

What Does it Take to Be Human?
Foreignness in Yuan Mei's *Zi buyu*
by
Miles Campos

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Approved April 2012 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Xiaoqiao Ling, Chair
Young Kyun Oh
Stephen West

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2012

ABSTRACT

Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-97) is often thought of as a rebellious figure within the eighteenth-century intellectual and literary landscape. His perceived rejection of nearly all aspects of Confucian values was so extreme that he was even dubbed a “sinner against the teachings of Confucius.” This thesis examines six stories within Yuan Mei’s *Zi buyu* 子不語 (What Confucius Did Not Talk About) and, through close reading, shows how Yuan Mei utilizes each foreign group’s physical traits and their ability to verbally and/or ethically communicate with the Chinese protagonist, in order to reflect their adherence to Confucian values and acceptance of Chinese imperial authority to arrange them along a spectrum of humanness that reflects the Chinese-foreign distinction. Furthermore, by examining each story in their historical and literary contexts, it is discovered that nearly every foreign group portrayed in *Zi buyu* is based on historical groups that actually existed on the periphery of the Qing empire, and that the different degrees of foreignness of each subject reflect each historical foreign group’s acquiescence to or rebellion against the imperial authority of the Qing empire. Contrary to commonly held opinions, Yuan Mei’s negotiation of foreignness demonstrates his own deep subscription to Confucian ethics and adherence to imperial order.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Xiaoqiao Ling, whose patient guidance and constructive criticism was critical to my thesis. I would like to thank Professor Stephen H. West for sharing his vast breadth of knowledge and many suggestions, and Professor Young Kyun Oh for his moral support, whose words brought confidence in times of doubt. I would also like to thank Professor Madeline Spring for her years of support and for first opening the doors to Chinese literature, the staff at Arizona State University's Chinese department, and all of my colleagues for their encouragement. Finally, I would like to thank my family for their support and understanding in my pursuit of all things Chinese.

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INTRODUCTION

Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-97) is often thought of as a rebellious figure within the eighteenth-century intellectual and literary landscape. Depicted as notorious for his hot temper and unconventional ideas, he is said to have been hostile to and rejected many Confucian values,¹ even Confucian morality itself.² It is also widely accepted among critics that he was doubtful of the authority of Confucius' *Analects* and all historical sources,³ and he also challenged Confucian ethical order.⁴ His infamy was so great that it even earned him the title of "sinner against the teachings of Confucius."⁵

Yuan Mei's support for the Qing's Manchu rulers as an official has also been called into question when, following a quite successful political career, Yuan Mei retired following his inability to learn the Manchu language, a requirement of his appointment to the Hanlin Academy.⁶ Schmidt argues that another possibility was that his retirement came in response to essays that may have been considered anti-Manchu; noting that Yuan Mei "probably despised the Manchu government."⁷

Despite the conventional view of Yuan Mei as an iconoclastic figure, anecdotal accounts of his career presents the historical figure as a compassionate, creative, and level-headed decision-maker; although Yuan did find it difficult to

¹ J.D. Schmidt, *Harmony Garden: The Life, Literary Criticism and Poetry of Yuan Mei, 1716–1799* (London: Routledge, 2003), 17.

² *Ibid.*, 167.

³ *Ibid.*, 344.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁵ Arthur Waley, *Yuan Mei: Eighteenth Century Chinese Poet* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1956), 77.

⁶ Waley (1956) clarifies that one of the ways officials forced themselves into retirement was by requesting the maximum length of three months sick leave and then not returning.

⁷ Schmidt, *Harmony Garden*, 386.

abide by what he considered trivial protocols, such as ignoring the enjoinder that in writing to his superiors he should sign his name as small as possible lest he be misunderstood as claiming to be their equal. Another common anecdote used to cite Yuan Mei's "rebelliousness" in a sympathetic light occurred when, acting as an assistant examiner for the Provincial Examinations of Nanjing, he refused to accept the chief examiner's decision to fail a particular candidate who, in Yuan Mei's opinion, stood head and shoulders above the rest, and therefore should not be dismissed simply because the examination's quota had already been filled.⁸

The original title of his collection of strange tales, published in 1781, was *Zi buyu* 子不語 (What Confucius Did Not Talk About), drawing upon *Analects* (7.22): "The Master did not discuss prodigies, feats of strength, disorderly conduct, or the supernatural" 子不語怪力亂神.⁹ *Zi buyu* itself was therefore generally interpreted as a satirical provocation of Confucian scholars.¹⁰ After discovering a previous Yuan dynasty title of the same name (that apparently aroused little concern from critics), Yuan Mei retitled his collection *Xin Qixie* 新齊諧 (New Records of Qixie).¹¹ But the new title did not seem to appeal to readers as much as the original name, and the collection continued to be referred to as *Zi buyu*.

⁸ Waley, *Zi buyu*, 31-43.

⁹ Edward Slingerland tran., *Confucius' Analects with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003), 71.

¹⁰ Yingzhi Wang, "The Ideological Value of Yuan Mei's *What Confucius Did Not Talk About*," *The Research On Ming and Qing Novels* 63.1 (2002), 176.

¹¹ This new title refers to the *locus classicus* of the term *zhiguai* 志怪 from the "Inner Chapters" of *Zhuangzi* 莊子內篇. Lydia Sing-chen Chiang, *Collection the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 158.

Zi buyu is a massive twenty-four-juan collection of Classical Chinese tales in the *zhiguai* 志怪 (tales of the strange) tradition. When we examine stories that deal not with ghosts or other supernatural creatures, but rather with foreign peoples – many of which are based on historical groups that actually existed on the periphery of the Qing empire – we see a drastically different side of Yuan Mei that stands contrary to conventional views of his rebellious attitudes towards Confucian ethics and the Manchu imperial authority. Indeed, within these stories Yuan Mei utilizes these two criteria – the levels to which each group adheres to Confucian values; and each foreign group’s historical acquiescence to or rebellion against the imperial authority of the Qing empire – as the major factors determining how they are portrayed in his collection, and whether they are Chinese or a foreign other.

Within these stories the foreignness of each subject is measured by their position along a spectrum of humanness, that is to say, the degree to which they both physically resemble normative human features, subscribe to normative Confucian ethical codes, and are directly referred to as human (*ren* 人). At the highest position of humanness is Chineseness: that is the degree to which the foreign subjects bodies resemble or are directly referred to as Chinese. Moving down the hierarchical spectrum, below Chineseness is a kind of liminal level of humanity. Those foreign groups that occupy these spaces tend to exhibit the features of both man and beast; their bodies are covered in hair with dark skin; they may have long teeth; live in caves and nests; they may or may not be man-eaters; their language is consistently described as bird-like, and they are unable to

communicate with the Chinese protagonist directly – these are the hairy-men (*maoren* 毛人). Finally, at the lowest end of the spectrum directly opposed to Chineseness is monstrosity. Physically, monstrosity is ferocious, ugly and absolutely terrifying. They prey on humans and there is no communication whatsoever – these are the monsters (*guai* 怪).

Within these stories foreignness and Chineseness are, then, akin to measurements of humanness, which is itself a representation of ethical identity. By adhering to Confucian ethics and accepting imperial authority, one is human, and therefore Chinese. By not subscribing to Confucian ethics or accepting imperial authority, a group or person is the monstrous opposite of human, and therefore not Chinese, the foreign. If a group occupies an ethical middle ground, adhering to customs that correspond to some Confucian values but not others, or if they insufficiently accept imperial authority, then they will find themselves occupying the spaces between human and beast.

Chineseness, also, humanness for Yuan Mei, therefore hinges on the time-honored *hua-yi* 華夷 (Chinese-foreign) distinction as is shown in Chen An's 陳黯 (805-877) essay entitled "Hua xin" 華心 (The Chinese Mind):

If one speaks on the grounds of the land, then there is the Chinese [land] and *yi* barbarian [land]. [If] one speaks on the grounds of teachings, in that case is there also a difference between the Chinese and the barbarian? He who is Chinese or barbarian, the distinction lies in the mind. To differentiate the mind, one examines their inclinations. [There are those who are] born in the central plains

whose actions violate propriety and righteousness – this is having the appearance of Chinese and the mind of a barbarian. [There are those who are] born in barbarian lands whose actions conform to propriety and righteousness – this is having the appearance of a barbarian and the mind of a Chinese.

苟以地言之，則有華夷也。以教言，亦有華夷乎？夫華夷者，辨在乎心，辨心在察其趣向。有生於中州而行戾乎禮義，是形華而心夷也；生於夷域而行合乎禮義，是形夷而心華。¹²

Chen An's view identifies Chineseness as a superior identity based on ethical values rather than geographic locations. His opinion, like Yuan Mei's and indeed even that of the Manchu imperial court, was essentially a highly inclusionary view in which a Chinese identity was contingent upon an adoption of a certain set of values. The importance of these values to Chinese identity was such that even if one was in fact born in China, one is not Chinese if one does not subscribe to orthodox Confucian values.

During the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), there was of course a great advantage in this sort of interpretation of Chineseness. As non-Han peoples, the Manchu conquerors needed to justify their legitimacy to rule China. As a matter of fact, by the early eighteenth-century, the Manchu rulers had already adopted many crucial elements of Chinese civilization in statecraft. Their political framework was based on that of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), and many Manchu officials were well-versed in classical Chinese education. Indeed, by the

¹² *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 767.27a-b.

eighteenth century China was home to an incredible variety of peoples with different ethnic backgrounds, all of whom were subsumed into a Chinese identity under Manchu rule. Yang Shen's 楊慎 (1488-1559) view is a typical example of this concept:

The Chinese are a truly cosmopolitan people, the heirs of all mankind, of all the world. The Han people are just one of the ethnic groups in the empire and we include many different types of people. In Yunnan alone there are over twenty other non-Han native peoples. So long as they accept the emperor's rule, they are Chinese.¹³

Yang Shen's view of Chineseness is also an essentially inclusionary one, wherein Chinese identity is rooted in an acceptance of the emperor's imperial authority, which entails the Manchu rulers' conception of their own role as enforcing Confucian morality. Their validity as rulers is therefore based on Confucian values. It is precisely these orthodox Confucian values that are evoked by Manchu rulers when they engage in ideological campaigns against those who challenge their imperial authority. By emphasizing Chineseness as an identity based on Confucian ethics and imperial authority, the Manchu rulers were able to argue for legitimacy of rule by emphasizing the essentially universal nature of Chinese civilization. This ability to apply and conversely deny Chineseness was of paramount importance during the eighteenth century, which saw the unprecedented expansion of the Qing empire. During Qianlong's reign in

¹³ Yang Shen, "Lun Min" 論民 (On people), in *Sheng'an quanji* 升庵全集 (Complete works of Sheng'an) (1795 edition.), 48, 6b-9a. As quoted in Lee, James, "The Legacy of Immigration in Southwest China, 1250-1850;" *Annales de démographie historique* (1982), 279-304; Ward, *Xu Xike*, 137.

particular, the Qing empire experienced huge geographical gains via military conquests, placing the imperial court in direct conflict with various border peoples. Often these peoples were either assimilated into the Manchu imperial order or faced extermination.

There was a pronounced anxiety that the Manchu rulers were in fact an alien people, part of which was rooted in their inability to speak Chinese.¹⁴ However, within a few generations the Manchus had all but abandoned their native language for Chinese.¹⁵ This in turn generated a court-based effort in the eighteenth century to establish both Chinese and Manchu as court languages, required of all those who aspire to enter the elite circle of political power.¹⁶ It was within this linguistic atmosphere that Yuan Mei would lose his position at the Hanlin Academy due to his inability to learn the Manchu language. This experience of being forced to retire from his official position, likely a large part of

¹⁴ Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 216.

¹⁵ Mark C. Elliot, *Emperor Qianlong: Son of Heaven, Man of the World* (New Jersey: Pearson, 2009), 57.

¹⁶ In his “Preface to the Polyglot Gazetteer of the Western Regions” (1763), itself a compilation of local gazetteers published in six different languages, Qianlong writes on the importance of commanding more than one language for high officials who preside of a multi-ethnic empire. Interestingly, his words emphasizing the need to understand multiple languages display a attitude that certain universal truths transcend linguistic differences, and that commanding multiple languages enables one to recognize this, thus reinforcing the idea of a pluralistic empire based on universal ethical principles:

“Now, in Chinese, ‘Heaven’ is called *tian*. [. . .] In the Muslim tongue it is called *asman*. Let a Muslim, meaning ‘heaven,’ tell a Han Chinese it is called *asman*, and the Han will necessarily think this is not so. If the Han Chinese, meaning ‘heaven,’ tells the Muslim *tian*, the Muslim will likewise certainly think it is not so. Here not so, there not so. Who knows which is right? But by raising the head and looking at what is plainly up above, the Han Chinese knows *tian* and venerates it, and the Muslim knows *asman* and venerates it. This is the great unity. In fact, once names are unified, there is nothing that is not universal. Elliot, *Qianlong*, 102.

今，以漢語指天則曰“天”...以回語指天則曰“阿思滿”。令回人指天以告漢人曰：“此阿思滿”漢人必以為非。漢人指天以告回人曰：“此天”，則回人亦必以為非。此以一非也，彼亦一非也。庸詎知孰之為是乎？然仰首以望昭昭之在上者，漢人以為天而敬之，回人以為阿思滿而敬之。是即其大同也。實既同名亦無不同。

“Qinding xiyu tongwen zhi xu” 欽定西域同文志序 (Preface to the Polyglot Gazetteer of the Western Regions), in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete Libraries of the Four Treasuries), 1b-2a.

his own identity, over his inability to command both languages must surely have had a profound impact on Yuan Mei, and his tales display a deep concern about the role of language in shaping one's identity.

It is within this framework that Yuan Mei depicts each encounter between a Chinese protagonist and various groups on China's periphery. In each case, Yuan Mei utilizes the foreign group's physical traits, and their ability to verbally and/or ethically communicate with the Chinese protagonist to map out their location on the spectrum of humanness. As I will show in this thesis, communication is carried out on three different levels. At the most basic level are different kinds of incomplete communication; which can take the form of non-verbal communication such as gesturing or yelling or mediated communication wherein two parties communicate through an intermediary. The next level is verbal communication wherein the two parties are able to overcome their linguistic differences to learn to communicate with the other party. The highest form of communication is ethical communication wherein common ground beyond language can be identified between the Chinese protagonist and the foreign group. This form of communication transcends differences in language and cultural practice by rooting out the shared ethical bases between the Chinese and foreigners, who are thereupon considered Chinese and fully human.

I will show how Yuan Mei develops his stories based on foreign groups' adherence to Confucian values and acceptance of imperial authority by closely reading six stories from *Zi buyu*. For each story, I provide a full translation followed by a combined study of each story's historical and literary context with a

discussion of the narrative strategies employed by Yuan Mei in his negotiation of foreignness based on communication. I argue that, contrary to commonly held opinions of Yuan Mei as an iconoclastic rebel, he in fact organizes his negotiation of foreignness based on his own subscription to Confucian ethics and adherence to imperial order.

THE MOUNTAIN MONK (*ZI BUYU* 18.22)

There is one surnamed Li who was living away from home in Zhongzhou.¹⁷ Encountering a flood he ascended a mountain to avoid it. The flood-water was quickly rising higher and higher, so he went all the way to the peak. It was already dusk when he saw a short thatched hut, the homes of those field-tilling mountain dwellers who are the nighttime patrollers. Inside was totally padded with straw; to one side was placed a bamboo plank, and this is where [the nighttime patroller] spends the night.

In the middle of the night he heard the sound of someone treading water. Taking a look, he saw a short, heavysset, dark[skinned] monk swimming, at the point of reaching him. The man yelled loudly. The monster halted for a moment, and after a little while again advanced. The man was desperate, so he took the bamboo plank and thumped on [it]. The mountain-people all gathered together, then the monster left and didn't return the whole night. The next day the water receded. Li inquired to the people of the mountain, who said "This was a mountain-monk. [If] a person is alone and weak, then [the mountain monk] will eat their brain."

山和尚

¹⁷ Henan 河南 province.

有李姓者客中州，遇大水，登山避之。水勢驟漲，其人更上山頂。時已暮，見矮草屋，乃山民耕在夜巡者所居，內悉藉以草，旁置一竹榻，其人宿焉。中夜，聞踏水聲，視之，見一黑短胖和尚游水面將至。其人大呼，此怪稍卻，少頃又前。其人窘急，取榻大擊。山民都集，怪遂去，終夜不復至。次日水退，詢山人，云：“山和尚也，斯人孤弱，便食人腦。”

Flooding

Framing this story is Li's reason for diverting from his original route in order to clamber up the unfamiliar mountain, a flood. Throughout China's history many areas have been prone to catastrophic flooding, and the controlling of floods has long been an important myth in China's civilization. Within this tradition, Da Yu's 大禹 mythological taming of the rivers and controlling of the floods have been seen as an important event in the development of Chinese civilization.

Mengzi 孟子 (372-289 BCE) notes:

“Formerly, Yu suppressed the flood, and the world was settled. The Duke of Zhou incorporated the uncivilized peoples, drove away the ferocious animals, and the common people were at peace. Kongzi completed the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and disorderly ministers and brutal sons were afraid.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Bryan Van Norden, *The Essential Mengzi: Selected Passages with Traditional Commentary* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009), 41.

昔者禹抑洪水，而天下平；周公兼夷狄，驅猛獸，而百姓寧；
孔子成春秋，而亂臣賊子懼。¹⁹

Mengzi establishes Yu's controlling of the floods as the catalyst that allowed the world to be settled, which in turn allowed the Duke of Zhou to incorporate uncivilized peoples (*yi di* 夷狄) into the civilized realm, driving the dangerous beasts from the civilized realm and finally leading to the establishment of Confucian order through the writings of Confucius. Beginning with the taming of the floods, each citation represents a stage in the construction of Chinese civilization through forces of demarcation and division that eventually lead to the construction of a civilized, ordered, Confucian space fully differentiated from its antithetical space of savage, primal chaos. Just as Yu's controlling the floods serves to represent this broad civilizing process, so the floods represent the threats to civilization and social order that must be tamed.²⁰

With the symbolic significance of the flood in Chinese mythical tradition in mind, the flooding within this story in particular symbolizes the forces of chaos that are directly opposed to Confucian order. Although the mountain is within the geographic boundaries of China, the flood as the setting symbolically situates the story within the savage, primal chaos outside of the civilized realm. Evidence of the local people's lack of security in this space is immediately evident, as the narrator notes that of the mountain-dwellers who make their living tilling among fields there are those specifically tasked with performing nighttime patrols, on

¹⁹ Mencius 3B:9.

²⁰ Mark Lewis, *The Flood Myths of Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 53.

guard for some threat as yet undiscovered by the protagonist. This insecurity likely reflects the reality of many Chinese farmers of Yuan Mei's time who had begun settling massive tracts of previously uncultivated (but not necessarily uninhabited) lands, often placing them in direct conflict with indigenous populations.²¹

The Monk: Historical and Literary Models

The symbolic power of the flood and the threat that it represents evokes an untamed world steeped in chaos, and it is precisely under this setting of these waters that the mountain monk figuratively and literally emerges. The floods of the story, that the mountain monk swims out of, brings to mind another great mass of water, the sea. The pirate Xu Hai 許海 (?-1556), known among the Japanese by his sobriquet the "mountain monk," may very well have been the historical model of Yuan Mei's mountain monk.

Xu Hai, the [Japanese] barbarians call him "the mountain monk."

徐海者，夷稱名山和尚。²²

China had for centuries been plagued with raids on its coastal villages, however it was the sixteenth century that stood out as one of the major eras of pirate activity. It was at this time that significant numbers of Chinese began

²¹ According to Elliot, under the pressure of an expanding population, which grew at such rates as to still be unexplained today, in the 1740s Qianlong began to utilize what were essentially homesteading laws such as free land giveaways and tax breaks in order to encourage policies focused on the opening up of new farmland. These policies particularly emphasized taking advantage of previously uncultivated areas such as hilltops, mountainsides and in coastal areas. It would seem that these policies were extremely effective, as "the thirty-five years between 1740 and 1774, nearly 5,000 square miles of new farmland were opened up. But by 1785, the land reported to be under cultivation everywhere in the empire amounted to nearly 10 million *qing* (over 235,000 square miles), a 30 percent increase over 200 years before." See Elliot, *Qianlong*, 147-148.

²² Li Xu 李翹 (1506-93), *Jie'an laoren manbi* 戒庵老人漫筆 (Miscellaneous Jottings of the Old Man of Jie'an), 5.185.

colluding with the Japanese pirates (*wokou* 倭寇), often becoming the leaders of “pirate gangs” (*zeizhong* 賊眾). This combination of Chinese pirate leaders commanding large numbers of Japanese pirates led to a particularly effective combination, allowing them to raid not only coastal areas but also those upstream on the many rivers flowing to the sea, and Xu Hai was one of the most feared pirate leaders of the Jiajing 嘉靖 (1522-1627) period .

Xu Hai was originally a monk at the famous Lingyin Temple (Lingyin si 靈隱寺) in Hangzhou 杭州, but left to join his uncle trading in Japan. When his uncle was killed, Xu Hai became a pirate in order to pay off a debt owed by his uncle to his Japanese partner. His career as a pirate was incredibly successful, at it’s heyday controlling “more than one thousand junks with no fewer than sixty thousand pirate-smugglers,”²³ and his earlier training as a Buddhist monk earned him his nickname among the Japanese. He was killed in 1556 when he drowned after his ship was sunk in battle, his body later being found in a stream.²⁴

By evoking the symbolic meaning behind the flood as the representation of a threat to Chinese order, and utilizing Xu Hai’s nickname literally to portray him as a creature known as a “mountain monk” that swims through and emerges from these chaotic waters, Yuan Mei’s story functions partially as a comment on Xu Hai. To Yuan Mei, Xu Hai is not just a pirate but through his rejection of Confucian ethics and challenge of Chinese imperial authority is a personification of chaos and opposition to Chinese order. Within Yuan Mei’s view this places Xu

²³ Robert Antony, *Elusive Pirates, Pervasive Smugglers: Violence and Clandestine Trade in the Greater China Seas* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 51.

²⁴ Stephen Turnbull, *Pirate of the Far East: 811-1639* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2007), 59.

Hai so far removed from Chineseness, beyond even cultural or geographical foreignness into the realm of ethical foreignness; and in Yuan Mei's model of identity, it is ethical foreignness that makes Xu Hai a monster (怪).

The threatening nature of the mountain monk also comes from his physical description which draws upon the established monk imagery in the *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (The Water Margin). By describing the mountain monk as a “short, heavysset, dark[skinned] monk” (黑短胖和尚), the mountain monk's physical traits seem to be an amalgam of various characters. In particular Lu Zhishen 魯智深, who is described as a heavysset, big monk (胖大和尚) famous for his hair-trigger temper and violent tendencies, is the Flowery Monk 花和尚.²⁵ Despite being a monk he has little qualms living a life of violence, arson and banditry, and is fond of wine and meat, particularly roast dog. He uses his incredible strength to wield an oversized monk's spade,²⁶ itself an object typically of religious use that becomes a weapon and instrument of violence, or to beat men to death with his fists. Black Whirlwind 黑旋風, sobriquet of Li Kui 李逵, so named for his dark skin and hurricane-like style of fighting, is infamous for being repulsive, filthy and sadistic. Yuan Mei draws upon the image of the monks and rebels of popular literature by using stories that would have been quite familiar to an eighteenth-century Chinese reader, to highlight the mountain monk's strength and ferocity, thereby setting up the stage for the failed communication between the mountain monk and Li the protagonist.

²⁵ So nicknamed for his flowery tattoos covering his body.

²⁶ A pole weapon consisting of a flat, fan-shaped blade attached to a wooden pole. It doubled as both a implement in Buddhist rites and a self-defense weapon against bandits.

Failed Communication

Let us consider the likely state of mind of Li when he first encounters the mountain monk. Having found himself scrambling up a mountain to avoid the rising floodwaters, he arrives in a strange village where he can clearly tell the local are concerned with defending themselves from something. In the middle of the night he hears a strange noise coming from the water, and, upon investigation, sees a very threatening monk-like thing coming towards him. Li then responds as one would expect: he screams out at it (*da hu* 大呼). It is unclear whether or not Li actually speaks any words as he is yelling, but nevertheless his scream still functions as a completely valid form of communication. Through his scream he expresses his alarm and fear of his encounter, and intends it to be interpreted by the monk as expressing Li's desire for him to stay away. However, after Li's scream "the monster halted for a moment, and after a moment again advanced" (此怪稍卻, 少頃又前).

This sentence is significant in that it is not only the point in which we see a crucial failure of communication when the mountain monk does not respond properly to Li's communicative outburst, but it also marks a change in the monk's identity. Whereas before this point his identity as a 'monk' (*heshang*) was merely based on his physical features and resemblance to the literary descriptions of a threatening monk. He had not been assigned any categorical identity as a Chinese or foreigner. However with the failure of communication we see an immediate shift to his identity as a monster (怪).

It would seem that from the beginning the mountain monk, as a representation of Xu Hai, situates his identity so far from Li's Chineseness that there was never any real likelihood for the possibility of communication between the two. The sheer irreconcilable differences in status between the two eliminate the possibility for linguistic communication, which goes on to make communication on any ethical grounds inconceivable. It is this failed linguistic and ethical communication that denies the mountain monk any attributes of humanity.

The mountain monk's monstrosity is retroactively confirmed at the end of the story when Li is informed that the mountain monk is known to attack weak or isolated people and eat their brain. This act of violent depravity serves as the final confirmation that the mountain monk is indeed a highly dangerous monster, which probably echoes Yuan Mei's feelings on Xu Hai, whose act fully nullifies his Chineseness and humanity.

CAVE OF THE BLACK MIAO (*ZI BUYU* 18.25)

The Fang county in Hunan²⁷ lies deep within a myriad of mountains. Stretching into the northwest for eight-hundred li are all continuous ranges of strange-peaked mountains. [Within these mountains] the Miao²⁸ caves number in the thousands, and no man dares to enter. There was a woodcutter who accidentally strayed into one of these caves, got lost and was not able to find his way out. He [then] came upon a number of dark-skinned men with bodies covered in hair. Their language was entirely incomprehensible resembling that of birds. They used grass to build nests and perched at the top of the trees. Upon seeing the woodcutter [they] got very pleased and took rattan to bind his hands and feet, then hung him from a tree. The woodcutter figured that he was a dead man.

After a while, an old woman came out from some other nest. With white hair and a high forehead she slightly resembled a human, and she still spoke with the sound of [the people of] Chu.²⁹ Speaking to the woodcutter she said “How did you stray into this cave? I was also a resident of the Fang county. One year during the Kangxi Reign (1662-1723) there was a famine. On my way begging for

²⁷ According to *Qingchao tongzhi* 清朝通志 (Comprehensive Treatise of the Qing Dynasty), Fang country is in Hubei. *Qingchao tongzhi* 26.6892.

²⁸ The term *miao* seems to have been a general term used to refer to non-Chinese peoples throughout the southwest area. It can be seen applied to the modern Miao people (themselves an amalgam of various distinct ethnicities and languages placed under the artificial umbrella term “Miao”), Yi peoples, and various tribes throughout southwest China. Nicholas Tapp, “Cultural Accommodations in Southwest China: The Han Miao and Problems in the Ethnography of the Hmong,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 61.1 (2002): 97-99.

²⁹ Hubei and Hunan provinces; the south in general.

food I became lost and entered this cave. The Black Miao people at first wanted to eat me. Later when they felt my lower body to know I was a woman, they kept me in their nests as their wife.” She then pointed to two of the black hair-men and said “These are my boys. They still listen to what I say. I’m going to save you.” At this the woodcutter expressed his gratitude. The old woman leapt up the tree and untied his bindings with her own hands. She then produced a number of chestnuts and dates, saying “For your hunger.” She then whispered into the ears of the two black hairy-men for a long time, with a warbling sound that was incomprehensible. She took a twig and tied a piece of cloth to it, saying “ If there are those of your kind that desire to harm people from my homeland, show them this, so that they may know my meaning.”

The two hairy-men accompanied the woodcutter, travelling for over three days before he finally found his original route to return home. People on the road all said: “This is a cave of the Black Miao. All who wander into it get eaten. There never has been one who returned alive.”

黑苗洞

湖南房縣，在萬山之中。西北八百里，皆叢山怪嶺，苗洞以千數，無人敢入。有採樵者誤入洞內，迷路不能出，見數黑人渾身生毛，語兜離似鳥，以草結巢，棲於樹巔。見樵人，喜，以藤縛其手足，掛於樹梢。樵者自分死矣。

俄而，一老嫗從他巢中來，白髮高穎，略似人形，言語猶作楚聲，謂樵者曰：“汝何誤入此洞耶？我亦房縣城中人。康熙某年年荒，乞食迷入此洞。諸黑苗初欲食我，後摸我下體，知為女，遂留居巢中為妻。”指二黑毛人曰：“此我兒也，尚聽我說話，我當救汝。”樵人感謝。老人嫗騰身上樹，親解其縛，袖中出栗棗數枚曰：“為汝療飢。”隨向二黑毛人耳語良久，語呶呶莫辨，手樹枝一條，縛布巾於上曰：“有爾等同類欲害我鄉鄰者，以此示之，俾知我意。”

二毛人送樵人，行三日許，才得原路歸。路上人皆曰：“此黑苗洞也，迷入者都被其啖，從無歸者。”

The Historical Background of the Black Miao

During much of the eighteenth century the tense relationship between the Miao and the Qing was punctuated by two large Miao rebellions requiring large scale military campaigns against them. These two rebellions would frame Qianlong's 乾隆 reign (1735-1796), with the first one beginning just a few months prior to his ascending the throne. It began in response to Yongzheng's 雍正 (1722-1735) changes in administrative policies in Miao areas of southern Guizhou 貴州. Before this change, the Miao areas had been administrated by local chieftains (*tusi* 土司) who were given various privileges in return for their loyalty. However, in 1726 Yongzheng replaced the local chieftains with Chinese officials in order to bring these areas more in line with greater empire-wide

policy. As one would expect, the local chieftains rebelled in 1735 until they were defeated by Qianlong after nine months of bloody fighting. The relationship between the Miao and the Qing remained relatively stable until a few months prior to Qianlong's death in 1795, when a second Miao rebellion began lasting until 1806.³⁰

Despite the two rebellions, much of the eighteenth century was one of relative peace between the Miao and the Qing. It was during this time that we see a sincere attempt by local gazetteers throughout the southwest attempting to tackle the issue of Miao identity. Accounts began in local gazetteers such as the *Guizhou tongzhi* 貴州通志 (Guizhou gazetteer) of 1741 which “names and describes thirteen different kinds of Miao, citing materials from a Kangxi period (1661-1721) gazetteer and other sources, while adding new information. The text lists the counties or districts in which each group can be found (there is some overlap) and then goes on to describe the dress, features of economic and material life, and some of the unique or exotic customs that characterize them and justify putting them in separate groups.”³¹ Within these the separate groups of Miao, each differentiated in name by the different colors dominant in their clothing, are categorized according to the levels in which they had assimilated into Chinese culture (some are praised for having learned to speak or even write Chinese or adopted Chinese customs) or their willingness to submit to Chinese imperial

³⁰ Donald Sutton, “Ethnicity and the Miao Frontier in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*, ed. Pamela Crossley et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 193-203.

³¹ Norma Diamond, “Defining the Miao: Ming, Qing, and Contemporary Views,” In *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, ed. Stevan Harrell (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 100.

authority, the lack of which marked them as barbarians and justified anything from expropriation of their lands to extermination. Norma Diamond notes that within the *Guizhou tongzhi*'s classification of the Miao, there are various Miao groups that are not mentioned in detail but merely glossed over as unpacified, dispersed or otherwise insignificant. One of these groups, the Black Raw Miao (*Hei sheng Miao* 黑生苗), "are described as having been a treacherous and aggressive people. But one account assures us that in 1725 about half of them were killed and the rest surrendered, while another album, clearly of later vintage, reassures the reader that in 1736 there were conquered once and for all."³²

During the eighteenth century the accounts from gazetteers gradually became more and more detailed until developing "Miao albums," illustrated ethnographic manuscripts on mostly the Miao, but essentially various peoples of the southwest. These albums were primarily an administrative tool, and within each entry we learn which administrative jurisdiction the particular group belongs to: appearance; local customs such as marriage; funerals and festivals; as well as their disposition (*xing* 性) and nature. Many of these albums, however, were of particular interest to Confucian scholars who were concerned with adherence to proper rites. Finally, the albums' ability to classify and organize the various peoples of the southwest conveyed a sense of order and control, acting as an assurance that the Miao were being successfully domesticated.³³

Portraying Miaoness

³² Diamond, "Defining the Miao," 104.

³³ Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 40-49.

It is most likely within this context that Yuan Mei wrote his story of an encounter between a Chinese woodcutter and a group of Miao. As Miao inhabited areas of the southwest, the story takes place in an area still in the process of integrating into the Chinese realm. But by having the woodcutter get lost, Yuan Mei opens up this space as one of uncertainty in which humanness can be negotiated. Additionally, as an underground space, the cave of the Miao represents those areas outside of the Chinese realm. Within Chinese imagination we can see the importance of underground areas as the domain of ghosts³⁴ as well as other highly *yin* 陰 creatures such as fox spirits (*huli jing* 狐狸精) that often reside in underground areas, such as tombs and fox dens.³⁵ As Kang Xiaofei points out, there are many stories in popular fiction, histories and dramas that establish associations between foxes, their dens and various problems. In these sources, plagues, hauntings and illicit cults are dealt with through the destruction of fox dens. By portraying the Miao as inhabiting the same underground areas associated with ghosts, fox-spirits and foxes, Yuan Mei is able to use the imagism of dual spaces based on the *yin* and *yang* forces of the living and the dead to extend this dualism to the relationship between the China and the foreign.

In the opening of the *Xuanhe yishi* 宣和遺事 (Anecdotes of the Xuanhe Reign) we find “China, having the principle of heaven is all *yang*; foreign tribes, those of base nature, the lusts of man, are all *yin*.” (中國也，天理也，皆是陽

³⁴ Not just within literature, but historically we can see in both the importance and elaborateness of underground tombs that underground areas were considered the domain of the dead. Judith Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine: Ghosts and Gender in Seventeenth Century Chinese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 20-25.

³⁵ In the *Liaozhai zhiyi* tale “Yingning” 嬰寧 we discover that the fox-spirit Yingning and her ghost-mother live in the ghost-mother’s tomb.

類；夷狄也，小人也，人慾也，皆是陰類）。³⁶ By inhabiting these underground areas the foreign, the *yin* Miao are cosmologically juxtaposed against the *yang* Chinese. However, their presence in the caves does not, like the floods of the mountain monk, threaten the basis of the idea system that they (or rather, the control of them) are a part of. Rather they inevitably work in the same way as the control of the floods by confirming the *yang* and civilized nature of China and the *yin*, foreign nature of the Miao.

Within Yuan Mei's descriptions of the bodies, language and customs of the Miao, we can see a conscious attempt to highlight the bestial nature of the foreign. Their bodies, dark and covered with hair, are indicative of their less-than-human status. Their language and custom of residing in structures resembling bird nests is brought out as further evidence of their bestial status. The practice of attributing bird-like features to the foreign is a common theme within Yuan Mei's writings, and using bestial features such as 'bird-talk' (*niao yu* 鳥語) and living in bestial dwellings has long been a solidly established and derogatory way of describing foreign peoples.³⁷ Despite their animalistic features they are still referred to as people (*ren* 人), albeit with an added caveat noting their 'not quite' human status – they are dark-skinned people (*hei ren* 黑人) or hairy people (*mao ren* 毛人). The Miao are not, however, monsters (*guai* 怪) like the mountain monk. Such a choice of Yuan Mei seems to coincide with the concerns of the

³⁶ *Xuanhe yishi* 宣和遺事, yuan ji, 1.

³⁷ One section of *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Book of the Later Han) reads: “The kind [of foreigners] who lengthen their earlobes and tattoo their feet, dwell as beasts and speak bird-like language and the sort – there are no species that did not submit entirely.” 緩耳雕腳之倫，獸居鳥語之類，莫不舉種盡落. *Hou Han shu*, 86.2860.

gazetteers and Miao albums. It behooved the compilers of these gazetteers and albums to portray the Miao as being somewhere within the civilizing process. To portray them as completely wild would indicate a lack of control and lack of confidence in the undeniable civilizing power of the Chinese, and to portray them as fully civilized would be impossible. Yuan Mei's portrayal of the Miao, based on the Miao albums and the real-life relationship between the Miao and the Qing to create the Miao in *Zi buyu*, uses their liminal humanity to negotiate the complexities of the actual Miao people's adherence to Confucian ethics and imperial authority.

The relationship between the body and speech as outward signs of cultural foreignness can be seen even in the old woman living among the Miao. While not sharing all of the animalistic traits of the Miao, her appearance is still differentiated from 'normal' Chineseness through a similar use of descriptive caveats. She first emerges from a nest and later jumps onto the tree, indicating that in at least some way, she follows the same half-animal half-human lifestyle of the Miao. With white hair and her high forehead she only slightly resembles a human, but she is still closer to human than the Miao. Although the woman is able to speak the babbling language of the Miao, her Chinese still carries the sound of the people of Chu, indicating that there still exists a part of her that maintains elements of Chineseness. This negotiation of the old woman's identity places her within a particular hierarchy that situates her below normative Chineseness but above the Miao's bestial foreignness. In light of the old woman's status it would seem that just as a foreigner's ability to communicate with a Chinese person and

adoption of elements of Chineseness results in their moving further away from the category of monster and towards humanness, occupying spaces of liminal humanity; so conversely, by adopting elements of Miaoness so can even a Chinese person move away from the category of humanness slipping towards non-Chinese, liminal humanity.

The old woman denotes a certain anxiety regarding the go-betweens between the Miao *tusi* and the Chinese officials that administered them in real life. Her physical changes and adoption of Miao customs represents a fear or doubt of the civilizing power of the Chinese against the uncivilizing power of the Miao. As a writer clearly convinced of the civilizing power of language, ethics and imperial authority, it is quite believable that Yuan Mei could have considered the possibility that the inverse power could also exist. The old woman, not quite Chinese and not quite Miao, is situated between the woodcutter and the Miao, setting the stage for her role as a mediator between the two.

Mediated Communication

There is no direct communication between the Chinese woodcutter and the foreign Miao. Instead there is an exchange between him and the Chinese woman and then between her and the Miao. The reader can therefore understand only what is said in Chinese, but we are left in the dark when she speaks with her Miao children in their bird-like, warbling language. It is clear that her mediation is the key to communication between the Miao and the Chinese which operates on two levels, linguistic and ethical. Linguistically, their communication essentially involves the explanation and confirmation of identities. It is only from her

explanations that the woodcutter knows that she is from Fang Country, how she came to be here, that the rest of her clan are Miao, and who they are within the group. This introduction of identity not only serves to explain their place within the Miao group, but their place in the grand scheme of Chinese-foreign identity, albeit with some reservations.

On the ethical level, we do not see the same explicit communication that we see when the old woman and the woodcutter exchange information on their identities, but there is still a clear picture of Miao ethics and the way the old woman mediates ethically between the two parties. Before the arrival of the old woman, we see a real possibility of violence as the Miao rejoice, and tie up the woodcutter as their prey. The fear of the woodcutter is retroactively confirmed when the words of the people on the road speak on the Miao's man-eating tendencies. This is essentially the expected outcome had the woman not arrived to intervene and save the woodcutter. It is she who instructs the Miao to release him, and even accompany him so that he may find his way home. Through this, she takes Chinese cultural values, and negotiates them not only into Miao language but also into Miao ideas, with such efficacy there seems to be little issue with his release or threat from them during the three-day journey back. Her Miao sons' unquestioned acceptance of their mother's instructions shows that, despite their highly un-Chinese language and lifestyle, they maintain the same traditions of filial piety (*xiao* 孝) so critical to Confucian ethics and Chineseness. Ethically, the Miao exists between the man-eating monstrosity of the mountain monk and filially pious Chinese humanness. This level of ethical communication could only

have occurred through a mediated encounter. It is through the old woman's ability to successfully mediate linguistically and ethically between the Miao and the Chinese woodcutter that we come to know their shared value of filial piety, and it is this value – as mediated through the old woman – that enables the woodcutter to survive.

XU YAKE (*ZI BUYU* 17.19)

Xu Yake of Huzhou³⁸ is the son of a concubine.³⁹ His father was deceived by his step-mother's words, and intended to bring about his death. Yake fled, roaming in all directions. All the famous mountains and great rivers, the deepest cliffs and the remotest ravines, he would certainly climb his way to the farthest reaches. Taking himself as one who was supposed to be dead, there was nothing he feared.

[Once] he was climbing the Yandang Mountain⁴⁰ and was not able to ascend to the top. It was late, and there was nowhere for him to spend the night. A monk at the side looked at him and said: "Is the young master fond of roaming?" Yake said: "Yes." The monk [then] said: "When I was young I also had this obsession. I encountered an extraordinary person who gave me a leather bag. When I slept in this bag at night, be it wind or rain, tigers or leopards, venomous snakes or lizards, none could harm me. He also gave me a length of cloth of five *zhang*. When [I encountered] mountains that were too high, I would throw this cloth up and clamber up. Even if I tipped over and fell, so long as my hands did not let go, and I held fast to it, then I would land to the ground without injuring myself. With these I was able to visit all the areas within the seas. Now I'm an old man, and a tired bird knows when to return to the nest. Please [allow me] to give

³⁸ Northern Zhejiang 浙江 province.

³⁹ A *niezi* 孽子 is the illegitimate son of a concubine, as opposed to the son of the main wife.

⁴⁰ In Zhejiang province, between Taizhou 台州 and Wenzhou 温州.

these two items to you as a gift.” Xu kowtowed to express his gratitude, and then bid farewell. After this point, he was able to climb high and descend deep, doing as he pleased.

Entering the south of Dian,⁴¹ more than one-thousand *li* away from the Qingling River,⁴² he became lost. Seeing only gravel as far as the eye could see, he entered his bag to spend the night in the wild. Under the moon he heard someone urinating on his bag, with the sound of a rushing tide. He stole a look, and saw a large, hairy man with square eyes, a hooked nose and two [front] teeth protruding out from the corners of his mouth for several *chi*, a number of times longer than those of a human. He also heard the sound of a pandemonium of beasts trampling the sand, as if ten-thousand hoards of deer and rabbits were sent madly in flight. After a while, a strong gust of wind arose from the southwest carrying an unbearable stench. There turned out to be a python passing by in the sky, driving the [fleeing] beasts, its body-length extending several *zhang*, and its head the size of a chariot wheel. Xu tried to stop his fearful panting, kept quiet, and stayed laying down.

At dawn he crawled out from his bag to see on both sides of where the python passed, the grass and trees were all burned. Only he was unharmed. He was starving and there was no place to beg for food. He looked ahead at a village and saw something of cooking

⁴¹ Central Yunnan 雲南 province.

⁴² A river in southern Yunnan approximately 100 miles north east of Dian 滇.

smoke rising, and raced towards it. [Upon reaching the village] he saw two hairy men sitting side by side. A cauldron was set aside, sending out an enticing smell of cooked taro. Xu suspected that [one of] these were the moonlight-urinator. He knelt down and kowtowed. The hairy men did not comprehend him. He then dolefully begged for food to relieve his hunger, and again they did not comprehend. Yet they wore amicable facial expressions and smiled, glancing at him from the corners of their eyes. Xu thereupon pointed at his mouth with his finger and pointed at his belly. The hairy men laughed much harder, with a *haw haw* sound that sent the forested valley shaking, showing that they had understood his meaning. They granted him with two taro corms, with which he was able to fill his belly. He set aside half a taro, and when he looked back at the men, they turned out to be white rocks.

Xu roamed all through the four seas, and [in the end] returned to Huzhou. He used to say the following to others: “It is the nature of Heaven and earth to take man as the most noble [kind]. [As for] all those desolate, wild, hidden and remote places, if people did not reach them, nor would ghosts, deities and strange beings. [If] there are places with ghosts, deities and strange beings, then [those places] also have people.”

徐崖客

湖州徐崖客者，孽子也，其父惑繼母言，欲置之死。崖客逃，雲遊四方，凡名山大川，深岩絕澗，必攀援而上，以為本當死之人，無所畏。

登雁蕩山，不得上，晚無投宿處，旁一僧目之曰：“子好游乎？”崖客曰：“然。”僧曰：“吾少時亦有此癖，遇異人授一皮囊，夜寢其中，風雨虎豹蛇虺具不能害。又與纏足布一匹，長五丈，或山過高，投以布，便攀援而上。即或傾跌，但手不釋布，緊握之，墜亦無傷。以此遊遍海內。今老矣，倦鳥知還，請以二物贈公。”徐拜謝別去。嗣後，登高臨深，頗得如意。

入滇南，出青蛉河外千餘里，迷道，砂礫渺茫，投囊野宿。月下聞有人洩於皮囊上者，聲如潮湧。偷目之，則大毛人，方目鉤鼻，兩牙出頤外數尺，長倍數人。又聞沙上獸蹄雜沓，如萬群獐兔被逐狂奔者。俄而，大風自西南起，腥不可耐，乃蟒蛇從空中過，驅群獸而行，長數十丈，頭若車輪。徐惕息噤聲而伏。

天明出囊，見蛇過處兩旁草木皆焦，己獨無恙。飢無乞食處，望前村有若煙起者，奔往，見二毛人並坐，旁置鑊，爇芋甚香。徐疑即月下遺洩者，跪而再拜，毛人不知；哀乞救飢，亦不知；然色態甚和，睨徐而笑。徐乃以手指口，又指其

腹，毛人笑愈甚，啞啞有聲，響震林谷，若解意者，賜以二芋。徐得果腹，留半芋，歸視諸人，乃白石也。

徐遊遍四海，仍歸湖州。嘗告人曰：“天地之性人為貴。凡荒莽幽絕之所，人不到者，鬼神怪物亦不到。有鬼神怪物處，便有人矣。”

Historical Model of Xu Yake

To an informed reader, the name and experience of the protagonist, Xu Yake, would immediately recall the famed seventeenth-century geographer and travel writer Xu Hongzu 徐弘祖 (1587-1641), better known as Xu Xiake 徐霞客. From the writings and stories of the real-life Xu Xiake,⁴³ we know that he spent the first portion of his career travelling around the Chinese heartland, with a particular interest in famous mountains. His travelogues document his visits to many different areas around China, including Yandang Mountain.⁴⁴ After the death of his mother, Xu Xiake undertook his grandest, and most well-known journey, travelling to the southwest where he spent two years documenting his travels along the border with Tibet and Burma.

There are many similarities of life experiences between the historical Xu Xiake and Yuan Mei's protagonist. Each of them first travels within the heartland of China, including the Yandang Mountain, before undertaking a journey to the southwest. Their relationship with their mothers also served as a strong incentive

⁴³ His writings existed mainly in manuscript forms until printed editions were published in 1776 .

⁴⁴ No events of particular interest are noted having happened to him at Mount Yandang.

for their travels.⁴⁵ In addition, both encountered a monk before their trip to Yunnan.⁴⁶ The historical Xu Xiake's life experiences and itinerary therefore very likely provide a model for Yuan Mei's story.

As Xu Yake reaches Yunnan, his crossing over into foreign lands is marked by his entrance into the south of Dian, where he gets lost far from the Qingling River. The use of these locations to situate this area becomes clear when we take the context of Xu Xiake's life within consideration. The Qingling river was an important discovery of Xu Xiake's exploration of Yunnan when he found out it was a tributary of the Jinsha River 金沙江 and one of the headwater streams of the Yangtze River 長江. In Xu Xiake's time, the area of Dian was not within the borders of the Ming empire, as was shown in his accounts of people in this area. The region known to the Chinese as Dian was then a mostly independent tributary, part of a Tai confederation made up of a dozen or more regions (*banna*). Dian itself was called Sipsongbanna in the Tai language, meaning "the twelve-rice-fields region".⁴⁷ Sipsongbanna remained mostly independent up to the mid-eighteenth century, with suzerainty shifting between the Burmese and Chinese, or both at the same time.⁴⁸ Following Burmese invasion in 1762 Sipsongpanna

⁴⁵ Xu Xiake travelled to the southwest after his mother's death, while Xu Yake travelled to the southwest after his step-mother conspired to have him killed.

⁴⁶ In *Zi buyu*, the monk gives Xu Yake the magical tools needed for him to continue his roaming and eventually make his way to Yunnan. Similarly, Xu Xiake encountered a monk by the name of Jingwen 靜聞 (?-1637) before his travel to Yunnan. Jingwen was also travelling to Yunnan on a pilgrimage, but died of dysentery enroute, however he is still commonly mentioned in Xu's writings and his affection for the monk is clear.

⁴⁷ Lionel M. Jensen and Timothy B. Weston, *China's Transformations: The Stories Beyond the Headlines* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007) 220-1.

⁴⁸ Janet C. Sturgeon, *Border Landscapes: The Politics of Akha Land Use in China and Thailand* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 69.

became part of the Burmese Konbaung dynasty (1752-1885), whereupon it was invaded three years later (1765) by the Qing.⁴⁹

As I will show later, within Yuan Mei's tale, the area of Dian that Xu Yake travels is a mixture of the Dian of Xu Xiake's time, when the area was outside the borders of Ming imperial order, and the Dian of Yuan Mei's time, when it had been only recently brought in as a de facto part of the Qing empire.

Historical Background of Dian as a Foreign Space

On Xu Xiake's travels to the southwest he writes extensively on the local minority headmen (*tusi* 土司) and the lives of peripheral peoples.⁵⁰ In his writings he often describes their eccentricities and his judgements seem to shift between praise and disparagement in a way that lays bare Xu's innate belief in the superiority in Chinese culture. His judgements of the non-Han peoples of the southwest are dependent on the level to which they had accepted efforts at sinification. For those people he does praise, he describes them as being civilized and generally likable, citing the level to which they had adopted Chinese dress, food, culture, their loyalty and desire to uphold the Chinese imperial system and their ability to speak Chinese and even compose, although not particularly well, poetry in Chinese. Those criticized by Xu as wild barbarians are those people with little understanding of Chinese culture, some of whom Xu shockingly notes do

⁴⁹ Charles P. Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 97-9. The area is a part of China today. The region formerly known as Dian encompasses a large portion of the southern part of Yunnan province, and although it has been split up into multiple counties the name itself remains an abbreviation for Yunnan province. The 'south of Dian' is known as Xishuangbanna 西雙版納, a Chinese transcription of its Tai name adopted in 1953.

⁵⁰ For a complete discussion on Xu Xiake's records of his visit to the southwest see Julian Ward, *Xu Xiake (1587-1641): The Art of Travel Writing* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001), 131-150.

not even know of the existence of China, or are unable to understand Chinese. While travelling the border of Burma, Xu describes seeing a group of wild men (*yeren* 野人) at Tea Mountain (Cha shan 茶山)⁵¹ noting: “formerly this was also part of China, but today it is no longer within the swaying power of the [sage] king” (昔亦內屬, 今非王化所及矣),⁵² displaying clearly, in his opinion, the direct relationship between China (and Chineseness) and the local people’s subscription to imperial rule and orthodox culture.

Xu Xiake’s judgements of civilized or barbarians resident in Yunnan are parallel to Yuan Mei’s approach to foreignness and Chineseness as categories rooted in one’s adoption of Confucian ethics, one’s acceptance of imperial authority, and one’s ability to communicate with the Chinese protagonist. Because of the complicated relationship the area had with both Ming and Manchu authorities, Xu Xiake and Yuan Mei’s descriptions each presents the local people in varying lights. Xu Xiake, writing within the travel records tradition (*youji* 遊記), deals with the complexities of the region by attempting to record details on each person or group he encounters. Yuan Mei, writing within the *zhiguai* tradition, portrays the locals in the liminal state between beast and man. The details within the way Yuan Mei portrays southern Dian and the local inhabitants are, however, heavily influenced by the events of the mid-eighteenth century, long after Xu Xiake’s time.

⁵¹ The former name of Nannuo Mountain 南糯山 in Yunnan’s Menghai county 勐海县, the most southwestern county in all modern China, bordering Burma.

⁵² Xu Xiake, “Dian you riji” 滇游日記 (Daily notes on travels in Dian), no. 9, *Xu Xiake youji quanyi* 徐霞客遊記全譯, trans. and annot. Zhu Huirong 朱惠荣 et al. (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1990), 2287.

A Historical Reading of Signs of Foreignness

In Yuan Mei's story, the monk's gift before Xu's journey to Dian foreshadows the encounter with the foreign. The cloth allow him to penetrate into the foreign land he otherwise wouldn't be able to get to. Likewise, were it not for the leather bag that he brings with him, Xu could not safely view the foreign land with his Chinese eyes. The bag, brought from within China's heartland, serves to establish a physical boundary that maintains within it the safety of imperial order even when Xu himself has left the geographical boundaries of that order. The bag therefore serves as a buffer against the danger of foreign lands, as well as the possible corrupting influences of foreign peoples.

After entering Dian, Xu is clearly out of his element, and finds himself lost in the same manner as the Chinese woodcutter who encounters the Black Miao. Having nowhere to stay, he is forced to sleep out in the wild with only his bag to protect him. It is out here in Dian that he has a series of strange experiences that I will unpack from within the context of Dian's history.

His first encounter is with the strange-looking hairy men, whose descriptions are more or less in line with Yuan Mei's other foreigners of liminal humanity. Interestingly, although their square eyes, hooked nose and large, protruding teeth would seem to be quite frightening, there is no sense of possible fear or danger that we see in the stories of the mountain monk and the Black Miao. Xu Yake is in danger of being urinated on, but this is still a far cry from possibly being eaten. The nearly inhuman appearance of the hairy man, as a personification of the local Tai people as a whole, display their only minor

adoption of cultural elements of Chineseness. What stops the hairy man from being seen as frightening and dangerous is the fact that, unlike the pirate Xu Hai and the Miao peoples, the Tai had never fought against the Chinese and therefore had never represented a threat to the imperial order. For this reason, they also pose no real threat to Xu Yake in the story.

His second encounter, the nighttime pandemonium of countless deer and rabbits madly fleeing, seems to represent the alarm of those peoples to Burmese invasion. There was, in fact, resistance put up against the Burmese by Tai militias and even the many local Chinese silver miners. In some instances, these resistances were successful, but in most they were not. Many of them fled when the Burmese armies pillaged Sipsongpanna in 1765.⁵³

If the fleeing rabbits and deer symbolize the fleeing Tai locals, then it is clear that the gigantic python (*mangshe* 蟒蛇) that slithers through the air after them symbolizes the Burmese. The python's arrival is foreshadowed by a terrible stench from the southeast (the direction of Burma) and leaves behind nothing but a scorched landscape. The giant python, as a tropical species of snake that flourishes in southeast Asia, serves as a geographic point of reference that situates this entire event at China's southwest border, if not Burma itself.⁵⁴ With the appearance of the python there are, in a way, two different foreign groups encountered by Xu Yake. Just as the lack of any real threat to the Chinese imperial order by the Tai results in a corresponding lack of threat to Xu, so the

⁵³ Giersch, *Asian Borderlands*, 99.

⁵⁴ The Burmese Python (*Miandian mang* 緬甸蟒) is the largest and one of the most common species of python.

great threat to Qing imperial order by the Burmese results in their depiction as an incredibly dangerous giant serpent.⁵⁵

Yuan Mei's depictions of the two foreign groups, the Tai and the Burmese, fit quite well with his overall narrative strategy in depicting foreigners. Additionally, within the utilization of their historical positions relative to Chinese imperial authority – the Tai as non-threatening hairy people and the Burmese as a highly threatening python – were not just symbols that fit well within Yuan Mei's approach to these groups but likely an approach that would have been found very appropriate by Qianlong himself. As Alexander Woodside points out, even an essay by Qianlong himself “shows the conflicts between the various elements of the eighteenth-century courts ideology. Ch'ien-lung's (Qianlong) need to see the rice-planting Burmese as being unvaryingly barbaric as the Hsiung-nu (Xiongnu), in order to provide a stable external reference point for the comparative measurement across dynasties of Chinese political and cultural loyalty, worked against his court's equally significant agenda of demolishing negative Chinese pictures of the frontier peoples the Ch'ing (Qing) empire was trying to assimilate

⁵⁵ In reality, the Qing campaign against Burma was “the most disastrous frontier war the Qing had ever waged.” Yingcong Dai, “A Disguised Defeat: The Myanmar Campaign of the Qing Dynasty,” *Modern Asian Studies* 38.1 (2004): 145. Wholly unprepared for a grueling four-year fight in the tropical jungles of Burma, the war ended with the deaths of over 70,000 Chinese troops, almost half of which were due to starvation and tropical diseases. The Burmese use of scorched earth policies and guerrilla tactics; such as allowing the Qing troops to penetrate deep into Burma with little resistance until finally encircling them, cutting their supply lines and attacking them until they had all starved or been killed; had been so effective that they are still the subject of military case studies. Michael Haskew et al., *Fighting Techniques of the Oriental World: AD 1200-1860 Equipment, Combat Skills, and Tactics* (Dubai: Thomas Dunne Books, 2008), 27-30. The war ended with an unclear truce wherein each side's records indicate it was the other to request peace. Nevertheless, it was this war that established China's current borders with Burma. Dai argues that it is likely that Qing records are deliberately spotty or vague in order to suit Qianlong's desire to include the campaign as one of his “Ten Great Military Victories.” Dai, *Disguised Defeat*, 145-189. The former Tai confederation was split between the two sides, with one becoming the Dai minorities of Yunnan and the other Burma's Shan State.

or control.”⁵⁶ Yuan Mei’s distinctive depictions of each group is quite effective in projecting the same concerns as the imperial court, while avoiding the incriminating risk of directly commenting on foreign peoples.

Foreignness of Signs: Interpreted Communication

The morning following his very strange night Xu encounters the two hairy men face to face. Xu’s attempts at communication begin on the ethical level as he greets them with standard Chinese social etiquette, kowtowing twice with respect. Had they recognized his action as a proper gesture of showing utmost respect, like those foreigners praised by Xu Xiake, it would have been possible for them to engage in ethical communication. The two hairy men, however, do not understand what he is doing. Xu then lowers his mode of communication from ethical to verbal. He uses Chinese to appeal to them for something to eat, which is again not understood. Xu then takes to an even simpler form of communication, gesturing to his mouth and belly in reference to the necessity for food, an act that would likely be an easily understandable sign to any human.

By falling back on gesturing as the viable form of communication, Xu and the hairy men avoid the failure of communication seen in the case of the mountain monk. Yet different from verbal or ethical communication, the success of the communication hinges on a common ground of interpretation. Despite the failure of the first two attempts, Xu keeps trying different ways of communicating precisely because he has correctively interpreted the hairy men’s amicable facial expressions (色態甚和) and their smiling glances as friendly gestures. By

⁵⁶ Alexander Woodside, “The Ch’ien-lung Reign,” in *The Cambridge History of China: The Ch’ing Empire to 1800 Volume 9*, ed. Willard J. Peterson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 250.

pointing at his mouth and belly Xu is presupposing a universal semiotics of hunger. This time, it is the two hairy men who interpret the attempt at communication correctly.

After the successful interpretations of communication, the narrative presents a scene of bestowing gifts – the two corms (賜以二芋). Xu consumed one and a half, saving *half*. This is important because the remaining taro is an index to what happened within Xu's empirical experience. However, when he looks back to take one last look, the two very real hairy men turn out to be only white rocks” (歸視諸人，乃白石也) – a trope on the encounter with the immortal that traces back to the tale of Liu Chen 劉晨 and Ruan Zhao's 阮肇 encounter with female deities.⁵⁷ The foreign has thus been subsumed into the mythical realm.

⁵⁷ *You ming lu* 幽明錄 (Records of Hidden and Visible Worlds), in *Han Wei Liuchao biji xiaoshuo da guan* 漢魏六朝筆記小說大觀 (A Compendium of biji and xiaoshuo of the Han, Wei and Six Kingdoms) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1999), 697.

THE DEPRESSION IN THE WATER (*ZI BUYU* 23.37)

The water level of the ocean gradually runs lower in the area close to Ryukyu.⁵⁸ In the case of the depression, the water falls without swirling. There were people of Min⁵⁹ who, having passed Taiwan, were blown off course to the whirlpool and sucked in. They figured there would not be any chance whatsoever for them to survive, when suddenly, with a huge crashing sound, everyone was thrown off their feet and the boat came to a stop. Slowly they looked around. Only then did they realize that they had hit a desolate beach with sand and pebbles of pure gold. There were strange-looking birds that would not fly away when seeing people.⁶⁰ [Since] these people were starving, they caught the birds and ate them. At night they could hear the chirping sound of ghosts of various kinds.

[After] living there for half a year, they slowly came to comprehend the ghosts' language. The ghosts said "People of our kind are all Chinese! [Some years ago] we were sucked into the whirlpool and our corpses drifted here. We have no idea how many tens of thousand of *li* it is from China! Having lived here for a long time, we know quite well the nature of the sea. It takes about thirty years for the depression to reach the sea level, [and at that point] those who have not yet died can hope for return. It just so happens

⁵⁸ This area is called Liuqiu 琉球 in Chinese. Historically it is the chain of islands running from southern Japan to Taiwan, and the kingdom that ruled them.

⁵⁹ Fujian 福建 province.

⁶⁰ There is in fact a flightless bird of the rail family native to Okinawa Island.

that this is about the time for the depression to level up with the sea.
[If] you repair your ships you can hope for returning alive.”

[They did] according to what [the ghosts] said, and crowds of ghosts tearfully saw them off, scrambling to take the gold sand on the shore as parting gifts, [all the while] beseeching in the following words: “It would be our fortune if you could send word to our hometown, [so that our folks may] sponsor Buddhist rituals to deliver us.” These people were much moved by the ghosts’ friendship. Upon returning home they each contributed to the fund to hold a significant sacrificial ritual to pray [for the ghosts and express their] gratitude.

落漈

海水至澎湖漸低，近琉球則謂之“落漈”。落漈者，水落下而不回也。有閩人過台灣，被風吹落漈中，以為萬無生理。忽然大震一聲，人人跌倒，船遂不動。徐視之，方知抵一荒灘，岸上砂石盡是赤金，有怪鳥見人不飛，人飢則捕食之。夜聞鬼聲啾啾不一。

居半年，漸通鬼語。鬼言：“我輩皆中國人，當年落漈，流屍到此，不知去中國幾萬里矣！久棲於此，頗知海性，大抵閱三十年落漈一平，生人未死者可以望歸。今正當漈水將平時，君等修補船隻，可望生還。”

如其言，群鬼哭而送之，競取岸上金沙為贈，囑曰：“幸致聲鄉里，好作佛事，替我等超度。”眾感鬼之情，還家後，各出資建大醮以祝謝焉。

Ryukyu in Historical Sources

Because of significant trading between China and foreign lands such as Japan and Malaysia, as well as significant migration from southern Chinese coastal areas to Taiwan, the maritime region of eighteenth-century China was a space that virtually guaranteed contact with foreign peoples. This fact not only captured the imagination of writers of strange tales like Yuan Mei, but was a concern for the Qing state, as well as for those who sought to control maritime activities such as trade and immigration. Within historical records we can also see attempts to reshape the state's knowledge of maritime areas and peoples.

References to the depression of water around Ryukyu can be found in a wide variety of historical sources. Indeed, the opening sentence of Yuan Mei's story repeats nearly verbatim the same information on the phenomenon found in many Ming and Qing historical sources.⁶¹ Chen Kan's 陳侃 (1489-1538) *Shi Liuqiu lu* 使琉球錄 (A Record on the Emissary Trip to Ryukyu) cites the popular accounts of Ryukyu in an essay titled “Qunshu zhiyi” 群書質異 (Questioning the Differences in Various Books):

⁶¹ Some of the sources where the entry can be found verbatim, or nearly verbatim include the *Jilu huibian* 紀錄彙編 (Collection of Essays, Stories, Comments and Quotations), *Yuan shi* 元史 (History of the Yuan) and the *Xu wenxian tongkao* 續文獻通考 (Continuation of the Comprehensive Investigations based on Literary and Documentary Sources).

Penghu Island is a five day's sea voyage to the west of the state. The tide gradually runs lower in the area close to Penghu and forms the gigantic whirlpool in the area near Ryukyu. This is called the sea depression, in which case the water rapidly falls without swirling. Typically [if] the fishing boats of the two coasts⁶² reach Penghu and encounter a typhoon they will be blown into the depression. Of the hundred ships [that were blown into the depression] there was not one or two that had returned.

澎湖島，在國西，水行五日。落漈深水至澎湖漸低，近琉球，謂之落漈。漈者，水趨下不回也。凡兩岸漁舟至澎湖，遇颶風作，漂流落漈，回者百無一二。⁶³

However, this repeated record of the sea depression around Ryukyu and the danger associated with it was not without its challengers. Within the *Ming jingshi wenbian* 明經世文編 (Collected Writings on Statecraft from the Ming), finished in 1638, a particular essay entitled “Fuyi Geishizhong Chen Kan deng jincheng Shi Liuqiu lu shu” 覆議給事中陳侃等進呈使琉球錄疏 (“Renewed discussion on the Memorial on *A Record of the Emissary Trip to Ryukyu* presented by Supervising Secretary Chen Kan and others”) challenges the information cited above in the follow words:

I was thinking that for the rule of the state under the single, grand order, we must have faithful histories to record foreign and

⁶² The coast of Taiwan and of China

⁶³ Chen, “Shi Liuqiu lu” in Deng Shilong 鄧世龍 ed. *Guochao diangu* 國朝典故 (Anecdotes of the Ming state), *juan* 120 (Beijing: Beijing Renmin Chubanshe, 1993), 2012.

domestic matters. Take *The Unification Gazetteer of the Great Ming* for example. In its records of the events related to Ryukyu, there is the mention of a depression in the water, whereby the water falls without swirling. Of the hundred boats that drifted off [into the whirlpool], there was not one that had returned. We, your humble subjects, used to dread this place because of [all the accounts], and when we passed through [this area] and did not encounter this danger [we thought we were] extremely fortunate. [However], when we reached the state and inquired about the depression, nobody knew about such kind of phenomenon. Therefore there were no cases of the sea depression to learn about.

[*The Gazetteer*] also claims that below the walls of the king's residence, skulls are collected, deemed to be appealing. We, your humble subjects, had doubts [about the state] on account of this. We figured that the king must have been violent and ferocious and that we would not be able to speak with him. However, when we reached the king's palace and looked all around the walls, all [that we saw] were piles of stones. The king acted according to proprieties, with an elegant and restrained manner just like a Confucian scholar. During the number of months we were there, we never saw people in this state kill each other. So how could [they] have ever taken skulls to be appealing? Therefore what is recorded [about Ryukyu] in *The Gazetteer* are all false accounts....

Why is this the case? It is probably because Ryukyu did not learn about [the use of] Chinese characters and it never had [its own] records. Chinese people never visited this land by themselves, then how could they get the true [picture] all by themselves? [Therefore] one hearsay led to another, until these became records.

又嘗念國家大一統之治必有信史以載 內外之事。如大明一統誌者。中所載琉球之事。所云落漈者。水移下不回也。舟漂落百無一回。臣等嘗懼乎此。經過不遇是險。自以為大幸。至其國而詢之。皆不知有其水。則是無落漈可知矣。

又云。王所居壁下。多聚髑髏以為佳。臣等嘗疑乎此。意其國王兇悍。而不可與言也。至王宮時。遍觀壁下。亦皆累石。國王循循雅飭。若儒生然。在彼數月。雖國人亦不見其相殺。又何嘗以髑髏為佳哉。是誌之所載者。皆訛也...若此者何也。蓋琉球不習漢字。原無誌書。華人未嘗親至其地。胡自而得其真也。以訛傳訛。遂以為誌。⁶⁴

This paragraph challenges the widely-cited accounts that presented Ryukyu as a dangerous, little-known island inhabited by what must surely be brutal barbarians, their savagery being confirmed by their use of skulls to decorate the king's palace. Such accounts then acknowledge the existence of what is both geographically and ethically beyond the reach of imperial order. *Ming jingshi wenbian*, by contrast, attempts to override prior accounts in order to claim the

⁶⁴ Ming jingshi wenbian, 203.2140-2.

universality of the civilizing power of Confucian morality. By denying the existence of deadly whirlpools around Ryukyu and the barbarity of the people who inhabit it, the new account serves to diminish the geographic boundaries of the Confucian order, thereby diminishing the ethical boundaries between the foreigners of Ryukyu and the Chinese. In this essay's denial of the reliability of all other accounts on Ryukyu, the author is preoccupied with maintaining the single, unchallenged order under the Ming rule (大一統之治).

It is unclear the level to which, if at all, the new account as the imperial view had affected Yuan Mei's perceptions of Ryukyu or other maritime areas. What is important is that this account represents a trend, existing at least by the late Ming period, of scholars and officials within China thinking critically about the nature of Chinese and foreign identities, the aspects of each identity that separated them, and the possibility that these aspects of differentiation were much smaller than what both official histories and popular notions held. We must remember that the *Ming jingshi wenbian* was not a collection of strange tales, nor entertainment, nor religious writings of far-away utopias, but memorials to the emperor meant to influence his opinions and policies. It is clear that this essay represents a very real, and very serious discussion on foreignness a century before Yuan Mei's time.

The Sea Depression as Imagined Space - Ryukyu in the *Zhiguai* Tradition

Yetan suilu 夜譚隨錄 (Casual Records of Night Talks), a collection of strange tales in the *zhiguai* tradition by the Manchu writer He Bang'e 和邦額 (fl. 1736-ca. 1779) also has a tale titled "Luoji." The two stories are so similar that

they are clearly based on the same source. Both versions open with the typical introduction to the sea depression discussed earlier, and share what is essentially the same plot, wherein a group of people depart from Min for Taiwan when they are blown into the whirlpool until their ship crashes into a shore with pebbles of pure gold. After this point, the two versions bifurcate and I put them side-by-side here for comparison.⁶⁵

Yetan suilu

1a. [There were] many strange-looking birds that were quite varied in appearance. Upon seeing people they would not fly off in alarm. [When] they were hungry, they would capture them for food. There was one kind [of birds] that resembled geese, being distinctively tasteful. At night, surrounding the boat were all ghosts, whose chirping sound would not die away till dawn, and resumed at night again.

怪鳥頗伙，不一其形，見人亦不驚飛。饑則捕食之，有如鵝者，味獨美。夜間繞船盡鬼，啾啾不絕。至曉乃歿，夜則復然。

2a. [After] living there for half a year, they gradually got close to the ghosts and could verbally communicate. The ghosts thereupon said “[From] here to China is many thousands of *li*. In the past we sank into the whirlpool, and our bodies drifted here. Home is very far, and there were no means to get there even through dreams.”

居半年，漸與鬼習，可通言語。鬼因言：「此間去中國數千里，往日陷於落漈，流屍至此，去家萬遠，通夢無由。」

Zi buyu

1b. There were strange-looking birds that would not fly away when seeing people. [Since] these people were starving they caught the birds and ate them. At night they could hear the chirping sound of ghosts of various kinds.

有怪鳥見人不飛，人飢則捕食之。夜聞鬼聲啾啾不一。

2b. [After] living there for half a year, they slowly came to comprehend the ghosts language. The ghosts said “People of our kind are all Chinese! [Some years ago] we were sucked into the whirlpool and our corpses drifted here. We have no idea how many tens of thousand of *li* it is from China!”

居半年，漸通鬼語。鬼言：“我輩皆中國人，當年落漈，流屍到此，不知去中國幾萬里矣！”

⁶⁵ Bang'e He 和邦額, *Yetan suilu* 夜譚隨錄, ed. Ruiyu Sheng 盛瑞裕 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1978), 3.259-266.

Yetan suilu

Zi buyu

3a. “The birds that we ate resembling geese, what kind are those?” The ghosts answered: “These are not birds. They are also ghosts. After many years their vital energies exhausted and dispersed, thus transforming into this illusory form.” Everyone then sighed at this.

3b. N/A

所食似鵝之鳥, 何鳥也? 鬼曰: 此非鳥, 亦鬼也。歷年既久, 精氣耗散, 故幻此形耳。眾為之嘆息。

4a. Lanyan said: Gold is that which people contend for and covet. There are many among kith and kin who harbor enmity and get into lawsuits on account of this. Then there is this place where gold is strewn about amidst pebbles, everywhere for one to pick up. This would indeed be a land of pleasure and no one would leave here for other places. Yet crowds of ghosts bitterly weep, begging for deliverance as if they cannot reside here for a single day. Why is it the case that the ghosts are not attached to this place with such an abundance of gold? It is because they also take death to be [truly] lamentable. Those of this world who hoard gold with a dead mind do not take their situation to be strange, but there is also no joy to speak of. For those who do not dodge and are instead attached to [such situation], even the Buddha with his wisdom cannot provide deliverance for people of this kind.

4b. N/A

蘭岩曰: 赤金人所爭愛, 至戚良朋, 為此結怨構訟者多矣。乃有地焉, 金雜砂礫, 在在所取, 斯誠樂園, 未有肯捨而之他者。乃群鬼痛哭求拔, 直有不可一朝居之勢, 鬼何不戀此多金哉? 亦以死可悲耳。世之擁多金而心死者, 恬不為怪, 然亦無甚趣味。不思避而戀之, 佛氏有靈, 恐不能為此種人荐拔也。

Both versions of this tale successfully shift the focus of the sea depression from the very real Ryukyu to the imaginary island that replaces the whirlpool into which the Chinese people disappeared in popular accounts. But they are different in many significant ways. The strange birds in the *Yetan suilu* version are at first taken as an important food source, necessary to sustain the starving people

marooned on the island. Later we discover that the birds are actually ghosts whose vital energies had already left them. The birds, having once been ghosts, and therefore having once been people, are the end result of a series of transformations related to the dissipation of vital energies. By not recognizing the illusory nature of the birds, the Chinese survivors have engaged in a strange form of cannibalism; and in the case of the goose-like birds they are fooled by their own senses to enjoy the taste. Such a reprehensible act serves to highlight the dangers associated with the delusion of senses.⁶⁶ Within Yuan Mei's model this act of cannibalism is a very serious violation of the survivors' Chineseness, and it is therefore not surprising that this detail does not appear in *Zi buyu*.

The final comment by Lanyan 蘭岩⁶⁷ in the *Yetan suilu* version shifts the focus of the story, and indeed the entire island, to the small pebbles of gold that litter the beaches. By focusing on the gold, a seemingly irrelevant detail when compared against any number of aspects of the story, the comment turns the story into a social critique against greed. His use of the ghosts' wish to leave the island and willingness to give away the gold turns them into a model to criticize those people who would hold financial gain to be the most important thing in life.

In *Zi buyu*, Yuan Mei's focus clearly lies elsewhere. By eliminating the original stories' preoccupation with the illusory strange birds and the end-of-the-story comment, as well as revising the conversations between the people and the

⁶⁶ The birds' illusory nature is further highlighted by the fact that, despite have been taken as an important source of sustenance to stave off starvation, the birds' utter lack of vital energies actually indicates their complete lack of the energies they are being consumed for.

⁶⁷ Anonymous commentator.

ghosts,⁶⁸ Yuan Mei is able to mold his tale from a rather cluttered account of ghosts, strange birds, gold and greed to a story that focuses on the communication between the Chinese and the ghosts, and its effect on the ghosts' identity.⁶⁹

Displaced Communication

It is important to keep in mind that in each story Yuan Mei consistently uses particular animalistic terms to describe the physical features and linguistic features of non-Chinese peoples. The most common of these, as we have seen, are hairy bodies and bird-like language. There are no descriptions of the ghosts' appearance, and no references to the same kinds of embodied otherness that can be seen in Yuan Mei's tales dealing with both foreigners and ghosts. This lack of

⁶⁸ For a detailed discussion on the possible influence of *Yetan suilu* on multiple stories within *Zi buyu* refer to Charles Hammond, "Yetan suilu: Casual Records of Night Talks." *Tamkang Review* 30.1 (2000): 136-143.

⁶⁹ There is in fact a possible historical basis for the idea of a group of Chinese that had become trapped in Ryukyu. In the late fourteenth century thirty-six families from Fujian, under imperial orders, established an overseas Chinese community in Kume Village (久米村) in Ryukyu to assist in trade and diplomatic missions. Takashi Uezato, "The Formation of the Port City of Naha in Ryukyu and the World of Maritime Asia: From the Perspective of a Japanese Network," *Acta Asiatica* 95 (2008): 59.

Their presence turned the area (modern Naha 那覇) into a hub of trade that made the area quite wealthy, as well as turning the area into a center of Confucian learning. Gregory Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu: Identity and Ideology in Early-Modern Thought and Politics* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 36.

Seeing themselves as bastions of Confucian civilization, rooting out native shamanistic practice and promoting Confucianism became a priority for the Chinese. Their efforts proved quite successful and as early as the end of the fourteenth century there seems to be the beginnings of Ryukyuan adoption of Confucianism. George Kerr, *Okinawa: The History of an Island People* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2000), 96-7.

Indeed, the strength of the Kume Chinese's identity was so strong that having lived there for about 250 years and intermarrying with Ryukyuan people to the point that they were essentially ethnically indistinguishable from native Ryukyuan they retained, quite thoroughly, Chinese dress and customs. However, with the establish of the Qing, and the new Manchu rulership requirements to adopt the queue hairstyle, the Chinese community of Kume essentially severed their cultural ties with China and began to adopt Ryukyuan dress and customs. Kerr, *Okinawa*, 178.

Although this would seem to be a likely model for the isolated Chinese ghosts within the sea depression, it is not clear whether Yuan Mei or He Bang'e were aware of the Chinese community on Kume. To determine the likelihood of the Chinese of Kume as a model would therefore require a thorough exploration of both author's writings, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

remark hints at an element of normative Chineseness among the ghosts. Their language however, does display the typical characteristics associated with foreignness. Prior to the Min people learning to understand ghost-talk, the ghosts' sound is described using the onomatopoeic *jiu jiu* (鬼聲啾啾), a sound that also describes the chirping of bird. It would seem then, that the basis for the ghosts' foreignness is a solely linguistic one.

The small changes Yuan Mei makes to the dialogue between the people and the ghosts allow us to focus on his particular interests in this story. Within the *Yetan suilu* version successful communication emerges, apparently spontaneously, as a result of the people's closeness to the ghosts and functions on a neutral basis without indicating which language they are using. They could simply verbally communicate (可通言語). Within *Zi buyu*, the Min people slowly come to comprehend the ghosts' language (漸通鬼語). This change displays Yuan Mei's much greater sensitivity to the relationship between language and identity. It is also clear that in Yuan Mei's view the people must learn the ghosts' language in order to communicate with them, and only then are we able to know the ghosts' true identity.

Once verbal communication becomes possible the very first utterance to come from the ghosts is a clear and concise "We are all Chinese!" The ghosts of *Yetan suilu*, by contrast, lack the same concise and concrete statement of identity. The ghosts' eager exclamation reminds us that Yuan Mei's concern remains distinguishing the Chinese and the foreign, rather than the living and the dead. The fact that the ghosts do not seem to differ from humans but for their language

seem to reinforce this concern. In this imaginary land that is more foreign than ghostly (opposite of *Yetan suilu*), the foreigners with their different language are reframed to become an extension of afterlife as ghosts speaking their own language (*gui yu* 鬼語). By presenting residents of the foreign land as ghosts who claim they are Chinese, Yuan Mei displaces the boundary between Chinese and foreign with the boundary between live and death.

Yuan Mei has therefore shifted the entire discussion on Ryukyu away from the barbarity of its inhabitants and the dangerousness of its water in popular accounts to one on long-lost Chinese who are trapped in the form of ghosts. This shift echoes the corrective stance of *Ming jingshi wenbian* that the residents of Ryukyu are not really foreign. The only difference is that, whereas the *Ming jingshi wenbian* maintains that the people of Ryukyu are in fact civilized and the dangerous whirlpool does not exist, Yuan Mei shows that it is within the whirlpool itself that we discover the inhabitants of Ryukyu are not only civilized, but in fact Chinese.

This is probably why, despite being firmly rooted in the discourse of the foreign, throughout the entire story there are no descriptions of embodied foreignness, and Yuan Mei's preoccupation with the qualities of Confucian ethics and imperial authority, the inevitable yardstick with which to measure foreignness and Chineseness, does not even appear. Instead, we see the ghosts beseech the survivors to hold a Buddhist deliverance ritual so that they may enter the cycle of reincarnation, to be reborn as human again. The ethical communication, which is

expected to follow successful verbal communication, is displaced by the popular belief in the afterlife.

THE GATELESS KINGDOM (*ZI BUYU* 15.31)

Lü Heng of Changzhou made a living dealing in foreign goods. In the fortieth year of the Qianlong Reign (1776), [the ship] encountered a hurricane. All aboard the boat were lost, save Lü who clung to a plank, bobbing in the storm until he drifted to a certain kingdom. The people of this kingdom all lived in multi-storied houses, some of which had three stories and some of which had five stories. The grandparents lived on the third floor, the parents on the second and the sons on the first. The highest floors were where the eldest generations lived. There were [non-locking] doors for entering and exiting, but no locking gates to block the way. The people were very wealthy and there were no incidents of theft.

When Lü first arrived he could not communicate [with the locals] through speech, so he took to pointing and gesturing. After a while, however, they slowly were able to comprehend [him]. [They] heard that he was Chinese and knew to treat him quite respectfully. It was their custom to split each day into two days. When the cock crowed they would rise, engaging in business and trade; at noon the entire kingdom would rest. They would rise when the sun was slanting and conduct business as normal and in the *xu* hours⁷⁰ of the day they slept again. [If] you asked them their age and they were ten

⁷⁰ Traditionally each day could be split into twelve two-hour time periods based on the twelve Earthly Branches. The *xu* 戌 time refers to 7-9pm.

years old, this would be five years old in China. [If] they said they were twenty years old, this would be ten years old in China.

The place where Lü lived was still a thousand *li* from their king and he had no means by which to see him. There were very few government officials. Those who had attendants were called “*baluo*,” [but he] had no idea which office they were in charge of. Man and women married based on their mutual delight in each other. Attractive or ugly, old or young, each one sought their own type and none surpassed their own standard or were forced to marry causing resentment.

Their penal codes were most unusual. [If] one severed a person’s foot, then one’s own foot would be severed; [if] one disfigured a person’s face, then one’s own face would be disfigured at exactly the same spot, not missing a single inch. [If] one raped a person’s son or daughter, then someone would be dispatched to rape one’s own son or daughter. If the offender had no sons or daughters, then [they would] carve a piece of wood into the form of a man’s penis [and use it to] hammer [the offender’s] anus.

Lü lived in this kingdom for thirteen months. Then, with the help of a southerly wind, [Lü boarded] a nearby ship and returned to China. According to an old mariner this island is called the Gateless Kingdom. Since the beginning of time there has been none [from this kingdom] who has been in contact with China.

無門國

呂恆者，常州人，販洋貨為業。乾隆四十年，為海風所吹，舟中人盡沒，惟呂抱一木板，隨波掀騰，飄入一國。人民皆樓居，樓有三層者、五層者；祖居第三層，父居第二層，子居第一層，其最高者則曾高祖居之。有出入之戶，無遮攔之門。國人甚富，無盜竊事。呂初到時，言語不通，以手指畫。久之，亦漸領解。聞是中華人，頗知禮敬。

其俗分一日為兩日，雞鳴而起，貿易往來；至日午則舉國安寢，日斜時起，照常行事，至戌時又睡矣。問其年，稱十歲者，中國之五歲也；稱二十者，中國之十歲也。

呂所居處，離國王尚有千里，無由得見。官員甚少，有儀從者，呼為“巴洛”，亦不知是何職司。男女相悅為婚，好醜老少，各以類從，無攙越勉強致嗟怨者。刑法尤奇，斷人足者亦斷其足，傷人面者亦傷其面，分寸部位，絲毫不爽。奸人子女者，使人亦奸其子女。如犯人無子女，則削木作男子勢狀，椽其臀竅。

呂居其國十有三月，因南風之便，附船還中國。據老洋客云：“此島號無門國，從古來未有通中國者。”

Unlike Yuan Mei's other stories on the foreign wherein the foreigner or foreign group encountered by the Chinese protagonist is based on a historical or literary model, the tale of the Gateless Kingdom is not based upon any documented kingdom. Rather the people and events of this kingdom are very likely a product of Yuan Mei's own imagination, a literary sandbox wherein Yuan is able to construct an imagined encounter between Lü Heng and a foreign group free from the constraints of an established opinion of that group. Therefore, this story projects a more faithful picture of Yuan Mei's personal take on the foreign, allowing us to see with greater clarity Yuan Mei's criteria in debating foreignness.

The Gateless Kingdom is essentially a catalogue of the various customs and practices of a foreign land compared to and contrasted against those of China. The story begins by discussing the living situation of the people, in which the eldest generations live on the highest floors while the youngest generations live on the lowest. In this way familial hierarchy is spatially mapped out, organized by assigning the highest floor to what we can only assume would be the highest ranking member of the family.⁷¹ Although practically speaking, this would likely make entering and exiting the buildings difficult for the elderly, it holds significant symbolic meaning in that it places them in a position of leadership and oversight and makes it likely that within this system elder generations are taken care of by younger ones. Yuan Mei's description comes together to show that the ideal Chinese family life expressed in the phrase "four generations under one

⁷¹ There is, actually, no indication that the eldest members of the family are the highest ranking. Likewise, there is no indication that they are not. It is most likely that in Yuan Mei's description of this living situation he was thinking in terms of typical Chinese familial hierarchy.

roof⁷² wherein the elderly and the youth reside together in a harmonious system of support, is the standard way in which these foreigners live.

Moving away from family life and into the function of time, we find that people of the Gateless Kingdom split their days up in a manner that causes time to pass twice as quickly as in China. The people take the cock's crow as the beginning of the day, which lasts until the sun's zenith in the sky, whereupon the people return home to sleep. After the sun had left its vertical position a new day would begin which lasts until the *xu* hours, when the sun had set, and the people would sleep. In the people's conception of a day we see a modified version comparable to that of China. Rather than taking a single day to be one complete cycle of a night and a day, the people of the Gateless Kingdom classify a single day according to the sun's positions. One's usual understanding of the nighttime figures little in this concept. This manner of splitting days, although different from China's, is not without reason. After all, considering the need for time-keeping, there is no reason why simply doubling each measurement, as they clearly do with days and years, should present any major problems. Indeed, their system inevitably achieves the same end as any other by standardizing time through the entire kingdom.

The Gateless Kingdom has a king, but in contrast to China's highly developed and massive bureaucratic system, this kingdom has a small, simple system. Contrasted with China's system wherein officials are addressed by their official titles, for Lü Heng the observer, the officials of the Gateless Kingdom

⁷² *Si shi tong tang* 四世同堂. Literally 'four generations same hall' – four generations living in the same home.

distinguish themselves by their retinue. But it is not clear what their duties entail, as they are all addressed as *baluo* with no designation of official titles. Despite these major differences, it is clear that the system still works to keep the kingdom safe, ordered and prosperous (國人甚富, 無盜竊事).

The people of the Gateless Kingdom lack the same strict social conventions of marriage in China, which is based on compatibility of social status and gender segregation. Within their system the grounds for marriage are based simply upon mutual admiration. Yet, as the narrative goes, emotion as the driving force of marriage does not lead to turmoil. Rather it functions in a harmonious way to bring people together without violating any sense of order.

Up to this point, foreignness in the Gateless Kingdom is portrayed as a kind of utopia similar to the fabled Peach Blossom Spring (Taohua yuan 桃花源), wherein the simple systems are able to maintain social harmony to a remarkable degree in a timeless manner. However, it is the penal system that calls attention to the fact that the Gateless Kingdom is not a utopian society of harmony. Rather it is an ordered kingdom that is maintained through a system of punishments for criminal acts. It is therefore advisable to read the penal system of the Gateless Kingdom against the contemporary Chinese source of law, the *Da Qing lü li* 大清律例 (Great Qing Legal Code), to get a better understanding of how foreignness is catalogued.

The Qing system of punishment distinguishes between different degrees of assault based on the part of the body injured, the severity of the injury,⁷³ and whether or not a weapon was used. The commensurate punishment takes the form of flogging and banishment, with degrees of punishment meted out based on the degree of the crime. The Gateless Kingdom, on the other hand, stresses the dispensation of exactly the same injury back on its original perpetrator.⁷⁴ Rape, within the Qing legal code, entails more than coerced sexual intercourse. Within the purview of Qing rape law are also consensual sexual intercourses that transgress social order: adultery, incest, and sexual relations that breach social hierarchy (e.g. sex between a servant and the master of the household). One example from the Qing code will suffice:

All slaves or hired servants who have been guilty of a criminal intercourse with their master's wives or daughter, shall be beheaded immediately.⁷⁵

凡奴及雇工人姦家長妻女者各斬[決]。⁷⁶

By contrast, within the Gateless Kingdom sexual transgressions are equated with sexual violence. It is likely that within the system of marriage cited by Lü Heng, wherein their system works so well, there would not be consensual sexual activities that would disrupt the domestic order. Their singular concern for

⁷³ For example, whether any teeth were broken, hair pulled out of the scalp or if one or both eyes were injured.

⁷⁴ *Da Qing lü li* 大清律例 (Great Qing Legal Code), 302.1. For an English translation see George Thomas Staunton, *Ta Tsing Leu Li Being the Fundamental Laws, and A Selection from the Supplementary Statutes of the Penal Code of China* (London, 1810)

⁷⁵ Staunton, *Ta Tsing*, 407.

⁷⁶ *Da Qing lüli*, 370.1.

punishing coerced intercourse, then, stands in stark contrast to the Qing's use of sexual control to enforce social order.

Despite the considerable differences regarding punishment, each system inevitably functions based on the same principles of retribution. The Gateless Kingdom's penal code essentially functions as a *lex talionis* system of justice in which the offending act, its scale and location are directly turned around on the perpetrator as punishment. The major concern, and indeed the very basis for determining a punishment lies in proportionality, which is taken to the extent that the punishment is the exact equivalent of the crime itself. Qing penal code also functions as a system of retributive justice with the same concerns for a proportionate response to a crime. The Qing developed a complex system in which each crime, and each successive degree of that crime had an already established method of proportionate punishment through flogging, exile and execution, therefore the original transgressing action is not repeated. This is where the two systems depart from each other. The Gateless Kingdom used the very act of the crime to punish the perpetrator, thus replicating the act of transgression.

Gateless Communication

By comparing the Chinese and Gateless Kingdom's concepts of family, time, bureaucratic systems, marriage and law, we find a consistently different, yet justifiable series of systems. Although this catalogue of difference is an observation of foreign practices from a Chinese perspective, there is a consistent feeling of familiarity between the different systems, that underneath the

differences there is an underlying and fundamentally shared sense of what is ethical. Each of the Gateless Kingdom's customs arises from the need to address particular ethical concerns to keep society in order; all of which are reminiscent of similar core ethical concerns of the Chinese.

In descriptions of their houses and family structures, the people of the Gateless Kingdom practice their particular form of familial hierarchy that recalls the values of filial piety (*xiao* 孝) in the Confucian system. Their system of time is presented as able to bring about kingdom-wide conformity to a particular schedule. This is indicative of a developed social order, and this perspective recalls the Confucian discourse on propriety (*li* 禮). Likewise, although we are given little information on their bureaucracy, and it is not as pervasive as China's, it maintains a prosperous, safe, ordered and ethical kingdom. The existence of such a system seems to correspond to the Confucian idea of good government. Finally, the Gateless Kingdom's penal code seems to provide an alternative way to conceive of justice (*yi* 義) in the Confucian tradition. By meting out punishment in exactly the same way crime is committed, the Gateless Kingdom's system fulfills the principle of reciprocity in the most literal sense.

The entire story therefore functions as a sort of dialogue between the two cultures, wherein the Chinese reader is given an account of foreign customs that does not dismiss the foreign as inferior. By identifying the land as a kingdom (*guo* 國), the narrative presupposes a sense of social order and hierarchy that distinguishes the Gateless Kingdom from other strange lands.

The transcultural dialogue enables the reader to transcend the superficial representations of foreignness and to consider the underlying reasons for the Gateless Kingdom's customs and to compare them to their own. The ability to understand and accept both systems can be seen in the very sense of non-duality that gives the kingdom its name. The homes of the people, and their doors that do not block the way (無遮攔之門) show the sense of non-duality and total correspondence to the same absolute truth as the one laid out in Wumen Huikai's 無門慧開 (1183-1260) thirteenth-century collection of *chan* 禪 koans *Wumen guan* 無門關 (The Gateless Gate).

In this collection, Huikai presents a series of koans and comments concerned mostly with dualistic conceptualizations of reality by simultaneously displaying philosophical polarities. The goal is to discover the sameness within seeming opposites: “that life and death are the same as no-life and no-death; the other is no other than myself; each being is infinitely precious as a unique expression of the nature which is essential to use all.”⁷⁷ The gate (*men* 門) is often used to represent the way of doing something.⁷⁸ To be “gateless,” then, is to have no method, which *is* the method, again challenging the deep-trenched concept of duality. Seen in this context, Yuan Mei's choice of the phrase *wumen* as the title seems to resonate with the Buddhist philosophy of non-duality (of which Huikai's Gateless Gate is a good example) by showing the way in which one can see something common in what seems to be two drastically different systems. In this

⁷⁷ Robert Aitken, *The Gateless Barrier: The Wu-Men Kuan (Mumonkan)* (New York: North Point Press, 1995), xiv.

⁷⁸ For example, different ways to achieve enlightenment are called “*Fa men* 法門” (gate to Dharma). To get initiated in a particular way of cultivation is called “*ru men* 入門” (Entering the gate).

way, the story almost becomes a koan itself to erase the duality between Chineseness and foreignness.

THE HUMAN-EQUIVALENT (*ZI BUYU* 6.6)

The Khalkha⁷⁹ have a kind of beasts that are similar to monkeys but are not monkeys. The Chinese refer to them as “human-equivalents,” while Turks call them “*Gali*.” They often peek into [people’s] yurts, beg for food and drink, or such things as small knives and utensils for tobacco. When they are yelled at by people they will immediately give up and run away.

There was a general who raised one and had it prepare fodder, collect firewood, fetch water and other things like this, and it was quite capable at these chores.

Having lived [there] for a year, the general’s tenure ended. [When he was about to return] the human-equivalent stood in front of his horse with tears pouring down like rain. They followed each other for over ten *li*, and when [the general] commanded it [to leave], it would not leave. The general said: “You cannot follow me to China, just as I cannot follow you to live in this land. You can stop here in seeing me off.” The human-equivalent left wailing, every so often still turning around to look up [at the general].

人同

喀爾喀有獸，似猴非猴，中國人呼為“人同”，番人呼為“噶里”。往往窺探穹廬，乞人飲食，或乞取小刀煙具之屬。被

⁷⁹ The Khalkha Mongolian subgroup situated throughout modern Inner Mongolia 內蒙古 and the eastern parts of Mongolia proper.

人呼喝，即棄而走。有某將軍畜養之，喚使莖豆樵汲等事，頗能服役。居一年，將軍任滿，歸。人同立馬前，淚下如雨，相從十餘里，麾之不去。將軍曰：“汝之不能從我至中國，猶我之不能從汝居此土也。汝送我可止矣。”人同悲鳴而去，猶屢回頭仰視云。

The Historical Khalkha and the Dzungar as the Human-Equivalent

The ethnic groups mentioned in this story were of great importance to the history of the Qing empire in Mongolia and northwest China. The Khalkha were the largest, most closely-situated and perhaps most closely-allied of all Mongolian groups to the Qing empire. Relations between the Manchus and the Khalkha dated to before the establishment of the Qing Dynasty, and in 1691, following their defeat by the Dzungar Mongols,⁸⁰ they were integrated into the Qing empire as a means of protection. Relations between the Dzungar and the Qing had been plagued by conflicts since the seventeenth century, and the Qing campaigns against them constituted two of the Ten Great Campaigns (*shi quan wugong* 十全武功)⁸¹ of the Manchu empire. Vying for influence over parts of Mongolia and modern Xinjiang, the Qing government invested huge amounts of troops to this conflict, which was finally brought to a close through a peace treaty in 1740.

⁸⁰ Part of the Oirat Mongolian subgroup, formerly situated throughout northern Xinjiang 新疆 and southwestern Mongolia.

⁸¹ The ten major conflicts during Qianlong's reign. They included two wars against the Dzungars and the subsequent pacification of other smaller tribes in Xinjiang, two wars against Jinchuan 金川 rebels in Sichuan, campaigns against the Burmese, suppression of rebels in Taiwan, a war against the Vietnamese and two wars against the Gurkhas of Nepal.

However, after only about fifteen years, fighting restarted and Qianlong embarked on a renewed campaign to exterminate the Dzungars once and for all. After wiping out approximately 90 percent of the remaining 600,000 Dzungars, Qianlong commissioned massive four-sided stelae to be created celebrating the victory in Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan scripts, and had them placed around the empire. He also sponsored the construction of Puning Temple 普寧寺 (Temple of Universal Peace) in Chengde 承德 and, as always, composed a huge amount of poems on the topic of his military victories.⁸² Finally, he issued a proclamation outlawing the use of the word “Dzungar,” insisting that instead they be referred to by the names of other nearby tribes.⁸³

The Dzungar and the Human-Equivalent

Although the human-equivalent is very likely an imaginary figure, the story itself refers to a very real group of people. By associating the *Gali* with the Khalkha people, and by using a sound often associated with the Dzungar,⁸⁴ Yuan Mei’s use of the term succeeds in clearly identifying the creature as a reference to the Dzungar people while not violating the Qing proscription on the use of their name.

It is interesting, then, that Yuan Mei chose to portray the human-equivalent, a characterization of one of the most hated enemies of the Qing, in such a non-threatening manner. This is possible because, as a conquered people,

⁸² Elliot, *Qianlong*, 101.

⁸³ This is likely the reason for the difficulty of finding direct references in contemporary materials. Elliot, *Qianlong*, 94.

⁸⁴ *Ga* 噶 itself forms part of *Zhunga’er* 准噶爾, the Dzungar Mongol people. The sound ‘gali’, with a handful of different Chinese characters used for transliteration, is also an oft seen portion of Dzungar place and people names in Chinese. This name very likely refers to the Dzungar Mongols.

there was indeed no threat from the Dzungars. The descriptions of those remaining Dzungars in an account by a Manchu traveller to Xinjiang in 1777 notes their tendency to have ended up as thieves, beggars, prostitutes, and drunkards too lazy to farm.⁸⁵ Yuan Mei's depiction of the human-equivalent is essentially an amalgam of these common conceptions. Their curiosity in the homes and belongings of people, begging for food, drink and tobacco, as well as their easily frightened nature, running away if yelled at – all show them as emasculated and dehumanized beggars whose only interests are in eating and the simple treat of tobacco.

The chores of the human-equivalents reflect the domestication of the once wild Dzungar but also the very real fact that many of the surviving Dzungars were transferred out of their former lands to locations in Mongolia and Manchuria where they supplied corvee labor to the Qing.⁸⁶

Hierarchical Relationship Between of the General and the Human-Equivalent

The term Yuan Mei uses to describe how the general raises the human-equivalent sheds more light into their relationship. The particular term *xuyang* 畜養 has connotations both of raising animals⁸⁷ as well as to raise a child.⁸⁸ In either

⁸⁵ James A. Millward, *New Qing Imperial History: The Making of the Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde* (London: Routledge, 2004), 103.

⁸⁶ Gertraude R. Li, *Manchu: A Textbook for Reading Documents* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 327.

⁸⁷ [One needs to] put efforts in [comprehending] the principles of animal husbandry, and be observant of the suitability of the soil, when the six animals (horses, oxen, sheep, chickens, dogs, and pigs) flourish, and the five grains abound, then yield will be enormous. 務於畜養之理，察於土地之宜，六畜遂，五穀殖，則入多。 *Han Feizi* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1958), 15.835.

case, the process involves supporting and directing something to develop to its full potential in the manner it was meant to develop. The relationship between the general and the human-equivalent, therefore, is more or less custodial in nature. Indeed, when viewed in this context, the behavior of the human-equivalent is obviously child-like – it flees when yelled at; it is always curious, and it loves small treats.⁸⁹

Such a relationship reflects the Confucian hierarchy between father and son (*fu zi* 父子), master and servant (*zhu pu* 主僕), ruler and subject (*jun chen* 君臣). The same hierarchical structure can also explain the relationship between China and foreign states, wherein China assumes the dominant cultural position over its neighbors. The Confucian state is therefore responsible in educating and civilizing foreign peoples, while the latter is responsible in recognizing China's authority and dominant position. As both a Han Chinese and a member of the same military that had subdued the real-life Dzungars, the general symbolizes China and Chinese imperial order. The human-equivalent symbolizes, in turn, the domesticated foreign; and through their relationship we see the same Confucian hierarchical structure.

What is then portrayed in this story is how, through their relationship, the Chinese general and the human-equivalent both subscribe to the same universal Confucian ethics that defines humanness and Chineseness. They have the same *ren* (*ren tong* 仁同).

⁸⁸ Those who are fathers must embrace a tender and benevolent love with which to rear a son. One soothes and nourishes him with food and drink, in order to perfect his way. 夫為人父者，必懷慈仁之愛，以畜養其子，撫循飲食，以全其身。 *Han shi wai zhuan*, 315.

⁸⁹ Human-equivalent (*rentong*) is a homophone to *rentong* 人童 (human child).

Emotion as Voice and Ethical Communication

Throughout the story, the human-equivalent never speaks. It can, however, fully understand the Chinese general who speaks to it in Chinese. This is, in fact, the only time among the stories discussed that the foreign can actually understand Chinese. In all other cases it is the Chinese protagonist that learns the language of the other.⁹⁰ The human-equivalent's ability to understand Chinese is what enables it to become a quite capable servant of the Chinese general, which establishes each other's position as father-son, ruler-subject, master-servant and even Chinese-foreign. Embedded in this relationship is a deep-seated sense of asymmetry. The Chinese general is free to straddle both the Chinese heartland and the peripheral areas outside of it. The human-equivalent however, is unable to enter the Chinese heartland and must remain isolated just outside of the Chinese realm. This asymmetry leads to the most moving part of the story, and of all the encounters between the Chinese and the foreign that I have discussed.

When the general leaves for home after his tenure, "the human-equivalent stood in front of his horse with tears pouring down like rain" (人同立馬前，淚下如雨). The human-equivalent's pain is evidence of its deep allegiance to their relationship. It is in fact losing a father, a teacher and a ruler at the same time. As the general leaves, the human-equivalent follows and does not turn back until the general's words explain that it is prohibited from entering the heartland of China, after which the human-equivalent cries again and leaves (人同悲鳴而去). Its

⁹⁰ The Depression in the Water 落際 and The Gateless Kingdom 無門國.

tears, then, represent a doleful resignation to being barred from China's imperial order.

Within this story, communication between the general and the human-equivalent begins on a linguistic level, wherein the human-equivalent can understand, but still not speak. However, this ability to comprehend enables the human-equivalent to become the quite capable servant of the general, placing it in a relationship structured on Confucian hierarchy. Their relationship then becomes the setting of their dialogue on Confucian ethics, and as each one fulfills their respective responsibilities, their participation serves as their voice. The powerful emotions of the human-equivalent and the lack of emotional response from the general reinforces their sense of hierarchy, and shows the level to which both sides have engaged in highly successful communication, embracing those values that form the heart of Confucian ethics.

CONCLUSION

Within his stories (The Depression in the Water, The Human-Equivalent and the Gateless Kingdom) Yuan Mei uses two different terms to refer to Chinese identity: *Zhongguoren* 中國人 and *Zhonghuaren* 中華人. Chineseness is therefore constructed along two lines of concerns. *Zhonghua* itself is the land of China's mythical founding dynasties, the imagined heartland of Chinese civilization while *Zhongguo* 中國 (Middle Kingdom) is the geographic and political entity of China. This understanding expresses what is essentially the same view seen in Chen An's distinction between ethical Chineseness and geographical Chineseness, which finds its echo in Yuan Mei's presentation of communication on ethic and linguistic levels. This distinction also organizes different parameters of foreignness.

The historical groups that Yuan Mei covers in his discussion of the foreign, and those he leaves out are also worth noting. Mapping out the areas where the Chinese protagonists encounter foreigners, we see that half of the encounters take place in historical areas of major conflicts between the Qing and foreign or other un-assimilated peoples. We see: the Chu 楚 area in Cave of the Black Miao, Dian 滇 in Xu Yake, the trading route to Ryukyu 琉球 in Depression in the Water and the Turk 番 areas in The Human-Equivalent.

Interestingly, Yuan Mei seems to have consistently left out stories that occur in northern border areas and encounters with northern peoples (e.g. Mongolia proper and the Tungusic areas of the northeast). His hesitance to engage

these areas and inhabitants could be interpreted as a hesitance to risk upsetting the Manchu rulers or the politically elite bannermen, many of whom were northern peoples. Yuan Mei therefore writes very much with the Manchu imperial order in mind.

Writing within the *zhiguai* genre, Yuan Mei is able to extract the stories' protagonist from his native land. His protagonists are either lost (Cave of the Black Miao, Xu Yake), or are forced off their regular courses (The Mountain Monk, The Gateless Kingdom, The Depression in the Water). Such a design puts the protagonist in a liminal space, in which identities of both Chinese and foreign are suspended for negotiation. The *zhiguai* tradition therefore enables Yuan Mei to create make-believe settings for his negotiation of foreignness that cannot be achieved in other sources such as historical documents and moralistic treatises.

Of the six stories, The Mountain Monk, Cave of the Black Miao, The Gateless Kingdom and The Depression in the Water are all survivors' stories in that they show ways in which encounters with the foreign are *not* expected to turn out for the protagonist. In three out of the four stories, the accounts end with a statement on the common knowledge of the dangerousness of these areas and the impossibility of survival or communication (The Mountain Monk, Cave of the Black Miao, The Gateless Kingdom). By showing how these experiences turn out differently from expected, Yuan Mei's stories are contrastive comments on the common expectations of encounters with foreigners and travels to foreign lands.

Yuan Mei therefore writes in order to enrich the contemporary understanding of foreignness. What distinguishes his endeavor from the corrective

accounts in official documents is his use of communication to negotiate foreignness. In his stories, communication functions as an alternative lens for the reader to examine the foreigners through the perspectives of the Chinese protagonists. Foreignness is not so much observed as the absolute *other*, but as a set of qualities articulated through the viewpoints and the needs of the Chinese protagonists. This point is best illustrated in Xu Yake's words at the end of the story: "It is the nature of Heaven and earth to take man as the most noble [kind]. [As for] all those desolate, wild, hidden, and remote places, if people did not reach them nor would ghosts, deities and strange beings. [If] there are places with ghosts, deities and strange beings, then [those places] also have people." (天地之性人為貴。凡荒莽幽絕之所，人不到者，鬼神怪物亦不到。有鬼神怪物處，便有人矣). Foreignness ultimately hinges on the observations of the people, namely, Chinese.

In some stories, Yuan Mei's concern echoes the Manchu regime's preoccupation with mapping out foreignness against the usual *hua-yi* distinction to assert imperial authority. The foreign is either alienated as a monster, such as the mountain monk and the Burmese python, or embraced as actually Chinese, such as the ghosts of the Depression in the Water. But through multiple modes of communication, Yuan Mei presents foreignness in much more complicated ways. There is foreignness diffused and displaced by afterlife (again, with the ghosts in The Depression in the Water); there is foreignness that is subsumed within the mythical tradition, as is the case of the two hairy men in Xu Yake's story; there is foreignness that calls into question the dualistic conception of Chinese-foreign

distinction, which is explicit in the Gateless Kingdom; and, finally, there is the emotional contour of the foreign. This can be seen in the story of the human-equivalent and its final gesture: “The human-equivalent left wailing, every so often still turning around to look up [at the general]. “ (人同悲鳴而去，猶屢回頭仰視云). This description presents something of a romanticized version of foreignness. The foreign is kept at a comfortable distance, yet it is emotionally attached to Chineseness with its longing gazes.

There are, of course, other tales within *Zi buyu* that deal with issues of foreignness, but they are quite different from the six stories I have discussed. These other tales typically feature short and shallow accounts of a certain foreign lands or foreign people (i.e. in such and such country they use dogs to pull chariots, in such and such country they have very long ears). Most importantly, these stories do not put their Chinese protagonists in contact with the foreign groups. They therefore lack the element of interaction and communication so intrinsic to Yuan Mei’s negotiation of foreignness.

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