in Hangzhou, the c.1615 Wulin fan zhi (Record of Buddhist temples in Hangzhou) by Qiantang native Wu Zhijing (juren 1609), roughly corroborates this number. Wu recorded 426 monasteries in and around Hangzhou dating from the third century through the eras of monastic glory in the Wuyue (907-978) and Southern Song (1127-1279) periods. For many of these historical monasteries, however, only ruins remained by the time of Wu’s writing in the late Ming. In compiling an historical record of Hangzhou’s Buddhist institutions and the celebrated figures associated with them, Wu included every Buddhist temple, monastery, or chapel – even if it had long ceased to exist. Wu was thus composing an historical and imagined Buddhist landscape of Hangzhou rather than recording contemporary realities alone. Hangzhou’s rich history as a centre of Buddhism, which Wu carefully recorded, resonated through to his own day and contributed to its place in the cultural imagination. As the compilers of Lingyin Monastery’s gazetteer wrote:

321 Tian Rucheng, Xihu youlan zhi yu, p. 260. The Northern Song scholar-official Su Shi also gives the figure of 360 monasteries in Hangzhou. For Su, it was probably not a precise figure; rather, he meant that if one were to visit a different monastery every day, it would take more than a year to see them all. Zhou Feng, Nan Song jingcheng Hangzhou, p. 159.
It has always been the case that famous mountains and scenic places have many ancient remains. These are all places that former people observed with their eyes and attended with their spirits. But with the passage of time, the sites are destroyed, although their names still remain. When people visit they cannot but linger to imagine seeing [the former sites]. How much more the case with a famous mountain like Wulin, and a great monastery like Lingyin?

Ancient monasteries had many traces of the past (guji) whose memory the compilers of Buddhist histories sought to preserve. These historical memories complemented the physical structures on the cultural landscape to shape how people imagined and engaged with place. But a site was not created only by Buddhists. Diverse interests and meanings could run through a site that had little to do with the intentions of Buddhists. This was the case with the site examined in this chapter: Hangzhou’s famous Lingyin Monastery (Soul’s Retreat Monastery) and the adjoining rock formations of Feilaifeng (Fly Hither Peak). As with Yue Fei’s shrine discussed in the preceding chapter, this site was on the itinerary of many visitors to Hangzhou and appears among the select sights with their own illustration in Yang Erzeng’s *Hainei qi guan* (Figure 10).

Unlike the Yue Fei and Yu Qian sites, however, Lingyin Feilaifeng was not an official shrine established within the politico-ritual order. As a Buddhist institution its position in relation to the state was very different: it was subject to regulation and control rather than promotion by the state and its agents. As an institution Lingyin Feilaifeng also depended on strong leadership, which could be affected by Buddhist relations with the greater Sangha – especially within its own Chan lineage. Moreover Lingyin Feilaifeng required regular patronage from many groups within wider society for its very survival. These could include members of the court, regional and local officials, local power-holders and the greater populace.

Just as so many group interests intersected at Lingyin Feilaifeng, its history and place in the cultural imagination were also multivalent and complex. It embodied no unifying message such as the loyalty of Yue Fei and Yu Qian. The figures most

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322 *Lingyin si zhi*, juan 2, 19a-b.

323 Lingyin Monastery is pictured together with Feilaifeng and the Tianzhu monasteries. Yang Erzeng, *Hainei qi guan*, juan 3, They are introduced at the end of the first sightseeing route that leaves the city through the Qiantang Gate and goes northwest around West Lake. Yang Erzeng, *Hainei qi guan*, juan 3, 5b-6a, 10a, ff. Cf. Tian Rucheng, *Xihu youlan zhi*, juan 10, pp. 113-125.
remembered at the site included legendary Buddhist masters, scholar-poets, and a notorious monk. Memories of these figures influenced how visitors imagined the site and engaged with its history. Visitors might seek out the traces of admired figures from the past and emulate them, or be stirred to violent action to punish the heinous deeds of a person long dead.

The following paragraphs will consider the multiple images of Lingyin Feilaifeng that attracted and repelled visitors before turning to its social existence as a Buddhist institution and its physical construction and reconstruction.

3.1 The Fame and Attractions of Lingyin Feilaifeng

Of the many monasteries in Wu Zhijing’s survey Lingyin Monastery enjoys a prominent place, having one of the largest numbers of pages devoted to it. Indeed, Lingyin was included among the “five mountains” (wushan) – a grouping of prominent Chan monasteries established in the Southern Song. Lingyin was and remains one of the great monasteries of Hangzhou. Nestled in the hills a few kilometers from the northwestern edge of West Lake, it is easily reached from the main lake area, from where visitors approach it today as they did in the Ming. Lingyin Monastery owed much of its reputation to its founder Huili, the Indian monk who came to Hangzhou in the third century during the earliest phase of Buddhism in China. Even the briefest accounts of the monastery mention Huili’s role in founding it. The Huili legend explains the choice of site for Lingyin Monastery and the name of Feilaifeng. Huili reportedly saw a close

324 For instance, in the section on past Buddhist masters associated with particular monasteries, the Lingyin and Jinci monasteries have the longest accounts, being fifteen and twenty-five pages respectively. Wu Zhijing, Wulin fan zhi, juan 9.
325 Lang Ying, Qi xiu lei gao, juan 5, p. 92, Yù, “Ming Buddhism”, p. 929. The other four were: Jingshan, Tiantong, Jingci and Ayuwang – all in Jiangnan.
326 There were several great monasteries in the vicinity of Hangzhou that could rival Lingyin. Jingshan in Yuhang and Jingci Monastery on the south edge of West Lake were also among the five great Chan monasteries. In Yang Erzeng’s opinion Lingyin and Jingci, one north and the other south of West Lake and similar in scale and splendour, were the greatest of Hangzhou’s monasteries. Yang Erzeng, Hai neiqi guan, juan 3, 27b.
327 The first in a series of twelve illustrations of Lingyin in the monastery’s gazetteer presents a view from the monastery looking onto the lake. In fact, this is not really a realistic view since the monastery was situated a few kilometers from the lake. What the image does point to is Lingyin’s close association with West Lake. Lingyin si zhi, pp. 3014-3020.
resemblance between the peak next to the site and Lingjiu Peak (Vulture Peak) in India and remarked that it was as if the Indian peak had flown to China. Accordingly it was named Feilaifeng, meaning “Fly Hither Peak”. The story was subsequently embellished and a later version of the legend, dating at least to the Tang period, stated that Feilaifeng not only resembled the Indian peak, it was that peak, as proved by the presence of two monkeys that flew with the peak from India and appeared from its caves when Huili called to them in Hangzhou. Understandably there was doubt about the literal truth of this provenance, but the legend retained its place in the popular imagination and had an enduring appeal for all who visited.

Despite the otherwise shadowy figure of Huili (little is known about him and later Buddhist masters played more important roles in the institutional history of the monastery, as will be discussed below), Lingyin Monastery bathed in the light of its founder’s fame long after his death. But it was a shared light, for Huili’s reputation shone beyond Lingyin Monastery to other Buddhist establishments. Huili was actually credited with the founding of five monasteries in Hangzhou. In addition to Lingyin there were also the Lower Tianzhu, Lingshan, Lingfeng, and Yongfu monasteries. By the Ming period only the Lingyin and Lower Tianzhu monasteries were still in existence. In earlier times the Lingyin and Tianzhu monasteries may even have been part of the same monastic complex. During the Tang, they were jointly referred to as “Tianzhu Lingyin” or “Lingyin Tianzhu.” The famous Tang poet and official Bai Juyi (772-846) wrote in a poem that there was one single gate for the two monasteries, which arose from one monastery.

328 Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, 13a-14b. The Tang poet Lu Yu seems to be the earliest source of the legend. Shahar, “The Lingyin Si Monkey Disciples,” p. 213.

329 Local scholar Lang Ying ridiculed the idea. He also dismissed the belief that people carved Buddhist images into the rock in order to anchor the mountain and prevent it from flying off. Lang Ying, Qi xiu lei gao, juan 21, p. 321.

330 Wu Zhijing, Wulin fan zhi, p. 117. It is uncertain precisely which five monasteries Huili founded, partly because monasteries were known by multiple names. One alternative listing in the monastic gazetteer names four monasteries (Lingyin, Lingjiu, Lingshan, Lingfeng) but states that there were indeed five founded by Huili. Sun and Xu, Wulin fan zhi, juan 1, 1b-2a.

331 They were also paired as Bei Lingyin, Nan Tianzhu. Shahar, “The Lingyin Si Monkey Disciples,” p. 201. n 17. The Tang writer Lu Yu (733-804) referred to them thus. Shahar cites Lu’s essay quoted in Qian Yueyou, Xianchun Lin’an zhi (c. 1270).

332 “Yi shan men zuo liang shan men, liang si yuan cong yi si fen,” cited in Wu Zhijing, Wulin fan zhi, 46a. Not everyone accepted this connection. The local scholar Lang Ying questioned this association, believing
During the Southern Song’s Qingyuan period (1195-1200) it was renamed Tianzhu Lingyin monastery. While they were separate institutions by Ming times, the Lingyin and Lower Tianzhu monasteries remained closely associated through the Huili legend and their proximity to Feilaifeng and to each other.

An illustration that appears in local publisher Yang Erzeng’s guidebook, *Hainei qi guan*, pictures the two monasteries and Feilaifeng together (Figure 10). Yang’s work reveals much about the site’s position in the cultural imagination and the reasons so many visited it. As already noted, Buddhist master Huili was a lingering presence at the site. But people did not only visit because it was a famous centre of Buddhism. Lingyin Monastery was also attractive because of its position as a historical-literary site associated with famous scholars of earlier times in whose footsteps later literati visitors sought to tread. Furthermore, Feilaifeng drew the attention of visitors because of its unusual rock formations and its association with a notorious Yuan monk – reasons unrelated to the fame of the Buddhist monastery.

The account of the site in Yang’s guidebook mentions the founding by Huili and has a few lines on the monastery itself and what is to be found there. It describes an ornate prayer stone, a revolving prayer wheel, and a scripture case in the main hall. The reader is told that everybody who visits turns the wheel because by doing so one can avoid suffering in future lives. This glimpse into what late Ming visitors did at the monastery bears similarities with the actions of tourists today. But most of the section on Lingyin Feilaifeng in *Hainei qi guan* is not actually concerned with the monastery itself. The illustration of the site is rather telling. The “Illustration of Lingyin and Tianzhu” (*Lingyin Tianzhu tu*) depicts the main points of interest, and the activities of visitors (Figure 10). Lingyin Monastery appears on the right and the three Tianzhu monasteries on the left. The mountain range on which the monasteries are located stretches across the

that Bai’s poem referred not to Tianzhu Monastery in Hangzhou, but to its namesake in Tianzhou. Lang Ying, *Qi xiu lei gao*, juan 6, p. 99.


334 Yang Erzeng, *Hainei qi guan*, juan 3, 5b-6a. However, in the text Yang introduces the Tianzhu monasteries separately and on a different route. *Hainei qi guan*, juan 3, 25b-26a.

page, and Feilaifeng runs down the middle, with most of its caves pictured on the Lingyin side. The monastery is represented by a main building in an enclosed site behind Feilaifeng. Other than the monasteries themselves (including Jiqing monastery) and Feilaifeng, only a few other sights are identified by text. These include: the Northern High Peak (bei gao feng); Lion Peak (shizi feng); Daoguang Hermitage (daoguang an); and Cool Spring Pavilion (lengquan ting) outside the monastery wall and by the stream which runs along Feilaifeng.

A number of visitors are depicted. Some are looking around the monasteries, others are exploring the caves. Most visitors appear to be literati gentlemen at leisure, although there are also several servants who are at work carrying their master in a sedan chair, holding a parasol for him, or bearing his belongings while he rides in front.

Figure 10 "Lingyin Tianzhu tu" (Image of Lingyin and Tianzhu monasteries) in Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, 5b-6a; pp. 218-219.
Noticeably, there are few signs of monastic life in action. There is only one figure that appears to be a monk, accompanying a gentleman visitor and his servant. Certainly the lack of clerics has something to do with the purpose of the text – to show literati travelers what there was to see there. And for many literati visitors, the monastery may not have attracted them because it was a religious establishment per se. In the illustration at least, none of the visitors to Lingyin Monastery appears to be engaging in any act of devotion, although one figure outside the gate of Upper Tianzhu Monastery appears to be in the pose of a devotee.336

Instead, the site attracted literati visitors on account of its literary and historical allure, as well as for its natural and wondrous beauty. Marked prominently in Yang Erzeng’s illustration, the Northern High Peak and Lion Peak were well known for their views and unusual rock formations.337 Daoguang Hermitage was named after Master Daoguang and in the late Ming remained a popular site with literati.338 Perhaps the most celebrated spot was Cool Spring Pavilion, also marked prominently in the illustration. When it was first built in the Tang, the pavilion’s reputation was established by a record from the brush of Bai Juyi that stated that “in the prefecture [of Hangzhou], Lingyin Monastery is an outstanding place, and of all the sights at the monastery, Cool Spring Pavilion ranks in first place.” It was reputed to be a delightful place to visit at all times, with charms particular to each season.339 Over the ages many famous figures, including Su Shi, visited the spot and made their own contributions to its literary existence. Ming

336 This difference is brought out much more clearly in another illustration of the site – also called “Lingyin Tianzhu tu”. It appears in a work by Gao Yingke entitled Xihu zhi zhaicui buyi xinang bianlan (A handy glance at West Lake gazetteer extracts with supplement for the bag), which was published in 1601, around the same time as Yang’s work. A very obvious difference between the two images is that in Gao’s work, while a few leisurely gentlemen are looking around Lingyin monastery, there is a stream of pilgrims at Tianzhu, prostrating on the ground on the approach to the monasteries and praying by the buildings themselves. This depiction suggests that the Tianzhu monasteries were a more significant site of pilgrimage than Lingyin Monastery, or at least that leisurely gentlemen did not visit Lingyin as pilgrims. The image is reproduced in Shahar, “The Lingyin Si Monkey Disciples”, p. 218.

337 Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, pp. 85-86.


339 Shi E, Chunyou Lin'an zhi, juan 8, 11b-12a. It was actually the last of five famous pavilions that had been built at the monastery in the Tang, and the only one to have survived through the Ming, being rebuilt in the Wanli era.
literati emulated their predecessors. On his visit in 1590, Gao Panlong lingered there to enjoy the cool water of the brook and the marvellous rocks. He also composed a poem to mark his visit. Yuan Hongdao had a similar experience seven years later, praising the beauty of the site and remembering Bai Juyi’s record of the pavilion. Zhang Dai recalled sojourning in the area in 1624. His visit combined study and leisure with summer hours spent enjoying the cool of the pavilion, lying there on his bamboo mat into the night. It was truly an attractive spot for the scholar to enjoy his leisure and to imagine himself communing with literary luminaries who had been there before him.

Travelers were also drawn to Feilaifeng. The peak itself was renowned not so much for its height, but for its unusual shape, rock formation and caves. Gao Panlong likened the rocks to “fearsome panther and crouching lions.” He was also amazed that the trees could grow over the rocks, their roots on the surface. Yuan Hongdao also praised the peak, writing that its spirit surpassed “a thirsty tiger or leaping lion.” He compared the twists and turns of the rocks to the bizarre brushwork of famous madmen artists.

Feilaifeng was also famous for its caves, and many visitors went to explore them, as depicted in Hainei qi guan. Gao Panlong explored several of them, remarking on the light reaching deep within, and the beauty of the stalactites and stalagmites. In his explorations, Xu Hongzu noted that many of the caves were interconnected and had openings above that let in light and air.

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340 Gao Panlong, Wulin you ji, 4a-b.
341 Yuan Hongdao, “A Brief Record of the Cool Spring Pavilion”, in Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, pp. 77-78.
342 Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, pp. 76-77.
343 Gao Panlong, Wulin you ji, 4b-5a.
344 They are Madman Zhang and Wu Daozi. Yuan Hongdao, Xihu ji shu, 3a-b, p. 451; cf. Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, pp. 72-73; McDowall, “Four Months,” pp. 5-6. Zhang Dai described them in a similar way.
345 Gao Panlong, Wulin you ji, 4b-5a.
346 Xu Hongzu, Xu Xiake you ji, pp. 96-111.
Perhaps the most famous cave, the only one named on Yang’s illustration, was Call-the-Monkey Cave (hu yuan dong). The main reason for its fame was that it formed part of the Huili legend concerning the origins of Lingyin Monastery and Feilaifeng. As Gao Panlong and other visitors were aware, the proof that the peak “flew hither” was that when Huili called out, a monkey appeared from within the cave in response to his call and then man and simian recognized each other from India. Different versions of the monkey legend evolved and were enlivened by the fact that there were monkeys living in the area. According to one version of the legend, master Huili had raised two monkeys, one black, and one white. During the Liu Song era (420-479) Master Zhiyi was also known for feeding monkeys, which roamed freely in the environs of the monastery. Some people held that Huili’s two monkeys were still alive in the late Ming. Zhang Dai wrote they would be seen again at the appearance of a great abbot, which, sure enough,

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347 Gao Panlong, Wulin you ji, 4a.
happened when Master Jude was at Lingyin, making his achievements comparable with those of the founder. Meir Shahar believes that the legend of Huili’s monkeys was also an influence upon the lore of the ‘monkey king’ Sun Wukong. Certainly, carvings of Sun Wukong, his master Tang Sanzang and fellow disciples appear among the many Buddhist carvings at Feilaifeng.

3.2 A History of Violence at Feilaifeng

The hundreds of sculptures carved into the rock face and within the caves of Feilaifeng constitute an impressive collection of Buddhist artwork, exhibiting the devoted skill of artisans over the centuries. Today they are a major tourist attraction and draw the daily wonder of crowds. Yet it is striking that there is no record of any Ming visitor praising the sculptures. In their writings, many simply ignored the existence of the carvings. In the Hainei qi guan’s illustration of the site, despite a rather detailed depiction of Feilaifeng, there is not a hint that Buddhist images were carved all over it. This suggests that Yang Erzeng did not regard the Buddhist sculptures to be noteworthy to touring literati. Or Yang may have deliberately omitted any mention of the Buddhist carvings due to, as we shall see, the notorious figure associated with them. Accordingly, visitors liked to explore the strange formations of Feilaifeng and wander about its caves (as depicted in the image) but they did not wonder at its Buddhist carvings.

Those who did mention the carvings decried them for spoiling the natural beauty of Feilaifeng. Such sentiments echoed a wider preference for naturalness that was prevalent in the late Ming. For instance Yuan Hongdao (1568-1610) bemoaned “the scraping and gouging of ignorant monks and vulgar scholars inflicted on the landscape,” referring to the many inscriptions with which literati and their imitators marked their visits to famous sites, and to carvings more generally. But in the case of Feilaifeng, the

349 Shahar, “The Lingyin Si Monkey Disciples” p. 217. Gao Yingke’s illustration of Lingyin and Tianzhu also has the cave labeled, and even shows a monkey sitting inside it – a detail missing from Yang Erzeng’s more refined image.
350 Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, 5b-6a.
351 Zeitlin, “Disappearing Verses”, p. 74; Strassberg, Inscribed Landscapes, p. 401.
criticism was more targeted. Xu Hongzu lamented that “Baldy Yang’s chisel” had scarred the beauty of the rock.\footnote{Xu Hongzu, \textit{Xu Xiake you ji}, pp. 96-111.} Zhang Dai vividly compared the sculpting of the rock with smearing black ink over the ‘fragrantly beautiful skin and gleaming white body’ of the legendary beauty Xi Shi. So pained was Zhang that he wished that Feilaifeng had never flown from India to China to be assaulted in this way (and imagined that Huili himself would have shared his sentiment).\footnote{Zhang Dai, \textit{Xihu meng xun}, pp. 70-72.}

This “Baldy Yang” was the Yuan monk Yang Lianzhenjia who won infamy for plundering the Song imperial tombs near Shaoxing. He was believed to have commissioned the carvings at Feilaifeng, which is why they were so abhorred. This belief was not wholly accurate as contemporary texts and modern research make clear. In his study of the 330 Buddhist images at Feilaifeng, the art historian Chang Qing has found that the sculptures span several periods, from the Wuyue kingdom, through the Northern and Southern Song dynasties, the Mongol Yuan period, and into the Ming.\footnote{Chang Qing, “Feilaifeng and the Flowering,” pp. 28, 52.} This shows that most of the sculptures were not Yuan creations. But many Ming writers seem to have been unaware of the history of Feilaifeng’s sculptures. Yuan Hongdao and Yang Erzeng took the widely expressed position that the Buddhist carvings were all the work of Yang Lianzhenjia.\footnote{Yang Erzeng, \textit{Hainei qi guan}, juan 3, 13b; Yuan Hongdao, \textit{Xihu ji shu}, 3a-b, p. 451.} This was despite the fact that there were pre-Yuan texts that noted their existence. For instance, Shi E’s widely cited Song gazetteer of Hangzhou stated that monks had sculpted images of arhats, Buddhas, and bodhisattvas all around the rock and also around Longhong Cave.\footnote{Shi E, \textit{Chunyou Lin’an zhi}, juan 8, 13b-14b.] Not everyone thought they were the work of Yang. Visiting the site in 1701, Zhu Yizun (1629-1709) noted the common error in attribution citing Song writings. However, speaking as an art historian, Zhu claimed that the style of the arhats betrayed their origins in the Six Dynasties. Zhu Yizun. \textit{Pu shu ting ji}, juan 68, 8b-9a.} But for most Ming literati, Yang was responsible for the carvings at Feilaifeng. Yang’s heinous crime earned him unparalleled hatred for centuries
and brought infamy for the site of Lingyin Feilaifeng within the cultural imagination. In addition the association with Yang precluded any consideration for the aesthetic or religious merit of the sculptures. So strongly did people feel about Yang that some sought to ‘punish’ him by smashing the Buddhist sculptures attributed to him. This cultural violence that Yang provoked is so remarkable that it is worth considering in detail the memories of Yang that formed one strand of the site’s history with which visitors engaged.

A swirl of stories about Yang Lianzhenjia’s crimes circulated as early as the late Yuan. The writer Tao Zongyi’s (fl. 1360-1368) *Chuo geng lu* (Record of Reflections while Resting from Ploughing) contained an essay on the subject entitled “Fa Song ling qin” (Excavating the Song imperial tombs).\(^{357}\) Tao’s piece was a composite text patched together from different pieces that were separated in the early Qing historian and geographer Wan Sitong’s (1638-1702) work *Nansong liuling yishi* (Events around the Six Tombs of the Southern Song).\(^{358}\) But the basic narrative of the event seems to have been widely agreed.

Yang Lianzhenjia was a foreign Buddhist monk, probably Tibetan in origin, who served at the court of Khubilai Khan.\(^{359}\) He was a protégé of Sangha, the dominant figure at Khubilai’s court from the late 1280s and an active patron and protector of foreigners (often at the expense of Chinese), whose economic policies won him much hostility.\(^{360}\) In 1278 Yang was appointed to the position of supervisor of Buddhist affairs in Jiangnan where, Tao Zongyi relates, “relying on imperial favour, he carried out violent deeds without restraint.”\(^{361}\) Much of this violence involved the aggressive promotion of Buddhism. With Sangha’s backing, Yang constructed and restored many Buddhist monasteries in south China, which included the conversion of some Confucian and Daoist temples into Buddhist ones.

\(^{357}\) Tao Zongyi, *Chuo geng lu*, pp. 63-69.

\(^{358}\) This later compilation brought together many different sources, both official histories and private writings, some of which had discrepancies, others included doubts over aspects of the story.

\(^{359}\) He may have been a Tangut. Franke, “Tibetans in Yuan China”, p. 321.


Yang’s destruction of the Song tombs should be seen in part within the larger context of Buddhist expansion. Certainly, competition over land and opportunities for enrichment underlay the history of the Song tombs, even from their inception. At least one Buddhist monastery, Taining Monastery, was displaced in order to build the tombs of Emperor Ningzong (1195-1224) and his consort. Similarly Longhua Monastery at Qiantang was destroyed to make room for the scenic suburban area of the Song emperors. The Yuan shi records that Yang pointed this out to Sangha and presented his plan as a restoration of former monasteries, thereby winning permission to carry it out. Conflicts related to land brought a wider involvement in Yang’s plans. The move to violate the Song tombs at Kuaiji seems to have been initiated by Chinese monks in Hangzhou who were seeking to win Yang’s favour and to recover land previously lost. Monk Fuwen of Tianchang Monastery offered up the tomb of a Wei prince that was situated on the monastery’s grounds. Yang complied and they acquired many treasures from it.

With Yang’s appetite whetted, Zongkai and Zongyun, monks of Taining Monastery near the Song tombs, instigated a disagreement over the ownership of land with the guardian of the Song tombs. The Taining monks presented themselves as the aggrieved party to Yang, who won approval from Sangha for the pillage of the tombs. Yang then led a group of monks and workers to the tombs. The official who had been appointed by the Song to guard the tombs sought in vain to stop them. First they opened the tombs of emperors Ningzong, Lizong, Duzong and empress Yang, in which they found a large amount of precious stones, fabrics, and metals. Lizong’s body was perfectly preserved. They hung him from a tree by the feet, and cut open his head in order to collect the mercury, which dripped from his body for three days. Yang took Lizong’s head to make a skullcup (kapala) and subsequently it was lost. Shortly after, on a separate excavation, Yang’s party opened the tombs of Huizong, Gaozong, Xiaozong and their empresses. Yang then had all the bones collected together, mixed with rotten ox and horse bones, and buried on the site of the Song palace in Hangzhou. Following that he ordered

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362 Wan Sitong, Nan Song liu ling yi shi, 5b-6b; Demiéville, “Notes d’archéologie,” p. 460.
363 Tao Zongyi, Chuo geng lu, p. 67; Demiéville, “Notes d’archéologie,” p. 461.
364 Tao Zongyi, Chuo geng lu, p. 67; Demiéville, “Notes d’archéologie,” p. 461.
a pagoda to be built on top of them in order to “to crush and conquer them.” It was named “Subdue the South Pagoda” (zhen nan futu).\(^{365}\)

Yang and his accomplices all profited. Part of the treasures taken from the Song tombs was used to rebuild the Tianyi and Taining monasteries. The remainder was divided between Yang Lianzhenjia and the Chinese monks, in particular Zongkai of Taining Monastery. These exploits marked the beginning of an extended campaign of pillaging tombs. According to the Yuan shi Yang violated more than one hundred tombs.\(^{366}\) For his financial and personal misdeeds that so incurred the wrath of Chinese, Sangha was arrested and executed in 1291.\(^{367}\) Yet Yang’s life was spared. In 1292, Yang was dismissed and all his possessions were confiscated and returned to their owners.\(^{368}\) The monks who assisted Yang in his exploits were not so fortunate as they all met a violent death.\(^{369}\)

As for the Song imperial remains, some believed that they had actually been saved. According to one unofficial account of the events, Yang’s nefarious deeds had been partly mitigated by the acts of two local heroes, Tang Jue and Lin Deyang, who secretly gathered up the scattered Song remains before Yang’s men mixed them up with the animal bones and later reburied them at Tianzhang Monastery near Shaoxing.\(^{370}\) Another version suggests that the imperial remains were saved before Yang Lianzhenjia got to them.\(^{371}\) Regardless of what really happened, the official record recounts that the Song bones were only reburied in the early Ming on the order of emperor Taizu.\(^{372}\) And

\(^{365}\) Tao Zongyi, Chu o geng lu, p. 64; Demiéville, “Notes d’archéologie,” p. 462.

\(^{366}\) Wan Sitong, Nan Song liu ling yi shi, 5b-6b; Demiéville, “Notes d’archéologie,” p. 462, n, 2.


\(^{368}\) He was found to have amassed 116,300 ding in currency, 23,000 mu of land and many treasures. Wan Sitong, Nan Song liu ling yi shi, 6b.

\(^{369}\) Tao Zongyi, Chu o geng lu, p. 68.

\(^{370}\) Tao Zongyi’s account narrates the history largely as biographies of the pair. Tao Zongyi, Chu o geng lu, pp. 63-66; Demiéville, “Notes d’archéologie,” p. 462.

\(^{371}\) Richard Davis considers different versions of the story and questions whether the two men could have saved all the bones in advance. Davis, “The Reign of Tu-tsung”, pp. 958-961.

\(^{372}\) Having learnt about the history of the Song imperial remains from the historian Wei Su (1295-1372), Ming Taizu ordered a search for Song Lizong’s skull. It was located and retrieved from a lama’s house in Beiping. In 1370 it was returned south and reburied at the Yongmu Tomb in Shaoxing. In 1376 the emperor
long after that, the history of Yang Lianzhenjia’s deeds remained a detestable blot on Hangzhou’s landscape. Nor was it only at Feilaifeng that he left a mark. Phoenix Hill south of West Lake, near which Yang built Zhennan Pagoda, was another site of that history for which Yang was remembered.373

At Feilaifeng itself, the Buddhist images evoked memories of Yang whose violation of the Song imperial remains was so abhorrent to people in the Ming. Yang’s excesses were not limited to his treatment of the Song bones. Probably part of a wider folklore around Yang that sought to emphasize the horror of his deeds, Zhang Dai related a belief that Yang not only opened up old tombs, but even took pleasure in necrophilia. On one occasion, Yang started to excavate the tombs of two beautiful young ladies whose bodies had been preserved with mercury. A simple and honest monk by the name of Zhendi was so outraged that he tried to stop Yang and his men, brandishing his wooden staff, one man against many. As if by divine protection – which Yang attributed to the manifestation of the Buddhist protector Wei Duo and Zhang Dai credited to the mountain spirit – Zhendi was able to beat and injure all members of Yang’s group. He even cracked Yang’s head open before escaping unscathed. According to the account, this so terrified Yang that he put a halt to the excavation.374 Such stories convey the idea that some people stood up to Yang. People hoped that spirits were opposed to Yang too, and so perhaps there would be divine retribution for him even though his punishment in life seemed inadequate.

Yet during the late Ming, some people took it upon themselves to punish Yang, or at least to vent their anger against his memory, by attacking the Buddhist sculptures at Feilaifeng. Not only did people believe that Yang was responsible for all the sculptures, he was also thought to have his own image carved into the rock. As Zhang Dai told it, all

appointed guardians to take care of the site. Taizu forbade the felling of trees or the building of homes at the site, but local people soon began to encroach upon the forbidden site. Ming Taizu shilu, juan 53, 9b-10a, pp. 1050-1051; Demiéville, “Notes d’archéologie,” p. 463.

373 According to one account, the pagoda was destroyed in 1359 by Zhang Shixin, who was governing Hangzhou during the Zhou regime of his brother Zhang Shicheng. [Peng Wei, ‘Shu chuo geng lu hou’ (Postscript to Chuo geng lu, by Peng Wei of Huating in the Chenghua period), p. 462, n. 2. But the impact of its presence was still felt in the late Ming, and noted in Hainei qi guan. Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, 23b-24a. Cf. Lang Ying, Qi xiu lei gao, juan 2. p. 36.

374 Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, pp. 70-72.
the arhats carved along the brook – riding lions and elephants, with naked serving girls offering flowers – were made in his likeness. Accordingly Zhang smashed the head of one of these.375 But Zhang was wrong. His victim turned out not to be Yang, but the Indian monk Virupa and his handmaids.376 And Zhang’s attack was not the only case of mistaken identity. Late Ming writer Feng Mengzhen (1546-1605) recorded that a Prefect Sun was once visiting Feilaifeng when he saw the carving of Yang Lianzhenjia and, in his anger, ordered a stonemason to chop off its head. Like Zhang, Sun was mistaken and the sculptures decapitated turned out to be images of Ksitarbha Buddha (Dizang) and his two attendants. This mistake proved to be costly for those involved and all who came into contact with the sundered head fell gravely sick.377

Figure 12 Carving of Yang Lianzhenjia at Feilaifeng. Photograph by author.

375 Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, pp. 70-72.
376 Chang Qing, “Feilaifeng and the Flowering”, p. 454.
Chang Qing believes that the actual sculpture of Yang Lianzhenjia had had its head smashed during the Jiajing period, before Zhang and Feng wrote of their mistaken attempts.\(^{378}\) (The head on the carving today is a recent replacement, see Figure 12.) In 1543 Hangzhou Prefect Chen Shixian of Fuqing had knocked the heads off statues of Yang Lianzhenjia and his two attendants, the monks Fuwen and Yunwen. Tian Rucheng outlined Yang’s desecration of the Song tombs and wrote that Chen smashed the statues explicitly to punish (*zhu*) Yang and to remove the miasma of his presence from Feilaifeng. He believed that Chen was the first to locate and smash Yang’s image. Tian also regarded the smashing of Yang’s image to be a working out of retribution in the afterlife (*mingbao*) and an act of avenging the indignation of a deceased dynasty.\(^{379}\)

Such acts of cultural destruction were a mode of engagement with the site and its history and how people understood and participated in that history. There are similarities with Yue Fei’s Hangzhou site, where people attacked the statues of Qin Gui and his associates in order to punish them. Just as the shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian came to represent loyalty to the state and the punishment of those who brought about Yue’s death expressed a commitment to that virtue, so did the destruction of Yang’s image mark an adherence to the integral values of the imperial order that he so notoriously violated. Yet there are significant differences between the two cases. The statues at Yue Fei’s shrine were deliberately installed to stir the memories and emotions of people and prompt them to punish the historical figures they presented. In contrast, most of the statues that people took to represent Yang Lianzhenjia were not Yang, but the products of centuries of Buddhist devotion and patronage carved into the rock of Feilaifeng. Moreover, while the message of loyalty at the sites of Yue Fei and Yu Qian was largely clear, there was no unifying narrative at Lingyin Feilaifeng. This was a much more complex site that featured on Hangzhou’s landscape and in the wider cultural imagination for its associations with famous literary figures of the past and its bizarre rock formations, in addition to being a major centre of Buddhism known for its legendary founder and the


notorious monk Yang Lianzhenjia. Yet the site’s physical existence and survival depended largely on the strength of the monastery as an institution. It is to this dimension of the site’s history that we now turn.

3.3 Lingyin Monastery as a Buddhist Institution

Lingyin Feilaifeng was a famous site in Hangzhou that, like the shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian, featured prominently in the popular imagination and received many visitors in Ming times. But it had a position in the politico-ritual order that was very different from the shrines’. Although initiated through family efforts, the shrines became established within the Sacrificial Statutes of the state. The narratives of loyalty inscribed on them were woven into the history of the state and the imperial system. Despite the difficulties in maintaining the shrines over time, anybody who did work to rebuild them did so in adherence to state ritual requirements. In contrast, Lingyin Feilaifeng was a Buddhist site that had no natural affiliation with the dynastic order. Lingyin Monastery as an institution was subject to controls and constraints imposed by the state throughout the Ming period. Furthermore, unlike the shrines, which were instituted by the state but did not have any attached personnel to attend to their regular upkeep, a monastery was not only an institution but also a community of monks.

The healthy survival of the community depended on effective leadership and administration as well as on secure assets in land and other properties. The monastery as community and institution both benefitted from external support, which usually came as different forms of patronage from all levels, from the court (including the emperor himself), officials, and other elites, both from the capital and from the locality. At the same time, threats to the institution’s existence came from the state’s regulations, from challenges within the Buddhist lineage leadership, and from the incursions of the locally influential. Thus when we consider Lingyin Monastery as a site, we must also think of it as an institution and a community dependent on man and land that survived at the approval or sufferance of the state.\(^{380}\) The remainder of this chapter will provide an overview of state policies regarding Buddhism during the Ming, so as better to

understand the greater political context in which Lingyin Monastery existed as an institution. We will also consider the monastery’s vitality as an institution by examining the successive strength of its leadership and the patronage it enjoyed, both of which were essential to its existence. While these aspects of the site may not always have been immediately apparent to those who visited it, together they constitute the site’s institutional existence that provided the social context within which people visited and engaged in its history.

3.3.1 State Regulation of Buddhism

In the standard surveys of the history of Buddhism in China, the Ming period is cast as a period of “recession and decline.” Such an assessment arose largely from the assumption that Buddhism’s brilliant flowering of earlier centuries – which saw the writing and translation of major scriptures, the rise of great monastic centres, the accomplishments of Buddhist art, the founding of new Buddhist schools with their own contributions to Buddhist philosophy – had withered into history, and that latter-day Buddhists could only limp on in their shadow. More recent studies have revised this view, challenging us to rethink the Buddhism of later periods in their own historical contexts. An appreciation for the increased laicization of religion in the Song period, and the popularization of Buddhism in particular from Ming times onward have enabled us to see how Buddhism was lived and practiced in its specific social context. The cultural parameters for judging the vitality of Buddhist life aside, the assessments of the Ming state’s relationship with Buddhism continue to demand attention for understanding the institutional existence of Buddhism.

In a manner similar to the way in which he sought to reestablish the politico-ritual order (see discussion in chapter 3), the founding emperor Ming Taizu set policies that were to have a lasting effect on state control of Buddhism. Zhu Yuanzhang’s initially favorable attitude towards Buddhism was probably influenced by his personal experiences living in monasteries in his youth. Soon after founding the Ming he called

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381 E.g. Ch’en, *Buddhism in China.*
382 Yü, *The Renewal of Buddhism*; Brook, *Praying for Power.*
large-scale conferences of Buddhist masters, personally composed Buddhist writings, and even to order the printing of the Buddhist Tripiṭaka. Early in his rule Taizu saw Buddhism as beneficial to the realm and having a positive effect on transforming the people but he came increasingly to see the need to control it for fear of its disruption to the social order. Ming Taizu took measures to control both Buddhist establishments and their clerics that shaped state policy towards Buddhism for the rest of the Ming era. We should not overemphasize his role, but official policy did establish the framework of operation, though regulations could be circumvented or even openly flouted by later rulers.

At first Ming Taizu encouraged the ordination of clergy, permitting over 150,000 ordinations in 1372 and 1373. This was a controlled ordination program that sought to ensure a higher standard within the monastic community however by requiring ordinands to pass examinations on Buddhist scriptures, and to meet certain age and regional quota restrictions. Taizu also implemented measures to regulate the numbers of Buddhist establishments. In 1373 and again in 1391 it was decreed that each prefecture, sub-prefecture and county could have only one large Buddhist monastery and one Daoist temple. According to an order of 1382, all monasteries were to be registered by the state in one of three categories: meditation (chan), doctrine (jiao), and teaching (jiao) to include Vinaya and ritual/yoga (yujia). The Ministry of Rites defined the roles and religious practices of each kind of monastery and their communities. The cap on the number of monastic establishments was reinforced in 1391 when the “100-day edict” decreed that all monasteries were to amalgamate to form abbeys (conglin). Thereby the

383 Jiang Weiqiao, Zhongguo fojiao shi, 17b; Ch’en, Buddhism in China, p. 435.
384 Brook, Chinese State, p. 139.
385 In certain cases, imperial patrons may be seen to be acting as individual patrons, rather than the ruler going against official policy. Whether the policies initiated during the Hongwu reign were effective or not, Ming Taizu’s rule was idealized in the fifteenth century as a time during which laws regarding Buddhism had been fully implemented, in contrast with supposedly more profligate later periods. Gerritsen, “The Hongwu Legacy,” pp. 64-6.
386 Similar systems of official ordination were practiced in earlier dynasties. Brook, Chinese State, p. 142; Yü, “Ming Buddhism”, p. 894-5.
387 All members of the clergy were to be housed in these officially recognized institutions. Yü, “Ming Buddhism”, p. 897.
total number of monasteries was reduced to one quarter of that formerly and there was a ban on the foundation of new monasteries. Another measure to control the Buddhist sangha in the Hongwu reign was the establishment of the Central Buddhist Registry (Senglu si), an agency staffed by monk-officials (sengguan) charged with overseeing Buddhist affairs in the capital and at all local levels down to the county.

Zhu Di, the Yongle emperor (r. 1403-1424), was also well versed in Buddhism. He composed Buddhist writings, had the Tripitaka printed anew, and particularly favored Tibetan Buddhism. In 1402 he even ordered the de-amalgamation of monasteries, a move that allowed space for institutional growth (going against the Hongwu restriction), but in fact was hampered by the difficulties of restoring defunct monasteries. But while he acted as a patron of Buddhism, like his father the Yongle emperor also took measures to control Buddhism. In 1418 he issued an edict that further sought to limit the number of monks and the amount of land a monastery could hold in order to combat the problem of tax revenue and corvée labour being lost to monasteries.

The mid-Ming period of the fifteenth century saw a general unraveling of the order established by the dynastic founder. Some emperors, such as the Yingzong emperor, continued to play the imperial patron, but seemingly with less conviction and certainly less knowledge of Buddhism than their predecessors. Difficulties in upholding the Hongwu restrictions were apparent early in the fifteenth century. Some emperors reiterated Taizu’s orders as fitted their own priorities, but they also loosened many of his restrictions as suited them. By the mid-Ming, the many registries were largely defunct and those that did remain were very limited in function and effect. The most blatant

389 Brook, Chinese State, p. 144.
390 Yü, “Ming Buddhism”, pp. 904-6. Brook, Chinese State, p. 149. Initially this did not function below the prefectural level, but after the Hu Weiyong affair of 1380, the emperor came to see Buddhism as a greater threat, and so greater efforts were made to extend the reach of the Buddhist bureaucracy down to the local level. Brook, Chinese State, p. 143. Four of the original eight senior monk-officials of the Central Buddhist Registry had Hangzhou connections, including Lingyin’s abbot Shouren. Two of these incurred incurred the emperor’s wrath in the 1380s and lost their heads for it. Thornton, “Buddhist Monasteries in Hangzhou,” pp. 37-39.
391 Brook, Chinese State, pp. 149-150
392 Brook, Chinese State, pp. 146-8.
disregard for the Hongwu system lay in the selling of ordination certificates. This was a fund-raising method that was first used in Sichuan in 1451 and became common practice during the fifteenth century. The ordination certificates were sold blank, so anybody could fill in their name, and thus the former criteria for the age, Buddhist training, and regional quotas were all ignored. Some scholars have seen this as providing an open door to the sangha for anyone who could afford the ticket, thus leading to the decline of the monastic community.394

Mid-Ming officials certainly complained about monks and their lack of regulation. But the selling of ordination certificates may not have automatically translated into the wholesale dilution and corruption of the monks – most people who bought ordination certificates did not actually become monks, but were just seeking the exemption benefits.395 It did have an impact on state resources, however. Monasteries were included in the lijia system and taxed as households, while monks were on the household registers but were exempt from corvée if they held ordination certificates. Thus monasteries did not necessarily benefit from the system. Many monasteries had seen their properties – prey to encroachment by more powerful parties – reduced over time, but were still taxed on the amount registered, which may have been the original amount. Thus strong leadership of monasteries and able management of their fiduciary property were vital.396

The late Ming era of the Wanli period (1573-1620) and after saw the continuation of earlier tendencies and a Buddhist revival as manifested in the lives of four Buddhist masters, Yunqi Zhuhong (1535-1615), Zibo Zhenke (1543-1603), Hanshan Deqing (1546-1623) and Ouyi Zhixu (1599-1655), the first of whom was active in the Hangzhou area. Buddhism had been persecuted during the Jiajing era (1522-1566), but the suppression was halted at the beginning of the Wanli reign. The Shenzong emperor, together with his mother the Empress Dowager Cisheng (1546-1614) and other members of the court became lavish patrons of Buddhist monks and monasteries. But their acts may be seen as

395 Brook, Chinese State, pp. 151-2.
396 Facing these challenges, many monasteries may have succumbed to being completely taken over or broken into smaller entities. Thornton, “Buddhist Monasteries in Hangzhou,” pp. 76-79.
patronage by individual members of the court; it did not constitute state policy or any change to the official regulations. The Wanli emperor was as interested in controlling the sangha as he was in supporting it (at least initially), although it is unclear whether regulations concerning the sangha were very effective. There was some attempt to restrict ordinations, but public ordinations continued to be conducted. Monasteries were largely free from state control for the last seven decades of the Ming.\footnote{Yü Chün-fang, “Ming Buddhism”, pp. 928-9; Brook, \textit{Chinese State}, p. 152-4. This lack of regulation probably provided opportunity for competent Buddhist leaders to reform their communities, and also for local elites to construct a new sphere of public authority. Brook, \textit{Praying for Power}.}

Although official policy towards Buddhism fluctuated to some degree, both Buddhist monasteries and the monkhood were subject to state controls throughout the Ming. It was a constant challenge to secure a monastery’s assets and to maintain a vital community.

3.3.2 Leadership at Lingyin Monastery

Strong and able leadership was crucial to the strength and very survival of the monastery as an institution. As the compilers of Lingyin Monastery’s seventeenth-century gazetteer explained, the importance of abbots to monasteries is akin to that of rulers for countries.\footnote{Sun and Xu, \textit{Lingyin si zhi}, juan 3, 1a-b.} While there was a general sense that the Buddhist Law was in a state of decline (\textit{mofa}) in the late Ming and that there were few great masters in comparison with earlier dynasties, according to Zhuhong, abbot of Hangzhou’s Yunqi Monastery, there were five outstanding Buddhist masters in Hangzhou during the Ming period, two of whom were associated with Lingyin Monastery.\footnote{Yü, \textit{Renewal of Buddhism}, p. 138. The two Lingyin monks were Xingyuan Lang and Konggu Long, see Yuanjing, Yuanfu, Zuhong, \textit{Wulin Xihu}, 25a-b, 26b-27a. Zuhong himself, of course, was widely praised for his reforms at Yunqi Monastery.}

An examination of Lingyin Monastery’s own gazetteer reveals significant gaps in the succession of its abbots that point to weakness in its leadership. The most prominent masters in the monastery’s history are Huili and Jude. Huili was of course the monastery’s founder and his legend was one of the main reasons for the site’s prominence in the cultural imagination. As for Jude, he was the abbot who brought about
the monastery’s seventeenth-century restoration (*chongxing*), the celebration of which was the gazetteer’s compilers stated intention.\(^{400}\) Because much of the gazetteer reads as a eulogy of Jude’s efforts, it is possible that its compilers downplayed the achievements of earlier abbots, and exaggerated the monastery’s state of decline in order to emphasize Jude’s achievements. Even so, the gazetteer’s record of the monastery’s leadership going back to the founder Huili remains telling for the information provided and the gaps in the account.\(^ {401}\) The list spans the sweep of the monastery’s history although, as with other sections of the gazetteer, the treatment of the pre-Tang period is rather scant - possibly due to a dearth of sources as well as a focus on the monastery’s later history. For the leadership of the monastery in the early Tang period there are major gaps from the mid-seventh through the mid-eighth centuries. Thereafter a steady stream of masters is recorded, except for the decades following the suppression of Buddhism by Tang Wuzong in the Huichang reign (841-846). Strong leadership seems to have returned to the monastery in the Wuyue period, and masters are again regularly recorded through the Song and Yuan periods.\(^ {402}\)

As for the Ming, Lingyin Monastery initially won imperial favour in the Hongwu reign, during which ten masters were involved in the founding emperor’s Buddhist activities. In 1370 Youan Tan’e was called to serve in the Buddhist administration of Jiangnan. In the same year Jianxin Laifu was named one of the ten High Monks, followed by Huiming Xingyuan a couple of years later.\(^ {403}\) Lingyin masters also took part in the rituals Emperor Taizu ordered to rest the spirits of the war dead early in his reign. Xingyuan Huilang (d. 1388) and Tianjing Yuanjing assisted in one such ceremony at Nanjing’s Bell Mountain in 1372.\(^ {404}\) Yet a number of Lingyin’s masters also incurred the emperor’s wrath, including some of those formerly favored. Jianxin Laifu, who was – and

\(^{400}\) Bai Henan, who wrote a preface for the gazetteer, commented that the work was explicitly to record the restoration (*chongxing*) of the monastery by Master Jude. Sun and Xu, *Lingyin si zhi*, p. 3013.

\(^{401}\) Wu Zhijing’s survey of Hangzhou monasteries has its own list of past masters of Lingyin that omits many of those in the gazetteer record, but does include a few additional figures. Wu Zhijing, *Wulin fan zhi*, pp. 205-220.

\(^{402}\) Sun and Xu, *Lingyin si zhi*, juan 3.1, 2a-9a; 3.2, 1a-23b.

\(^{403}\) Sun and Xu, *Lingyin si zhi*, juan 3.2, 24b, 26a-b.

perhaps because he was — on very good terms with the emperor’s son, the Prince of Shu, was accused of using his poems to criticize the emperor and executed. Tianjing Yuanjing, one of the masters who conducted the 1372 Buddhist mass, also ran into trouble. After the mass he was kept in Nanjing for four years, and when he was about to return to Lingyin, he was caught up in trouble that led to his banishment to Shaanxi, although he died en route. The years of uncertainty after his fate left a void at the monastery. Amid these swings of fate in the Hongwu era, some abbots did manage to carry out rebuilding work at the monastery. For instance, in 1384 abbot Huiming rebuilt Juehuang Hall and Yongzhen Fuliang built Zhizhi Hall.

From the late Hongwu period through the Yongle period there was a regular succession of leadership at Lingyin from Kongsou Xinwu the sixty-fifth abbot, through to Sikuo Xingkong the sixty-ninth. Among these abbots there were some accomplishments, both at the monastery and in Buddhist politics. Abbot Wujie Shancai, who came to live at Lingyin in 1403, added the gold-covered statues of the Three Buddhas, replaced all the implements and vessels, and built the Shuanggui Chapel. He also revised many essays and writings in the monastic gazetteer. Sikuo Xingkong, who came to Lingyin in 1421, was commanded by decree to revise the scriptures. He was appointed the Left Elucidator (jueyi) of the Central Buddhist Registry. Following Xingkong, there is a gap in the record of the succession to the abbacy, for the next named abbot is Fashi Liangjie who became the seventy-fourth abbot in 1434. That there appears to have been five abbots over the span of roughly ten years suggests that Lingyin suffered from unstable leadership. Why these intervening abbots are passed over in silence is unclear. Apparently they did not leave enough of a mark on the monastery even to have their names recorded.

405 Sun and Xu, Lingyin si zhi, juan 3.2, 25a.] Later on in the reign, Xingzhong Shouren, who had been appointed Right Buddhist Patriarch (you shan shi) at the Central Buddhist Registry, met a similar fate: his ‘Jade Poem’ angered Ming Taizu and brought punishment. Sun and Xu, Lingyin si zhi, juan 3.2, 27b-28a, Wu Zhijing, Wulin fan zhi, p. 220.

406 Sun and Xu, Lingyin si zhi, juan 3.2, 25a-b; cf. Thornton, “Buddhist Monasteries in Hangzhou,” pp. 40-41. In another case, Abbot Kongsou Xinwu, at Lingyin from 1388 to 1392, was caught up in the amalgamation of monasteries (conglin gaiguan). He was arrested though he died on the way to the capital. Sun and Xu, Lingyin si zhi, juan 3.2, 26b-27a.

407 Sun and Xu, Lingyin si zhi, juan 2, 2b; juan 3.2, 27a.

408 Sun and Xu, Lingyin si zhi, juan 2, 2b; juan 3.2, 26b-28b.
Or perhaps their abbacies were viewed so negatively that they were deliberately struck off the record. For over the subsequent century, from the Zhengtong reign through the Jiajing reign, most of the abbots seem to have been so undistinguished that only their names are listed. Of the only two abbots given detailed entries in the record, Shen’an Xiang, who was abbot during the Tianshun period (1457-1464), carried out some repairs at the monastery, while Qianxi Deming, the one hundred and fifth abbot of Lingyin Chan Master, is noted for protecting the monastery from pirate raids during the Jiajing period and also for his work in aiding the poor.409

The only other abbot to be recorded for the remaining seventy years of the Ming is Yi’an Rutong. Rutong’s life was remarkable before it began. His mother conceived him after dreaming of a visit by an Indian monk – a sure sign of future greatness. He grew up to become a talented monk and able leader of Lingyin Monastery. In some ways Rutong’s abbacy foreshadowed that of Jude. Both were able abbots who carried out a restoration of the monastery. Both were also learned masters in the Linji tradition of Chan Buddhism. Despite an early emergence in the Tang and growth in the Song and Yuan periods, Chan lapsed into a long dormancy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries only to return to prominence and influence in the seventeenth century. Beginning in the late Ming and reaching a peak in the early Qing, Chan Buddhism underwent a revival that gave it an unprecedented level of prominence marked by notable Chan masters and a surge in the production of Chan texts.410

From an early age Rutong was a brilliant student of Linji Buddhism. He so impressed his teacher, Shuangjing Wansong, with his response to a Chan riddle that he was immediately acknowledged as the Linji successor of the twenty-seventh generation. He initiated lectures at Lingyin in 1582 that were heard by large crowds. Rutong’s abbacy was also notable for the most significant rebuilding work carried out at the monastery during the Ming. Nevertheless, Rutong’s successes were not matched by his successors

409 Sun and Xu, Lingyin si zhi, juan 3.2, 28a-b.
410 In this revival, following the ideals of Tang and Song times, the ideal of sudden enlightenment once again came to the fore and dharma transmission between masters and disciples was both valued and contested. Wu, Enlightenment in Dispute, pp. 3-4, 21-23. These emphases are evident in the gazetteer accounts of masters at Lingyin, which record many koans and provide information about the teacher-student relationships between monks.
and Lingyin Monastery seems to have lacked effective leadership in the final decades of the Ming.\footnote{Sun and Xu, *Lingyin si zhi*, juan 3.2, 29a-b.} By the end of the Ming, Lingyin Monastery had divided into twenty-four houses (fang).\footnote{Sun and Xu, *Lingyin si zhi*, juan 1, 2b.} These were sub-corporate units that together constituted the monastic community but operated independently from one another. Such an institutional arrangement indicated the overall weakness of the monastery for it meant a division of monastic property, including the buildings and especially the arable lands.\footnote{Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*, pp. 33-34.} In 1649, the heads of Lingyin’s twenty-four houses invited Jude, the thirty-sixth generation master of the Linji lineage to take up the abbacy, again affirming Lingyin’s leadership and its place in the Linji lineage.\footnote{Sun and Xu, *Lingyin si zhi*, juan 1, 2b. Until the time of the gazetteer’s compilation, Lingyin’s Linji leadership seems to have been intact, with ‘Jude and Huishan succeeding one another [as abbot] like father and son and for these thirty years, the single lamp of Linji has alone been shining brightly.’ Sun and Xu, *Lingyin si zhi*, juan 3, 1a-b.}

In sum, leadership at Lingyin Monastery through the course of the Ming was intermittent. Despite Holmes Welch’s emphasis on the need to determine the vitality of a monastic community beyond its leaders and doctrine, capable leadership remains important to the success of a monastery as an institution.\footnote{Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*, pp. 277-280; Welch, *The Buddhist revival in China*.} For only an able leader could successfully administer the monastic community and attract the patronage and wider support that the institution needed to maintain itself and hold onto its property. After all, it is the physical site of the monastery that travelers went to, even if their experience was informed by images of the site in the cultural imagination.

### 3.3.3 Patronage at Lingyin Monastery

Patronage, like able leadership, was vital to the survival and growth of Buddhist establishments and came from all levels of Ming society from the imperial house and other influential figures at the court (including eunuchs and senior ministers), through ranking regional officials, resident administrators and local gentry. As already noted, the Hongwu and Yongle emperors supported Buddhism, its clerics and institutions, in various
ways early in the dynasty, and almost two centuries later the Wanli emperor and his mother the Empress Dowager Cisheng went further in their lavish patronage. It is not easy to separate the actions of the imperial clan from the state, but it is evident that individual acts of patronage by the emperor and his family were not always consistent with state regulations concerning Buddhism. As for eunuchs, despite the Ming founder’s prohibitions on eunuchs becoming involved in government, just decades after his death they were able to acquire considerable power and influence, so that they too became significant patrons of Buddhism, although sometimes they may have been acting on behalf of members of the imperial house.

Members of the scholar-gentry were also significant patrons of Buddhist monasteries, especially in the Wanli era. While the most famous monasteries may have had a prominence among certain Buddhist schools or particular significance in the order of the state (a national perspective that is reflected in views of the realm as presented in some encyclopedia, guidebooks, and travel accounts), many monasteries were patronized primarily for their position in local society. Monasteries provided a sphere in which gentry could contribute towards the public good as well as acquire symbolic capital for their contributions. This role of the monastery was at odds with its marginal position in the official order, but it did not prevent many people from patronizing monasteries.

Patronage came in four main forms. Financial patronage helped to pay for and maintain the properties of the monastery and its community. Land donations were also vital to the upkeep and long-term viability of the institution. These were the two most concrete forms of patronage that could come from members of the court and wealthy gentry. Just as practical perhaps was stewardship of the monastery. Local gentry might supervise monastic affairs and perform a range of functions from finding a suitable abbot to raising funds and leading lay associations. Yet another form of patronage might be

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418 Brook, Praying for Power.
419 One may view “institutional religion [as] a component element of state and society as they actually existed” and therefore integral to the local order. Brook, Chinese State, p. 162.
called symbolic patronage. This included the bestowal of a plaque from the emperor, the composition of a poem by a scholar, or the production of a gazetteer history of the monastery. While less concrete, such acts could translate into prestige for the monastery that might afford it protection and attract further patronage. These forms of patronage may have been different in kind, but they were largely complementary. For instance, land was vital to a monastery’s existence but its donation did not guarantee a monastery’s control and use of it. Land was an oft-exchanged commodity and its sale often led to litigation as monks had no right to sell it or sometimes even because the descendants of donors disapproved of and disputed their ancestors’ largesse and sought to regain land that their forbears had endowed. Especially in the late Ming when competition for land was particularly intense, the patronage of influential parties was needed to safeguard it.420

The retention and protection of land was a challenge even for great monasteries like Lingyin. Over the centuries, Lingyin Monastery accumulated large landholdings due to the generosity of patrons. Many were acquired during the Southern Song. For instance, in 1025 a gift from the empress dowager enabled Lingyin to buy over two thousand qing of land spread over several counties. By the end of the Song, this amounted to at least 13,000 mu of fields. Importantly, land bestowed through imperial largesse was exempt from tax.421 However, Lingyin seems to have been unable to hold onto all this land. At the beginning of the Ming, the Hongwu emperor affirmed the monastery’s land holdings of 3,000 mu.422

Yet threats of encroachment remained. In one case in the early Ming, a military officer (zhihui) sought to use the land around the stupa of Song Master Xiatang as burial land. According to the record, the stupa was protected by divine force, and so the officer honoured the stupa instead.423 In the early fifteenth century, the monastic estate grew to more than one hundred ninety-eight qing, ninety-eight mu. Yet in the early sixteenth

420 Brook, Praying for Power, pp. 167-171.
421 Lingyin si zhi, juan 2, 11a-b; Thornton, “Buddhist Monasteries in Hangzhou,” pp. 42-43.
422 Lingyin si zhi, juan 2, 11b-12a. At the time, Ming Taizu sought to protect monastic property both so that monasteries could be independent, and also to segregate the religious and secular realms. Brook, Chinese State, p. 144.
423 Lingyin si zhi, 17b-18a.
century, the monk Damou memorialized the throne because much of its land had been taken over by others. In the Wanli era, which saw the broadest official survey of property for fiscal purposes since the Hongwu period and during which patrons of endowed institutions actively urged officials to help restore lost monastic property, Lingyin Monastery possessed about 1,600 mu of land, only slightly over half of what it had at the beginning of the Ming. In this brief sketch of Lingyin Monastery’s landholdings during the Ming, the constant problem of holding onto property is evident. Given the precarious position of Buddhist monasteries within the Chinese constitution and social order, it was vital for them to have the support of influential patrons. Patrons provided support and funds to a monastery’s leaders, so that they could maintain and rebuild it. The maintenance and expansion of a site also secured the vitality of its continued existence. Without regular patronage, a site’s very survival was threatened.

Early in the founding Hongwu reign, Lingyin Monastery was restored and recognized with a name plaque from the court. It was damaged by fire in 1370 but Master Huiming Xingyuan arrived in 1378 and began a restoration project soon after. He rebuilt the Great Hall and the pagoda on the northern peak, but after he ran into trouble with the emperor and was imprisoned, the project came to a halt. In 1403, the first year of the Yongle reign, Master Wujie Shanceai became the new abbot and carried out renovations. He added the gold covered statues of the Three Buddhas, remade the ritual implements and vessels, and also built the Double Cassia Chapel (Shuanggui an).

Despite some imperial favour in the Hongwu and Yongle reigns, there seems not to have been much large-scale rebuilding of monasteries in the early Ming, nor evidence of wealthy patrons giving their support, in contrast to the late Ming.
Thereafter the rebuilding of the monastery proceeded intermittently under the leadership of its abbots. During the Xuande reign (1426-1435), following the destruction of the Juehang Hall by fire in 1430, abbot Fashi Liangjie and Master Tanzan rebuilt the hall, added an ornately carved prayer stone (*bai shi*), and restored the side gates. However they were unable fully to restore the monastery and parts of it were left in decay.\(^{431}\) In the Zhengtong period, Master Xuanli rebuilt the Zhizhi Hall.\(^{432}\) During the Tianshun period (1457-1464) Master Shen’an Xiang, who had been residing at the Xianning Monastery for a few years, returned to Lingyin and carried out some repairs. The gazetteer records that he “tipped his pockets” to repair part of the abbot’s quarters without, so it seems, any significant support from patrons.\(^{433}\) As noted above, there was a lack of strong and sustained leadership for much of the sixteenth century, which saw the scourge of pirate attacks during the Jiajing reign. In addition a lightening fire in 1569 destroyed most of the monastery, leaving only one hall standing in the 1570s.

The precarious situation of Lingyin Feilaifeng was not apparent in the history of the site as presented in Yang Erzeng’s guidebook, nor in the travel accounts of Ming travelers. For most of those sources were products of the late-Ming period, which saw the rise of travel and a revival of Lingyin’s fortunes. The Wanli reign (1573-1620) especially saw a broad revival of Buddhism that involved court patronage (above all from the emperor and his mother), strong leadership and reforms by Buddhist masters, a wide lay movement, and increased gentry involvement in Buddhism that saw the recovery and protection of monastic property.

\(^{431}\) *Lingyin si zhi*, juan 3.2, 28a; Wu Zhijing, *Wulin fan zhi*, juan 5, 30a; Zhang Dai, *Xihu meng xun*, pp. 79-80. The prayer stone may be the one mentioned in *Hainei qi guan*.

\(^{432}\) Wu Zhijing, *Wulin fan zhi*, juan 5, 30a-b.

\(^{433}\) *Lingyin si zhi*, juan 3.2, 28a.
Beginning in 1582, the charismatic abbot Rutong carried out a five-year project to rebuild Lingyin Monastery: after decades of rubble “one hundred destroyed [buildings] were all remade.” Allowing for the hyperbole, all the main halls were rebuilt with widespread support and patronage. Most impressive was the rebuilding of the Great Hall in the Tang style, with 48 flat-headed columns, and sixteen stone columns. Its name was changed to the Da Xiong bao dian (Treasure Hall of the Great Hero, i.e. Sakyamuni. See Figure 13 for today’s Great Hall.). Rutong also rebuilt the Hall of Five Hundred Arhats, which had first been built in the Southern Song, but was destroyed in the early Ming. In addition, he had many new statues made, a bronze bell cast, and a bell-tower erected. He also rebuilt the stupas of several former masters, including that of the founder Huili after heavy rains caused it to collapse in 1587. Rutong was aided in his task by Deming

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434 Lingyin si zhi, juan 2, 2b; Wu Zhijing, Wulin fan zhi, juan 5. 31b-34b.
Yuanfu, Yuanning and other monks, but perhaps more importantly, he enjoyed the patronage of a group of officials, several of whom were natives of the Hangzhou area.

Among these were Qiantang native Zhang Han (1511-1593) who rose to become minister of Personnel, Chen Hongmeng, a Renhe native whose career culminated in the post of Grand Coordinator of Guizhou in 1565, Hu Shunsuo of Renhe, Xin’an magistrate, and Chen Shan (1514-1589) of Qiantang who edited the 1579 Hangzhou gazetteer. Rutong’s renovation project demonstrates what an able monk supported by influential patrons was able to achieve. Later in the Wanli period further rebuilding work was carried out with the support of the eunuch Sun Long, who held the important position of Director of Ceremonial. He rebuilt the Sanzang Hall and installed a statue of Guanyin donated by the empress dowager. Senior ministers were also involved including (again) Zhang Han, who helped rebuild the Main Hall, and Minister of Works Pan Jixun (1521-1595), who donated funds for its statuary. Rutong led the largest and last major rebuilding project of the Ming with the support of influential patrons. But the fruits of these efforts did not survive long. In the final years of the Ming, the Zhaoqing, Lingyin, and Upper Tianzhu monasteries were all destroyed by fire. At Lingyin only the Zhizhi Hall, and the Lunzang Hall were left standing.

The gazetteer account’s emphasis on the monastery’s state of decline following Rutong’s abbacy partly serves to highlight the achievements of the early-Qing abbot Jude, whose achievements the work overtly celebrates. Master Jude was said to have

435 Other patrons were acquaintances of Rutong with interests in Buddhism before Rutong came to Lingyin. Still others were associates of Chen Hongmeng, having passed the jinshi examination in the same year as he did. Thornton, “Buddhist Monasteries in Hangzhou,” pp. 120-126.

436 Sun’s contributions remain visible today in the Wanli-era incense burner he had cast that still stands in front of the main hall. Thornton, “Buddhist Monasteries in Hangzhou,” pp. 125-6.

437 Wu Zhijing notes that in 1611 monk Xingzheng rebuilt the Meditation Hall and the Returning Dragon Bridge with the patronage of a provincial commissioner. Wu Zhijing, Wulin fan zhi, juan 5, 31b-34b. Xu Hongzu also observed rebuilding work during his visit in 1636. Xu Hongzu, Xu Xiake you ji, pp. 96-111.

438 Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, pp. 79-84.

439 Lingyin si zhi, juan 2, 2b; juan 3.2, 29a-b; cf. Thornton, “Buddhist Monasteries in Hangzhou,” p. 146.
“toiled for over twenty years personally paying attention to every detail of the rebuilding project, thereby making it such a grand establishment”.

The rebuilding began in the winter of 1650 and the various structures (seven main halls, abbot’s quarters, guest lodgings, monks dormitories, bell tower, and bath house) were completely renovated or rebuilt one after another. Large funds were required, an estimated one million cash in the case of the Great Hall, yet Jude was able to complete the project.

He also managed to secure the monastic estate. When Jude arrived at Lingyin the monastery had lost all its land apart from the grounds of the buildings themselves, possessing a mere 145 mu of hilly land around the monastic site. Jude managed to win many donations to rebuild the monastic estate, adding over two thousand mu to it. He attracted a large number of patrons including officials and wealthy gentry – there are even hints of divine assistance in the gazetteer account. When Zhang Dai, a clansman of Jude, visited in 1657 he noted the magnitude of the project and remarked that Jude’s achievements far surpassed those of Rutong and also Zhuhong’s work at Yunqi Monastery.

The extent of Jude’s restoration was truly impressive, perhaps even on par with Huili’s initial founding. Both of them played crucial roles in the survival and growth of Lingyin Monastery as an institution. They won support from patrons across society, thereby assuring the site’s continued prominence on Hangzhou’s cultural landscape.

3.4 Conclusion: The Divergent Histories of a Buddhist Site

The Buddhist site of Lingyin Feilai Feng had certain similarities with the shrines of Yue Fei and Yu Qian and with the Wushan City God Temple. All were prominent sites in Hangzhou (and also on the wider cultural landscape of the realm) that attracted countless visitors and drew a wide range of patrons from the imperial court and local society. It was the interaction of these different groups – agents of the court, government officials, literati writers and travelers, resident administrators, and local elites and the wider

440 Lingyin si zhi, p. 3013.
441 Lingyin si zhi, juan 1, 3a-4b.
442 Lingyin si zhi, juan 8, 72b-74b.
443 At the time of Zhang’s visit, the project was far from completion, yet many buildings had already been rebuilt and newly refurbished. Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, pp. 80-82.
populace – that determined the physical existence of the site. As physical sites
monasteries and shrines required regular maintenance and were subject to similar
pressures for land and resources, which only officials or influential patrons could secure.

But Lingyin Feilaifeng was also a Buddhist institution with its own resident
community that demanded strong leadership as well as the support of patrons to ensure its
healthy survival. Furthermore, it was part of a greater affiliation of monasteries that
formed a lineage in the Chan school, within which its abbots and senior monks were
affirmed. Unlike the official shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian and the city god temple, all
of which were formally sanctioned by the state and included in its politico-ritual order,
Lingyin Feilaifeng was forever subject to state control. And the stronger an institution the
monastery was, the more it might be subjected to official restraint and interference.

There was a disconnect between the institutional history of Lingyin Feilaifeng as
part of the Buddhist order and its prominent place in Hangzhou’s landscape. Its
institutional history was concerned with praising past Buddhist masters – especially the
founder Huili and more recent abbots like Rutong and Jude – for their contributions to the
monastery and wider community as well as for their teachings. Some of this history was
captured in Wu Zhijing’s *Wulin fan zhi*, which served as a portrayal of Hangzhou’s
Buddhist landscape. Yet little of these Buddhist concerns made it into the cultural
imagination of the site projected by texts created outside the Buddhist community.

The site’s history unfolded at multiple levels that reflected the interests of
different social groups and drove them to engage with the site in different ways. Many
travelers were drawn to the site because of its natural beauty. This included unusual rock
formations and caves, some of which were associated with famous Daoist practitioners.
Numerous celebrated scholars were also remembered at the site and it was these
historical-literary connections that provided Lingyin Feilaifeng with cultural allure for
Ming literati. At a broader, popular level certain figures associated with Lingyin
Feilaifeng also loomed large. True, these included the monastery’s founder Huili, but he
was remembered in the popular imagination mainly for the legend of Feilaifeng flying to
Hangzhou from India and for his long-lived monkey. These attractions of the site added
to its cultural allure and helped to woo patrons to rebuild and expand the site.
But the most dominant figure that so besmirched Lingyin Feilai Feng on the cultural landscape may have been the Yuan monk Yang Lianzhenjia. The crimes that Yang perpetrated were so detestable that many sought out his statues at the site in order to smash them. This violent engagement precluded any appreciation of the Buddhist art that flowered at the site for centuries. This history of Lingyin Feilai Feng demonstrates that a site could give rise to contestation and destruction as well as cooperation and construction.
Chapter 4
Popular Urban Sites: The City God Temple at Wushan

The City God Temple (chenghuang miao) at Wushan (Wu Mountain) is unique among the Hangzhou sites examined in this dissertation as being the only site that lay within Hangzhou’s city walls. The sites discussed in the two preceding chapters were situated outside the city around and beyond West Lake, while the subject of the next chapter is West Lake itself. Although many visitors to Hangzhou did view Wushan in relation to West Lake, the City God Temple and Wushan were very much urban sites, not only in terms of their location amid the bustle of commerce and festivals that drew large crowds to the city, but also because in the cultural imagination the temple was closely bound up with the order of the city and the well-being of its people.

There were numerous prominent temples on Wushan, many of which were associated with celebrated figures from Hangzhou’s past, that maintained a firm presence in Hangzhou’s cultural landscape. Indeed the figure of city god Zhou Xin was far from the most famous figure in Hangzhou’s history. Yet the City God Temple’s close identity with the city made it stand out. It was both an official site and a popular site. While the temple’s upkeep and rituals were mandated by the state, its position in the politico-ritual system differed from that of the official shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian, partly as a result of the non-canonical origins of the chenghuang cult and the continued uncertainty over its popular nature.

The Wushan City God Temple was a complex site that served a variety of purposes and was the concern of multiple groups for incongruous reasons. For many travellers Wushan afforded some of the best views of West Lake and its environs. It was also a site steeped in the history of Wu and Song among other periods of Hangzhou’s past. From the state’s perspective the City God Temple was the focus of an official cult that mirrored its bureaucratic hierarchy. For local people the city god Zhou Xin was a model of justice who could hear and correct grievances that were not being addressed by his human counterpart and protect the people of Hangzhou.

This chapter will explain the different ways in which people interacted with the site, and what it meant to them. First it will explain why Wushan attracted literati visitors.
It will then discuss the origins and nature of the city god cult and the state’s growing control and eventual incorporation of it in its ritual system in the early Ming. After that comes an examination of the history of the building and rebuilding of the Wushan temple itself. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the figure of city god Zhou Xin and his broad appeal for the people of Hangzhou based on stories that circulated about him.

4.1 Wushan: a Literati Destination

Ming literati who visited Hangzhou spent most of their time seeing the many sights around West Lake, but many also ventured into the city where the top destination was Wushan. Wushan attracted travellers on account of its relationship with West Lake and the views it afforded, but also because of its own sites and its rich history.

Wushan’s connection with West Lake is evident in gazetteers and travel guides. The Da Ming yitong zhi places Wushan at the head of the section on mountains and rivers (shanchuan) in its entry on Hangzhou and states that from there “on the left is the great river and on the right one can survey West Lake”. Yang Erzeng’s guidebook, Hainei qiguan, makes the connection clear in its depictions of Hangzhou. In the guide’s illustration of Wushan the Qiantang River and West Lake are clearly marked on either side (Figure 14). In the West Lake section of the guidebook, the lake is portrayed from the perspective of someone looking out from an elevated position in the city. The city wall skirts the edge of the lake at the bottom of the page and Wushan protrudes at the bottom left, suggesting that the viewer is in fact standing on Wushan (Figure 2). As the guidebook points out, there was a gate at the foot of Wushan with a sign that read: “Climb up high to survey the sights” (deng gao lan sheng).

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444 Da Ming yitong, 2686, 3b.
445 “Wushan tu shuo” in Yang Erzeng, Hainei qiguan, juan 4, 1b-2a, pp. 411-413.
446 Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 3, pp. 210-211.
447 As well as the lake and the river and the surrounding hills, the guidebook notes that from Wushan one could also see the official buildings, the city streets, the markets, the temples and monasteries, and the pleasure quarters of the city. Yang Erzeng, Hainei qiguan, juan 4, 2a.
Figure 14 "Wushan zhu miao" (The Temples of Wushan), in Yang Erzeng, Hainei qi guan, juan 4, 1b-2a; 411.
Indeed, the views from Wushan were so highly regarded that many literati travellers who otherwise shirked the bustle and din of the city made a special effort to enter the walls and climb the hill. Yang Yingzhao, a Jiajing era juren wrote during a visit to Hangzhou in 1555 that whenever he passed by Qiantang, he would always climb Wushan. 448 The famous Wanli era poet Yuan Hongdao, when visiting the city in 1597, wrote that he dreaded going into the city, but because Wushan was located there, he could not but enter to see it. 449 Also passing by in the late sixteenth century, the traveller and writer Wang Shixing recorded that he climbed one of the buildings of the City God Temple, which commanded fine views of the lake, and “looking down from there one can survey the whole lake, the sunlight glimmering on its green face, one can take it all in with a single glance.” 450

Travellers did not climb Wushan only to see West Lake; Wushan had its own sights that drew visitors, even if they were not as famous as those of West Lake. A late-Ming book of Hangzhou sights, entitled Hushan shenggai (Epitome of the sights of the lakes and mountains), includes two sets of ten prospects for West Lake and Wushan respectively. 451 For each prospect an illustration is given with accompanying text. The author of the preface, a certain “Old Man Lu of the West River” (Xijiang Lu sou), wrote that while West Lake’s Ten Prospects were well known and widely recorded, those of Wushan were not so well established despite their attracting many visitors through the ages. The work thus sought to amend the situation. It gives the standard set of Ten Prospects of West Lake as found in Hainei qi guan before setting out the Ten Prospects of Wushan, which are similar in kind to those of West Lake. One of them, called “Pacing the great void in the moonlight” (Taixu bu yue) was located at the City God Temple. 452

448 Yang Yingzhao, “Ziyang dong ji” (Record of Ziyang Cave) in Cao Wenqu, Xihu youji xuan, p. 303.
449 Because of his aversion to the city, however, he still did not see it properly. Yuan Hongdao, Xihu ji shu, 6b, p. 453; largely following translation in McDowall, “Four Months of Idle Roaming”, p. 12.
451 The edition of the work examined here is included in Xuxiu Siku quanshu, Shibu Vol. 721. It gives neither date nor author. Craig Clunas dates the work to c.1620-1640, Clunas, Empire of Brightness, p. 142.
452 The preface, Ten Prospects of West Lake, and Ten Prospects of Wushan appear respectively in Hushan sheng gai, pp. 511-515; 516-539; 540-563.
In addition to the views and prospects that it offered, Wushan also attracted literati travellers because of its geology, its history, and its shrines and temples. In the Southern Song, Wushan referred only to the hill on which the City God Temple was situated, but by the seventeenth century, the name had extended to cover the adjoining hills too. Wushan was considered the origin (zong) of the mountains of the Hangzhou area, its branch hills stretching northwest and south around West Lake. Similar to the caves of Feilaifeng, Wushan was well known for its bizarre rocks and caves. Yuan Hongdao wrote that one of the sites he visited at Wushan was Ziyang Temple, where there were strangely shaped rocks, with which “the rocks of Lake Tai cannot compare, like a lively ink painting of the Dao Master Plum Flower (Meihua Daoren).” Wang Shixing also wondered at the rocks by Ziyang temple, which he declared were “glossier than Taihu rocks, and more marvellous than Guilin rocks.” He explored the caves there, which were empty and serene at night and most suited to “perfected beings.” This was appropriate for, as Wang noted, the Ziyang temple was named after a Daoist immortal of the Northern Song. Yang Yingzhao stopped to explore the Ziyang caves too, drawn to them both by their unusual formations and their association with transcendants. Cao Xuequan referred to the rocks and caves at Ziyang as a realm of Daoist practitioners in his guide to famous sights, Da Ming Yitong mingsheng zhi.

Wushan’s reputation was also founded on Hangzhou’s long history, and historical sites and famous figures from the past maintained a firm presence there. The very name of Wushan pointed to its rich history. Two explanations of Wushan’s name are found in the sources. The first was that in the Spring and Autumn Period (722-481 BCE) Wushan

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453 Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, 5b-7b, 46-47. As Wang Shixing noted during his visit, Wushan comprised four hills that were named after famous sites on them: Sanmao hill also called Qibao (seven treasures); Ziyang hill also called Ruishi (auspicious stone); Chenghuang hill also called Jindi (gold earth); and Qingyi hill also called Baolian (treasured lotus). Wang Shixing, “Deng Wushan ji” (Record of ascending Wushan), Cao Wenqu, Xihu youji xuan, p. 285.

454 Yang Erzeng, Hai nei qiguan, juan 4, 1a.

455 This is a reference to the Yuan painter Wu Zhen (1280-1354). Cited in Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, p. 322.


457 Yang Yingzhao, “Ziyang dong ji” (Record of Ziyang Cave), in Cao Wenqu, Xihu youji xuan, p. 303.

458 Cao Xuequan, Da Ming Yitong mingsheng zhi, p. 2698.
was named because it marked the ancient state of Wu’s southern boundary with Yue. An alternative explanation was that Wushan was named after the famous statesman Wu Zixu (see below), but that the character of his name Wu (呉) was later mistaken as that of the state Wu (呉). (By some accounts the hill was named Xushan, also after Wu Zixu.)\textsuperscript{459} As with Hangzhou generally the histories and legends of particular periods of the past were layered at the sites of Wushan, including: the Spring and Autumn Period; the Tang era (618-907); the Wuyue Kingdom (907-978); and the Southern Song (960-1279). Around Hangzhou these historical sites included remains of old buildings and the locations of past events. Wushan itself was known for its many temples. The illustration of Wushan in *Hainei qiguan* is entitled “All the temples of Wushan” (*Wushan zhu miao*) and the *Da Ming Yitong mingsheng zhi* also noted that many temples were located there.\textsuperscript{460} During his visit Wang Shixing remarked that “there are so many shrines and temples that one cannot see them all”.\textsuperscript{461} There were both shrines that commemorated individual figures and temples associated with various spirits and Daoist masters. Before turning to the City God Temple, we briefly examine three historical sites that caught the attention of literati visitors to Wushan.

One of the more celebrated sites at Wushan was the Shrine to Lord Wu (Wu gong ci), which was dedicated to Wu Zixu (d. 484 BCE). Wu was a subject of the kingdom of Chu, who fled to the state of Wu after King Ping of Chu unjustly executed Wu’s father and brother. He came to serve the crown prince of Wu, who eventually ascended the throne as King Helü. Subsequently Wu Zixu was able to avenge his father and elder brother when he helped to lead an expedition that conquered Chu. However, after the passing of King Helü, Wu was unable to win the trust of his successor King Fuchai. Wu counselled Fuchai against the impending threats from the state of Yue, but was ordered to commit suicide on false charges. Wu Zixu’s premonitions were eventually realized as the armies of Yue conquered the state of Wu just ten years after his death. The legend of Wu Zixu was told and retold over the ages. Remembered as a loyal minister unjustly slain,

\textsuperscript{459} These explanations appear, for example, in *Da Ming yitong*, 2686, 3b; Lu Yingyang, *Guangyu ji*, juan 10, 2a; and Yang Erzeng, *Hainei qi guan*, juan 4, 1a.

\textsuperscript{460} Yang Erzeng, *Hainei qiguan*, juan 4, 1b-2a; Cao Xuequan, *Da Ming Yitong mingsheng zhi*, p. 2697, 7a.

\textsuperscript{461} Wang Shixing, “Deng Wushan ji” (Record of ascending Wushan), Cao Wenqu, *Xihu youji xuan*, p. 285.
and for his revenge of his father and brother, he came to be commemorated at sites in major Wu cities such as Suzhou and Hangzhou.\textsuperscript{462} Zhang Dai captured part of the story in his comments on the shrine in \textit{Xihu mengxun}. According to Zhang’s account, after Wu Zixu’s execution his corpse was wrapped in leather hides and thrown into the river where it was carried by the current, buffeting dike and shore. Subsequently someone saw Wu appear “in silver armour with a snowy lion, riding a brilliant chariot with white horses, at the head of the tide” and so the local people built a temple to him. Every year during the eighth month, when the tides were at their most powerful, the people of Hangzhou welcomed Wu with banners and drums and made offerings to him. During the Song there were occasions of threatening floods that subsided after the prefect prayed to Wu’s spirit. Wu in effect became a local guardian spirit with power over the waves.\textsuperscript{463}

A second site noted in the guidebooks and visited by literati was the Three Maos Temple (\textit{San Mao guan}). Wang Shixing visited the temple during his trip in the late Ming.\textsuperscript{464} Zhang Dai also wrote a short piece on the site explaining that this Daoist monastery, situated on the southwest side of Wushan, was dedicated to three brothers from Xianyang who attained the way and became transcendents in the early Qin period: Mao Ying, Mao Gu, and Mao Zhong. There were statues of the trio at the temple, showing them variously standing, sitting, and lying down, which people supposed to represent Daoist exercises.\textsuperscript{465} The three brothers were remembered for their achievements in self-cultivation, but the site nonetheless received official attention and numerous bestowals of name plaques and vessels through the ages. In the Jiajing period (1522-1566) Supreme Commander (\textit{zongdu}) Hu Zongxian built a hall at the site to enlist the powers of its spirits to help quell the scourge of piracy troubling the region at the time.\textsuperscript{466}

\textsuperscript{462} For a discussion of the early literary sources for Wu Zixu, see Johnson, “Epic and History in Early China.” The figure of Wu Zixu as a loyal minister who met a tragic death was comparable to the story of Qu Yuan. The \textit{Gongyang Commentary} was the first text to focus on the motif of righteous vengeance, see Lewis, \textit{Sanctioned Violence in Early China}, pp. 84-85.

\textsuperscript{463} During the Song, the court bestowed several official titles on Wu. Zhang Dai, \textit{Xihu mengxun}, p. 298. Yang Erzeng also noted the annual offerings made at Wu’s shrine, Yang Erzeng, \textit{Hainei qi guan}, juan 4, 1a.

\textsuperscript{464} Wang Shixing, “Deng Wushan ji” (Record of ascending Wushan), Cao Wenqu, \textit{Xihu youji xuan}, p. 285.


\textsuperscript{466} Yang Erzeng, \textit{Hainei qi guan}, juan 4, 4a.
The third site, the Pacifying the Seas Tower (Zhenhai lou), was also connected with Hu Zongxian. According to legend the tower was first built by the kings of Wuyue who would stand atop it and gaze north towards the Northern Song capital of Kaifeng as an expression of their subordination to the Song emperors. Thereafter it was rebuilt and renamed numerous times through the ages. Because of its height many visitors climbed it to enjoy the views it offered of the buildings in the city, the Qiantang River and West Lake, the surrounding hills and the sea beyond. According to the account in Zhang Dai’s record of Hangzhou, the tower also commanded the awe of foreigners who came to pay their tribute. Moreover, the tower served as a bell- and drum-tower, marking time and keeping order through the seasons. During the Ming it was destroyed by fire in 1474. Subsequently, when Hu Zongxian made Hangzhou a base for his operations against the pirates, he sought to rebuild the tower. Hu argued for the watchtower’s importance for maintaining order in local society. Hu eventually managed to rebuild the tower in 1557, with the support of officials and local elites. With views of “several hundred li into the distance” obtained from the tower, Hu was successful in ending the pirate menace. The tower was appropriately reassigned its former name of “pacifying the seas”.

These three famous Wushan sites originated in different periods and were associated with separate histories that drew the interest of literati visitors to Hangzhou. However, they all came to be connected with the wellbeing of Hangzhou and its people, for their protection against tidal floods and marauders, and with the general order of the area. It is this that gave them a wider appeal that extended from literati to the wider populace. Even more was this the case with the City God Temple, which drew visits by literati and was firmly embedded in local society.

### 4.2 Origins and Evolution of the City God Cult

The cult of the god of the chenghuang (literally “walls and moats”) or “city god” (these terms will be used interchangeably) had hazy origins – a point that was made by Ming (and earlier) writers as well as by modern scholars. Some sought the origin of the cult in the appearance of the term chenghuang in early texts. The early sixteenth century writer

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Cao An traced the term *chenghuang* to the *Xici* (appended writings) and *yao* (individual hexagram lines) sections of the *Yijing* and suggested that sacrifices to the spirit probably began as rites appended to other gods, although he acknowledged disputes over this identification.\(^{468}\) Fu Weilin (d. 1667), author of the *Ming shu* history, also cited the *Yijing* as the origin of the term *chenghuang*, in the context of princes and dukes protecting their states by building walls. For Fu, this was a sound reason for every prefecture, sub-prefecture, and county to make offerings to the *chenghuang* god to ask for protection.\(^{469}\) Ming writers sought to connect early references to walls and moats to a later belief in the city god, although the former did not in itself prove the latter.\(^{470}\) As the great fifteenth-century scholar and statesman Qiu Jun (1420-1495) put it, in heaven and earth all things (wu) have a spirit (shen), so just as mountains and forests, rivers and valleys all have their own spirits, if the people of a certain place build high walls and deep moats to defend it, then they hold that there must be a spirit that is master (zhu) of those walls and moats.\(^{471}\)

Modern scholars have also traced the origins of the city god to a tutelary spirit. Some scholars believe that the antecedent to the *chenghuang* was the god of the water barrier (shuiyong) as noted in the *Li ji*. According to this explanation, the spirit was originally a rural god, whose function was to protect the low walls around cultivated fields, that later transformed into the god of walls and moats following the urbanization of settlements.\(^{472}\) Other historians have traced the evolution of the god from the archaic soil gods (she), which it later supplanted.\(^{473}\) But as David Johnson points out, the *she* spirit was not associated with the same territory and it belonged to an earlier era. Moreover, in later imperial times the *she* retained a separate place in the official ritual, coupled with the *ji* grain spirit. People no longer worshipped the *she*, turning instead to


\(^{469}\) Fu Weilin *Ming shu*, “Jiao si zhi” (Treatise on suburban sacrifices), cited in *Wushan chenghuang miao zhi*, pp. 116-117.

\(^{470}\) Ancient and modern writers also cite the definition of *chenghuang* provided in *Shuowen jiezi*. Deng Siyu, “Chenghuang kao”, pp. 249-250.

\(^{471}\) Qiu Jun, *Daxue yanyi bu*, juan 61, 11b-12a.

\(^{472}\) Zhao Shiyu, *Kuanghuan yu richang*, pp. 164-165.

\(^{473}\) Taylor, “Ming T’ai-tsu and the Gods”, p. 34.
the chenghuang and the tudi earth god in town and country respectively.\textsuperscript{474} Buddhism may also have played a role in the evolution of the city god. Valerie Hansen has proposed that the Buddhist deity Vaisravana (\textit{pishamen}), a guardian figure closely associated with walls and buildings, may have been an influence on and merged with the god of walls and moats as it spread in the Tang era.\textsuperscript{475} Deng Siyu points out that the origins of the chenghuang cult lay in Yangtze river valley, which indicates that it had indigenous origins that pre-existed the spread of Buddhism, which entered China via the northwest land route and southeast coastal route. He does, however allow that the Buddhist deity may have influenced the later evolution of the city god cult.\textsuperscript{476} Despite the uncertainties over the origins and early evolution of the city god cult, what is clear is that it evolved as a protective spirit that was closely identified with city walls and local place.

Firmer evidence for the emergence of the city god came in texts of the Tang period, which provide the first appearance of the terms “god of walls and moats” (chenghuang shen) and ‘temple of [the god of] walls and moats’ (chenghuang miao). This suggests that the cult of the city god was certainly established by the Tang, although the texts themselves referred to people and events as early as the Qin-Han era.\textsuperscript{477} An early sixth century text preserved in the Tang compilation \textit{Tongdian} (completed in 801) records that the Han statesman Xiao He, who had helped Liu Bang found the dynasty and subsequently became prime minister, was believed to be the city god of Gucheng in modern Hubei.\textsuperscript{478} Another early example is found in the official history of the Northern Qi dynasty (\textit{Bei Qi shu}), presented to the throne in 636 but based on materials from the mid- and late-sixth century. This account describes a siege of the city of Yingcheng (contemporary Wuchang, Hubei province) in the year 555 in which the official defending the city, a certain Murong Yan, was only able to hold off the enemy after leading the people to pray at the city god temple. In this case the spirit was merely referred to as

\textsuperscript{474} Johnson, “The City-God Cults”, p. 395.
\textsuperscript{475} Hansen, “Gods on walls.”
\textsuperscript{476} Deng notes that there were Buddhist accounts of Vaisravana defending cities like Xi’an in the Tang. The foreign deity may also have been an influence on the appearance of statues of the city god and the practice of the god going on inspections (\textit{chu xun}). Deng Siyu, “Chenghuang kao”, pp. 269-270.
\textsuperscript{478} Johnson, “The City-God Cults”, p. 365.
chenghuang shen and not identified with any human figure, which was the usual case in the earlier stages of the cult.\textsuperscript{479} It is significant that an official sought help from the god for the protection of the city and its people, indicating early ideas about the relationship between state appointees and the spirit, as well as the latter’s charge over the welfare of the local place. Another example of an official seeking help from a city god can be seen in the case of Li Yangbing, the magistrate of Jinyun County in the mid-eighth century. However, the circumstances of this divine assistance were very different. In the summer of 759, after it had not rained for almost one month, magistrate Li Yangbing prayed to the city god and declared that if it did not rain he would set fire to the temple. For several days rain still did not fall. Li was about to set fire to the temple when it finally rained, after which the local people moved the temple to a superior location to thank the god.

Perhaps due to the fact that a human official had successfully threatened the god into action, the case of Li Yangbing became well known and was often mentioned by later writers when commenting on the history of the cult. The famous Northern Song scholar Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072) cited the episode and noted that the cult originated in the region of Wu and Yue, but that by his time it was to be found throughout the realm, though rarely at the county level. The mid-Ming writer Ye Sheng (1420-1474) also recorded the case of Li Yangbing in addition to Ouyang Xiu’s comments on it, indicating his awareness of the cult’s history.\textsuperscript{480} Soon after Ye, another Ming writer He Mengchun (1474-1536) mentioned the Li Yangbing story, and commented on the growth of the city god cult. He noted that it had spread beyond Wu and Yue as far as such places as Chengdu and Huangzhou. He also observed that ever since the Song dynasty, sacrifices to the god had spread throughout the realm and that there was a growing official recognition for the cult. Many city god temples had official name tablets bestowed on them and some even received noble titles. By He’s time sacrifices to city gods were both a formal responsibility and a high priority for prefects and magistrates throughout the realm.

\textsuperscript{479} Beishi, “Murong Yan zhuuan”, cited in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, pp. 83-84.

\textsuperscript{480} Ouyang Xiu, Jigu lu cited in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, pp. 97-98; Ye Sheng, Shui dong ri ji, pp. 296-297; Johnson, “The City-God Cults”, pp. 419-420. Up to the Tang-Song period, most city god temples were found in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, Hunan and Hubei, Jiangxi, Anhui, Fujian and Henan. Deng Siyu, “Chenghuang kao”, pp. 256-257.
Moreover, many individual city gods were identified with particular figures, some of whom He cites.\textsuperscript{481}

He Mengchun’s observations neatly summarize the main factors in the growth of the city god cult before the Ming dynasty, above all the increasingly official status of the cult. Despite questions over the precise position of the cult in the state politico-ritual system, it was clear that by the Song it had become a popular cult that received a large degree of official recognition.\textsuperscript{482} As Valerie Hansen has shown, the Song state used the bestowal of official titles on popular gods to maintain a presence in local society and to harness the gods’ power to strengthen itself at a time when it faced threats from northern peoples and was gravely short of funds. The granting of titles was intended both to reward deities and to endow them with further powers. The inclusion of local deities into the sacrificial statues also satisfied the local people who supported them.\textsuperscript{483} The practice of granting official titles to city gods specifically began at the end of the Tang and grew through the Five Dynasties period. The awarding of titles helped to promote the continued growth of the cult in the early Song and the number of titles bestowed on city gods shot up in 1075 and remained high thereafter.\textsuperscript{484} The cult remained widespread in the Yuan, continuing as an ad hoc system whereby the state granted recognition to individual gods and temples. It was not a universal state cult and there was no imperial sacrifice to the city god in the Song or Yuan capitals.\textsuperscript{485} The evolution of the city god cult reflects the broader developments in Chinese religion of the period. Official recognition of the cult also represented the growing human authority over local spirits. These gods became officials in a centralized bureaucracy of spirits closely resembling the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Deng Siyu wrote that the city god cult was included in the Sidian in the Song, while David Johnson posits that despite its appearance in numerous prefectures and counties, it was not evenly spread in the realm or across the administrative system and that it was not mandated by the state. Deng Siyu, “Chenghuang kao”, pp. 258-9; Johnson, “The City-God Cults”, pp. 399-401.
\item Hansen, \textit{Changing Gods in Medieval China}, chapter 4.
\item Hansen, “Gods on walls” pp. 94-97. The first case of a city god receiving an official title seems to be that of the god in Huazhou (Shaanxi) in 898.
\item Hamashima “Ming-Qing Jiangnan chenghuang kao”, p. 39.
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bureaucratic government of men, and through that colleagues and allies of human
magistrates and prefects.\footnote{Johnson, “The City-God Cults”, pp. 424-438.}

The city god cult was formally brought within state institutions at the beginning of
the Ming dynasty when it became included in the Sacrificial Statutes (\textit{Sidian}), as part
of the founding emperor’s efforts to impose politico-ritual order over the realm (see
discussion in chapter 2). As with other cults and ritual practices, Ming Taizu ordered an
assessment and reconfiguration of the city god cult at the beginning of his reign. This
process brought significant changes to the cult, which were introduced in stages as the
emperor deliberated with ritual experts and officials on the proper rites.\footnote{This section is based on the accounts in: Ming shi, juan 49, pp. 1285-1286; Qiu Jun, \textit{Daxue yanyi bu},
juan 61, 11a-12b; and Hamashima “Ming-Qing Jiangnan chenghuang kao”, pp. 40-41.}

At the
beginning of the dynasty, the Ming court mainly continued existing ritual practice
regarding the cult and declared noble titles for all city gods throughout the realm
depending on the place of the administrative seat of each on the bureaucratic hierarchy.
The capital city god received the rank of prince (\textit{wang}), gods of prefectural seats were
made dukes (\textit{gong}), and those of sub-prefectures and counties were made marquises
(\textit{hou}) and earls (\textit{bo}) respectively. In addition, the city gods of Kaifeng, Linhao, Taiping,
Hezhou, and Chuzhou were made princes because of their associations with Zhu
Yuanzhang.\footnote{Kaifeng had been considered for the position of dynastic capital, Linhao was Zhu Yuanzhang’s native
place, while the other three had been base cities in the course of Zhu Yuanzhang’s rise to power.}

But the situation soon changed. In 1370, the third year of the Hongwu reign, an
edict ordered the removal of all feudal titles, and thereafter city gods were to be known
only as the \textit{chenghuang} spirit of whatever prefecture, subprefecture or county. Several
months later additional edicts ordered the further clean-up of city god temples.
Miscellaneous spirits were to be removed, and spirit tablets were to replace statues of the
gods, which were to be ground up and mixed with water, and the resultant paste used to
paint clouds and mountains on both sides of the hall. There were prescriptions for city
god temples to be arranged like government offices, with all ritual implements, desks and
ink brushes and stones to correspond with the yamen of their living official counterparts.
There were special provisions for the city god of the capital to have offerings appended at the altar to mountains and rivers (shanchuan) along with those of other celestial and chthonic spirits. Otherwise the metropolitan prefect was to administer sacrifices to it, as were princes, prefects, sub-prefects and magistrates at chenghuang temples in their respective jurisdictions throughout the realm.

The Hongwu decrees formed the first systematic ordering of the city god cult in history. Through these ritual prescriptions, Taizu sought to rectify ritual practice. He did not seek – at least in rhetoric – to control the city gods, but to channel the power of spirits to bolster the Ming order. As he stated in a decree, city gods were “appointed by the Lord-on-High (shangdi) … how can the state grant titles to them?” Instead, he declared that just as he had received a mandate of heaven to govern and transform the world, so did spirits receive a mandate from heaven. Ming Taizu envisaged the administrations of men and spirits to be working in parallel: “the realm of light having rites and music, the realm of shade having ghosts and spirits.” As Qiu Jun explained, this is why new officials arriving at their posts were to swear an oath before the city god, which had the responsibility of supervisor to watch over the affairs of people so that people did not act against the rites.

The realms of men and spirits were matched to the extent that the city god cult was reconfigured to mirror the Ming administrative structure. Writing in the late Wanli era, Zhu Guozhen (1557-1632) observed that at Beijing’s city god temple there were statues of the city gods of the thirteen provinces and that every year, when the metropolitan prefect made offerings to the capital’s city god, the provincial administration commissioners (buzhengsi) would conduct sacrifices to the provincial city gods. Zhu was puzzled because he had never heard of provincial city gods. As far as Zhu was concerned cities that were centres of political administration (the capitals, prefectures, sub-prefectures, and counties) ought each to have one – and only one – city god. It did not make sense for a city to have two city gods, one local and one

489 Ming shi, juan 49, p. 1285.
491 Qiu Jun, Daxue yanyi bu, juan 61, 12b-13a.
Zhu Guozhen’s contemporary, Tian Yiheng (fl. 1570), also noted the situation at the capital’s city god temple, but wrote that prefectural and county city gods should similarly be appended to provincial city god temples. Thus Zhejiang should have a provincial city god temple with the city gods of Hangzhou, Renhe and Qiantang appended to them.\(^\text{493}\)

The city god cult’s parallels with the Ming bureaucracy did not stop there. There came to be chenghuang spirits not only for provinces, prefectures, sub-prefectures, and counties, but also for the offices of grand coordinator (xunfu), surveillance commissioner (anchashi), and even for directorates of grain, transportation, and silk manufacturing.\(^\text{494}\)

What struck Zhu Guozhen as odd makes sense if we view chenghuang spirits as officials in a bureaucracy of spirits that replicated the administration of men, rather than only as guardian spirits of individual cities. The addition of city gods at these multiple levels thus complemented and reinforced the structure of government with its new provincial offices being crafted by the Ming state.

While the early Ming reconfiguration of the city god cult was part of a process of reforming and standardizing ritual practices and an attempt to reshape the realm of spirits to match the order of men, the cult’s popular and unorthodox character persisted. The removal of miscellaneous gods and the replacement of statues with spirit tablets constituted a mode of iconoclasm that was in line with ritual reforms advanced by Song Lian (1310-1381), the leading Neo-Confucian scholar of the Jinhua school at the Hongwu court. But while Ming Taizu was prepared to do away with images of city gods, he was not ready to remove statues of Confucius, which Song also sought arguing that it was a Tang innovation and therefore corruption of ancient ritual practice. Song Lian’s successor at the Grand Academy, Song Na (1311-1390), was more successful. In the 1380s he persuaded the emperor to have images of Confucius replaced by spirit tablets, with the

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\(^\text{492}\) Zhu Guozhen, *Yongchuang xiao pin*, juan 19, 4a-5a; p. 506. Zhu’s observation attested to the presence of statues at city god temples, despite the ban by the dynastic founder.

\(^\text{493}\) Tian Yiheng, *Liu qing ri zha*, cited in *Wushan chenghuang miao zhi*, juan 2, 14b-15b, pp. 110-112. At one point Hangzhou’s chenghuang temple did indeed house all three levels of city god. *Wushan chenghuang miao zhi*, juan 1, 9b-11a, pp. 54-57.

\(^\text{494}\) Hamashima “Ming-Qing Jiangnan chenghuang kao”, pp. 41-42.
new Grand Academy in Nanjing leading by example. The edict ordering the change was cited in many gazetteers and other sources, although it was probably not universally effective. Indeed, statues made a comeback early in the fifteenth century. Openly flouting the dynastic founder’s directive, images were reintroduced at all levels from the new Grand Academy in the Yongle emperor’s new capital at Beijing, through temples to Confucius and city gods everywhere. The use of statues and images clearly had a broad appeal. Many scholar-officials of the elite classes supported their use and the reintroduction of statues was probably connected with their importance to popular practices of temple worship and processions involving the god. As the writer Ye Sheng saw it, the use of statues was a case of an erroneous custom being passed on. As noted already, many Ming writers commented on the city god cult’s hazy origins. Rites officials debating ritual reform at the early Hongwu court similarly noted that the cult did not have an orthodox foundation, adding that early Confucian scholars saw the chenghuang as an unnecessary addition to the she spirit. They cited the well-known account of Li Yangbing, which stated that the cult was not to be found in the Sidian, and that only Wu and Yue had it. They also pointed out, however, that the cult was more extensive than that account indicated and had spread throughout the realm during the Song. Ultimately, because the city god cult was so well established in local society – evident in the popular belief that “the chenghuang protects a city, and the people rely on it” – they concluded that it was fitting to maintain the cult and conduct sacrifices to the god despite its unorthodox

495 Sommer, “Ming Taizu’s Legacy” pp. 76-78. Deng Siyu also traces chenghuang statues back to the Tang, see Deng Siyu, “Chenghuang kao”, p. 258.
496 For instance, we know that in Changshu the statue of the god was preserved outside the city and continued to be worshipped as a lesser city god temple (xiao chenghuang miao). Hamashima “Ming-Qing Jiangnan chenghuang kao”, p. 41.
497 Sommer, “Ming Taizu’s Legacy”, p. 79.
498 Guo Qitao notes that the need to parade the god in processions may have contributed to the reintroduction of its statue. Guo Qitao, Exorcism and Money, p. 51.
499 Ye Sheng, Shui dong riji, juan 27, p. 270. Ye cites a case during the Jingtai era (1450-1457) where a chief censor had the spirit tablet in a city god temple in Guangzhou replaced with a statue. Lu Rong similarly stated that it was a muddleheaded practice and attributed it to a simple continuation of long-standing customs. Lu Rong, Shu yuan za ji, cited in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, pp. 108-109.
nature. The city god cult was in fact the only one of eight official and universally mandated cults in the Ming that did not have a Confucian origin.

The Ming court’s intentions may have been to reform ritual practices, but its policies resulted in the promotion and further growth of an already widespread popular cult. Accounts in local gazetteers indicate that most chenghuang temples were indeed built in the early Ming. One scholar by the name of Zhang Jiao calculated that there were 1,472 city-god temples throughout the realm by the Wanli era while the writer Zhao Han (fl 1615-1620) commented that “no county did not have one” in the late Ming.

Before turning to examine the specific case of the City God Temple at Wushan, we shall consider city god temples as urban sites. This is not merely due to their location within cities, but because of two important factors: their historical spread was closely connected with commercial and urban growth; and, being a symbolic urban site, they helped to delineate and to define relations between cities and the surrounding area.

In the earlier phase of the city god cult’s growth during the Tang-Song period there is an evident concentration of its distribution in northern Zhejiang and southern Jiangsu. The cult then spread outwards from these areas, which also saw the greatest rises in population from the beginning of the seventh to the beginning of the thirteenth centuries, in tandem with a general orientation to the south and increasing urbanization. Local gazetteers and other historical records indicate that in this earlier period of the city god cult’s history, and especially before it became a state mandated cult in the early Ming, influential commoners took the lead in building temples to chenghuang spirits. These were merchants and other newly wealthy elites who profited from the growth of city-based commerce. City god temples were frequently renovated and

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500 Ming shi, juan 49, pp. 1285-1286.
503 Guo Qitao, Exorcism and Money, p. 49, n. 3 citing the Enshi xianzhi, p. 439; Zhao Han, Shi mo juan hua, cited in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, pp. 107-8.
505 Johnson, “The City-God Cults”, pp. 420-424; Shen Hao, “ ‘Ming-Qing Jiangnan chenghuang kao’
expanded through the Ming period, and especially after the mid-Ming in the highly commercial and urbanized Jiangnan region. Moreover, city god temples did not only signal urban growth – they also stimulated it. Several scholars have observed that temple fairs played an important part in commercial growth beginning in the Song. Temple fairs and festivals were occasions for bustling markets that catered to people from all over the region. These markets remained significant in the Ming, although their relative importance lessened with the increasing urbanization and regularization of commercial life through the Ming-Qing period. Another remarkable aspect of the growth of the city god cult in relation to urbanization was that beginning in the mid-Ming, city god temples began to appear in places below the level of the county. Market towns (zhen) and other lower level settlements had no official administrative status. They may not even have had city walls, yet the god of walls and moats (chenghuang) appeared in them. The proliferation of the cult outside the official ritual system and beyond the centres of state administration points to its popular and diffuse nature, which increased with urban growth.

Furthermore, the city gods honoured in market towns were those of the counties to which they were subordinate. This suggests that city god temples came to serve as general urban markers that also identified the relationships between particular towns and cities. The early Ming ordering of cults was largely focussed on cities. At lower level towns only the altar to the spirit of the soil (she) and that to restless spirits (li) were included in the ritual system of the Sidian. Thus the city god had no official presence

buzheng”, p. 91.


507 Deng Siyu, “Chenghuang kao”, p. 262; Guo Qitao, *Exorcism and Money*, p. 51. In the Song, temple fairs were more important in the south than in the north. But as Jiangnan became China’s leading commercial region, the temple fair became less important to economic life in the south and comparatively more important in the north. Zhao Shiyu, *Kuanghuan yu richang*, p. 171.

508 Hamashima gives examples of this phenomenon from Songjiang from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries. Hamashima, “‘Ming-Qing Jiangnan chenghuang kao’ buzheng”, p. 91.

509 In the countryside sacrifices to the earth god (tudi) and the she were often combined to become one of the most important sacrifices. Zhao Shiyu, *Kuanghuan yu richang*, pp. 163-166. Some cults were almost exclusively found in urban areas (such as the Lord of the Eastern Peak [dongyue dadi] and Wenchang); other gods (including Guandi and dragon kings) were found in urban and rural areas; many spirits were found mainly in rural areas, *ibid*, pp. 168-169.
outside centres of state administration. But the establishment of city god temples in market towns suggests the self-assertion of towns on the administrative hierarchy, and also their identification with county towns, which was evident in the setting up of temple festivals and fairs and also in popular rituals conducted between county and market town such as the procession of city gods. City dwellers organized the festivals at city god temples, but people from the surrounding towns and villages were very much participants in them. There was no clear urban-rural divide between these different groups as far as social culture was concerned. But there was a hierarchy of place reflected in ritual practice. For instance, in a manner reflecting the prefect or magistrate inspecting the surrounding areas that lay within his jurisdiction, city gods were brought out on inspection tours and would be greeted by deities based in the rural areas. Moreover, such rural tours were often the initiative of rural residents who invited the city god to tour their areas and organized receptions for them and then saw them off back to the city afterwards. These popular ritual practices clearly illustrate the potency of the city god as a symbol of urban identity and the hierarchy of place in late imperial times.

4.3 The Wushan City God Temple

Having examined the non-canonical origins of the city god cult, its historical growth and spread, and its enduring popular character despite the state’s ritual reforms, we now return to the site of Wushan and the city god temple there. We first briefly consider the temple as a religious institution, before outlining the history of building and rebuilding the site. Finally we consider the legend of the city god Zhou Xin himself, the powers attributed to him, and his place in the popular imagination. These different dimensions of this popular urban site together reveal what it meant to different groups in society, and how different interests intersected and interacted at the site.

510 In Songyang, Zhejiang the city god was brought out to tour alongside Marshall Wen in order to expel pestilences. Zhao Shiyu, *Kuanghuan yu richang*, pp. 179-181.

511 In the early Qing there also appeared the practice of “releasing cash and grain” (*jie qian liang*) in which people of a locality made offerings to high-level administrations through city god temples as a form of tax payment. Hamashima “Ming-Qing Jiangnan chenghuang kao”, pp. 45-46.
4.3.1 Institutional Organization of the City God Temple

The Wushan City God Temple was a religious institution that was both mandated by the state and subject to its control. Like the shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian, it had a place in the socio-political order. But it was not established in commemoration of the figure at its centre. Rather, in making the city god part of the Sidian, the state was recognizing a long-standing and diffuse popular cult. And the figure of the city god Zhou Xin itself was a local persona grafted onto an existing type. Like Lingyin Monastery, the City God Temple was an institution with its own clerical management and personnel. But whereas Lingyin was a Buddhist institution, city god temples generally had closer ties with Daoism and diffuse popular religious practices. They were usually administered by Daoist priests who also conducted the cult’s rituals, as was the case at Wushan.512 Due to the lack of information in the temple gazetteer, we can only outline the institutional arrangements at the Wushan City God Temple during the Ming. It is possible to make a couple of observations about the temple’s organization nonetheless. First, there was a community of Daoist priests that was resident at the temple and administered it. These priests were divided into some thirteen houses (fang) that were organized into two groups. Each house took charge of temple affairs one month at a time by rotation. The priest of whichever house was responsible for any given month would divide temple duties and income among the others in his group.513 This system of sub-corporate organization has similarities with that at Lingyin Monastery (chapter 3), but the community at the city god temple seems to have been much smaller and more loosely structured. Second, although it was a smaller institution and community than that at Lingyin Monastery, clerics still played a part in the regular running of the temple, in its ritual life, and in the occasional projects to restore the temple. Six Ming priests are named in the temple gazetteer’s record of its presiding clerics (zhuchi). (This small number may indicate both the looser organization and smaller size of the institution.)514

512 City god temples had close relations with the Daoist religion since the Song, and other popular gods such as local earth (tudi) spirits, also attended by Daoist priests, were commonly found appended to them. Deng Siyu, “Chenghuang kao”, pp. 270-272.
513 The gazetteers records that there were formerly fifteen houses, reduced to thirteen by the early Qing. Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, Juan 5, pp. 335-342.
514 This could also be a feature of the temporal bias of the gazetteer, which was a product of the Qing
Figure 15 The Wushan City God Temple today. Photograph by author.

The first trio of priests named are credited with rebuilding work in the Hongwu and Hongzhi reign periods. A further pair of clerics is mentioned for their role in conducting prayers for rain during a drought in 1596 and for helping with the subsequent renovation of the temple carried out to thank the god, although it was the city’s prefect who led the overall project. In 1616 another priest led rituals to expel a pestilence. Subsequently there was a major fire that burnt down the temple and so local officials raised funds to rebuild it.\(^{515}\) Thus while clerics did have a role in the running of the city god temple as an institution, generally they did not lead major projects to rebuild or renovate it. This was partly because, compared with Lingyin Monastery, the temple was a smaller and weaker institution with fewer resources to sustain it. But it was also because the temple was an official establishment that occupied an important place in the wider community that it attracted support from officials, elites, and the people at large. The history of those behind the building and rebuilding of the temple illustrates the different groups involved in maintaining the site.

### 4.3.2 Building History of the City God Temple

Most historical records on Hangzhou’s city god temple note that it originally lay outside the city walls just south of West Lake at Phoenix Hill (fenghuang shan), and that it was relocated to Wushan in 1139 during the Shaoxing era of the Southern Song.\(^{516}\) For the Ming period, the gazetteer of the Wushan City God Temple notes five occasions on which the temple was restored or rebuilt. The first rebuilding work was organized by resident priests following a period of disrepair, as mentioned in the preceding section. A second construction project took place in 1474-1475 when the provincial administration commissioner (buzhengshi) Ning Liang rebuilt a hall that had been destroyed in a fire. The next two major renovations were carried out in 1503 and 1596-1598 in the hope that the god would bring rain. Finally a major fire in 1617 caused extensive damage to the site. The gazetteer treats the last three occasions of rebuilding work in greater detail

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\(^{515}\) *Wushan chenghuang miao zhi*, juan 5, pp. 342-345.

\(^{516}\) The earliest major history of Hangzhou is the Song writer Qian Shuoyou’s *Xianchun Lin’an zhi*, which records the move and was cited by later historians thereafter. *Wushan chenghuang miao zhi*, juan 2, 1a-b, pp. 137-138.
because they were larger-scale projects with more people involved. An examination of all these cases of rebuilding work reveals the members of different groups who acted as patrons of the temple as well as the professed reasons for their patronage of the site.\footnote{Wei Yuan, Qiantang xian zhi, in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, 2b-3a, pp. 140-141.}

In 1503, the sixteenth year of the Hongzhi reign, Hangzhou Prefect Yang Mengying (see chapter 5) wrote a record of the restoration of the city god temple that year that was carved into a stone stele and erected at the temple to commemorate the occasion. The detailed account is noteworthy for providing an official’s stated view of the city god cult as well as the circumstances of the renovation project.\footnote{Yang Mengying, “Chongxiu chenghuang miao ji” (Record on restoring the city god temple), cited in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, juan 6, 2a-4b; pp. 463-468.}

Yang begins the account by discussing the history and role of the city god as a guardian spirit for the local place. He refers to the Yi jing and other early texts for the origin of the god, largely in accord with the general Ming understanding of the cult discussed above. As for the occasion of the renovation project, it was in the spring of 1503 that a lack of rain prompted the senior eunuch Grand Defender (zhenshou) Mai Xiu and regional inspector (xun’an yushi) Xia Jinghe to lead their subordinates to the city god temple to seek the god’s assistance to bring rain. Thereupon they saw that the temple was in disrepair, which they blamed on “idle and disrespectful officials” and determined to be the cause of the dry spell. Mai and Xia immediately put forth the funds to cover the temple’s renovation and charged Prefect Yang Mengying with the task. Yang was the author of the record and as the resident administrator of Hangzhou, the maintenance of the city god temple was his responsibility. Mai and Xia were in effect blaming the temple’s deteriorated state on Yang. In his own defence, Yang noted that he had intended to repair the temple since his arrival at the post, but that he did not have the resources or the popular support to carry out the necessary work. Since Mai and Xia had then provided the funds and bade him to the work, Yang eagerly carried out the project. He made careful arrangements to acquire the necessary materials and supplies for labour, and within just three months, the temple was completely restored and fitting for the god once more. At the end of the record, Yang credits Mai and Xia for the restoration – he himself merely carried it out. While Yang may have been praising his superiors partly out of courtesy, his account indicates that
local officials did not necessarily have the authority or resources to meet such obligations as maintaining the official cult of the city god.

The second instance of substantial renovations to Hangzhou’s city god temple also concerned rain. But whereas the previous case saw the temple restored so that the god might send rain, on the second occasion repairs were carried out to thank the god after he had brought rain. Two texts bring to light the circumstances of 1596-1598 that resulted in the temple’s renovation. The first text is a commemorative stele record, similar to Yang Mengying’s on the previous occasion, by incumbent Hangzhou Prefect Li Donglu. It begins by praising the city god for his role in protecting and transforming the people. Significantly Li notes that the god does not send rain directly, but acts as an intercessor to the Lord-on-High (shangdi) to bring rain on behalf of the people. Li then recounts that in the summer of the bingshen year of the Wanli era, 1596, he visited the temple because it did not rain. With his subordinates in tow, Li conducted rites and prayers. The god responded swiftly indeed for Li “had not yet returned to the yamen gates when sweet rain fell.” In order to thank the city god for his favour, Li immediately planned the renovation of the temple with the assistance of a pair of its priests. He then presented the plans to the prefectural elites and leaders of the town, to the other officials and the local gentry, in order to gain their support. According to the account they all “delightedly contributed funds.” This larger project took three years and on its completion in the middle of 1598, the temple was much enlarged and had a completely new appearance. Proud of the results Prefect Li wrote the account and had it inscribed on stone for all to see, in stated emulation of the earlier restoration carried out by his predecessor Yang Mengying.

However, the success of the project may not have been as straightforward as Li suggested. A second text detailing the episode, written by Hangzhou native and provincial administration commissioner of Shanxi, Jiang Duo was composed to accompany a list of names of those involved in the project. It confirms that local officials and elites worked

519 Li Donglu “Chenghuang miao ji” (Record of the Chenghuang temple) in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, juan 6, 4b-6b, pp. 468-472.

520 Jiang Duo, “Chenghuang miao timing ji” (Record of names at the chenghuang temple), in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, pp. 474-476.
together to renovate the temple, but it also hints that the project met with problems. Specifically, the project was so great that nobody could take full responsibility for its restoration, so the censors, prefects and magistrates all had to reduce their salaries to contribute funds in addition to securing donations from local elites. Still, they managed to restore the temple to a splendid state befitting the city god. Perhaps as a result of the difficulties in raising the funds for the project, the prefect made special effort to have a list of the donors compiled and their names carved into stone for all to see at the temple. This pair of texts thus reveals that while the restoration of the temple was the responsibility of officials, it could only be achieved in negotiation with local elites and with the support of the wider community.

The last major rebuilding project during the Ming period followed a fire that burnt the temple down in 1617, the forty-fifth year of the Wanli reign. As on the two previous occasions, the main source is a commemorative text that recorded the events. In this case, however, the author was not the resident administrator who carried out the work, but a Hunanese called Zhang Dayou, who came to Hangzhou to serve as Zhejiang’s postal service circuit (yi chuan dao) intendant. Unlike the earlier accounts, Zhang’s record was written several years after the project was completed – he did not arrive in Hangzhou until that time. That Zhang wrote the account at all years after the event was due to his personal ties to the driving force of the project, a man by the name of Jin Xuezeng. The account provides unusually detailed information not only on the people who contributed towards the project but also the costs of the work. Zhang signals his relationship with Jin from the outset, referring to him by his official position of vice censor-in-chief (zhongcheng) and as his teacher. Zhang explains later in the essay that Jin had been a provincial education commissioner (wenzong) in Hunan (Zhang’s home province), during which time there were more successful scholars than there had been in two hundred years. As educational achievement was an important step towards official advancement, Zhang became indebted to Jin and remained so as his own career progressed. So it happened that in 1626 Zhang came to take up a post in Hangzhou, his teacher’s native

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521 Zhang Dayou, “Chongjian chenghuang miao ji” (Record on the rebuilding of the chenghuang temple), in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, pp. 476-481.
place, where Jin’s son, a tribute scholar (gong shi) invited Zhang to compose a record of the events around the rebuilding of the site.

According to Zhang’s account, upon his arrival in Hangzhou he went to the city god temple to swear his oath of office before the god. Seeing that the temple was in a splendid condition despite being more than two centuries old, he suspected it had been repaired recently. Upon inquiry, one of the resident Daoist priests named Deng Guangnian informed Zhang that the site had indeed been rebuilt, after a fire that began at the foot of Wushan spread uphill and destroyed the temple in 1617. In despair, Deng and his fellow priests informed Jin Xuezeng of the disaster, whereupon Jin immediately provided one hundred taels of silver to build a temporary shelter for the god’s spirit tablet. Jin then contacted numerous officials to explain the disaster and to raise funds to rebuild the temple. Zhang Dayou gives a truly impressive list of officials who supported Jin’s project. This included the governor general (dufu) Liu Yikun, who immediately gave three hundred taels of silver and sent officials to assist with the project. A host of other officials from the government ministries, provincial administrations and other regional agencies, Hangzhou’s prefect Yao Zhilan and the county magistrates, members of the local gentry and commoners, all made contributions. Some gave of their official salaries, others made personal donations so that in a short time they were able to start work. The large-scale project took five years to complete at a cost of almost seven thousand taels of silver. This was a very large sum of money that few individuals except the extremely wealthy could imagine possessing, although substantial construction projects, such as the building of a pavilion at West Lake, might be expected to exceed 1,000 taels. 522 Zhang Dayou notes that half of the costs for rebuilding the city god temple came from the government and the other half from the common people.

The apparent ease with which this major project was launched and completed attests to the importance of the city god temple to officials and the wider populace. Furthermore, that so many officials from different tiers of government contributed showed that Jin Xuezeng was an able fund-raiser with good connexions in officialdom.

522 In the world of official corruption, however, bribes as high as 10,000 taels could be demanded by the turn of the sixteenth century. For a discussion of how to interpret such sums in the Ming, see Brook, “Everything for a Price”, especially pp. 15-18.
and wider society. Certainly he was a man of considerable local standing, which is why the temple’s priests sought his assistance immediately after the fire had reduced the site to ashes. Indeed, Jin’s reputation would have suggested to the priests that their plea would not be in vain. Zhang Dayou records that in addition to his earlier appointment as an education official in Hunan, Jin had served prominently in other positions including governor general of Fujian, in which post his success in fighting pirates had won honours from the emperor. After retiring from office, Jin had returned to his native Hangzhou where he spent his days attending to “ritual vessels and schools” – a worthy occupation for a former education official. He was thus an active member of the local elite and had also been involved in the restoration of Ciguang Monastery and the rebuilding of the county Confucian school. 523

The series of projects to rebuild the Wushan City God Temple over the course of the Ming demonstrates that the city god cult was widely supported across officialdom and among local people. But despite being an official institution, the central government did not provide funds to maintain or rebuild it when necessary. Instead, such work was possible only through the efforts of officials and local elites as well as the people at large. The three main projects outlined above neatly illustrate how different levels of official might take the initiative in such projects. In the first instance the senior eunuch Mai Xiu and regional inspector Xia Jinghe charged Hangzhou prefect Yang Mengying with renovations. In the second case Prefect Li Donglu himself led efforts to rebuild the temple. In the final case it was the retired official and local son Jin Xuezeng who took the lead. That the final rebuilding was the most extensive project was because the temple had been burnt down. That Jin Xuezeng was able to rebuild the temple with such widespread support shows that even in retirement he wielded considerable influence. He clearly enjoyed an extensive network of connections that reached far beyond Hangzhou itself. To rebuild such an important site as the city god temple brought considerable praise and in addition to the commemorative records describing the events, both Jin Xuezeng and Yang Mengying had shrines built in their honour at the site. 524 (On the other hand, those who

524 Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, juan 1, pp. 56-57; 11a-b.
had been praised for carrying out such projects could later be erased from the record, as seems to have been the case with the eunuch Mai Xiu, whose name did not appear in the brief account of the event in the county’s Wanli era gazetteer. Patrons of the city god temple were highly regarded because of the importance of the cult, but the god himself had a much wider appeal to the people at large because of the general functions of city gods, and also due to the legends behind Zhou Xin, Hangzhou’s city god, in particular.

4.4 Zhou Xin – Hangzhou’s City God

While the cult of the city god was incorporated into the state’s politico-ritual system in the Ming and the city god temple became a central institution that was the concern of officials and commoners alike, there was continuing uncertainty over the nature of the city god itself. The late Ming scholar Fu Weilin (d. 1667) was one who questioned the nature of the god. Commenting on the celebration of the god’s birthday on the eleventh of the fifth month, Fu wrote that “the chenghuang was not originally a man or ghost, so how could it have a birthday? I say that’s ridiculous!” The nature of city gods was also debated in a 1638 conversation between the scholar Zhu Jizuo (who would later become a grand secretary) and the Italian Jesuit Giulio Aleni. In response to Aleni’s assertion that city gods were the spirits of human beings, as evident in their having surnames, Zhu retorted that the chenghuang cult was not set up for worshipping human beings and that only common people thought that they had surnames. Zhu may have been attempting to defend the literati class as well as to avert Aleni’s charge of idolatry, but both his and Fu’s comments indicate that there was uncertainty over what the city god actually was.

Part of the problem was the cult’s fuzzy and clearly non-canonical origins discussed above. Further complicating the picture, while the city god emerged as a generic guardian spirit, in countless localities it also became conflated with particular

525 Wanli Qiantang xian zhi, in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, p. 138, 1b. Mai Xiu had been a prominent patron of building projects at numerous sites around Hangzhou, including Yue Fei’s shrine – see chapter 2.

526 Fu Weilin, Ming shu, “Jiao si zhi” (Treatise on suburban sacrifices), cited in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, pp. 116-117.

527 Aleni suggested that if Zhu was correct, then people should inscribe a wooden tablet addressing the chenghuang as “Supernatural Being Charged by the Lord of Heaven to Protect this City” and pay homage to him according to Christian ritual. Zürcher/ Li Jiubiao, Kouduo richao, Vol. 1, pp. 575-576; Book VIII.2, pp. 1b-2a; pp. 528-529).
individuals that had close ties to the place in question. This was significant because it made the chenghuang spirit more relevant to local people – and thereby likely more efficacious and authoritative.\textsuperscript{528} As noted already, the earliest sources naming individuals as city gods date to the sixth century, although in some cases they refer to figures as early as the Western Han. In the early stage of the cult’s evolution during the Tang-Song era, there were several main types of city god: historical figures from the Han, including statesmen who helped found the dynasty, but whose connection with a particular city may have been rather tenuous; men who opened up a region for settlement in the Sui or early Tang; able officials who had served in the city; or city gods that evolved from ancient, non-human spirits.\textsuperscript{529}

Particular details about individual city gods persisted in the lore around them, but as the cult grew and spread, the generic city god also acquired certain qualities and roles. Popular tales show that already in the Tang and Song the chenghuang spirit was regarded as a guardian spirit that protected a particular place and saw to the welfare of its people. It provided rain, it had control over the registers of the dead, and was able to appear in people’s dreams and to control malevolent spirits.\textsuperscript{530} By the Yuan the city god had become a judge of the dead in the underworld. In the Ming there were stories of city gods appearing in military campaigns of the Hongwu, Yongle, Zhengde and Wanli reigns – and not always on the Ming side.

It was also during the Ming that the chenghuang became associated with success in the civil service examinations, alongside Wenchang. Another significant change in the Ming that came with the official systematization of the cult was the association of the city god with the altar to restless spirits (\textit{li tan}). In the fourth year of the founding Hongwu reign, 1371, it was decreed that the imperial and princely capitals, all prefectures, county towns, and sub-county \textit{li} and \textit{she} wards were to establish an altar to ghosts and spirits that

\textsuperscript{528} Guo Qitao, \textit{Exorcism and Money}, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{529} Johnson, “The City-God Cults”, p. 424ff.
\textsuperscript{530} This overview of the capacities and functions of city gods draws on Deng Siyu, “Chenghuang kao”, pp. 263-269.
Commenting on the introduction of this ritual responsibility for the city god, Qiu Jun explained that the purpose was to put to rest spirits that did not have a place to which to return, so that they would not become malevolent spirits and harm people. Qiu also gives the various circumstances under which a person might die a violent or irregular death and become a restless spirit. Heading the list was to be killed during warfare, followed by death from flood, fire, banditry and robbery. Ming Taizu probably instituted the ritual altar to attend to the spirits of the countless people that died in the violent years around the Yuan-Ming transition. Qiu also explained that to have city gods take care of

531 The three dates were qingming, the fifteenth day of the seventh month in the autumn, and the first day of the tenth month during winter. Chenghua Hangzhou fuzhi, cited in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, p. 104; Ye Sheng, Shui dong riji, juan 27, p. 297.

532 Other cases for restless spirits that Qiu mentions include: those who died from pestilence; those who
restless spirits throughout the realm was akin to the ruler and his prefects and magistrates attend to affairs at all levels of government. Certainly through the Ming and Qing periods, the figure of the city god became increasingly viewed as an official in the underworld bureaucracy, and took on many responsibilities associated with his human counterpart, such as quelling bandits, resolving cases of injustice, ensuring moral customs, administering exams, and keeping yamen officials in order. As we shall see, the legends and popular history of Hangzhou’s city god Zhou Xin also came to include many of these elements. It is through such roles and deeds that Zhou so captured the popular imagination and was seen to act for the overall wellbeing of the people of Hangzhou.

4.4.1 Zhou Xin becomes Hangzhou’s City God
Zhou Xin, the Yongle period (1403-1424) judicial official who became the deity at the Wushan city god temple, was not Hangzhou’s original city god. This was a well-known fact in the late Ming. Yang Erzeng noted in his touring guide Hainei qiguan that after the city god temple was moved to Wushan during the Song Shaoxing period, the image of the previous god was painted there and images of his wife and descendants were later added.533 Zhang Dai also noted the relocation of the temple and identified the city god that had been granted additional titles in the Song as a certain Sun Ben, and that it was only in the Ming Yongle reign that Zhou Xin replaced him.534 But how did Zhou Xin become the city god of Hangzhou? Native Hangzhou writer Lang Ying’s personal recollections regarding the identification of Zhou Xin as Hangzhou’s city god are telling. Lang recorded an anecdote in which his maternal grandfather had witnessed as a boy a Daoist priest being possessed by the city god on its birthday. The spirit declared to the gathered crowd: “I am not the old god. I was originally the provincial censor Zhou Xin. I was born on the seventeenth day of the fifth month. Because I am resolute and honest, the Lord on High (shangdi) ordered me to administer Hangzhou again.”

533 Yang Erzeng, Hainei qiguan, juan 4, 4b-5a.
534 Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, p. 301.
Subsequently, local people made a statue of Zhou Xin as city god and instituted offerings to him on his birthday in the fifth month. Lang then gives a brief biographical sketch of Zhou, noting his honest and rigorous execution of his duties in various posts, including that of surveillance commissioner (ancha shi) of Zhejiang, and the political struggles that brought his execution. Lang recognized that Zhou’s qualities could lead to his apotheosis, yet he still doubted that Zhou had sufficient stature to become the city god and occupy the senior position in Hangzhou’s spirit hierarchy. He wondered whether it might have been an error of oral transmission and remained doubtful until, decades after the incident witnessed by his grandfather, he read a certain Secretary Peng’s biography of Zhou Xin. That account related the spirit of Zhou Xin appearing to the Yongle emperor and informing him that the Lord on High had indeed appointed him city god of Hangzhou because of his resolute and honest character. For Lang, this account corroborated the family story and proved that his grandfather’s words were not mistaken.

Lang’s account reveals that there was uncertainty over the identity of Zhou Xin as Hangzhou’s city god. While it was widely acknowledged that virtuous and able officials might serve in the bureaucracy of spirits after death, for some people notable feats and remarkable qualities required validation by separate accounts. Furthermore, as one gazetteer record noted, the sacrifices of the people of Hangzhou to Zhou Xin arose “from the people’s hearts” and there was never an imperial edict appointing him to be city god. Sources differ on this last point and some suggest that the Yongle emperor did recognize Zhou’s position. But even if Zhou’s appointment was recognized by the court, his authority as city god came from the Lord-on-High, and Zhou’s status as city god

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536 As Lang was born in 1487 at the end of the Chenghua reign, we can suppose that the case of spirit possession took place during or soon after the Yongle reign (1403-1424), during which Zhou Xin first became the city god.
537 *Wushan chenghuang miao zhi*, pp. 129-130.
538 For instance, Zhang Dai wrote that Zhou’s appointment was official, as did the temple’s Qing gazetteer. However, the *Ming shi* biography of Zhou Xin contains no mention of him becoming city god. See Zhang Dai, *Xihu meng xun*, p. 301; *Wushan chenghuang miao zhi*, pp. 140-141. 2b-3a; *Ming shi*, juan 161, Liezhuan di 49, pp. 4373-4375.
god was bolstered and maintained by the popular appeal generated through stories of his achievements in life and his power in death.

4.4.2 Zhou Xin in the Popular Imagination

It was Zhou Xin’s reputation and the lore and legends about him in life and in death that secured his place in the popular imagination and infused the site of the Wushan City God Temple with meaning. Tales and anecdotes about Zhou Xin circulated widely both textually and orally. For the present discussion we focus on four texts that form part of the popular history of Zhou Xin and the Wushan City God Temple. The first text is Zhang Dai’s account of Zhou Xin in the Wushan section of his *Xihu mengxun* (Searching for Dreams at West Lake). This account recorded what a seventeenth century Jiangnan literatus had heard and read about the sites of Hangzhou, a city in which he spent much time over many years. The second source is *Xihu er ji* (Second Collection of West Lake) a collection of stories compiled by Zhou Qingyuan, a Hangzhou local who lived at the end of the Ming. We know little about Zhou Qingyuan except that he came from a poor family and that he was a talented writer, although that did not bring him success in his lifetime. His stories, on the other hand, have been highly regarded by modern scholars. *Xihu er ji* is an example of a particular kind of huaben fiction that arose as urban entertainment and was set in major cities. Hangzhou and its West Lake provided the setting for a rich stream of this literature of which *Xihu erji* is a leading example. The work’s thirty-four chapters contain stories about many people and places connected with Hangzhou and one of the chapters, “Zhou chenghuang bian yuan duan an” (City God Zhou discerns injustice and solves cases) is devoted to Zhou Xin. The two other sources are Qing compilations: the *Ming shi* (Ming history) and the *Wushan chenghuang miao zhi* (Gazetteer of the Wushan City God Temple). Within these historical works, we will examine the *Ming shi* biography of Zhou Xin and the accounts in several chapters of the temple gazetteer that relate episodes of Zhou Xin’s life and also “events and traces”

539 Zhou Qingyuan, *Xihu er ji*, p. 2.
540 Hangzhou had become a model location for this genre of fiction during the Song and reached a peak in the late Ming. Other cities that provided settings for similar stories included Suzhou, Yangzhou, and Nanjing starting in the mid-Ming period, see Liu Yongqiang, “Wan Ming ‘Xihu xiaoshuo’”, pp. 381-382.
(shiji) manifesting his power after his death. Although these two works were compiled in the Qing, they contain a lot of material dating to the Ming and represent wide source bases from which their compilers worked.

Taken together, these four sources are representative of what was known about Zhou Xin in the Ming. Although the first two sources were authored privately by individuals and the latter two works were histories produced for the dynastic and institutional record respectively, they should not be deemed to fall into different textual worlds that might be labelled official or popular. Rather, I follow recent scholarship on late imperial culture and literature in seriously questioning, if not eschewing, the notion of a dichotomy between elite and popular knowledge and culture. In her research on Ming chantefables and dramatic texts, Anne McLaren has argued that in the fifteenth century popular oral genres were transcribed into print for a new reading public. This growing body of popular literature bridged the divide between the classical and the vernacular by taking from both and was shared by a wide and broadening segment of the population. Studying the cultural production and consumption of folk songs in the Ming, Kathryn Lowry has likewise posited that categories of “refined” and “common” literature were blurred at best and that highly educated elites composed songs and lyrics that drew on and were presented as folk songs that appealed to people with varying degrees of literacy.\footnote{See Anne McLaren’s Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables, and Kathryn Lowry’s The Tapestry of Popular Songs in 16th- and 17th-Century China.}

Similarly I consider the four sources here to be part of the same body of stories about Zhou Xin that was familiar to people from all kinds of social and cultural background. True, there were certain differences in form and style. For instance, Xihu er ji is written in the voice of a storyteller, who often addresses his audience directly in vulgar – sometimes even crude – tones.\footnote{Zhou Qingyuan, Xihu er ji, p. 4.} In addition, the stories it relates are mostly lengthier than the versions in the other works. Yet comparing the different texts it is evident that they drew upon common sources. Literature scholars have detected a range of sources at work in Zhou Qingyuan’s story collection, including: Yuan writer Tao Zongyi’s (fl. 1360-1368) Chuo geng lu (Record of Reflections while Resting from...
Ploughing); Tian Rucheng’s 1547 *Xihu youlan zhi* (Record of Touring and Sightseeing at West Lake); and the *Huang Ming congxin lu* by Chen Jian (1497-1567) and Shen Guoyuan (17th century). The last two titles were particularly important for the chapter on City God Zhou Xin, and Tian Rucheng’s work also informed the compilers of *Ming shi*.\(^{543}\) It was certainly not uncommon for authors to borrow widely from other works across notional genres of fiction and history. McLaren has shown that chantefables from the thirteenth through the eighteenth centuries borrowed freely from the written tradition and contributed to both popular fiction and oral tales, calling the phenomenon “literary recycling”.\(^{544}\) I propose that this textual borrowing also took place between the different accounts of Zhou Xin. Each of the sources contains accounts not found in the others, but they all include key episodes and elements that combine to form a composite figure of Zhou Xin. It is this image of Zhou Xin that enforces his appeal in the popular imagination and undergirds his place in the history of Hangzhou as both an upright official and a powerful city god.

Hangzhou native Lang Ying, whose puzzling over the identification of Zhou Xin as city god was noted above, gives a succinct account of Zhou’s life and career:

Zhou was a native of Nanhai in Guangdong. During the Yongle reign he was a censor (*yushi*). He was a regional inspector (*xunan*) in Jingshi and Fujian. He rose to be surveillance commissioner (*ancha shi*) of Yunnan and Zhejiang. He dealt with matters of great importance, and made memorials and policy suggestions that were detailed and carefully considered. He was incorruptible and enlightened, resolute and honest. He removed local strongmen and heard cases of the aggrieved, often attending to the affairs of unjustly wronged souls that had nobody to take care of them. Within he gained a reputation for being “cold-faced and cool as iron” (*leng mian han tie*). Outside people called him divinely enlightened. But later on he fell a victim caught up in power struggles and slander. The emperor was angered by his direct words and so he met his death.\(^{545}\)

\(^{543}\) Specifically, juan 33 draws from *Huang Ming cong xin lu* juan 14 and *Xihu youlan zhiyu* juan 7, see Zhou Qingyuan, *Xihu er ji*, p. 4.

\(^{544}\) McLaren borrows this term from literary analyst Peter Rabinowitz. For this “literary borrowing” at work, see McLaren’s study of stories about Xue Rengui, a historical figure who rose from common origins to become a famous general during the reign of emperor Tang Taizong (r. 622-649), Chapter 6 “The Tale of Xue Rengui”, in her *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables*. McLaren judges the story-cycle of Xue Rengui “striking for the amount of direct and indirect textual borrowing which took place between works generically distinct and set apart in time, space and social provenance”, *ibid*, p. 193.

\(^{545}\) Lang Ying, *Qi xiu lei gao, xu gao*, juan 2, pp. 773-4.
In this passage from Lang Ying’s recollections, and in greater detail in the other sources, we can see four elements of the life story of Zhou Xin: 1) his background and early career; 2) his resolution of difficult cases, often against the falsely accused; 3) his relentless battle against corruption; 4) his fall and death. There were other details that some of the sources mentioned, such as the Ming shi accounts of Zhou Xin quelling bandits and a Zhejiang official taking care of Zhou’s impoverished wife after Zhou’s death, but these four elements are at the core of the Zhou Xin legend.\footnote{Ming shi, juan 161, pp. 4374-4375.}

Regarding Zhou Xin’s background and early career the Ming shi account is the most detailed in listing Zhou’s official appointments while the Xihu erji is the most sparse – as might be expected given the nature of the sources. The overall image is of him establishing his abilities early in judicial and censorial posts. As a case reviewer at the Court of Judicial Review (dali si pingshi) Zhou was able to judge difficult cases quickly and clearly. As a censor he was stern and outspoken and impeached many officials. This won him the epithet of “cold-faced and cool as iron” (leng mian han tie) as noted in all the sources. It also made him feared by officials and nobles and his name was even used to frighten small children. It is with this track record that he was appointed surveillance commissioner of Zhejiang.\footnote{Ming shi, juan 161, pp. 4373-4374; Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, p. 301; Zhou Qingyuan, Xihu er ji, p. 626.}

Zhou had not even arrived at his new post in Hangzhou when he began to display his perspicacity and judgment that enabled him to solve difficult cases – the second key element in the image of Zhou Xin, which features in all the sources. On his approach to Hangzhou a swarm of flies assailed his horse. Zhou and his entourage followed the flies and found a man’s corpse amid some thorn bushes. Attached to the corpse was a small metal stamp, which enabled Zhou to identify the deceased as a cloth merchant. He then had his men investigate the cloth that was being sold on the market, and through tracing cloth bearing the stamp’s mark, he was able to apprehend the men who had killed the cloth merchant.\footnote{Ming shi, juan 161, p. 4374; Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, p. 301; Zhou Qingyuan, Xihu er ji, pp. 627-628.} In fact Zhou’s reputation as a judge had preceded him. There was a man who had been imprisoned in Hangzhou on false charges for a long time. When he
heard that Zhou Xin was going to take up a post in Hangzhou, he realized that his name would be cleared and that he would be freed, as indeed happened. The *Ming shi* account does not detail the circumstances of the case, but the *Xihu er ji* account does - just as it embellishes most of the stories for its audience. It identifies the man as a certain Wang Kejiu of Jinhua Prefecture who went away on business in Fujian. During his long absence, his wife was tricked into believing that he was dead, and into remarrying a fortune-teller, who proceeded to take over Wang’s property. On Wang’s return, his wife’s new husband bribed officials to arrest Wang and put him in gaol. It was there that he was when Zhou Xin arrived and soon afterwards saved him.\(^\text{549}\)

The stories display Zhou’s keen deductive logic and understanding of human behaviour. In one case a merchant was returning home with some silver which, fearing that he might encounter robbers as it was getting late, he hid at a temple. He then returned home to his wife and told her about it. When the merchant returned to the temple to retrieve the silver the following morning, it was gone. After he reported the case, Zhou Xin asked him whether he had told anyone about the silver other than his wife. The merchant replied that he had not, at which Zhou determined that his wife was having an affair and that the lover must have heard the merchant when he came home and spoke to his wife, and so took the silver himself. Zhou was proved correct, and the wife and lover were punished.\(^\text{550}\) In another case (reminiscent of a judgment of King Solomon, but in a lighter mode), two men were arguing over an umbrella. Zhou ordered the umbrella cut in two, with half given to each of the two disputants. The two men left and Zhou had them followed. One man said that the other should have agreed to sell the umbrella and split the sum gained. The other replied that since it was his umbrella there was no reason for him to share it. At this, the first man was arrested and punished.\(^\text{551}\)

We can appreciate how stories of such everyday situations might have appealed to ordinary people. Other stories relate Zhou’s sharp powers and also contain elements of the supernatural. In one case he was sitting at his desk in his yamen when a gust of wind

\(^{549}\) *Ming shi*, juan 161, p. 4734; Zhou Qingyuan, *Xihu er ji*, pp. 626-627.


\(^{551}\) *Wushan chenghuang miao zhi*, juan 3, 17a-19a; Zhou Qingyuan, *Xihu er ji*, p. 633.
carrying unusual leaves dropped them in front of him. His attendants informed him that such leaves were only found at one particular monastery outside the city. Zhou realized that there must be some restless spirit that had died unjustly. Upon investigation, Zhou found the corpse of a woman buried under a tree at the monastery and through interrogating the monks, he learnt that a pair of them had killed the woman. The longer version of the story in *Xihu er ji* details in addition the immoral behaviour of the members of the monastery, who were given to feasting on meat and wine and were monks in name alone. It also describes the encounter of the victim with the monks and how they murdered her when she refused their sexual advances. It was the restless spirit of the woman that blew the leaves with the wind to Zhou Xin and her icy wail could be heard from within it.  

In another case of murder the message came via a pair of birds. A merchant bought a pair of birds from a bird-trapper and then freed them. He was subsequently murdered by his muleteer. After witnessing the death of their rescuer, the birds flew to Zhou Xin’s yamen where they cried out as if reporting a case of injustice. Zhou Xin understood their meaning and sent his staff to follow the birds, which led to the discovery of the merchant’s body and a muleteer’s whip next to it. That night, Zhou dreamt he saw a dishevelled ghost that bewailed the injustice of its death and left a riddle about the identity of the murderer. The next morning Zhou examined a list of all muleteers in the area and was able to deduce which was the murderer by interpreting the riddle against the names. The murderer was seized and confessed all. The ability to understand birds and to communicate with the dead enlarged the figure of Zhou Xin in the popular imagination. That Zhou Xin was able to address the wrongs of those unjustly killed also fit with the city god’s responsibility for pacifying restless spirits as established in the Ming ritual system.

Other stories in the lore around Zhou Xin focus on his continued fight against official negligence and corruption in government. In the middle of the Yongle reign, there was a major flood in western Zhejiang. The commissioner of the office of transmission

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553 Zhou Qingyuan, *Xihu er ji*, pp. 628-629.
(tongzheng), whose responsibility it was to report the matter to the throne, concealed it. It was only when Zhou Xin sent up a memorial that the emperor learnt of the real situation and granted the afflicted area tax exemptions and relief as Zhou proposed. In a more localized case, there was a legal secretary at a Zhejiang county yamen by the name of Mo Laohu, who abused his position to take bribes. Many yamen staff worked with him so Mo was able to build up a fortune. Zhou Xin had him arrested and his assets confiscated to provide for the poor and needy. Having made an example of Mo, Zhou also rooted out other corrupt yamen staff to make it an honest and effective local government.554

In another instance of local corruption that appears in all the sources, Zhou was once out incognito inspecting a part of Zhejiang, going incognito dressed in civilian attire. He had a run in with a county magistrate, who had Zhou arrested and imprisoned. Inside the gaol Zhou questioned all the prisoners and learnt of many cases of the magistrate’s corruption. The next day, the people in the county heard that the surveillance commissioner was coming and prepared to greet him. Zhou Xin thereupon revealed his true identity. The magistrate was startled and tried to defend himself against charges of misconduct, but Zhou had him impeached and demoted.555 These stories reflect an unjust society dominated by corrupt officials and the rich and powerful. Many other stories in works like Xihu er ji also depict a time in which the scourge of banditry and piracy was almost a violent constant, and factionalism rocked the government right up to the imperial court. While such topics might seem somewhat stale to historians today, writers like the Republican era literary critic Ah Ying have praised Xihu er ji’s merits in reflecting the world in which it was created.556 Injustice and the lack of good officials are major themes that run through the work, as nicely summarized in a quotation (taken from a different chapter) in which a victim of corruption laments: “Today’s world belongs to officials and the rich, there is no place for the likes of us! Where are we to seek redress for the injustice that we suffer? There are so many corrupt and greedy officials, and too

554 Zhou Qingyuan, Xihu er ji, pp. 633-634.
555 Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, p. 302; Ming shi, juan 161, p. 4734.
556 Ah Ying, “Xihu erji suo fanying de Mingdai shehui”, reprinted in Zhou Qingyuan, Xihu er ji, pp. 668-671.
few honest officials who care for the common folk.”

Given such a dark view of the late Ming, the ready appeal of honest and able officials like Zhou Xin is all the more apparent.

But the stories about Zhou Xin also suggest that it was his unwavering execution of his official duties that brought his downfall and death. In particular it was his conflict with Ji Gang, the powerful commander of the Embroidered Guard (jinyi wei), which led to his execution. Ji had sent a military officer to Zhejiang on business. Once there, the officer abused his authority to take bribes. Zhou wanted to arrest the officer but he fled. After some time, Zhou Xin ran into the officer at Zhuozhou in the northern metropolitan region where he had him arrested and imprisoned. But the officer escaped and reported the matter to Ji Gang. Ji then made false accusations against Zhou Xin before the throne and Zhou was arrested on imperial order and beaten severely. When brought before the throne, Zhou prostrated himself and protested that he had only ever carried out his official responsibilities dutifully and was guilty of no crime. Further angered, the Yongle emperor ordered the death sentence for Zhou Xin. With his last breath Zhou cried out: “In life I am a straight official, in death I will be a straight ghost!” whereupon he was executed. That same night the court astronomer reported observing a fallen star, at which Yongle realized Zhou’s innocence and regretted his summary execution. One day soon afterwards the emperor saw a figure dressed in red appear before him at midday. He asked his identity and the figure replied that he was Zhou Xin, newly appointed city god of Hangzhou by the Lord on High so that he could continue his work of carrying out justice and control wicked and corrupt officials.

This final episode in Zhou Xin’s life, which marked his transformation into Hangzhou’s city god, is the same story that assured Lang Ying that his grandfather had correctly witnessed the god’s manifestation. For Lang a family story required confirmation from an external source to be validated. Similarly the telling of stories about the life of Zhou Xin outlined above consolidated his position in the popular imagination.

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557 The quotation is found in juan 34, “Hu shaobao ping wo zhan gong” (Junior Guardian Hu’s achievements in quelling the pirates), Zhou Qingyuan, Xihu er ji, p. 3.

558 Ming shi, juan 161, pp. 4734-4375; Zhang Dai, Xihu mengxun, p. 302; Zhou Qingyuan, Xihu er ji, pp. 634-635.
As one fifteenth-century official remarked, “the people of Zhejiang were able to relate Zhou Xin’s administration in great detail.” The retelling of these stories about Zhou’s life made people identify Zhou as the “Bao Zheng of the Ming” and a “living King Yama.” The comparison with the famous Song dynasty official and judge Bao Zheng (999-1062) highlighted Zhou Xin’s ability to solve difficult cases and also made him a symbol of justice. Being compared with Yama, the most prominent judge in the underworld, highlighted Zhou’s stern punishment of the wicked and corrupt. All of these qualities that Zhou displayed in life were sustained after his death and empowered him in his posthumous career as city god. As noted already, the positions of city gods corresponded with officials in the human bureaucracy. After Zhou transferred from one realm to the other, people continued to seek justice as well as other blessings from him. In a sense, people sought from the city god what they could not obtain from the regular workings of the human administration, but Zhou’s powers as the city god far exceeded his role as surveillance commissioner. People approached him through prayer at the city god temple and he demonstrated his power through granting their wishes and manifesting himself to them.

One section of the temple’s gazetteer contains accounts of city god Zhou Xin answering people’s prayers. While the city god as the official deity on a par with human administrators oversaw the overall welfare and smooth administration of his whole jurisdiction, individuals prayed to him seeking a range of personal favours including good health and progeny, success in the civil service examinations, and the rectification of injustice. While such cases served to prove the god’s power, he did not necessarily grant the boon sought so readily. The one who made the prayer might be required to demonstrate their sincerity and virtue before having their prayer answered.

559 Ye Sheng, Shui dong riji, juan 6, pp. 65-66.
560 The comparison with Bao Zheng was inscribed onto one of the pillars at the Hangzhou city god temple, Zhang Dai, Xihu mengxuan, p. 305. Cf. Zhou Qingyuan, Xihu er ji, p. 624; Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, pp. 186-188, 15b-16b.
561 Paul Katz has recently written about the long tradition of people calling upon gods including the city god to help them deal with cases of perceived injustice or to resolve disputes, a practice still current in Taiwan today. See Katz, Divine Justice, especially chapter 2.
562 Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, juan 3.
one case that took place during the Tianqi era (1621-1627) a man named Zhang Keze living in the Dongyuan area of Hangzhou was without a son at the age of 62. After praying to the city god for an heir, his concubine gave birth to a son. But just one year later the son was stricken with smallpox and died. It was only after further deaths in the family that Zhang was granted a second son who lived.\footnote{Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, pp. 232-233, 15b-16a.} In the Chongzhen era (1628-1644) a student from Haiyan prayed to the city god for success in the civil examinations. Only after failing several times did he finally pass.\footnote{Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, pp. 233-234.}

There were also trials for those who sought recovery from illness. In one case sick parents were granted recovery only after their son demonstrated his devotion and filial piety by writing out his prayer in blood and feeding his parents with his own flesh. In another case a man praying for the recovery of his sick neighbour had his wish granted but was also told not to seek a longer lifespan than had been preordained.\footnote{Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, p. 204.} These cases may have been trials for the suppliants but they provided proof of the city god Zhou Xin’s power. The god’s granting of prayers demonstrated that he was \textit{ling}, that he had efficacy.\footnote{The concept of \textit{ling}, or “magical efficacy”, has been central to popular religion for centuries and has reappeared as a main ingredient in China’s religious revival. For a discussion of the term in the context of religious life in rural Shaanbei in the post-Mao era, see Adam Chau, \textit{Miraculous Response}, pp. 64-66, passim, chapter 6.} This proof of efficacy and the retelling and recording of instances of it in turn enhanced the city god’s power – even for those who did not experience it themselves.\footnote{Some stele records at the temple referred directly to the god’s efficacy, e.g. Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, pp. 476-477.}

As for those who did experience the god, they might encounter him directly through his personal manifestation, as was the case with the Yongle emperor, or through his appearing to them in a dream, as happened to the temple’s Daoist priest Deng Guangnian when the god warned him of the temple fire.\footnote{Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, juan 5, pp. 343-345. In Zhang Dayou’s stele record of the rebuilding of the temple discussed earlier, the city god warned about the fire and also helped to extinguish it when it occurred. See Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, pp. 476-481.}

City god Zhou Xin’s power and place in the popular imagination remained strong through the early Qing period. In his preface to the temple gazetteer of 1704, the Zhejiang
scholar and Kangxi minister of rites Du Zhen (f.s 1659, d. 1705) reiterated the city god’s enduring efficacy. He noted that in the decades from when he was a young student until he wrote the preface in his retirement, there were countless cases of the god answering prayers. This demonstration of efficacy only brought more prayer-seekers so that one could see people carrying sacrificial offerings to the city god temple and praying earnestly there “packed shoulder to shoulder, going one after another, without a break in winter or summer.” Truly did the temple’s sacrificial vessels remain filled from the Yongle reign of the Ming through Du’s own time, thanks to the support of the local gentry and the people of Hangzhou at large.569

4.5 Conclusion: Configuring the Urban and the Popular
This chapter began by characterizing the site of the City God Temple at Wushan as both urban and popular. The former designation marked its setting and its relationship with surrounding towns and temples, while the latter expressed the enduring popular characteristic of the place. These definitions are not so clear-cut, however, since many literati visitors viewed the site in relation to the surrounding scenery, especially to West Lake. Moreover, the city god cult itself was subject to increasing state control over the centuries that culminated in its incorporation in the official politico-ritual system in the early Ming. Romeyn Taylor has commented that government regulation of the cult “conflicted with its autonomous communal character” and “it was thus a point of interaction between state and society.”570 I would qualify these observations by suggesting that the dichotomy between state and society might not be so straightforward. The construction and reconstruction of the place involved different groups, including regional and local officials, court eunuchs and local elites, and the people at large. While some of these were state appointees acting in an official capacity, others acted on local and personal interests. People variously sought to channel the power of the city god within the structure of the state ritual system, to protect local society, to assert the city’s

569 Du Zhen “Chenghuang miao zhi xu”, in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, pp. 537-541.
authority over the surrounding area, or to seek justice and assistance from the city god where it could not be obtained through human agency.

The Wushan City God Temple’s institutional status, and its deep-rooted popular character also made it more open to multiple readings by different groups. Compared with the sites examined in the preceding chapters, the city god temple was in some ways a weaker institution. Whereas the establishment of shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian was driven by family members seeking to honour their forbears, there was no particular group with such direct and personal attachment to the city god temple. The two family shrines were eventually recognized by the state, with their central figures elevated to the status of national heroes and recipients of official sacrifice. In comparison with Lingyin Monastery, the city god temple did not have a deeply established clerical community that was part of a greater Buddhist lineage system that transcended the temple itself. Its Daoist priests did administer temple affairs, but in a looser affiliation and lacking strong leadership they were more dependent on the support of local elites and officials. Like the other sites the city god temple was also subject to state control and it was official recognition that secured its place in the state ritual system. Yet this did not fix the site and its meanings. Paradoxically, because the temple was a weaker institution, its reliance on the constructions of multiple groups, allowed it to be imbued with a greater range of meanings. Moreover, the hazy and changing figure of the city god itself made it harder to define. Not only were the origins of the generic cult open to interpretation, there was also continued uncertainty over the identity of Zhou Xin as Hangzhou’s city god as far as the official cult was concerned. This permitted the legend of Zhou Xin and the meanings attached to the site to grow in the popular cultural imagination far beyond the temple’s official ritual status. Many stories circulated about the city god that arose from the individual needs of local people – some even offered criticisms of government.

Thus there was a convergence of different groups on the site of the Wushan City God Temple, but their different interests and the openness of the site allowed multiple and divergent histories to coexist. Engagement with the site took numerous forms. Some officials and elites rebuilt it as an official temple that had a ritual role to play in local administration. At a more popular level, people prayed to the god for blessings for themselves and their families. It was the most popular site in that it had the broadest
appeal and access, but its existence remained contingent on the interaction of multiple groups.
Chapter 5
Hangzhou’s Premier Site: West Lake

A standard sixteenth-century text about Hangzhou’s West Lake would include not only a description of the location and physical dimensions of the site, but also provide references to its history and the importance attached to it.

West Lake is located west of the prefectural seat and measures 30 li in perimeter. … When Su Shi was prefect of Hangzhou he wrote a memorial stating that there were five reasons why West Lake must not be abandoned. He built a long embankment for the benefit of the people and it became known as Lord Su’s Embankment. After Hangzhou became the capital in the Shaoxing era [1131-1162], rulers and ministers vied with one another to amuse themselves here. On hearing about it, the Jin ruler was so envious that he was determined to take up arms to cross the Yangzi and win it. Thus people said that West Lake was a bewitching woman that risked bringing down the country like Xi Shi.571

This account of West Lake appears in Guangyu ji, a gazetteer of the Ming realm compiled by Lu Yingyang of Huating County, Jiangsu. This typical overview of the lake mentions its location just outside Hangzhou’s city wall, a reference to Su Shi who carried out a major restoration of the lake while prefect, and the image of the lake as a playground of elites for whom its charms were irresistible – to the extent that it could bring the collapse of a dynasty like the femme fatale Xi Shi. All these aspects of West Lake were central to how it was imagined and came into play in the history of the site, which as a source of water was of utmost importance for Hangzhou and its people.

By the time Lu completed his work in 1600, West Lake had long been established in the cultural imagination as Hangzhou’s premier sight. Gaining prominence as a destination for travellers in the Tang period and later flourishing under the Song, by Ming times countless literati had written prose and poetry in praise of its legendary beauty – all to be enjoyed by the cultured gentleman. It had also become Hangzhou’s central sight by which other sights were oriented, stretching out from and winding around it on given routes as evident in the West Lake writings of Tian Rucheng (js 1526) and Zhang Dai (1597-c.1684), and Yang Erzeng’s guidebook Hainei qi guan. Indeed the name of West

571 Lu Yingyang, Guangyu ji, juan 10, 3b; p. 684.
572 Compare the entry for West Lake in Chen Yaowen, Tian zhong ji, juan 10, 13a-b; p. 306.
Lake was so encompassing that it became synonymous with Hangzhou itself, appearing in the titles of works whose subject – or at least setting – was both the lake and the city. The most prominent Ming titles were Tian Rucheng’s Xihu youlan zhi (Records of Travel at West Lake), Zhang Dai’s Xihu mengxun (Searching for Dreams at West Lake), and Zhou Qingyuan’s story collection Xihu er ji (A Second Collection from West Lake), but there were many other works that bore West Lake’s name in their titles including local histories, travel texts and collections of stories and poems.

Yet West Lake was more than a famous sight of Hangzhou and the sum of the city’s sights. Just as – and by some counts more – important was West Lake’s place in the hydrological order of Hangzhou. Hydrology (shuili) – broadly conceived as the management of water and harnessing of its benefits for man’s use – was a crucial part of state administration and a primary responsibility of officials. West Lake was a vital source of water for the people of Hangzhou (particularly the three counties of Qiantang, Renhe, and Haining) primarily for consumption and irrigation, but also for other uses furnished by proper water management such as transportation. As Yongzheng era (1723-1735) Grand Coordinator of Zhejiang Province Li Wei put it upon completion of his own restoration of West Lake in 1734: “Even though a place has famous sights (sheng), it must benefit (li) the people (min) and profit (yi) the state (guojia).” Li understood – and he could have been speaking for officials governing Hangzhou before and after him – that West Lake was important not just for sightseeing (youlan), but also for irrigating fields to produce food and to provide for transportation needs.

This chapter will first examine the representations of both of these aspects of West Lake – its position as a prominent site of cultural refinement and also an important source

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573 Against the charge that his Xihu youlan zhi was as much about Hangzhou as about West Lake, Tian Rucheng wrote that the two were inseparable. Tian Rucheng, Xihu youlan zhi, pp. 3-4.

574 Li Wei’s 1734 gazetteer of West Lake lists some dozen Ming works (and a couple dating to the Tang and Song respectively) whose titles include the term Xihu (West Lake). Li Wei ed., Fu Wanglu comp., Xihu zhi, juan 29, 1b-3b; pp. 2162-2166. Perhaps the earliest work with West Lake in the title was Tang writer Du Guangting’s (850-933) Xihu guji shishi (Events around the ancient sights of West Lake), but that work is no longer extant. Tian Rucheng, Xihu youlan zhi, p. 2.

575 Li Wei, “Xihu zhi xu” (Preface to Gazetteer of West Lake); and “Fan li” (Editorial principles), 1a; p. 39; in Li Wei ed., Fu Wanglu comp., Xihu zhi, vol. 1, 1a-4a; pp. 1-7. It is noteworthy that the Li Wei’s West Lake gazetteer begins with two juan on hydrology (shuili) that are followed by two juan of famous sights (mingsheng).
of water – in an array of writings that constituted a broad cultural imagination of the place. Within this body of texts, poetry played an especially significant role in bolstering the image of the lake as the epitome of cultural refinement and pleasure. This representation of West Lake was not, however, separate from projections of West Lake’s hydrological importance. The two faces of West Lake were distinct, but also interwoven. The interplay between the two is most clearly portrayed in the figures of Bai Juyi (772-846) and Su Shi (1037-1101), who loom large at the site of West Lake and feature prominently in its history. These two famous statesmen and scholars served as prefect of Hangzhou during the Tang and Song dynasties respectively. Counted among the greatest poets in Chinese history, both Bai and Su composed numerous poems extolling the delights of West Lake. While governing Hangzhou they also carried out hydrological projects to restore West Lake and improve its supply of water. Bai Juyi and Su Shi were remembered, praised, and emulated both as poets and as prefects. Their most celebrated verses about West Lake were included in many later texts about Hangzhou and influenced subsequent poets inspired to create verses of their own. They were also upheld as model governors, especially for their work in restoring West Lake.

The second part of this chapter will analyze West Lake as a physical site that was open to the competing interests of different groups in Hangzhou society. It will consider the place of hydrological administration in late imperial China before turning to Ming efforts to restore and maintain West Lake. Few could win acclaim for restoring the lake as had Bai Juyi and Su Shi. Later officials that sought to dredge and restore West Lake, especially and increasingly in the Ming period, found themselves up against staunch opposition from local power holders, who had encroached upon and occupied parts of the lake. In some cases such groups had occupied the lake for more than one generation, which made it all the more difficult to remove them. Under these circumstances, the private benefits of such occupants were in conflict with the wellbeing of Hangzhou’s people at large.

This was the case at the beginning of the sixteenth century when Hangzhou Prefect Yang Mengying (fl. 1502-1509) embarked on a major project to dredge and restore West Lake. Despite the challenges he faced, Yang was able to win the support of his superiors and the permission of the throne to execute his plan. Yang also drew upon
the history of West Lake, in particular the precedents of Bai Juyi and Su Shi for restoring the lake. By evoking their example and their emphasis on West Lake’s importance as a hydrological source, Yang was able to strengthen his own project to remake the lake. Furthermore he claimed to act on behalf of the local people and the state against entrenched private interests. As a result Yang Mengying was successful in restoring the lake. But the opposition he provoked contributed to his subsequent downfall. Nevertheless, having positioned himself as a latter-day Bai Juyi or Su Shi, Yang eventually became part of West Lake’s history himself as he was enshrined alongside Bai and Su and his deeds became part of the cultural imagination. Yang Mengying’s restoration of West Lake thus reveals the interests of different groups within Hangzhou society and the relations between them. It also demonstrates that the cultural and social dimensions of West Lake were not only inseparable but even mutually constitutive.

5.1 West Lake in the Cultural Imagination

A late Ming reader wishing to find out about Hangzhou’s West Lake would have been able to consult a range of works, including gazetteers, encyclopaedias and travel texts. These provided a wealth of information, of which a large proportion pertained to the two dimensions of West Lake already noted, but which varied across the texts depending on their purpose, scope, and schemata.

For instance, as an official gazetteer of the Ming realm (presented to the throne in 1461), the _Da Ming yitong zhi_ is structured according to the administrative geography of the empire. All information pertaining to West Lake is to be found in its chapter on Hangzhou (juan 38), which heads the part of the work covering Zhejiang province. West Lake appears alongside various topographical features of Hangzhou in a section entitled “Mountains and Rivers” (shan chuan). This contains some (more) strictly geographical information including location and dimensions, but the bulk of the entry is concerned with the lake’s literary manifestations – what we might call its cultural geography – including poems (about which more below) and other references to the joys the lake offered. There is no section on hydrology (shui li) _per se_, but details on historical hydrological works are included in the parts concerning the sites of the projects and also in the biographies of the officials who carried them out.
Ming encyclopaedias also contain information on West Lake. Chen Yaowen’s (jinshi 1550) *Tianzhong ji* has a section on famous lakes. The brief entry for West Lake consists of excerpts from several historical records (all identified) and a selection of poems. Chen seems to have chosen a handful of items, including poems by Bai Juyi and Su Shi and excerpts from their writings about restoring West Lake, to represent what he deemed its most essential features: it was a celebrated sight and an important source of water.⁵⁷⁶

Visions of West Lake are refracted in a more complex manner in another encyclopaedia, the *Sancai tu hui* of 1607. This larger and lavishly illustrated work is divided into three parts whose broad, overarching subjects are heaven (*tian*), earth (*di*), and man (*ren*). Hangzhou and West Lake appear in three separate *juans* of the middle part. The second *juan* of this *dili* (geography) section gives a brief account of Zhejiang that includes a map of the province, the basic administrative structure of its prefectures and counties, and a short list of its notable mountains and water features. Among these are Wushan, the Qiantang River, and West Lake. The inclusion of the lake’s Ten Prospects underscores its place as a top scenic spot.⁵⁷⁷ *Juan* five also contains references to Hangzhou in the context of coastal defence, sea transport, the canal system, and other hydrological concerns that fall under the rubric of statecraft (*jingshi*).⁵⁷⁸ There is no significant mention of West Lake, however. Within the encyclopaedia’s geography section, *juans* six through twelve are given to the famous sights of China and it is in *juan* nine that Hangzhou and West Lake figure most prominently. Qiantang River and the Dadi and Tianmu mountains are among the other major sights included in the *juan*.⁵⁷⁹ The work includes many detailed illustrations of sights, including a long view of West Lake (Figure 17).

This illustration presents a panoramic view of the lake. The assumed perspective is of someone at an elevated spot within the city gazing out over the city wall, which is in the foreground of the illustration skirting its lower edge. Three gates are depicted and named (Qiantang, Yongjin, and Qingbo), as are Xushan (Wushan) and Wu Zixu Temple.

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⁵⁷⁶ Chen Yaowen, *Tianzhong ji*, juan 10, 13a-b.
⁵⁷⁷ Wang Qi, *Sancai tu hui*, juan 2, 3a-3b; pp. 121-122.
Figure 17 "Xīhu tu" (Illustration of West Lake), in Wang Qi, Sancai tu hui, juan 9, 20a-22b; 316-317.
The remainder and majority of the panorama are filled with the length of the lake. The Baosuo Pagoda is on the far right, and the Jujing Garden marks the left edge of the scene. These are two of the thirty-odd named sites and spots: Yue Fei’s tomb is included, as are Feilaifeng, the Tianzhu monasteries, Hejing’s (Lin Bu) Shrine, the Six Bridges, and several peaks and pagodas. This only represents a selection of sights on Hangzhou’s touring routes – compare other images that name a fuller complement (e.g. Figure 2) – but in this illustration the lake itself is central. This *tu* is in some ways more painting than map. Like a scene revealed when opening a scroll, one’s eye is drawn both to the scenery and to the human activity. For scattered around the lake are numerous people, some on their own, but most in pairs or larger groups. The majority seem postured to enjoy the view – from the lakeshore, on the boats that ply the waters, or sitting on a hillside. There are people from different social classes: literati in their robes, and officials in their caps, as well as their attendants, and labourers carrying baskets on a shoulder-pole. While there are people at work around the lake, there is a general impression of leisurely activity enjoyed by literati. As compiler Wang Qi explicitly points out, the *Sancai tu hui* is intended for the enjoyment of the leisurely traveller and the “armchair traveller” (*woyou*). Accordingly the accompanying text takes the reader on an imagined excursion setting out from the city and going anti-clockwise (west and south) around the lake. En route, it points out prime spots and beautiful views and provides information on the histories and legends of numerous sights. It is not a comprehensive list, and most of the entries on particular sights are brief, but it gives a clear indication of what would have appealed to the Ming man of culture.

Such sightseeing trips are described in greater detail in texts that are dedicated to famous sights, such as Yang Erzeng’s guidebook *Hainei qi guan*. (Since Yang’s guidebook is devoted to famous sights, it does not have any sections on hydrological matters, although we can glimpse that side of West Lake through some of the comments on related sights.) In that work West Lake occupies an entire *juan* out of eleven (*juan 3*). This chapter provides a brief introduction to the lake that discusses its name, dimensions,

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580 Wang Qi, *Sancai tu hui*, Fanli, 1a, p. 11.
and location before guiding the reader through the many sights along the routes around the lake, including the shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian and Lingyin Monastery. Like the *Sancai tu hui* (which was first published around the same time), the *Hainei qi guan* is also known for its many illustrations. Heading the West Lake *juan* is the illustration of the lake with over one hundred named sights around it discussed in chapter 1 (Figure 2). Seven of the best-known sights are also featured in a series of illustrations with accompanying texts, as are the famous scenes of the Ten Prospects of West Lake (*Xihu shi jing*). While many texts list the Ten Prospects in their sections on Hangzhou and West Lake,\(^{582}\) the *Hainei qi guan*’s representation is probably the most elaborate. The final part of *juan* 3 is entitled “Praise in verse on the Ten Prospects of West Lake” (*Ci yong Xihu shi jing*). Each prospect appears in an illustration on the right accompanied by a *ci* poem on the left. The illustrations are detailed and finely crafted scenes of leisurely refinement and the poems are carved in different styles of calligraphy, possibly by different writers invited to contribute to the text.\(^{583}\)

Works like the *Sancai tu hui* and the *Hainei qi guan* were intended for the amusement and use of cultured gentlemen who might visit sights like West Lake themselves. And many late-Ming literati did indeed travel and write their own accounts of places they visited, thereby contributing to the cultural landscape of the realm. Among those who visited West Lake, Tian Rucheng and Zhang Dai wrote the best-known and most substantial works that provided detailed accounts of its history and sights. Tian Rucheng’s *Xihu youlan zhi* of 1547 (revised in 1584) is as much a gazetteer of Hangzhou as a travel record. A native of Hangzhou’s Qiantang County, his work became the local history of choice for Ming readers and was known as a particularly rich source for the Song period.

\(^{582}\) e.g. Li Xian, *Da Ming yitong zhi*, p.2697, 9a; Wang Qi, *Sancai tu hui*, juan 2, 3a-3b pp. 121-122. Zhang Dai also listed the ten prospects in his *Xihu meng xun*, and wrote a couplet on each one, Zhang Dai, *Xihu meng xun*, pp. 12-13. There seems to have been no fixed order of the Ten Prospects and the precise phrasing of each one sometimes varied, although the sights themselves seem to have been stable in Ming texts.

\(^{583}\) Yang Erzeng, *Hainei qi guan*, juan 3, 27a-36b.
By comparison, Zhang Dai’s *Xihu meng xun*, written in the years before 1671 over a century after Tian, is a collection of Zhang’s reminiscences of West Lake and its sights, which that he visited and enjoyed decades before. The two works are structurally similar, but while there is considerable overlap between them, their emphases are different. Both begin with an introduction to the lake.

Tian Rucheng’s “Xihu zong xu” (General preface to West Lake) first locates the lake, gives its dimensions and describes the surrounding hills. It then gives a history of the lake that goes into considerable detail on its past hydrology, highlighting the restoration projects of Bai Juyi, Su Shi, Yang Mengying and others (see discussion below)\(^{584}\). The opening section of Zhang’s work provides a rather different image of West

\(^{584}\) Tian Rucheng, *Xihu youlun zhi*, pp. 1-8.
Lake. Zhang offers no geographical information, but goes straight into a discussion of the lake’s superior attraction in comparison with other lakes of the region. He also cites some two dozen poems that feature Su Shi most prominently and otherwise include other Song, Yuan, and especially Ming poets, including Yuan Hongdao (whom Zhang greatly admired) and Zhang himself.\(^\text{585}\)

The bulk of both Tian’s and Zhang’s works consists of entries on individual sights structured according to routes. Tian has nine routes, most of which follow ranges of hills stretching out from and around the lake. Hangzhou’s city walls also draw a boundary for Tian. Zhang was influenced by Tian, but used a simpler schema of four routes around the lake plus one set of sights beyond the lake. The majority of West Lake sights appear in both Tian’s and Zhang’s compilations. The amount of information each author provides for any particular sight varies, but both authors provide historical and literary sketches, often citing earlier works, and going into greater detail for the more prominent sights. In general, Tian goes into greater historical detail and provides more references to the lake’s hydrological past in associated sights and structures around the lake – especially those associated with the lake’s major historical restorers. Zhang is more concerned with the literary representations of the sights, and includes more poems than Tian.

Their differences aside, both Tian and Zhang emphasize that Hangzhou had some of the most beautiful sights in the realm. The two texts were similar in many ways and both occupy a major place in the textual landscape of West Lake that literati visitors would have imagined and engaged with. Of course, there were many other literati who visited and wrote about West Lake and its sights, though in a less sustained and structured fashion. Many cultured travellers penned brief occasional records of their visits that recounted just a handful of sights that they visited or especially caught their interest. These also contributed to the cultural imagination of Hangzhou and West Lake.

\section*{5.2 West Lake in Verse}

Arguably the most prominent feature of West Lake in the literary landscape was poetry. Verses written in praise of and inspired by visits to the lake and sights around it

accumulated over the centuries and were often reproduced or at least mentioned in the
different kinds of texts about place in late imperial China. The more celebrated poems
might even be literally inscribed onto the landscape, carved into stone and set up for all to see at the site with which they were associated.\textsuperscript{586}

For the literati travellers who imagined or visited West Lake, the ability to
compose poetry was a requirement in their examination-oriented education. Poetry was
also a social lubricant – both a skill and a symbol of the cultivated scholar. Literati could
expect to be asked to pen a few verses to mark some social occasion or to commemorate
an event or person. Beyond that, the composition of poetry also enabled literati to step
into the long stream of verse that flowed across the ages and connected famous poets of
the past with readers and writers of the present. Writers often displayed their familiarity
with earlier works in their own creations, through which they might hope in turn to
influence later poets. This process marked their membership in a cultural community
whose existence continued long after the lives of individuals.

In many ways it was through poetry that literati came to know a place and to
express their own views of it. The Ming traveller and writer Yang Shen (1488-1559) aird
such a view in a brief account he wrote about Su’s Embankment at West Lake. Yang
begins the piece by stating that Su Shi opened up “West Lakes” at Hangzhou, Yingzhou,
and Xuzhou, but that his achievements were the greatest at Hangzhou. He then cites a
poem by Su Shi that relates Su’s efforts to dredge the lake and build the embankment.
Following on from the poem, Yang remarks that “sincere poetry is history” (cheng shi shi
ye) and says that he became acquainted with the history of the embankment and lake
through reading Su Shi’s poetry.\textsuperscript{587} Thus poems could serve as sources of history insofar
as they referred to past events and historical figures. Indeed it was those poems associated
with figures in Hangzhou’s history that were most prominent at West Lake. Su Shi,
together with his forerunner as Hangzhou prefect the famous Tang poet Bai Juyi, were the
figures that loomed largest at West Lake and whose poetry most influenced how later

\textsuperscript{586} The Qianlong Emperor is probably best known for having his verses inscribed physically at West Lake. See Chang, \textit{A Court on Horseback}, chapter 7.

literati perceived and engaged with the lake. Because of their place in the cultural imagination of Hangzhou, we will take a look at some of their verses as examples of the poetic inscriptions of West Lake.  

Spring arrives at the lake, like a painting, jutting peaks wind around its calm face. Pines line the hillsides, a thousand layers of jade-blue; the moon touches its rippled heart, a bright pearl. Early rice sprouts stick up, loose threads on an azure carpet; new rushes spread across the lake, belts on a green gauze dress. Unable to leave Hangzhou behind; what makes me linger is this lake.

This poem, entitled “Chun ti hu shang” (Composed on the lake in spring), was written in 824 CE, the fourth year of the Changqing era during the Tang, when Bai was prefect of Hangzhou. It is probably Bai Juyi’s most famous West Lake poem and was included in numerous Ming works, even those that had only a short entry on Hangzhou and West Lake. The reasons for its frequent selection are readily apparent. In the first three couplets, Bai manages vividly to paint the beauty of a spring day. By comparing the scene to a painting, Bai invites the reader to imagine the lake from a distance, perhaps gazing out from Wushan or another nearby peak that offered prospects onto the lake. The poet then draws the reader closer to the picturesque scene. The hills and trees, water and moon, rice sprouts and rushes, all add colour and texture to the ‘painting’ – comfortably conveyed through metaphors of carpet and dress. Moreover, the reference to the rice sprouts makes it not only a beautiful landscape, but also a scene of human activity, of agricultural work. This added dimension suggests the poet-prefect’s attention to the local people’s livelihood. The final couplet expresses the poet’s mood – his reluctance to leave Hangzhou and West Lake – a sentiment that Bai’s literati readers would have appreciated.

588 For a sizeable collection of poems on West Lake composed in a variety of verse forms and dating from the Tang through early Qing, see Li Wei ed., Fu Wanglu comp., Xihu zhi, juan 31-41. Among these are numerous poems by Bai Juyi, Su Shi, and Lin Bu.


590 Poem cited in: Li Xian, Da Ming yitong zhi, p. 2697, 9a; Chen Yaowen, Tian zhong ji, juan 10, 13a-b, p. 306; Tian Rucheng, Xihu youlan zhi yu, p. 161.
and shared. Bai wrote many other poems about West Lake, describing its sights and sounds and the times he spent there sharing wine and poetry with friends.\textsuperscript{591} His verses encapsulated the pleasures of the cultured gentleman and many later literati both read his poetry and emulated him.

A pair of poems by Su Shi entitled “Yin hu shang chu qing hou yu er shou” (Drinking at the lake, first it was clear but later it rained, two poems) were perhaps just as famous as Bai Juyi’s poem, and also appeared in the West Lake sections of numerous Ming works including the \textit{Da Ming yitong zhi} and the \textit{Tian zhong ji}.\textsuperscript{592}

\begin{quote}
Dawn rays greet the guests, colouring the layered hills
evening rain has people linger, then slip into drunkenness.
Let us experience such delightful moods
Come, one cup for the King of Water Immortals!\textsuperscript{593}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{591} Tian Rucheng, \textit{Xihu youlan zhi yu}, pp. 161-165.
\textsuperscript{592} Li Xian, \textit{Da Ming yitong zhi}, p. 2697, 9a; Chen Yaowen, \textit{Tian zhong ji}, juan 10, 13a-b, p. 306.
\textsuperscript{593} There was a temple to the ‘water immortals king’ (\textit{shui xian wang}) by West Lake.
\end{flushright}
The glimmer of the billowing water, so fine on a clear day;  
the colour of the hills under a drizzly sky – how marvellous the rain!  
Might I compare West Lake with Xizi,  
in light or heavy make-up, equally fine?  

This pair of poems are among the most famous verses that Su Shi wrote in praise of West Lake. They were written in 1073, the sixth year of the Xining era of the Song, during Su’s first period of office in Hangzhou as vice-prefect (1071-1073). They might refer to a particular day that Su Shi spent with friends drinking by the lake near the Temple of the King of Water Immortals and enjoying the lake’s views, but in these lines Su is really saying that West Lake is always beautiful, no matter what the time of day and regardless of the weather. West Lake reveals its beauty on a clear day when the morning sun shines on the ranges of hills around the lake, or the dazzling light is reflected off the lake’s surface, just as it does on a rainy day when there is a mist over the mountains. These varied weather conditions evoke different moods and feelings, but all are to be enjoyed, aided by a few cups of wine, by cultured gentlemen like Su Shi and his companions – and also by literati visitors coming after them. Through his poetry, Su Shi epitomizes the pleasures that literati enjoyed at West Lake. Su was known to frequent the lake while serving in Hangzhou and composed many poems describing the times he spent there. Especially on spring holidays, he would invite friends to spend entire days at the lake. They would go boating, admire the scenery, and enjoy poetry, wine and perhaps song-girls, going on until after dark. Such was the easy leisure of the man of culture (fengliu).  

Numerous poems by Su Shi describe these occasions, and would have been exchanged with friends to remember their gatherings. Zhang Dai includes some of Su’s poems in his Xihu meng xun. Two of the poems describe the joys of boating on the lake by night and drinking wine. Another, sent to a friend, speaks of Su’s fond memories of

594 Su Shi, “Yin hu shang chu qing hou yu er shou” (Drinking at the lake, first it was clear but later it rained, two poems), in Su Shi, Su Shi shi ji, p. 430. Cf. Watson, Selected Poems of Su Tung-p’o, p. 49; Graham, Poems of the West Lake, p. 23.  
595 Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, p. 162.  
596 For instance, see those included in Tian Rucheng, Xihu youlan zhi yu, juan 10, pp. 167-170.
and yearning for the sights and scenes of West Lake after he left Hangzhou.\textsuperscript{597} Zhang also cites poems by later writers that echoed Su’s sentiments, including one of his own. In that poem, simply entitled “West Lake”, Zhang alludes to the lake’s pleasures, but as in Su Shi’s poem just mentioned Zhang also reveals feelings of nostalgia for the lake after leaving it.\textsuperscript{598}

In the same poem, Zhang takes up Su Shi’s famous comparison of West Lake with Xi Shi, whose \textit{locus classicus} is the second poem translated above. Xi Shi was one of the most famous beauties of ancient China. According to tradition she lived at the end of the Springs and Autumns Period in the State of Yue. Her beauty was such that Yue ministers had her presented to their enemy, King Fuchai of Wu, to distract him from government. The plan worked and Wu declined, allowing Yue to defeat it.\textsuperscript{599} The point of the story for Su Shi’s comparison is that West Lake had a mesmerizing beauty that was equally attractive on a clear day or a rainy day just as Xi Shi was always alluring when wearing heavy or light make-up.

The comparison of West Lake with the beauty Xi Shi came to be echoed by countless later writers and appeared in many texts about West Lake.\textsuperscript{600} According to one account, when Hangzhou was the Southern Song capital, the Jin ruler was so envious of the pleasures that the Song ruler and ministers enjoyed at the lake that he was determined to take up arms to cross the Yangzi to take it. West Lake was thus likened to a bewitching femme fatale that risked bringing down the country in the manner of Xi Shi.\textsuperscript{601} It also gave rise to another name for the lake: “Xizi hu” that is Xi Shi Lake. Zhang Dai perhaps took a play on the simile to its furthest extent in an overview essay at the beginning of \textit{Xihu meng xun}.

\textsuperscript{597} Zhang Dai, \textit{Xihu meng xun}, pp. 4-6.

\textsuperscript{598} Zhang Dai, \textit{Xihu meng xun}, pp. 11-12. For a study of nostalgia in the writings of Zhang Dai, see Kafalas, \textit{In Limpid Dream}.

\textsuperscript{599} For twentieth-century retellings of the story, portraying Xi Shi as both a heroine that sacrificed herself for her country, and also as a model of wifely fidelity, see Cohen, \textit{Speaking to History}, especially pp. 94-97.

\textsuperscript{600} Chen Yaowen, \textit{Tian zhong ji}, juan 10, 13a-b, p. 306.

\textsuperscript{601} Lu Yingyang, \textit{Guangyu ji}, vol. 2, p. 684, 10.3b.
There, while Zhang’s younger brother Yiru is said to compare West Lake with a beautiful woman, Zhang Dai likens West Lake to a well-known courtesan that anyone can have as his plaything. Zhang’s cruder comparison might remind one of the excesses for which late-Ming literati have long been faulted, though Su Shi’s original simile was perhaps less rapt in pleasure.

5.3 The Worthies of West Lake

Both Bai Juyi and Su Shi left many poems praising the joys of West Lake that were recited and echoed by later poets and literati visitors. Their literary talents were admired

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602 The extended simile also has the brothers compare the nearby Xiang Lake and Mirror Lake respectively to a hermit and immortal (Zhang’s younger brother), and a shy virgin and a daughter of a notable family one cannot flirt with. Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, p. 1. In this overview of West Lake, Zhang also details the different attractions to be enjoyed at West Lake at different times of the day and the year.
for centuries and they left a deep imprint on the cultural imagination of West Lake, both in the textual landscape and at the site itself. Their memory was inscribed on the embankments and other places with which they were associated. One of the Ten Prospects of West Lake was named after Su’s Embankment (Figure 18) and an additional three of them were inspired by the memory of Bai and Su and their poetry.\(^603\) Other nearby spots bore their names such as Dongpo Spring, named after Su Shi’s sobriquet.\(^604\) In these ways Bai and Su represented West Lake as a site of literati culture. But they also became central figures in the other image of the lake: West Lake as a hydrological site. Bai and Su were remembered not only for their literary example, but also for their contributions as prefects of Hangzhou, above all for their work in restoring the lake.

Together with Tang prefect Li Mi (722-789), Bai Juyi and Su Shi figure prominently in the history of West Lake hydrology. Each was remembered for signature hydrological works that were recalled in the history of Hangzhou thereafter. Li Mi, who was prefect of Hangzhou from 781 to 784, was famous for opening six wells. Because of Hangzhou’s location near the sea, much of the area’s groundwater was salty and unfit for drinking, so Li’s wells drew water from the lake and into the city to provide drinking water. These wells were later restored by Bai Juyi when he was prefect.\(^605\)

In addition to restoring Li Mi’s six wells, Bai Juyi carried out extensive work on West Lake itself.\(^606\) In his West Lake gazetteer, Tian Rucheng provides a summary of Bai’s hydrological work closely following Bai Juyi’s own text “Qiantang hu shi ji” (Stone Record of Qiantang Lake).\(^607\) Bai’s key contribution was to repair and expand the lake’s irrigation system through building a tiled container to improve water storage and

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\(^603\) That is: ‘Spring Dawn at Su Embankment’ (Su ti chun xiao) on the one hand and ‘Autumn Moon on the Still Lake’ (ping hu qiu yue), ‘Wind and Lotuses in Barley Wine Court’ (qu yuan feng he), and ‘The Moon Reflected in the Three Deep Pools’ (san tan yin yue) on the other.

\(^604\) Li Xian, *Da Ming yitong zhi*, Vol. 5: 38.11b.

\(^605\) Li Xian comp., *Da Ming yitong zhi*, pp. 2700, 10b; 2722, 21b. The six wells were not deep drilled wells, but pools of water fed by the lake via covered channels, and opened and closed using water gates. Zhou Feng, *Sui Tang mingjun Hangzhou*, pp. 156-159. The saltiness of Hangzhou’s groundwater caused local scholar Lang Ying to ponder about the area’s shifts between land and sea over time. Lang Ying, *Qi xiu lei gao*, juan 2, pp. 47-8.

\(^606\) Li Xian comp., *Da Ming yitong zhi*, p. 2722, 21b.

\(^607\) Tian Rucheng, *Xihu youlan zhi*, pp. 2-5. For Bai’s record, see Bai Juyi, “Qiantang hu shi ji” (Stone Record of Qiantang Lake), in Bai Juyi, Zhu Jincheng ed., *Bai Juyi ji jian jiao*, pp. 3668-3672.
the addition of bamboo ducts to facilitate distribution. In Bai’s own words, the result was that “when the lake’s water level is reduced by one cun, it can irrigate more than fifteen qing of fields, and when it is replenished by an additional cun, it can irrigate more than fifty qing.” Bai also provided guidelines for managing the release and replenishment of water according to season and to avoid drought. His work became a model of irrigation.

Yet it is perhaps the figure of Su Shi (1037-1101) who left the greatest mark at West Lake. The famous scholar and statesman served in Hangzhou twice, first as vice-prefect then later as prefect. It was his accomplishments as prefect during the Yuanyou era (1086-1094), above all his work in famine relief and restoring West Lake, that were remembered most.608 The two projects were actually connected as Su Shi requested that he be permitted to sell Buddhist ordination certificates to raise funds for both projects, and the dredging and restoration of West Lake provided work for people at a time of hardship.609 As for West Lake itself, it had shrunk to less than half its former size by the time Su Shi arrived at his post. In a famous memorial, which was subsequently quoted and included in many texts about Hangzhou including Tian Rucheng’s Ming work, Su Shi laid out the severity of the situation.610 Su famously declared that: “Hangzhou having West Lake, is like a person having eyes and eyebrows, and so it cannot be abandoned.” He then gave an overview of the history of West Lake and described its current condition of being overrun by plants and weeds. He listed five reasons for restoring and maintaining West Lake. First, West Lake was used as a life-releasing pool (fangsheng chi) to obtain merit and blessings for the dynasty. Second, it provided fresh water for the people of Hangzhou, especially important due to the salt content of the groundwater. Third, as Bai Juyi had demonstrated, the water of West Lake was essential for irrigating the fields of the area. Fourth, it also provided water for the canal transportation system. Fifth, water from West Lake was used for state production of alcohol. In sum, the situation was desperate and if work was not carried out soon, Su declared, West Lake

608 Li Xian comp., Da Ming yitong zhi, p. 2723, 22a; 2726, 23b. Egan provides an overview of Su Shi’s “provincial activism” in those years, see Egan, Word, Image, and Deed, pp. 108-133.
609 Tian Rucheng, Xihu youlan zhi, pp. 4-6; Egan, Word, Image, and Deed, pp. 108-117.
610 Tian Rucheng, Xihu youlan zhi, pp. 3-6. For the full text of Su Shi’s memorial see Su Shi, Su Shi wenji, pp. 863-866.
would no longer exist. These five reasons were sufficient to persuade the court to grant permission for Su’s project, and were cited thereafter in support of later lake projects such as that of Yang Mengying (below). Su successfully dredged and restored the lake and to prevent it from being overrun by plants in future, he prohibited people from planting anything except for the water chestnut, the harvesting of which would keep the waters clear of weeds. Using the mud and weed removed from dredging Su built an embankment running north to south across the lake. This enabled people to walk across the lake, and also divided the lake into two halves. Named Su’s Embankment in his honour, it remained a visible reminder of his work.611

For their hydrological work Bai Juyi and Su Shi became enshrined as “worthies” (xian) at West Lake. Just as Yue Fei and Yu Qian were commemorated as statesmen who had given their utmost in serving the state and had their own shrines established in Hangzhou (chapter 2), similarly were Bai Juyi and Su Shi remembered by local people for their administrations. Bai’s memory was first to be honoured when Hangzhou people made offerings to him at a local monastery during the Tang period. Later in the Song, Bai was joined by Su Shi and Lin Bu and an independent shrine was dedicated to them called Three Worthies Shrine.

Lin Bu (967-1028) was not an official, but a famous local scholar-recluse who lived by West Lake and was admired for not serving in government despite invitations to do so.612 Yet, in a counterintuitive way, the recognition of a recluse as a worthy also reinforced the importance of government service, since it underscored the need for men of high morals. Lin himself had been praised by Song Emperor Zhenzong, who bestowed an honorary title on Lin despite having his offer of an official position rejected.


612 Typical accounts about Lin Bu note that he was a prodigious student, a prolific poet, and an accomplished calligrapher. A native of Qiantang, he was reputed for not entering the city of Hangzhou for over twenty years despite living by West Lake. Instead he spent his days enjoying the pleasures of West Lake and in his literary pursuits. He did, however, welcome guests, including officials, who came to see him. See Li Xian, Da Ming yitong zhi, p. 2726, 2738, 29b; Tian Rucheng, Xihu youlan zhi yu, pp. 127-141; Lu Yingyang, Guangyu ji, juan 10, 4a.
(To be sure, the attempts of rulers to woo men of integrity and ability that had distanced themselves from politics was an ancient theme in literature and in reality many reputed recluses may well have taken up the call.\footnote{One of the earliest, and probably the most famous, examples of a recluse being offered a position in government is found in the “Qiu shui” (Autumn Floods) chapter of the Zhuangzi. There the work’s reputed author Zhuang Zhou (4th century BCE) rejects the King of Chu’s invitation to office declaring that he would prefer to be a live tortoise “dragging its tail in the mud” than a sacred but dead tortoise, carefully kept wrapped in a cloth and boxed and revered in the ancestral temple of Chu. See Chen Guying, \textit{Zhuangzi jin zhu jin yi}, pp. 441-442. Over the centuries, many recluses and Daoist practitioners were attracted to West Lake and its surrounding hills, including Ge Hong (284-364), the author of the \textit{Baopuzi} (Master Who Embraces Simplicity) during the Eastern Jin period (317-420), see e.g. \textit{Da Ming yitong zhi}, juan 38, 4a-5b; Lu Yingyang, \textit{Guangyu ji}, Juan 10, 3a. For the observation that a spell in the hills allowed a hermit to improve his learning and to enhance his reputation, and could even lead to a position in government, see Barrett, “Hanshan’s Place in History”, pp. 122-124.}

Over time the Three Worthies Shrine was relocated, rebuilt and expanded with further figures added. Notably, mid-Ming Prefect Yang Mengying rebuilt the shrine and included Li Mi.\footnote{Tian Rucheng, \textit{Xihu youlan zhi}, p. 11.} As will be discussed below, Yang’s rebuilding the shrine was intended
to bolster his own project of restoring the lake. By evoking the memory of earlier figures and their accomplishments Yang could justify his similar actions. Li Mi, Bai Juyi, and Su Shi were all remembered for their hydrological projects and so a shrine dedicated to them underscored the value of dedicated activist officials.

5.4 West Lake as a Site of Hydrology

At first glance images of West Lake appear to represent it primarily as a site of leisure, above all for the enjoyment of the privileged social and cultural elites who visited and wrote about it. Yet the other face of West Lake, namely its importance as a hydrological site, was just as prominent and arguably by far more significant. These two faces of West Lake were not divorced from each other. As already noted, the most famous literati who spent their leisure hours at the lake and praised it in verse were also the officials whose responsibility it was to assure the wellbeing of Hangzhou’s people, which in no small part depended on the maintenance of West Lake to provide for the needs of irrigation and transportation. It was West Lake’s place within the hydrological system of the area that made it the concern of local people and officials alike. While the sites studied in the preceding chapters were situated within the politico-ritual order of the state and negotiated in local society, West Lake was configured in the hydrological order and contested on the ground in Hangzhou.

This section will begin by presenting an overview of the hydrological order in the Ming, outlining its most significant elements and showing how its institutions and practices evolved over the period. It proposes that although hydrology was a crucial sphere of action for the state, within it there was a clear hierarchy that prioritized hydrological works that were of national or regional importance. The upkeep of hydrological structures was mandated down to the county, but at that level the onus was on the local official, who had to muster all his initiative and resourcefulness and win the support of the local people if at all possible. This was the case with West Lake, and an examination of Hangzhou Prefect Yang Mengying’s restoration of the lake in the mid-Ming, will reveal how official and local interests interplayed at the lake.
5.4.1 The Hydrological Order of the Ming

The term “hydrology” is used here to translate the Chinese “shuili”, which may be rendered literally as the “benefits of water”. Perhaps because of his preoccupation with technology – albeit in a very broad sense – Joseph Needham translated the term as “hydraulic engineering”. To be sure engineering was central to shuili, but “hydrology” is preferred here for better conveying the institutions and discourses about the overall management of water as well as the engineering know-how and its attendant structures. Water management was at the heart of hydrology and scholars have studied the history of hydrology in China under three broad themes: river control, especially of the Yellow River; irrigation for agriculture and the supply of fresh water; and water transportation along rivers and canals. The management of water in these three areas was a priority of the state and a duty of its agents down to the county level.

In fact, successful water management was a mark of a worthy ruler since, according to the theory of the Mandate of Heaven, floods and other natural calamities were interpreted as signs of heaven’s displeasure. The ruler’s role in water control was also emphasized in the legend of Yu the Great, one of the founding myths of Chinese civilization. After the repeated failures of his father Gun to control the devastating floodwaters that were plaguing China, Yu took up the task. According to the legend, Yu laboured for thirteen years to tackle the problem by opening up nine channels and directing the waters to the sea. With the help of regional leaders including Bo Yi and Hou Ji, Yu eventually was able to control the waters. His success came at considerable cost: he was so occupied that for a stretch of eight years he did not return home to see his family, despite passing the gate to his house three times, and the long toil left him with a disability in his legs. Yet his labours were universally recognized and as a result he was hailed as ruler and became the founder of the Xia dynasty (c. 21st-16th C. BCE).

Similar to other flood myths of the world, the legend of Yu the Great controlling the

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616 For instance, see Yao Hanyuan’s *Zhongguo shuili shi gangyao*. Unlike other works, Yao’s study tries to treat all three main aspects of hydrology evenly within a chronological and geographical framework.

waters may be interpreted as a re-creation of the world that brought order to a state of chaos and established – and justified – the political institutions of the ruler. Yu’s channelling transformed the destructiveness of the rampant waters into sources of benefit for the people.618

So it was that the hydrological challenge at the centre of the Yu myth was flood control. The containment of rivers was a perennial problem for the Chinese state down through the late imperial period and, despite the state’s continued efforts, floods occurred periodically throughout history. It was therefore no coincidence that river control was one of the primary concerns of hydrology and commanded the close attention of the state. In particular the management of the Yellow River, in order to prevent the devastation it could unleash and also to ensure that the transport system it formed in conjunction with the Grand Canal ran smoothly, was a high priority of the state.

Indeed it is possible to discern within the hydrological order of the late imperial Chinese state a hierarchy, at the top of which were major hydrological systems that were vital to the very survival of the dynasty and affected a large proportion of the population, such as the Yellow River-Grand Canal system. At a level below that were regional irrigation systems that stretched across key areas, such as Jiangnan. At the bottom of the hierarchy were more localized hydrological concerns that were still important, but whose effects were mostly felt within a circumscribed locality. While official attention was given to hydrological work at all levels, developments in the institutions and practice of water management evince a certain state logic at work that prioritized the upper ends of this hierarchy of hydrology. Over the course of the Ming and into the Qing, offices charged with hydrological management changed from temporary ad hoc assignments to regular posts within the bureaucracy. The trends of institutionalization and systematization within the hydrological order are also evident in the compilation of hydrology texts and a growing professionalization of hydro-bureaucrats. These changes took place mostly at the upper levels of the hierarchy of hydrology. Certainly the stretched capacity of the state for managing increasingly expensive and unwieldy hydrology systems was a central factor behind its priorities, but the result was that lower-

level hydrological systems became increasingly dependent on the ability of local officials to manage them. It was at this lower end of the hierarchy that West Lake was situated as a site within the hydrological order of the state where local and official interests intersected and came into conflict. Before turning to examine the lake as a hydrological site, the following paragraphs will provide an overview of the developments in the late imperial hydrological order more broadly so as better to understand West Lake’s position in it.

As the most pressing hydrological challenge of the imperial Chinese state, the Yellow River is also a prominent illustration of the changes in the hydrological order just mentioned. The Yellow River is not China’s largest river system – the Yangzi River basin extends across an area three times that of the Yellow, and also plays an extremely important role in transport and irrigation – and there were other major hydrological structures that demanded regular maintenance, such as the Zhengguo irrigation canal in Shaanxi and the Qiantang sea-wall. But because of the Yellow River’s historical tendency to flood, often causing widespread destruction, it necessitated the constant efforts of the state to control it. The earliest attempts to control the river in historical times came in the first half of the seventh century BCE. Thereafter the silting of the river and the related deforestation and erosion of its surrounding landscape caused regular flooding through the centuries that sometimes even resulted in the river changing its course. The situation became much more complicated and control of the Yellow River even more important after the extension of the Grand Canal to link the metropolitan region of the North China Plain with the Yangzi valley in the Yuan period (and for the remainder of the imperial era after the subsequent establishment of Beijing as the primary capital in 1403). The Grand Canal became the main transportation channel between north and south and a vital trade artery, conveying crucial supplies such as the shipments of

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619 In comparison with the Yellow River, the Yangzi River rarely flooded. As a result it was not considered a major problem and so there are fewer historical materials concerning it. Zheng Zhaojing, Zhongguo shuili shi, p. 2.


grain to feed the government in Beijing and the military units along the northern borders. Where river and canal intersected, engineers created a complex hydraulic system to control the river and ease transportation. Thus managing the Yellow River became a central task of imperial administration and the government institutions designed for the task grew through the Qing as the Yellow River Conservancy until its abandonment in the mid-nineteenth century when the weakened and troubled state could no longer afford to keep it in operation. This was perhaps an extreme case of inadequate state capacity, but the state also faced significant challenges in earlier times.

Earlier in the Ming, there had also been technical and structural changes to the management of the Yellow River. Until the late Ming, the principal method was to divert excess waters into smaller streams and channels to split the river’s flow. It was Pan Jixun (1521-1595, jinshi 1550), a native of Wucheng in Zhejiang, who proposed a new hydrological approach that would dominate Yellow River engineering for the next three centuries. Pan was first appointed director general of the Grand Canal in 1565 and went on to serve four terms in total. (He did not, however, enjoy continuous occupancy of the post and served a relatively brief five years in total.) Learning on the job from investigating the area and studying works of hydrology, Pan became convinced that the biggest problem in Yellow River control centred on silt rather than water. He held that a faster flowing current would reduce the river’s silt-carrying capacity and so proposed a system of dikes that would restrict the lower course of the river to its narrow main channel. A faster flowing current, according to Pan, would not only reduce siltation, but also carve a deeper channel by cutting away earlier silt deposits. This approach changed water control practices to rely less on diverting water and more on an extensive and strong dike system to contain water.

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622 Dodgen, *Controlling the Dragon*, pp. 1-3, 147-159. Compare Mark Elvin’s argument that the Chinese hydrological system had by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries become caught in a ‘technological lock-in’ whereby the state had become committed to support a faltering and increasingly unwieldy system that it could neither easily abandon nor afford to maintain indefinitely. Elvin, *The Retreat of the Elephants*, p. 123. Similarly late Ming and Qing authors writing about the Zheng-Guo canal were well aware that its history was essentially one of degeneration, and that they could only tinker with it in the hope that it would somehow continue to function. Will, “Clear Waters versus Muddy Waters”, pp. 308-309.


624 Dodgen, *Controlling the Dragon*, pp. 18-22. For a chart of Pan Jixun’s work in Yellow River control and
Regular flooding, the heightened needs of transportation, and the new approach to water control developed by Pan Jixun all necessitated changes to the state’s hydrological administration. What started off as ad hoc methods of dealing with river crises gradually came to be replaced by a regular institutional structure. At the beginning of the Ming, matters related to river maintenance and irrigation were the responsibility of the waterways circuit (hedao), a branch office of a provincial administration commission (buzhengsi) or provincial surveillance commission (anchasi). The period beginning in the 1430s saw the increased occurrence of severe floods in the Yellow River flood plain in Henan and Shandong province. The state responded by creating temporary assignments of grand coordinators and directors general of waterways to tackle the problem. Similarly in 1430 the official Zhou Chen (1381-1452) was granted the title director general (zongdu) and given the duty assignment of overseeing the collection and shipment of tribute grain from the Yangzi valley along the Grand Canal to Beijing. Then in 1471 the state appointed a director general of the Yellow River and the Grand Canal (hedao zongdu), dedicated to the management of the Grand Canal and its critical junction with the Yellow River. This may be seen as the formal beginning of the late imperial Yellow River hydraulic bureaucracy. Thereafter a series of officials, usually a vice minister of works or censor-in-chief, took up the post, but the position was not immediately regularized within the bureaucracy. There were times when it went unfilled and there continued to be other offices with overlapping responsibilities. The post was even abolished soon after Pan Jixun held it in 1578. It was then re-established a decade later in 1587, and again filled by Pan Jixun, when an inspector and a censor made a special appeal for it to the throne. Despite these fits and starts, what were initially intended as ad hoc positions and duty assignments eventually evolved to occupy regular places in the bureaucratic structure – they even reshaped it. Granted powers that transcended the jurisdictional and spatial-administrative boundaries within the regular bureaucratic structure, the grand coordinatorships ultimately resulted in the provincial governorships.

major events in the hydrology of the river in the late Ming (1567-1644), see Yao Hanyuan, Zhongguo shuili shi gangyao, pp. 441-455.

625 The discussion that follows is based on Zheng Zhaojing, Zhongguo shuili shi, pp. 333-334; Hucker, A Dictionary of Official Titles, pp. 224-225, 521; Dodgen, Controlling the Dragon, pp. 22-23; and Sedo, “Environmental Jurisdiction”.

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of the Qing, and the directorate general of the Yellow River Conservancy grew into three posts straddling the four key provinces of operation. It was because the tasks of water management that these offices attended to were of such crucial importance to the state that they became regularized and prioritized at the top of the hydrological order.

The administration of the Yellow River and the Grand Canal may have been the most salient example of changes within state structures of water control, and moreover on the largest scale at the top of the hierarchy, but increasing institutionalization and systematization were features of the late imperial hydrological order more broadly. This is apparent in the changes that took place within the government bureaucracy. Hydrological work fell within the portfolio of the Minister of Works (gongbu shangshu), along with other responsibilities that concerned natural resources and production, including the products of mountains and marshes (shan ze), harvesting and fishing (caipu), kiln production, military farm (tuntian) cultivation, among others. During the Ming, certain offices that were concerned with hydrological matters were reorganized to enhance their functions. For instance, the Bureau of Waterways and Irrigation (shuibu) under the works ministry was changed to the Bureau of Irrigation and Transportation (du shui qingli si) and additional posts were created to attend to an extended list of tasks related to the supervision of the construction and maintenance of waterways throughout the empire.

At the regional level, too, the Ming state paid increasing attention to hydrological work. A prime case was Jiangnan. This economically and culturally central region, through which ran the Yangzi River in addition to other major water systems, was regularly struck by flooding during the Ming period. In a recent dissertation Li Cho-ying has discerned in the Ming state’s approach to the hydrological management of Jiangnan

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626 Sedo, “Environmental Jurisdiction”, p. 10. In general Ming grand coordinatorships spanned two or three provincial administration commissions, provincial surveillance commissions, or regional military commissions and were entrusted with the task of coordinating them all towards a single task-based goal.

627 The three posts were based at Huai’an, Jining, and Gu’an to attend to the Grand Canal system and the relevant sections of the Yellow River in the provinces of Jiangnan, Shandong-Henan, and Zhili respectively. Hucker, A Dictionary of Official Titles, pp. 224-225.

an “evolutionary statecraft”. According to Li’s three-stage schema, up until the mid-fifteenth century the early Ming state adopted a crisis management approach to hydrology rather than regular maintenance, despite the fact that regular maintenance was written in the regulations on the responsibilities of different levels of government. In the second phase there appeared gradual changes that led to the establishment of a regional authority. Beginning at the end of the fifteenth century during the Hongzhi reign (1488-1505) a series of officials was dispatched to manage the waterways of Jiangnan, especially in Suzhou, Songjiang, and the five neighbouring prefectures that were connected with the Lake Tai system. Among these officials were minister and deputy ministers of works, censors-in-chief, surveillance commissioners and grand coordinators. For certain periods additional directorships were established for the task. Similar to Yellow River management, these ad hoc assignments became ever more regular through the sixteenth century. These changes, lasting until the 1580s, marked a major shift from crisis management to regular maintenance that emphasized the indispensability of regional authority for hydrological management – that is, the need to have officials whose authority and jurisdiction transcended local administrative units. According to Li’s analysis, however, by the 1580s the regional approach had failed for reasons including a lack of administrative continuity and for want of stable funding or personnel. Replacing the regional approach in the late sixteenth century was a localization of hydrological management. While local elites had always played an important role, in this final phase their leadership in hydrological work was vital. Even though Li Cho-ying may be correct that the Ming state’s regional approach to hydrological management during the sixteenth century ultimately failed, his findings nonetheless indicate that there was a hierarchy within the Ming hydrological order in which the region was placed at the upper

629 Li Cho-ying, “Evolutionary Statecraft”. Li’s argument is summarized in pp. 12-20.


631 Li Cho-ying, “Evolutionary Statecraft”, p. 202. During this second phase of the regional approach officials and local leaders experimented with hydrological management and tried out different technologies of water control and various strategies for mobilizing resources, such as having local people contribute according to the principle of benefit (see discussion below in reference to Yang Mengying’s work at West Lake).

levels. As with nationally important structures bureaucratic changes were introduced in order to improve hydrological management at the regional level. The same cannot be said for the local level, however.

Just as the challenges of hydrology were not spread evenly across the land, so was the state’s attention to water management not directed equally to all places. The state committed vast resources to maintaining hydrological structures such as the Yellow River-Grand Canal and Jiangnan regional systems, which were vital to the sustenance of the state itself. But at lower levels where hydrology was centred on waterways such as West Lake, whose impact was mainly limited to the locality, the Ming state never did attempt direct management. To balance the picture with huge water-control systems like the Yellow River, it should be noted that the majority of hydraulic schemes were relatively small-scale, and that the state’s main role in their regard was usually intermittent or indirect, perhaps involving the re-establishment of a local hydraulic organization that had decayed or the arbitration of disputes between local inhabitants.633

Yet the state still charged its local administrators with the maintenance of hydrological structures within their areas of jurisdiction, together with the yamen, county school, granaries, transport stations and other government infrastructure as well as roads and bridges. There was no set budget for such public works projects, but local officials were responsible for them nonetheless and, according to the Ming Code, officials who did not promptly repair damaged government buildings or who neglected the repair of dikes would be punished by a beating with the light stick.634 Indeed, hydrological projects that concerned the irrigation of fields had a special place as they were closely tied to the welfare of the local place and directly affected the people. In the twenty-sixth year of the Hongwu reign (1393) the dynastic founder himself had decreed that local officials were to ensure hydrological conditions for the irrigation of fields.635

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634 He Zhaohui, Mingdai xianzheng yanjiu, p. 171. The punishment for failure to maintain public buildings and dikes was forty and fifty strokes respectively. Jiang Yonglin tr., The Great Ming Code, pp. 245-246.
635 He Zhaohui, Mingdai xianzheng yanjiu, pp. 178-179. He cites the Hongwu edict recorded in Ming huidian, juan 199, shuili.
But despite these official demands, at the bottom of the hierarchy of the hydrological order the burden lay on the resident administrator. With few resources at his disposal and often facing stiff opposition to change from local power holders, most local officials were content to overlook their responsibilities in water management, and simply to allow the existing situation to continue. Those who did strive to carry out their hydrological duties had to win the support of other officials and of local people if they were to succeed. When local power holders opposed official attempts to carry out hydrological work, as was the case of West Lake, it was a rare official that could execute a project successfully. Many Ming officials failed in the task, but some did succeed including Hangzhou Prefect Yang Mengying who dredged and restored West Lake at the beginning of the sixteenth century. It is to Yang Mengying’s project that we now turn.

5.5 Yang Mengying’s Restoration of West Lake

Hangzhou’s West Lake was at the bottom of the hierarchy within the hydrological order and so not directly or regularly managed by the Ming state. Over the course of its long history the lake was repeatedly threatened, especially by local people ever ready to claim a piece of the lake and its environs for building a villa or planting some crop. Yet the lake did manage to survive, which is especially notable given the disappearance – or extreme reduction – of so many lakes in the late imperial period. Geographer Chen Qiaoshi has attributed this remarkable survival of West Lake to the fact that it was a vital source of fresh water for Hangzhou.636 Local people drew on its water for consumption, irrigation and transportation. Officials appointed to Hangzhou were also very much aware of West Lake’s importance and accordingly sought to care for its hydrological health. As a result, there was a centuries-long struggle between officials and local power holders over the maintenance and use of the lake. In earlier periods the most famous successes were those of Bai Juyi and Su Shi mentioned above, but there were many more failed projects over the ages.

636 Chen points out that the lake became especially important with the city’s expansion beginning in the seventh century. After the administrative seat moved round to the east of the lake, the growing city could spread only as far as fresh water could be channelled or extracted from the system of wells. Chen Qiaoshi, “Lishi shiqi Xihu de fazhan yu bianqian,” pp. 471-475.
During the Ming numerous officials also worked to maintain and restore the lake. Among them were the future city god Zhou Xin (chapter 4), whose project to avert drought was met with strong opposition by influential families who had encroached upon the lake, and the Zhejiang provincial administration commissioner Sun Yuanzhen (1388-1474), who in 1456, the seventh year of the Jingtai reign, rebuilt two sluice-gates (zha) and recovered over three thousand four hundred mu of fields and ponds. But the most outstanding West Lake hydrology project during the Ming was that carried out in 1506, the first year of the Zhengde reign, by Hangzhou prefect Yang Mengying.

Yang Mengying, a native of Fengdu in Sichuan, served as Hangzhou prefect for seven years from 1502, the fifteenth year of the Hongzhi reign. Undeterred by the strong opposition from local power holders that had foiled the efforts of countless fellow officials before him, Yang was able to drive through his ambitious plan. In emulation of his illustrious predecessors Bai Juyi and Su Shi, he was able to restore West Lake to its former state. Some observers even held that Yang’s efforts surpassed the projects of Bai and Su. For Yang did not only overcome staunch opposition, his project was on a grander scale than any before it. Carried out the dredging and restoration work over a period of almost seven months, Yang mobilized thousands of workers at a cost of close to thirty thousand taels of silver. In addition to converting fields and ponds back to lake, Yang rebuilt Su’s Embankment and added another (that came to bear his name) and other structures around the lake.

We have a lot of information about Yang’s project. Overviews and references to Yang Mengying’s project are found in a variety of private writings (including the works of Tian Rucheng and Zhang Dai) and official gazetteers, but the most detailed source, especially for the actual process of Yang’s restoration project, was compiled by Yang

637 For an overview, see Tian Rucheng, Xihu youlan zhi, p. 5; Wu Nongxiang, Xihu shuili kao, 2a ff. Using a variety of official and non-official sources, Li Wei details the main episodes of the history of the hydrology of West Lake from the beginnings through the Ming in Li Wei ed., Fu Wanglu comp., Xihu zhi, juan 1.
638 Ma Rulong, Hangzhou fu zhi, in Wushan chenghuang miao zhi, juan 3, 18b; p. 192.
639 Li Wei ed., Fu Wanglu comp., Xihu zhi, juan 1, 21a-22a, 112-114; Zheng Zhaojing, Zhongguo shuili shi, p. 248.
640 Some date Yang’s project to 1508, apparently following the mistake of Tian Rucheng. Luo Yimin, “Yang Mengying jun fu Hangzhou Xihu”, p. 160.
himself. After Yang successfully completed the restoration of West Lake, he carefully assembled the various documents related to the project, and had them published as the *Junfu Xihu lu* (Record of the dredging and restoration of West Lake).

This compilation of twenty documents contains memorials, proposals, notices to the people of Hangzhou, ritual texts, and commemorative texts. Four illustrations of the work carried out are also included. Yang Mengying authored most of the documents, but he also included memorials and reports by his superiors and subordinates that supported his project and a text by high minister Xie Qian, which commemorated Yang’s project upon its completion. Acutely aware of the opposition to his endeavour, Yang probably compiled the documents to demonstrate that he was carrying out his official responsibility with complete propriety, and also for the benefit of the local people and of the state. So much is apparent in the discourses of public good to which he appealed. Yet the documents also reveal the deeply entrenched opposition from local power holders that had encroached upon the lake and profited from the land they occupied. Their complaints may be heard through the lines of Yang’s documents. A resounding voice of opposition comes more directly from the prominent Hangzhou scholar and high official Li Min, who wrote a memorial attacking Yang Mengying and critiquing the points he made. Reading Li’s memorial alongside Yang’s documents enables us to reconstruct a fuller history of the restoration of West Lake.

This history demonstrates that West Lake was not only the central site of Hangzhou in the cultural imagination, but also a physical site in the hydrological order that furnished vital resources and functions for local people. Yet its official and public importance did not safeguard it from incursions by private interests, leading to competing claims between the officials, local power holders, and the wider society of Hangzhou. Moreover, these groups were not so clearly demarcated, and the relations between them were not always

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641 Yang Mengying, *Junfu Xihu lu* (Record of Dredging and Restoring West Lake), in Wang Guoping ed., *Xihu wenxian jicheng* (Collected Writings on West Lake), Vol. 3, pp. 803-838. While some suspect the compilation to be a forgery, Luo Yimin asserts its authenticity because its title is listed in several Ming and Qing works and the modern edition of the work has the same number of items as stated in a Ming record. Luo Yimin, “Yang Mengying jun fu Hangzhou Xihu”, pp. 160-161. In the Yongzheng era, Li Wei commented on Yang’s compilation in his gazetteer of West Lake. Li Wei ed., *Fu Wanglu comp., Xihu zhi*, juan 29, 3b, p. 2165.
straightforward. Yang was an agent of the state, who professed to act on behalf of the state and for the wellbeing of local society, but he ran against entrenched local interests, and his project also affected the taxes that were paid to the state and was attacked as a waste of public funds. A signal example of the history of the making and remaking of West Lake, Yang’s restoration project reveals the tensions and interactions between different groups as they were configured at this central site in Ming Hangzhou.

First we will examine the perennial problem at West Lake (and other hydrological sites in late imperial China): encroachment. Encroachment of West Lake had become a grave problem by Yang Mengying’s time and had vastly reduced the supply of water. As an entrenched practice it also brought problems of taxation. To meet these challenges Yang ensured that he carried out his project according to proper procedure, obtaining the approval of the throne and the support of other officials. He also issued numerous notices to the local people informing them of his plans so that they could respond in a timely manner with minimum loss to their interests. This included Yang’s arrangement for monetary compensation and land to replace the lakeland surrendered. Throughout his project, Yang appealed to the precedents of Bai Juyi and Su Shi, and to the discourse of benefitting the people and the state, to demonstrate that he was only carrying out his responsibilities for the public good. Progressing in this careful manner, Yang was able successfully to restore West Lake.

5.5.1 The Problem

The encroachment and private reclamation of public land figure prominently in the social and environmental history of later imperial China, within which the situation of the lower Yangzi delta has received particular attention. Immigration and demographic growth were driving factors behind the reclamation of lowlands that was noted as early as the eighth century and was causing serious concern by the thirteenth century.642 The rate of encroachment leapt up after the Song move to the south. Jiaxing, for example, became filled with powerful families who had migrated with the government. Many of them

drained lakes and wetlands to make fields.\textsuperscript{643} These pressures eventually drove people uphill so that by the late Ming terraced paddy fields were spreading throughout the landscape.\textsuperscript{644} But low-lying lands along lakeshores and riverbanks were most vulnerable to encroachment. Studies have shown that smaller lakes of only local significance were especially prone to reclamation. For instance Mirror Lake in the Shaoxing plain had vanished from sight by Southern Song times on account of private encroachment.\textsuperscript{645} Also in Shaoxing Prefecture, the seventy-two lakes of Zhuji County that were built for flood prevention and for irrigation purposes had fallen subject to increasingly regular and violent struggles and encroachment by the Wanli era.\textsuperscript{646} In Hangzhou Prefecture, Yuhang County’s South Lake survived but shrank considerably from the Southern Song through the Ming and Qing periods. In the Jiajing era a regional inspector conducted a survey of the lake and, after confiscating large stretches of illegally reclaimed land, drew new boundaries for it.\textsuperscript{647}

It is clear that encroachment and reclamation was a widespread problem and contemporary observers were acutely aware of it. For instance, the fifteenth century Jiangsu scholar and minister Ye Sheng (1420-1474) recorded a popular Hangzhou saying regarding the widespread practice of submerging bamboo baskets in the lake for growing edible plants such as caltrop and arrowroot: “those who weave the wicker baskets are all rich and powerful families.”\textsuperscript{648} Yang Mengying himself noted in his initial petition to restore West Lake that, beginning in the Southern Song and continuing through the Ming, people had gradually encroached upon the lake and turned it into fields and ponds, so that the surface of the lake became ever narrower. Due to the demands of the fields

\textsuperscript{643} Elvin, \textit{The Retreat of the Elephants}, p. 179.

\textsuperscript{644} Osborne, “Highlands and Lowlands”, p. 208.

\textsuperscript{645} Shiba, “Environment versus Water Control”, p. 161. Of the roughly 200 lakes dotted around the Ning-Shao plain at the beginning of the Ming, by the twentieth century all but 44 had been entirely reclaimed, and those that remained had reduced surface area and water storage capacity. Osborne, “Highlands and Lowlands”, pp. 208-209.

\textsuperscript{646} Morita, “Water Control in Zherdong”. The majority of these were natural riverine lakes that had been converted into reservoirs by the building of dikes to contain the floodwaters.

\textsuperscript{647} Shiba, “Environment versus Water Control”, pp. 162-163. The confiscated land totaled more than 470 hectares and the lake’s new boundary actually contained a much smaller area than previously.

\textsuperscript{648} Ye Sheng, \textit{Shui dong ri ji}, juan 14, p. 147.
established along (and into) the lake and also along the connecting rivers, whenever drought occurred the lake would be exhausted and unable to provide for irrigation. In addition, the canals dried up so boats could not pass and “the whole city, the troops, and people inside and outside the walls, had to carry grain on their backs and firewood on poles, and the price for porters swelled out of control.” Furthermore, not only private households but also Buddhist monasteries and Daoist temples had encroached on the land over the centuries, with the result that from Su’s Embankment to the western hills, mulberry fields, ponds, and private dwellings stretched as far as the eye could see. The area of land reclaimed by these different groups in Hangzhou society provided means of livelihood for hundreds of households. In addition to creating fields and orchards in the area of the lake, people also raised fish, shrimp, and crabs there. To compound the problem, land reclaimed from West Lake had become recognized by the state. An early Ming government survey classified the higher land as fields and the lower land as pond and tax quotas were accordingly set for it. This regularization of the situation made it even more difficult to dredge and restore the lake and was a major factor behind the failure of proposals to do so before Yang Mengying. Thus, when Yang Mengying took up office as Hangzhou prefect in 1503, the sixteenth year of the Hongzhi reign, he faced the problem of having to challenge long established interests in order to restore West Lake, which may have been as much as “nine tenths occupied” by that time.

5.5.2 Yang Mengying’s Solution

Despite the size of the problem and the failure of his predecessors, Yang Mengying set out to restore West Lake, which he regarded to be of vital importance to the welfare of the people of Hangzhou as a whole. Realizing that his ambitious project would greatly disrupt vested interests, Yang proceeded carefully taking three broad measures. First, he

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650 Wu Nongxiang, Xihu shuili kao, 4a.
651 Ju Liang, “Xun’an Ju gong zou fu Xihu zhuang” (Memorial for the restoration of West Lake by Regional Inspector Lord Ju), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, p. 819.
652 Tian Rucheng, Xihu youlan zhi, pp. 5-6.
653 Tian Rucheng, Xihu youlan zhi yu, p. 209.
did everything according to proper procedure through official channels. He obtained the support of a group of officials that included both his superiors and his subordinates, which enabled him to win the throne’s approval for his project. In addition to presenting each stage of his project to the court, he also announced the plan to local people through a series of notices. Second, Yang appealed to a range of discourses to strengthen his claims that his project was both necessary and proper. Emphasizing that it was a restoration, he appealed to the history of West Lake, to the much praised examples of Bai Juyi and Su Shi who had brought untold benefits to the people of Hangzhou through their own hydrological projects in earlier times. By making this connection, Yang was casting himself as an epigone of the Three Worthies and also drawing on and actively participating in the history of West Lake. He reinforced his connection with past figures by rebuilding the shrine to them upon the completion of his lake project. Yang also made constant reference to the benefits (li) that the project would bring to all the people of Hangzhou in the longer term, despite the short-term disruptions the project might entail. In relation, Yang averred that his project was restoring the legal and proper use of land, which belonged to the state and was for the public good. Third, Yang arranged compensation for those who would lose reclaimed land as a result of his project. The terms of his offer especially favoured those who gave up land willingly and in a timely fashion, while those who refused to comply with the project would be dealt with severely. By these means Yang was able to carry out his project.

5.5.2.1 Official Channels

First, Yang Mengying followed proper procedure to ensure that he won official approval and support for his plan. Throughout the different stages of the project Yang memorialized the throne about his plans. The first memorial was his initial request for approval in which he stated the severity of the situation at West Lake and the necessity of dredging and restoring it. Following further assessments and deliberations by officials at different levels of government, Yang sent up a more detailed report that included the

estimated amount and cost of labour required and the duration of the project. After the project was completed, Yang submitted a report detailing the work that had actually been carried out, including adjustments that had to be made due to unforeseen difficulties with the dredging (e.g. the earth was in places harder and the mud deeper than expected). Although the final figures were not the same as those originally budgeted, the revised amounts had been approved by the regional inspector who oversaw the project. Yang also provided information about the costs and arrangements for compensating those who lost their reclaimed land.

In all his reports, Yang carefully referenced the surveys and assessments made by his predecessors who had attempted to restore the lake before him, and those by his superiors and subordinates with whom he was working in his own project to make clear that he was acting in full compliance with correct procedures. To be sure, one might view Yang’s actions simply as regular procedure and therefore nothing remarkable. But given the challenge of the task he had set himself, and the obstacles he faced, Yang was probably being far more careful than an official typically needed to be – or was – in routine work. Indeed, in his handbook for local officials *Chushi lu* (Records of a Beginner Official), Jiajing era official Wu Zun (*js* 1547) emphasized the importance of hydrology as well as recognizing the difficulty in dealing with the encroachment and occupation of land. Because any attempt to recover and restore such land would be an attack on private interests, it would lead to resentment and opposition so that “before the work is complete those above will be suspicious and those below will be resentful” (*shang yi xia yuan*). Despite these difficulties, Wu maintained that an official must do all he could to restore the hydrological health of his jurisdiction. He ought to take extra care in planning the work and to report it to his superiors to gain their approval and aid, including help from government funds for larger projects.

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657 Wu Zun, *Chushi lu*, 37b-38a. Wu also suggested that an official should wait half a year after coming to his post before embarking on any public works project so that “trust may be established between those above and those below” (*shang xia xin fu*).
Yang Mengying’s project won the approval and support of both superiors and subordinates. Perhaps the most significant support came from Zhejiang Regional Inspector Ju Liang who sent his own memorial in support of Yang’s plan soon after the latter’s initial request.\(^{658}\) One of Ju’s responsibilities for Zhejiang was to oversee its hydrological management (shuili) so it was crucial that Yang gained Ju’s official support for his project. In his memorial, in addition to endorsing Yang’s plan, Ju underscored that proper steps would be taken at every stage of the project. This included a thorough investigation of the situation on the ground, which would be reported to the Ministry of Public Works for examination and approval. Ju confirmed that everything would be done according to official procedure. This included the submission of reports on the size and location of ponds and fields that were to be dredged, the compensation to be made for them, and details on local obstructionists who were to be investigated and perhaps punished. All this information would be recorded in duplicate with copies sent to the relevant ministry and censorate departments for inspection and approval. Ju, Yang, and their fellow officials would not dare to act “without authority.” In similar fashion to Ju Liang, Assistant Surveillance Commissioner Gao Jiang also memorialized the throne in support of Yang’s project after reviewing Ju’s assessment and checking all the figures and estimates for Yang’s plan, judging it “very thorough” and that it was “fitting to act as proposed”. Gao even suggested additional labourers, fearing that Yang had underestimated the size of the task.\(^{659}\)

As for the cooperation of subordinates, Yang Mengying had Hangzhou Assistant Prefect Zhu Lin survey the surface area of West Lake. Zhu found the surface of West Lake to be over thirty li, as stated in the historical accounts, but that an area of over three thousand eight hundred mu had been occupied illegally. Yang used this information to strengthen his case for a major restoration of the lake.\(^{660}\) In fact, Yang Mengying’s initial appeal for the restoration of West Lake was based on an assessment by the magistrates of

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\(^{658}\) Ju Liang, “Xun’an Ju gong zou fu Xihu zhuang” (Memorial for the restoration of West Lake by Regional Inspector Lord Ju), in Yang Mengying, *Junfu Xihu lu*, pp. 818-822.

\(^{659}\) Gao Jiang, “Qianxian Gao gong yi fu Xihu an” (Assistant Censor Lord Gao discusses the case of the restoration of West Lake), in Yang Mengying, *Junfu Xihu lu*, pp. 824-825.

Renhe and Qiantang counties, who found that gradual encroachment on the lake had caused severe drought and flood. For such a sensitive project in which he would have to combat deeply entrenched local interests, it was essential that Yang also had the support of other local officials and not seem to be abusing his authority or seeking profit for himself.661

Yang Mengying’s final measure to ensure that the project was carried out according to proper procedure was to inform the local people, whom the dredging and restoration would affect directly, of the plans through a series of public notices. In his first notice to the people of Hangzhou, Yang affirmed unequivocally the hydrological importance of West Lake and the severity of the results of encroachment on it. Yet he also allowed that many people were perhaps not even aware of the need to restore the lake, given that encroachment and reclamation had taken place for so long and to such an extent that they may have come to seem the norm. Nevertheless, Yang declared that the restoration project had to be carried out for the benefit of the people. Accordingly he urged all who occupied reclaimed land to report it to the government within ten days, with the promise that they would be pardoned of illegal encroachment, and that Yang would also seek tax exemptions for them.662 In his second notice, Yang announced that the court had granted approval for the project and that preparations were being made to start work. He also detailed the terms of compensation for those whose who would lose reclaimed land through the restoration of West Lake.663 Further information on compensation through the granting of vacant monastic land was given in a third notice.664 A final notice announced the success of the project after its completion. Despite the difficulties and obstacles, Yang declared that all had gone according to plan, and that the

662 Yang Mengying, “Jun hu fu kan yu min wen” (Notice to the people about dredging the lake and restoring), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, pp. 817-818.
663 Yang Mengying, “Jun hu shi yu min hu wen” (Text on announcing the dredging of the lake to people’s households), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, pp. 825-826.
664 Yang Mengying, “Shi yu zhan zhong si tian minhu wen” (Text announcing the occupation and cultivation of the monastery fields to the people), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, p. 827.
results of the hydrological project would benefit everybody. He expressed this hope with the wish: “May your sons and grandsons forever be provided with water by it.”

5.5.2.2 Restoring the Past

In addition to following proper procedure in carrying out his project, Yang Mengying also appealed to different discourses to bolster his plans. First of all he continuously referred to the project as a restoration, the implied meaning being that although he was removing people from reclaimed land that they occupied, he did so only to restore West Lake to its former state to benefit everybody. In many of his memorials and reports mentioned above, Yang referred to the assessments and plans for West Lake of his predecessors as bases for his own project. The idea of restoration appears explicitly in the title of Yang Mengying’s collection of documents – *Junfu Xihu lu* (Record of dredging and restoring West Lake). Perhaps more telling, the introduction to Yang’s collection includes an imagined conversation between Yang and a man who asks him about the reasons for his project.

Somebody asked Yang Mengying: “Why was West Lake opened up?”
He replied: “It wasn’t opened up; it was restored to its former state.”
“Why was your aim its former state?”
He replied: “Letian [Bai Juyi] made the stone reservoir to store the lake’s water for irrigating the upper reservoir. Dongpo [Su Shi] removed weeds and grasses to deepen the water and increase irrigation. All this was done for the people. This is what is meant by its former state.”

Continuing the hypothetical conversation, Yang then goes on to explain that his own work at West Lake merely restored the lake to its former dimensions and capacity, and did not go beyond what Bai Juyi or Su Shi had done. In this sense his work was truly a restoration. But Yang’s interlocutor pressed on to ask why, if that was the case, were there so many questions surrounding the project. On the defensive, Yang said that while it was true that he had not yet allayed everyone’s concerns, people would eventually see the benefits of the restoration and delight in the project’s completion. At this Yang’s


questioner laughed and left. That is probably the reaction that Yang hoped he would get from everybody. But the fact that he decided to present his case through his document collection, in addition to the many measures he took throughout the project, was partly out of recognition that many opposed his restoration of West Lake.

Yang needed to defend his project, and his evocation of Bai Juyi and Su Shi and the position they held in the history of West Lake was a significant part of his defence. He also cited the work of Bai and Su as models for his own work in his memorials to the throne. In his initial request for permission for his project, Yang Mengying carefully laid out the history of the hydrology of West Lake citing earlier projects and plans. First he noted Tang prefect Li Mi’s important contribution in digging six wells that provided fresh water for Hangzhou residents. Next he cited Bai Juyi’s *Shi han ji* (Record of the Stone Reservoir) which stated that all fields from Qiantang to Haining counties depended on West Lake for irrigation. Yang then gave an overview of Su Shi’s hydrological project that restored the six wells, the transport canal system, and irrigation for all the fields – in short the chief benefits of West Lake. He also quoted Su Shi’s memorial that gave his five reasons for maintaining West Lake. These earlier exemplars set the standard for West Lake hydrology that gave authority to later projects. Before discussing his own project, Yang also discussed Vice Director He Cong who sought (but failed) to restore West Lake during the late Chenghua era (1465-1487), some twenty years before Yang himself. He Cong also specified reasons for dredging West Lake, the most important of which matched Su Shi’s – that is, West Lake was vital for water supplies, irrigation and transportation.

By setting out these precedents, Yang evoked the authority of his predecessors. But he was not claiming that his circumstances were identical to theirs. For instance, he acknowledged that Su Shi’s fifth reason for maintaining West Lake – that it was necessary for the government’s production of alcohol – was no longer relevant. Yang also pointed out that the challenges that confronted him were greater than those faced by Su Shi. For while Su Shi had to unblock West Lake and remove turnip fields, there were no powerful families occupying reclaimed land and obstructing his project as there were in

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Yang’s time, which is why “it was easy for Su Shi to open the lake and complete his work, but today it is difficult to dredge the lake.”

5.5.2.3 Benefitting the People

A second line of discourse that Yang Mengying marshalled in defence of his project was that it was for the benefit (li) of the people of Hangzhou. Of course, this was implied in his argument that he was restoring West Lake to its proper hydrological health on the model of Bai Juyi and Su Shi. But it was a distinct and important argument, not least because at the time many powerful families were profiting from the reclaimed land they occupied and would therefore suffer losses if Yang’s project were carried out. As Regional Inspector Ju Liang put it in support of Yang’s project: “Hangzhou’s having West Lake … is related to the livelihoods of a myriad people, it is certainly not only to provide the ‘brows and eyes’ for tourists.” This use of Su Shi’s famous metaphor makes light of West Lake as a site of pleasure to underline its importance as a hydrological site. More emphatically Ju stated in the same memorial that he and his fellow officials held that of all government tasks, none was more important than agriculture and that within agriculture, nothing was more important than hydrological management. According to Ju “the great base (da ben) of the people’s livelihood (minsheng) and the plan of the state (guo ji) truly lie in this [hydrology].” Explaining the situation at West Lake in his own memorial to the throne, Yang Mengying bemoaned the fact that the lake had been blocked for a long time and large areas of it reclaimed for private use. As a result, “benefits have accumulated for several dozen families, but harm has been bequeathed to thousands and myriads of households.” Only by going against the private interests of “powerful local people (quan hao)” could the successful restoration of West Lake “benefit the people’s livelihood below and benefit state finance above”.

Of course, the discourse of benefit (li) was an established component of the official lexicon of Confucian government. Within the field of hydrology, Li Cho-ying

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668 Ju Liang, “Xun’an Ju gong zou fu Xihu zhuang” (Memorial for the restoration of West Lake by Regional Inspector Lord Ju), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, pp. 818-819.

posits that the “principle of benefit” became especially important as statecraft evolved in Ming Jiangnan. As hydrological management shifted from a regional matter to a localized concern, officials and local elites employed the principle of benefit to calculate and elicit contributions from landowners, on the basis that those who benefitted most from hydrological project should contribute more towards them.\textsuperscript{670} In the case of Yang Mengying’s West Lake project the configuration of group interests was different in that Yang Mengying and his fellow officials took the lead and there was no notable initiative from local elites (although it is possible that this image is partly a product of the sources). Moreover, Yang was not demanding landowners contribute funds to the project, but to surrender their reclaimed land and allow officials to restore West Lake. For Yang it was no less important to wield the principle of benefit in support of their argument. By contraposing the private interests of powerful families who occupied land reclaimed from West Lake against the public benefits for all of Hangzhou’s people, Yang was claiming to act on behalf of the latter.

For Yang Mengying, West Lake’s hydrological health was closely related to the well-being of Hangzhou’s people as a whole. As he stated repeatedly, West Lake was vital for providing fresh water for the people of Hangzhou, for the irrigation of the fields from Renhe to Haining, and for transportation in the area. For the benefit of all the people, it was necessary to destroy the long established enterprises of the few.\textsuperscript{671} These three main hydrological functions of West Lake are depicted in an image that Yang included in his document collection entitled “Xihu tong jing zhu he guan tian tu” (Illustration of West Lake connected with the wells, pouring into the rivers and canals, and irrigating the fields) (Figure 22).

\textsuperscript{670} Li Cho-ying, “Evolutionary Statecraft”, pp. 17-18, 115-119. The principle of benefit was even used as a justification to revoke gentry’s exemption privileges, \textit{ibid}, p. 335.

\textsuperscript{671} E.g. Tian Rucheng, \textit{Xihu youlan zhi}, p. 6.
Figure 22 "Xihu tong jing zhu he guan tian tu" (Illustration of West Lake connected with the wells, pouring into the rivers and canals, and irrigating fields), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, pp. 813-814.

This illustration clearly shows that West Lake (upper right) was closely connected with the walled city of Hangzhou (upper middle) and surrounding settlements (one subordinate county town is represented in the bottom left) through a complex irrigation and transportations system that consisted of multiple channels flowing in different directions. The illustration’s message is certain: a restored West Lake is vital for providing water for the people of Hangzhou.

5.5.2.4 Protecting the State

In a third related discourse, Yang Mengying claimed to be acting on behalf of the state as well as for the local people. In his initial petition Yang backed up his point about the need to open up the reclaimed land occupied by private families and restore it to the lake by declaring that “what has become people’s enterprise today is the government lake (guan
of earlier times. Therefore it is the case that people have encroached upon the government to enrich their families.” This ought to be remembered when officials take land back from the people, so the restoration of West Lake should in no way be seen as the government arbitrarily imposing exactions upon the people. In his notices to the people of Hangzhou Yang Mengying reiterated this argument. But he also acknowledged that the situation had long been in the making and that private families may have worked hard to build up their enterprises on reclaimed land. Still, the legality of the situation was clear, and so “it is not that the government can bear to take away people’s livelihood, but that the local inhabitants have stolen government property and so the fields and ponds should definitely be restored to the lake.”

5.5.2.5 Compensation and Punishment
Despite the care Yang Mengying took to follow proper procedure and to gain the support of other officials, and his claims that he was restoring West Lake to its former state for the benefit of all the people of Hangzhou as well as on behalf of the state, there was substantial opposition to Yang’s project. Thus, as a third measure to ensure the success of his project, Yang took a carrot-and-stick approach to deal with opponents of the plan. As they were largely the occupants of the reclaimed land Yang both offered them compensation as an incentive to cooperate, and threatened them with punishment if they refused to comply.

In his first notice to the people of Hangzhou, Yang Mengying called on all who occupied reclaimed land to declare it to his office within ten days. If they did this they would be pardoned of any crime. In a proposal discussing the project and in a second notice announcing it Yang gave further details. Yang recognized that some of those who

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673 Yang Mengying, “Jun hu fu kan yu min wen” (Notice to the people about dredging the lake and restoring), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, pp. 817-818.
674 Yang Mengying, “Jun hu shi yu min hu wen” (Text announcing the dredging of the lake to people’s households), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, pp. 825-826.
675 Yang Mengying, “Jun hu fu kan yu min wen” (Notice to the people about dredging the lake and restoring), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, pp. 817-818.
occupied reclaimed land might have done so for many years – even for generations – and so may have come to depend on it for their livelihood. Such people might understandably be troubled by the project. Out of consideration for their situation, Yang proposed to compensate them by offering them fertile land from three abandoned monasteries and the site of the Song Copper Cash Bureau (tong qian ju), all of which lay near the city walls. They would be allotted the same amount of land as they gave up at West Lake. Moreover, if they did this willingly and submitted a full and open report on their holdings, they would have their taxes and corvée duties waived for one year. Yang’s proposal was modified by Assistant Censor Gao Jiang, but, as Yang announced to the people in a later notice, the compensation arrangements were intended to prevent those who cooperated from incurring and losses.

At the same time as offering concrete and substantial compensation to those who cooperated and willingly surrendered their reclaimed land, Yang Mengying also threatened those who refused with stern consequences. It was generally recognized that it was difficult to deal with local power holders who encroached on and occupied land, and so officials were advised to report such obstructionists to their superiors and punish them severely. Anticipating such problems, Yang Mengying requested that he be given permission to arrest powerful people (quan hao) who did not accept the arrangements of the project – and perhaps even dared to fan up opposition and otherwise cause obstructions – and hand them over to the censorate for investigation and punishment.

Yang’s superior Regional Inspector Ju Liang supported firm action, advocating that

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676 Yang Mengying, “Yi fu Xihu shiyi zhuang” (Proposal discussing the restoration of West Lake and related matters), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, p. 823; Yang Mengying, “Jun hu shi yu min hu wen” (Text announcing the dredging of the lake to people’s households), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, pp. 825-826.

677 Gao agreed that those who had passed the stipulated requirement for occupying newly cultivated land, or else had bought the land and were dependent on it, ought to be given the favourable terms of compensation, but those who had encroached on the land and occupied it themselves were not. Gao Jiang, “Qianxian Gao gong yi fu Xihu an” (Assistant Censor Lord Gao discusses the case of the restoration of West Lake), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, pp. 824-825.

678 Yang Mengying, “Shi yu zhan zhong si tian minhu wen” (Text announcing the occupation and cultivation of the monastery fields to the people), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, p. 827.

679 Wu Zun, Chushi lu, 37b-38a.

anyone that deliberately hindered the project be dealt with severely according to the law.\textsuperscript{681} Assistant Censor Gao Jiang agreed, but advised that families occupying reclaimed land be given detailed information about the project (including the approval of the throne and the censorate) well in advance through the display of large-character notices. They should also be given until the end of the first month of the first year of the Zhengde reign (1506) to vacate the reclaimed land, before work on the project began in the second month. Those who purposely delayed were to be arrested.\textsuperscript{682} Accordingly Yang Mengying made the arrangements clear in a notice to the people, bidding them to remove their assets from the reclaimed land they occupied in a timely manner, and not to tarry and obstruct the project. Those that did delay would be dealt with severely.\textsuperscript{683}

\subsection*{5.5.3 The Opposition of Li Min}

The concern that local power holders who were occupying and profiting from reclaimed land would oppose his project is evident in Yang Mengying’s documents, and we can assume that they posed a substantial challenge despite the measures Yang took. But reading Yang’s records of the project we can only infer the opposition he faced. For apart from some general references to such obstinate parties, there are few details about them. After all, Yang compiled his documents to demonstrate that he had carried out the vital project of restoring West Lake with full propriety; his purpose was not to record the words and deeds of those who disagreed with and contested his project.

A more direct voice of opposition to Yang’s project comes from another source. Included in the Wanli era (1573-1620) Hangzhou gazetteer is a text by Li Min (1435-1509), a Qiantang native who ranked first place in the palace examination of the twentieth year of the Chenghua era (1484) and held numerous official positions, rising to become Nanjing Vice Minister of Personnel.\textsuperscript{684} Li Min wrote his “Junzhi Xihu shuo”

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{681} Ju Liang, “Xun’an Ju gong zou fu Xihu zhuang” (Memorial for the restoration of West Lake by Regional Inspector Lord Ju), in Yang Mengying, \textit{Junfu Xihu lu}, pp. 819-820.
\item \textsuperscript{682} Gao Jiang, “Qianxian Gao gong yi fu Xihu an” (Assistant Censor Lord Gao discusses the case of the restoration of West Lake), in Yang Mengying, \textit{Junfu Xihu lu}, pp. 824-825.
\item \textsuperscript{683} Yang Mengying, “Jun hu shi yu min hu wen” (Text on announcing the dredging of the lake to people’s households), in Yang Mengying, \textit{Junfu Xihu lu}, pp. 825-826.
\item \textsuperscript{684} Pan Rongsheng, \textit{Ming Qing jinshi lu}, p. 188.
\end{itemize}
Debate on the dredging and management of West Lake) as an attack on Yang Mengying’s project, which shows that there was considerable opposition to the project within government at the time.\footnote{Chen Shan, \textit{Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi}, juan 92, pp. 5045-5049.} Li Min’s arguments reveal that some officials held views that differed starkly from Yang Mengying’s and provide a telling counternarrative to the picture that Yang presented.

Li Min began his text by affirming the importance of West Lake for irrigating fields and providing water for the use of Hangzhou’s people. Like Yang, he praised the earlier work of Bai Juyi and Su Shi, in particular Su’s Embankment which divided West Lake into two areas: the area west of the embankment could be used for growing caltrops and other edible plants, while the area east of the embankment would meet the area’s irrigation requirements. In addition, the embankment slowed down water entering the lake from the west so that its force would not threaten the city walls.\footnote{Chen Shan, \textit{Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi}, juan 92, pp. 5045-5046.} Thus Li Min did not dispute West Lake’s hydrological importance. What Li attacked was Yang Mengying’s misapprehension of the situation at West Lake and his resultant plan, which, in Li’s opinion, was completely inappropriate to the actual needs of both the local people and of the state.

First of all, Li Min accused Yang Mengying of failing to see that encroachment on West Lake had taken place over centuries and had become the norm. Beginning in the Xianchun period (1265-1274) of the Southern Song, the area west of the embankment had gradually become the property of local people (\textit{minjian hengchan}). It was at that time, for instance, that more than fifty \textit{mu} of fields and ponds were set up to provide for Yue Fei’s Tomb. One thousand families came to live and depend on the area of the lake. They were so rooted in the lake area that they had even established their family tombs there. This situation continued into the Ming and so it would be quite wrong to destroy the livelihood of these families and force them to move.\footnote{Chen Shan, \textit{Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi}, juan 92, pp. 5016-5018.} Moreover, Li Min asserted

\footnote{Chen Shan, \textit{Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi}, juan 92, p. 5046.}
that the land reclaimed from West Lake had become regularized to such an extent that their status was recognized in the state fiscal system. Beginning in the founding Hongwu reign (1368-1398) tax quotas were set for the reclaimed land and the occupying households were entered into the Yellow Registers. Li noted that earlier in the fifteenth century, officials had attempted to change the situation but failed owing to the land use being so deeply engrained. For Li the lesson was that officials should not attempt to take back this long-established land, although they might seek to reassess it for taxation purposes.688 Finally, Li Min brushed aside Yang Mengying’s arguments related to irrigation and transportation. Li claimed that the lake east of the embankment was one thousand several hundred qing in area, which was more than adequate for touring and sightseeing (youchuan), and could easily provide enough water for irrigation as long as it was kept free of weeds. As for transportation, Li explained in detail that each of the four canals that passed through Hangzhou had its own source and did not in fact connect with West Lake. Therefore people who claimed that West Lake was vital for the transportation canals and the irrigation of the Upper Reservoir “just spoke out brazenly without carefully examining the situation on the ground”. Li Min even charged that people who made such arguments were like the Northern Song reformer Wang Anshi (1021-1086), who did not take consideration of the actual circumstances of local people, and so caused hardship and resentment.689

Yang Mengying does not mention Li Min or any other opponents, at least not by name, in his documents so we do not know how their clash unfolded. We may surmise, however, that to have a ranking official like Li Min opposing his plans made it more difficult for Yang to carry out his project. It is unlikely that Li Min was a lone voice railing against Yang’s restoration project; there were probably other officials speaking out against Yang on behalf of local power holders. Furthermore the fact that Li Min’s text was included in the Wanli Hangzhou prefectural gazetteer while Yang Mengying’s writings were not shows that later officials did not uniformly recognize Yang’s

689 Chen Shan, Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi, juan 92, pp. 5047-5048. Li Min’s charge was a kind of ironic reversal given that Yang Mengying was claiming to follow the example of Su Shi, who had so vehemently opposed Wang Anshi.
achievements. The gazetteer’s editor Chen Shan wrote in his biography of Yang Mengying that Yang’s restoration of West Lake did bring benefits, but it also provoked much resentment and opposition. Without dwelling on that episode of Hangzhou’s history, Chen simply characterized Yang Mengying as “an earnest and able official of the day.” Chen’s brief and reluctant biography of Yang may be a sign that even in the Wanli era, people did not wish to talk of the political struggles over West Lake that took place in Hangzhou society decades earlier.  

5.5.4 The Result

In the end, Yang Mengying was able to carry out his plans to dredge and restore West Lake, notwithstanding the opposition from various quarters. In a memorial reporting the completion of the project Yang provided a detailed account of the work carried out. Work began on the second day of the second month of the first year of the Zhengde reign (1506) year and was completed on the twelfth day of the ninth month of the same year. With a break in the summer due to the stifling heat, the work was completed in a total of 152 days. Seven thousand labourers worked every day and the total cost of the project, including payment to the workers, the cost of materials, and the costs of moving people’s dwellings, amounted to 23,765 taels of silver four qian and three fen. The project was large-scale by any account, and the numbers involved demanded that Yang give detailed account of the work. He explained the adjustments made to the original estimates and emphasized that the county magistrates of Qiantang and Renhe worked closely with him to manage the project. Yang also noted the sources of all the funds used (which had been pre-approved) and the careful procedure for transporting and weighing the silver used for payment. The area of reclaimed land opened up and recovered for the lake came to thirty-four qing, 81 mu three li two si.  

691 Yang Mengying, “Hu wan hui zou zhuang” (Memorial reporting back on the completion of the lake), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, pp. 829-831.
692 Yang also provided the figures for the monastic land and silver given in compensation and the tax grain lost through the conversion of occupied fields back to lake. Nine hundred thirty-seven mu three fen four li one hao three si and four hu of monastic land and 2,449 silver taels nine fen nine li four hao nine si four hu were given in compensation. The tax grain deleted came to 903 piculs, nine dou eight sheng five he.
Figure 23 "Xihu junfu quan jing tu" (Illustration of the whole scene of West Lake dredged and restored), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, pp. 809-810.

Detailed accounting aside, the result must have been quite a sight. Having been encroached on for centuries, West Lake was restored to the full extent of its thirty li (roughly ten miles) perimeter in a matter of months. Dwellings, fields and orchards that had covered large stretches of the area for as long as anybody remembered disappeared and were replaced by the glimmering waters of the lake. In addition, the restored West Lake was shaped and demarcated by new and rebuilt structures. The earth, mud, and grasses dug up over the course of the work was used to rebuild Su’s Embankment, which had become dilapidated through erosion and neglect. Yang enlarged it by two zhang in height and five zhang three chi in width, and planted ten thousand willows along it to restore its former appearance. He also added a second embankment along the western
edge of the lake to serve as a new boundary and to prevent future encroachment.\footnote{Yang Mengying, “Yi fu Xihu shiyi zhuang” (Proposal discussing the restoration of West Lake and related matters), in Yang Mengying, \textit{Junfu Xihu lu}, p. 823.} Both embankments appear prominently on an illustration of the restored lake that Yang included in his document collection (Figure 23). It was fitting that the new embankment came to be named Yang’s Embankment after Yang Mengying, thereby physically commemorating his project at West Lake alongside the work of Su Shi, whom he sought to emulate.

Yang Mengying also rebuilt the Three Worthies Shrine to commemorate the restoration of West Lake and to reaffirm West Lake as a central site of hydrology. In a set of two proposals, Yang made a request to renovate the shrine. He outlined the history of the shrine that honoured the Three Worthies Tang prefect Bai Juyi, Song prefect Su Shi, and the Song recluse Lin Bu. He pointed out that it was necessary to renovate the shrine as, with the passing of years, it was “on the verge of collapse”. In addition, Yang proposed to add a fourth figure to the shrine, the Tang prefect Li Mi whose hydrological contribution was to open up six wells to provide fresh water for the people of Hangzhou. Although Li did not work directly on West Lake, his six wells drew water from the lake and so were closely related to the site. Accordingly, Yang requested to add an image and spirit tablet to Li Mi at the shrine and to rename it Four Worthies Shrine. In this way the worthies could together receive offerings from the people of Hangzhou.\footnote{Yang Mengying, “Chong xiu si xian ci zhuang” (Proposal for the Renovation of the Four Worthies Shrine), in Yang Mengying, \textit{Junfu Xihu lu}, p. 833; Yang Mengying, “You zhuang” (Additional proposal), in Yang Mengying, \textit{Junfu Xihu lu}, pp. 833-834.} After receiving permission, Yang rebuilt the shrine and included Li Mi in its offerings. As a result, the “spirits of the former worthies had a place to lodge their spirits” and their great merit (\textit{gong}) in carrying out crucial hydrological work, which continued to bring innumerable benefits the people of Hangzhou, would forever be remembered too.\footnote{Sixty \textit{mu} of fields were also established as the ritual land to provide for the upkeep of the shrine. Yang Mengying, “Si xian ci ji” (Record of Four Worthies Shrine), in Yang Mengying, \textit{Junfu Xihu lu}, pp. 834-836.}

By rebuilding the shrine Yang Mengying was underscoring the importance of West Lake as a hydrological site and, by extension, the importance of his own project. Among those who feted Yang’s achievements was Xie Qian (1449-1531), who on Yang’s
request wrote a commemorative record to mark the project’s completion. A native of Yuyao, Zhejiang Xie rose to be Minister of Rites and grand secretary and was as eminent an official as Yang could hope for to commemorate his work. And Xie did not disappoint. For in his glowing summary of Yang’s project – in which he exaggerated the scale of it – Xie exclaimed: “Alas! His [Yang’s] merit (gong) is great indeed! Two hundred years after Lord Bai [Juyi] there was Wenzhong [Su Shi], and four hundred years after Wenzhong there is Marquis Yang [Mengying]!” In this way Xie Qian cast Yang Mengying’s restoration of West Lake as the latest in a historical line of public works that greatly benefitted Hangzhou – which is probably exactly how Yang wanted to see it, given the appeals he made to the memories of Bai Juyi and Su Shi in support of his own work. Xie’s high praise was echoed by later writers, notably Tian Rucheng, who lauded Yang’s project in very similar terms. And Yang may well have deserved the acclaim, for it was his project that restored West Lake to its former state of the Tang and Song. One could even argue that Yang’s achievements surpassed those of Su Shi, whose embankment might have disappeared if not for Yang Mengying.

5.5.5 The Aftermath

Unfortunately for Yang Mengying his promising career was cut short not long after – and probably because of – his restoration of West Lake. Yang Mengying remained prefect of Hangzhou until the fourth year of the Zhengde reign (1509) when he was promoted to Shuntian Prefecture. But just a few months later he was removed, reappointed to Hangzhou, and then promptly impeached. Stripped of his office by the following year, Yang Mengying disappeared from the historical record. Historian Luo Yimin has ascribed Yang’s impeachment and dismissal to three factors – all connected to his West Lake project. First was Yang’s association with Xie Qian. Because Yang had invited Xie

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696 Xie Qian, “Hangzhou fu xiu fu Xihu bei” (Stele on Hangzhou prefecture repairing and restoring West Lake), in Yang Mengying, Junfu Xihu lu, pp. 836-837.
697 Tian Rucheng, Xihu youlan zhi, pp. 6-7.
698 Luo Yimin, “Yang Mengying jun fu Hangzhou Xihu de shijian ji baguan yuanyin kao”, p. 163.
699 Chen Shan, Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi, juan 14, p. 1038; Luo Yimin, “Yang Mengying jun fu Hangzhou Xihu de shijian ji baguan yuanyin kao”, p. 162. n. 19.
Qian to write a commemorative text, he inadvertently became caught up in a factional conflict. In the Zhengde reign a group of officials including Xie Qian became embroiled in a political struggle with the eunuch Liu Jin – a struggle that they lost and so were forced to retire. Subsequently hundreds of their associates were also dismissed or demoted. Ironically the text that Xie Qian wrote heaping praise on Yang Mengying was used as evidence that they were close associates. Second was the fact that Yang’s project had offended local power holders, whose influence can be seen in the attack by Li Min. Although that opposition did not derail Yang’s project, it won him many enemies. The third (related) reason for Yang’s dismissal is that in the fourth year of Zhengde (1509) Zhejiang was stricken by natural disaster. During a disaster year to attack Yang’s West Lake project for having been a waste of government funds was easily done, especially as the huge sum of over 23,000 silver taels spent on Yang’s project was so well known. The sum was cited by the censor Hu Wenbi as proof of Yang’s recklessness and lack of merit. The accompanying charge of “popular criticism” (wu yi) also strengthened the case for Yang’s dismissal.

Yang Mengying’s dismissal did not match the great merit to which he aspired with his restoration project. But if it was any consolation, his name survived and he was remembered in the history of West Lake. Yang rebuilt the Three Worthies Shrine and added Li Mi to make it the Four Worthies Shrine. Subsequently still further figures were added – including Yang Mengying himself. By the late Ming, Yang Mengying was included for offerings at the shrine together with Zhou Xin the city god and Wang Shizhen the famous scholar of the Later Seven Masters of the Ming who served briefly as prefect of Hangzhou. The shrine was renamed Six Worthies Shrine and Yang Mengying thereafter continued to be remembered for bringing benefits for the people of Hangzhou alongside five other luminaries who came before and after him.

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701 Chen Shan, Wanli Hangzhou fu zhi, juan 6, p. 488.
703 Zhang Dai, Xihu meng xun, pp. 46-47.
5.6 Conclusion: The Politics of Hangzhou’s Premier Site

Of all the sites examined in this study, West Lake was the largest in terms of the size of the physical site and its place in the cultural imagination. Given that it was supposed to provide for the needs for all the people of Hangzhou, it may also be considered to represent the concerns of the largest number of groups.

West Lake also stands out as being of a different nature from the other sites. All the other sites, to varying degrees, fall within the politico-ritual order of the Ming state. The shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian, although originally established by the families of the two figures, became key sites within the official ritual system as both were elevated to the status of national heroes and paragons of loyalty. Lingyin Feilaifeng was a Buddhist site to be contained within the politico-ritual order that came to have a national message through its association with Yang Lianzhenjia. The City God Temple at Wushan was a key official temple at the local level, although the origins of the god and its popular appeal rooted it firmly in the locality. West Lake, on the other hand, was not a site in the politico-ritual order, but a site in the hydrological order of the Ming state. Moreover, it was on the lower level of the hierarchy of the hydrological order. This meant that it was not a priority of the state, but very much a local site open to competing interests in the locality, especially given its large area and its provision of natural resources.

Yang Mengying’s restoration of West Lake illustrates the competing interests over the site: local power holders had occupied a public site that was meant to provide for the Hangzhou people as a whole. It took the local prefect Yang Mengying to rescue West Lake from private interests and to restore it for public benefit. Yang was an agent of the state ostensibly carrying out his official duties, but he was not simply executing an order from the court. He had to win the support of fellow officials and the approval of the throne to rectify a local problem. Although we must rely on the words of Yang, his colleagues, and his opponent Li Min to understand the conflict, while the voices of the local people directly involved are largely silent in the historical record, we can understand the situation as a conflict between different groups in local society that came to be resolved by political means. Yang Mengying’s hydrological project was not a conflict of interests between state and society, or an example of state intervention in local affairs—
both of which have been influential perspectives on hydrology in late imperial China\textsuperscript{704} – but a case of competition between local groups in which officials became involved.

Nonetheless, Yang Mengying had to appeal to the discourses of the benefit of the people and the well-being of the state, claiming to speak on behalf of both the people and the state against the private interests of local groups. Yang also evoked the authority of prominent figures in Hangzhou’s history: Bai Juyi and Su Shi whose hydrological achievements he hoped to mirror through his own project. Like Bai and Su, Yang was an activist official who carried out public works projects in Hangzhou, but his achievement also led to his downfall. But Yang may have taken solace in the fact that he, too, became part of the history of Hangzhou and was commemorated alongside Bai Juyi and Su Shi at the Worthies Shrine.

\textsuperscript{704} e.g. Perdue “Official Goals and Local Interests”, and Will, “State Intervention in the Administration of a Hydraulic Infrastructure.” In his article, Will does find that in places like Hubei there were many hydrological installations of local importance where the level and extent of state intervention was minimal.
Conclusion

Imagining Hangzhou, Picturing the Ming

Through the close examination of five sites in Hangzhou, this dissertation has proposed a new place-based approach to analyzing Ming society. The intention has not been to provide a general history of Hangzhou itself, but to explore how the interests and concerns of different constituents within Ming society came together and interacted at these sites. Central to the analysis followed is the dual nature of sites: they are both social and cultural, physical and non-physical. Sites were concrete places that demanded substantial resources for their continued existence. They required resources in the form of land, building materials, and regular labour to maintain them. Such projects reveal the social relevance of sites insofar as they necessitated contributions from members across society. In each of the sites studied above multiple groups within society were involved in the making and remaking of it (though the configuration of groups in each case differed) and included agents of the court (eunuchs), regional officials, local officials, local elites (including scholars, merchants, and landowners), individual families, religious professionals (Buddhist and Daoist clerics), and the wider populace. Because of the different interests of the groups involved, a project to build or reshape a site required cooperation and negotiation among parties. And any concerted action depended on particular interests – even when a project was professed to be for the benefit of the whole community. Thus officials and local people might cooperate to rebuild the temple of the city god (who was the guardian deity of the entire locality), but they could also come into conflict over the restoration of West Lake (which was meant to provide water for the benefit of all).

Members of these groups were also concerned with maintaining the sites because of the diverse meanings they attached to them. These meanings were variously derived from the particularities of a site and its histories, but ultimately positioned within the structures of the state. As we have seen, over the course of the Ming a series of projects renovated Yue Fei’s Shrine and Tomb and expanded the narrative of loyalty that was inscribed there. But it was not a uniform narrative. While officials and other intellectual
elites might have cooperated to maintain and expand the site, they did not necessarily agree on the precise meaning of loyalty. It was a contested loyalty and the histories of Yue Fei and Yu Qian could even be turned against the authority of the emperor. In debating the actions of these two ministers at their shrines Confucian scholars were in a sense imagining what course they might themselves take if they were ever faced with a similar predicament – especially since loyalty to the dynasty was demanded of all Ming subjects. From this perspective the physical additions to the site not only embellished the public presentation of the Song general’s life, but also helped to inculcate the ultimate political virtue among the wider populace. This interplay between the physicality of sites and their meanings, and people’s engagement with both, was central to their very existence.

The coexistence of multiple meanings made it more difficult for any group to dominate and control a site – difficult even for the state. In fact, although the state had a presence at all of the sites and exerted its influence through its agents and institutions, its capacity to control each site was limited and subject to negotiation. This was, tellingly, even the case at sites that were officially part of the politico-ritual order. The histories of the Yue Fei and Yu Qian shrines and the evolution of the city god temple reveal the state’s strategy for incorporating heroic figures and local worthies into its ritual system. As long as a popular figure (whose popularity and power were mutually generated) could be fashioned to represent values endorsed by the state, then it could be included in the state pantheon. The official shrines to Yue Fei and Yu Qian began as family projects, but became state-sanctioned sites extolling the foremost political virtue of loyalty. The merit (gong) of Zhou Xin lay in his reputation as an upstanding official. All were accordingly given a place within the sacrificial statues, the sidian, which served as both a glue and a framework for the Ming order.

For the cooptation of popular figures into the sidian bound local interests to the state with the active complicity of local power-holders. Important families and local leaders benefitted from associations with state-honoured cults and were therefore more likely to support the up-keep of shrines and temples. Officials similarly attended to the structures of the state ritual system out of government duty and in concert with local interests. Thus the sidian stretched across the different levels of government and linked
the interests of the state and local society within its overall framework. Even so, the continued integrity of a site was subject to regular efforts to maintain it and to reassert its significance. Even a celebrated official site such as Yue Fei’s shrine was at risk of encroachment. Therefore its survival demanded frequent contributions from regional and local officials (acting in both official and personal capacities), family members, and eunuchs (agents of the emperor). Moreover, a site’s significance was enhanced by its appeal to the wider populace. As the Yue Fei shrine was expanded, the story of the loyal general’s death at the hands of Qin Gui was set out for all to see and even to participate in. This presentation of history certainly had a popular appeal, but ultimately it was a narrative of the state, whose survival depended on the values of loyalty and martial prowess embodied by Yue Fei.

Hangzhou’s chenghuang cult was also incorporated and positioned within the state’s politico-ritual order while maintaining its importance for the city’s people. The cult had popular and ancient origins quite different from those of the Yue Fei and Yu Qian shrines, but it also came to be an official ritual site that reflected and reinforced the central bureaucratic system. The city god, Zhou Xin, came to serve the state as an official in the spirit bureaucracy, but as a champion of the aggrieved he also represented the people. Zhou Xin had an authority that was recognized and borrowed but not wholly bestowed by the state. As an official site the city god temple won widespread efforts by government agents and local elites to maintain it. But its power and popular appeal came from Zhou’s reputation not only as a guardian deity, but also as a god that resolved injustices and granted health, success in examinations, and progeny to the people of Hangzhou who sought his aid. Thus, although it was an official institution that reinforced the state system, the history of the city god and its power was also very much embedded in the locality.

The state’s reach could be felt at temples outside the sidian too. As a Buddhist institution Lingyin Monastery was subject to the control of the state, which imposed restrictions on its personnel, property, teachings, and overall presence in society (though these were often disregarded by local elites and even imperial patrons). But Buddhism also constituted its own sphere with its particular meanings and order, which intersected with Ming society at many levels and flourished, despite its formal position in the shadow
of the state’s own ritual system. For Buddhists, Lingyin Monastery was known above all as a great centre of Buddhism founded by the Indian monk Huili in the Jin era. It boasted prominent Chan masters in its past and in the Ming. However, many visitors were much more interested in the unusual rock formations and caves of Feilaifeng. Nonetheless the most striking history at Lingyin Feilaifeng was very much a narrative of the state. Yang Lianzhenjia’s heinous acts of desecrating the Song imperial tombs prompted literati and official visitors (and perhaps many others) to smash statues believed to represent the foreign monk. And the destruction of Yang’s images may have been not only a punishment for his abhorrent acts, but also an act of protest against the economic exploitation and political oppression which Yang and his patron Sangha represented – even a protest against the conquest Mongol dynasty itself.

While the first four Hangzhou sites examined were connected with the state’s politico-ritual order, West Lake was a site in the hydrological order of the Ming, which framed the interactions between the state and local society there. The state demanded the maintenance of hydrological structures as essential to statecraft, but it was not able to enforce its will (or did not make it a high priority to do so) at the local level of West Lake. The state’s inability to maintain such locally vital sites made their survival dependent on local elites working in concert with state officials. Yet such a partnership between official and local elites was also the source of social power that temporarily thwarted the restoration efforts of Hangzhou prefect Yang Mengying and ultimately brought his downfall. Despite the hydrological importance and cultural significance of West Lake, and Yang’s endeavours to carry out his work via official channels and offering compensation, a strong challenge came from powerful local elites and their representatives in the imperial bureaucracy. This conflict of interests illustrates the obstacles the Ming state confronted in maintaining its systems.

This approach to analyzing Ming state and society is consonant with recent scholarship that has freed itself of the notion of a despotic state (including the question of whether the Ming regime amounted to a state at all)\(^7\), to examine the interactions between the central state and local society and the institutions and systems that connected

\(^7\) For an overview of this changing historiography of the Ming state, see Brook, *The Chinese State in Ming Society*, pp. 182-184.
them. In this vein, scholars have scrutinized how lineages and community schools were established and manipulated by both local people and the central state for their own purposes.\textsuperscript{706} Timothy Brook has neatly articulated this newer approach to the Ming by pointing out that most people experienced the state via their dealings with four systems through which its affairs were administered: the taxation, education, justice, and military systems.\textsuperscript{707} The present study finds that the politico-ritual and hydrological orders of the Ming were also important systems within which the interests of the state and local society intersected and competed. Through its taxation, education, justice, and military systems the Ming state respectively exacted regular grain taxes and labour levies, inculcated and selected its officials, punished those who contravened its laws, and drew manpower for its armies. Through its ritual system the Ming state harnessed the power of revered spirits (while controlling any that did not suit it) and promoted teachings in support of itself. Through the hydrological system the state sought to ensure the provision of water for agriculture and transportation and to avert the threat of floods across the realm. In all these systems, however, the state was not able to act on its own; it required the contributions of local power holders alongside effective officials. And these local agents could and did seek to promote their own interests in the process. The Hangzhou sites examined here were therefore both locally significant places and nodes within state systems, sites of history where the complex relations between the state and local society unfolded.

A final question to consider is whether the analysis of Hangzhou sites pursued here might be expanded and applied to other places and, if it could, what is the larger vision that might thereby be formed? I would caution that it would not be a straightforward task of multiplying sites into localities and aggregating localities to form the encompassing realm. Sites and localities differ in countless, complex ways far beyond their basic differences in political, social, and cultural resources. The present focus has been on the construction and representation of histories at specific sites, and how those shaped and were shaped by the interests of different groups. That is not to say that

\textsuperscript{706} The main works include: Szonyi, \textit{Practicing Kinship}; Faure, \textit{Emperor and Ancestor}; and Schneewind, \textit{Community Schools}.

\textsuperscript{707} Brook, \textit{The Chinese State in Ming Society}, p. 6.
Hangzhou is unique and that this analytical approach could not be applied elsewhere, but that few Chinese cities had comparably deep histories and rich interactions of social and cultural forces. Nor did they loom so large in the cultural imagination. But while lodged in its own history, Hangzhou may in fact represent Ming society more broadly because so many different interests intersected there. Ultimately the importance of a site and its histories lay both in the locality itself and in the greater Ming order of which it was a part.
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